THE DYNAMICS OF IMMIGRANT AGENCY

A Transnational Perspective on East-West European Migration

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Abstract

This study delves into the dynamic transformation of human agency within the complex context of settlement-oriented immigration. It places a central focus on agency, examining it from interdisciplinary, structural, and non-structural perspectives while considering the individual and collective experiences throughout the migration process. The study employs a transnational lens and an interpretive approach, firmly grounded in the rigorous methodology of Grounded Theory. Using a versatile multimethod open research design, the research culminates in the development of an empirically grounded Immigrant Agency Theory. Through the migration and settlement lens, this theory engages the simultaneity hypothesis, bridging the realms of integration and transnationalism. Immigrant agency, derived from the empirical study, is conceptualized as a multifaceted analytical tool encompassing representational aspects (identity formations and frameworks), expressive dimensions (language use, the acquisition of voice, and multilingual practices), and operational facets (social actions).

The Immigrant Agency Theory takes shape through an in-depth case study of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who embarked on their journey to Germany during the 1990s and early 2000s, representing the fourth wave of the East-West European migration in the 20th century. To illustrate the dynamics within the researched immigrant communities, the application of the transition and postcolonial frames additionally prove useful in explaining the dominance of the Russian language and the outcomes of cultural Sovietization/Russification for the communities abroad.

The thesis introduces novel insights by differentiating between identity formations and identity frameworks, illustrated through a semantic assessment of 'russaki,' an identity framework originating from the German context. Moreover, the thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of the processual character of language use as languaging, encompassing practices like translanguaging between German and Russian and examining the contexts in which such practices are prevalent. Then it offers an in-depth examination of social actions across the spheres of business and leisure within the immigrant communities under investigation. These findings illuminate the roles of language use, encompassing multilingualism and translanguaging, along with identity formations and frameworks, as well as entrepreneurial and leisure actions. These elements serve as mechanisms facilitating transition, engagement, resistance, and the expression of flexible ethnic boundary-making, cultural pluralism, and the maintenance of difference through auto-exoticism as exemplified by the studied population groups.

The study's limitations primarily relate to its focus on first-generation immigrants. Furthermore, there are chronological constraints tied to migration enabled by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which has affected the temporal scope of the research. Additionally, there is reduced analysis of the role of state and international agencies. The study specifically concentrates on individuals affiliated with Russian-speaking communities in Germany. Furthermore, the empirical study took place before the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2022, a critical event that dramatically impacted the dynamics within the studied subjects on the ground. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and their applicability to broader immigrant populations and different migration contexts.

In conclusion, the study holds implications for the development of a comprehensive theory of immigrant agency that encompasses both individual and collective dimensions. It thoughtfully navigates structural and non-structural factors within transnational social and urban spaces. This research contributes significantly to the field of East-West European migration studies by adopting transition and postcolonial perspectives, allowing for a wide-ranging understanding of individual and collective experiences during migration amid the complex backdrop of social, political, and economic transformations.

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List of Abbreviations

ANT Actor-Network-Theory

e.K. Eingetragener Kaufmann [Registered Merchant]

e.V. Eingetragener Verein [Registered Association]

FSU Former Soviet Union

GMbH Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung [Company with limited liability]

GT Grounded Theory

HDR Human Development Report

ICT Information and Communications Technology

LMDR Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland e.V. [Territorial Association of Germans from Russia]

MG The Monolith Group

OHG Offene Handelsgesellschaft [General Partnership]

TH Reference to the author

IAT Immigrant Agency Theory

TM Transnational Methodology

TSS Transnational Social Spaces

VSA Visual Sequence Analysis

MSA Micro-situative action

List of Appendixes

Appendix A: Record of Academic Contributions

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INTRODUCTION

What is the Place of Immigrant Agency in the Migration Discourse?

> Globalization and migration are twin subjects. In a historical sense we are all migrants because our ancestors have all traveled to the places where we have come from. States that impose border controls may go way back in time but their spread dates only from the nineteenth century and their covering the globe is more recent still. …our perspective on history shapes our perspective on migration (Pieterse 2003, p. 32)

The perception of migration and immigrants is heavily influenced by the historical perspective and depth of knowledge on the subject. Conversely, the understanding of natives and the concept of a nation-state is closely linked to the willingness to learn about their political, cultural, and social contexts, language, cuisine, traditions, and more. The extent to which foreigners and natives are familiar with each other's worlds shapes their attitudes and opinions: natives about immigrants, and vice versa. Surprisingly, despite being well-informed about migration issues and recognizing their importance compared to other EU-member states, Germans, on average, are reported to have limited daily contact and interaction with others, primarily restricted to workplaces and occasional public encounters (European Commission 2018, pp. 24–25). This paradox becomes evident when analyzing national statistics.

National statistics reveal that the foreign-born population in Germany has steadily grown since the 1960s. In 1961, it numbered around 686,000 (1.2% of the total population), and six decades later, this figure had risen to 22.3 million, including the population with a migratory background (BAMF 2012, p. 97, 2022, p. 9). This constitutes approximately 27 percent of Germany's total population. Over the course of one generation (from 1961 to 2022), this increase represents a significant transformation, with immigration experiences becoming more visible, audible, and statistically traceable. It is often claimed that these newcomers bring with them an array of differences – cultural, religious, and social distinctions that have sparked public and political concerns about integration, especially in cases labeled as integration-resistant or, worse, integration-incompatible.

Reflecting on questions of migration and integration, Klaus J. Bade, a renowned historian of migration processes in the European context and a policy adviser, pointed out that the public and political discourse on integration issues in Germany is often unnecessarily agitated (Bade 2007). It is frequently overlooked that integration in Germany has long become the norm and is approached in a very pragmatic manner. Germany, like other European countries of immigration, undoubtedly faces integration challenges, but there is no reason for national depressive self-descriptions regarding migration and integration. In fact, the German path to becoming an immigration society remains 'a pragmatic success story' (idem, p. 6).

The question at hand is this: What transpires on the other side of the continuum? Beyond Germans as natives, beyond the realm of public opinions, myths, and the fervent political discourse, lies a vast landscape of immigrants. These immigrants can be newcomers, long-stayers, or citizens naturalized for decades, all regarded as Germans. Within this 27 percent of the population, a diverse tapestry of individuals with different journeys and aspirations unfolds. Some are grated rights based on their historical ancestry, like ethnic German resettlers, while others stake claims for historical justice, as Jewish refugees. Many are driven by the pursuit of employment, such as labor migrants, or by the bonds of love, leading to family migration. Others seek a better life, convinced that elsewhere is better and easier or that elsewhere a better future is waiting for them.

These individuals embark on a journey filled with movement, settlement, encounters with obstacles and barriers, successes, and setbacks. Throughout this path, they grapple not only with external challenges but also with their own identities and aspirations. Some aspire to draw closer to the mainstream society in the spirit of integration, while others resist this closeness, displaying signs of being integration-tired or integration-robust. In their multifaceted ways of being, identifying and representing themselves, expressing their desires, and taking actions, they vividly exhibit their (immigrant) agency. At the heart of this thesis lies a fundamental question: **How does human agency transform in the process of migration and settlement, viewed from both individual and collective perspectives?** To answer this question, I turn to Grounded Theory (GT) as a guiding epistemological and methodological framework (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Charmaz 2008, 2014). This approach enables the empirical generation of components that form the analytical construct known as immigrant agency, serving as the foundation for constructing the Immigrant Agency Theory.

This central query is illuminated through a case study of immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) who arrived in Germany between 1990 and 2005. How do the multifaceted aspects of immigrant agency manifest in the experiences of these individuals? What renders these population groups particularly compelling within the realm of immigrant agency? These are some of the subquestions explored in this thesis, providing valuable insights into the immigrant experience within the FSU immigrant community. As we delve into these subquestions, we gain a deeper understanding of FSU immigrants and their agency through several key perspectives:

Transnational and simultaneity hypothesis perspectives provide a foundational framework for understanding immigrant experiences and practices across various forms of migration, emphasizing interactions within and beyond the nation-state. They explore the influence of contested categories like ethnicity and nationality, ultimately revealing disparities and potentials in a context of cross-border migration shaped by factors like ethnic categories, multilingual contexts, transnational social spaces, and urban environments.

Structural and non-structural perspectives enable an investigation of connections and ties re-established by these groups of immigrants within the nation-state context, in the transnational social spaces, and urban settings, both within and outside the structural realities of hierarchical integration such as admission policies, labor-market segregation, and a tendency to overqualification.

Transition and postcolonial perspectives also prove valuable in examining the experiences FSU emigrants and immigrants. On the one hand, they had to navigate the aftermath of a transition caused by a drastic system transformation involving ideology, economy, political regime, and core values. On the other hand, the postcolonial frame helps explain hierarchies between the immigrant communities caused by colonial and postcolonial legacies, the dominance of the Russian language, and the outcomes of cultural Sovietization and Russification for these communities abroad. In this context, the boundary-making perspective is useful.

The flexible ethnic boundary-making perspective enables a comprehensive view of post-Soviet migrants' transition from the 70-year internationalist project to Germany, a country where they were largely pre-selected based on ethnicity, following the logic of a nation-state. They have been admitted as ethnic German resettlers or Jewish refugees, with further differentiation as Armenians, Russians, Kazakhs, Ukrainians, and so on. However, on the ground, these various population groups interact and merge together in Russian-speaking communities based on familial ties, regions of origin, Russian language, and culture with their post-Soviet and post-colonial legacies.

Reflexive knowledge production approach encompasses the critical assessment of the positionalities of both the researcher and researched subjects in the research process. Additionally, it incorporates a comparative analysis of studies conducted on FSU immigrants over the past 30 years in various academic contexts, including their former regions of origin and their current settlement regions (mainly Germany, with partial consideration of the USA and Israel). This approach contributes substantial value to knowledge production in the fields of migration sociology and East-West migration studies.

The synthesis of these key perspectives serves as the foundation for shaping the investigation, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of immigrant agency within the

FSU immigrant communities. Through this multifaceted approach, the thesis aims to shed light on the nuanced dynamics and experiences of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Germany during the specified period and structured as follows:

Part One *Traversing Boundaries: The Dynamics of Post-Soviet Immigration to Germany* delves into the East-West migration developments that unfolded after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals from the former Soviet Union who embarked on new lives in Germany. Chapter 1 meticulously examines the socio-demographic composition of this migration wave, illustrating its group composition as perceived in academic contexts: ethnicization, characterized by categories like ethnic Germans and Jewish refugees (Dietz 2000; Panagiotidis 2015); feminization related to the prominence of the family migration and the 'care capital' aspect (Beetz and Darieva 1997; Nottmeyer 2011); and liberalization of West-East European mobility, encompassing various forms of migration such as labor, study, and lifestyle choices (Fassmann and Münz 2000b). Additionally, these diverse groups are explored through the standpoints of 'Russian-speaking' immigrants and citizens, using the flexible ethnic boundary-making approach. The latter emphasized commonalities such as historical backgrounds, collective memory, language, culture, and comparable migratory experiences, all of which contribute to the emergence of diverse Russian-speaking communities in Germany.

Adopting the transition perspective, Chapter 2 aims to shed light on the personal transformations experienced by post-Soviet emigrants during their transition from the former Soviet Union to Germany. It delves into the shifts between closed and open border regimes (Yurchak 2005), the contrast between self-identity in the Soviet totalitarian regime and self-perception in liberal democracies (Carens 2003; Tlostanova 2008), the transition from planned to market economies (Arendt 1962 [1951]; Zaslavskaya 1990), and the evolution from communist internationalism to the ethnic pluralism found in nation-states (Yurchak 2005; Zherebkina 2006). This analysis holds significant relevance in comprehending the experiences of the diverse population during the post-migratory period.

Part Two *Toward the Immigrant Agency Theory – Background Preparations and Frameworks* initiates by establishing the theoretical groundwork for agency within the realms of social thought and migration studies. Chapter 3 presents the interdisciplinary discourse surrounding human agency, elucidating sociological debates encompassing theories concerning social action (Weber [1922] 2002), communicative behaviors (Habermas 1975), intersubjective interactions (Schuetz 1944, 1945a), agency-structure relationships (Archer 1982; Giddens 1984), and actor-network analysis (Latour 1996a). Furthermore, the concept of agency is scrutinized through the perspective of socio-conditioning factors and power dynamics, encompassing intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), nomadism (Braidotti 1994), and postcolonialism (Tlostanova 2012).

Following the exposition within the realm of social science thought, Chapter 4 contextualizes agency as an analytical tool for comprehending individual and collective

experiences within the framework of migration and settlement theories. The theoretical foundations that underpin the understanding of the embeddedness and processuality of immigrant agency are constructed upon the concepts of neoassimilation and integration (Favell 2022; Alba and Foner 2017) and transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Amelina and Faist 2012). The nomadic logic, 'I am rooted, but I flow' (Braidotti 2011, p. 137), is employed to conceptualize immigrant agency from the vantage point of the simultaneity hypothesis (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Falicov 2007; Beck-Gernsheim 2004), a perspective that will be specifically applied to post-Soviet immigrants in subsequent analyses.

Part Three, titled *Navigating Immigrant Agency – A Research Odyssey,* delves into the research design and methodological adjustments, exploring the experiences of research subjects both as both emigrants and immigrants, foreigners, and citizens. This section outlines the development of a multimethod research design as an investigative instrument for constructing an empirically grounded theory of immigrant agency. Chapter 5 details the methodological framework of the empirical research, drawing upon transnational perspective (Faist 2000b; Glick Schiller 2007; Schittenhelm 2007; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009), grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Charmaz 2008, 2014), and an interpretative approach (Gadamer 2000a; Ricœur 1971, 1976). Several research subprojects have contributed to the composition of this theory that encompasses identity formations, language use, and social actions, exemplified on entrepreneurial and leisure activities. These three fundamental pillars of immigrant agency are progressively elucidated in the subsequent parts.

In Chapter 6, a comprehensive account of the conducted multimethod research is provided, covering sampling strategies, individual methods, their integration, fieldwork access, and development. This chapter also explores into the social aspects of methods and data collection, emphasizing the importance of researcher positionality, self-reflection, and methodological self-consciousness. It considers various factors relevant to empirical research, including education, gender, linguistic background, historical context, migratory experiences, and intersectional positionalities. The chapter underscores the significance of recognizing both the privileges and limitations associated with researcher positionalities and subjectivities, a critical aspect to consider throughout all stages of reflective knowledge production.

Parts One to Three serve as the theoretical and methodological foundation for the subsequent parts that further develop the immigrant agency theory. Therefore, **Part Four**, titled *The Unbearable Lightness of Identity – The Shifting Landscape of Immigrant Identities,* focuses on a representative element of immigrant agency: identity. The title of Part Four reflects the complex and elusive nature of identity, something both crucial and challenging to grasp. This section explores the distinction between identity formations and identity frameworks. In Chapter 7, individual identification is not viewed through identity-conditioning properties like gender, class, ethnicity, or nationality, but rather as an ongoing process of identity formation. This approach allows us to consider post-Soviet

immigrants in terms of difference and authenticity, conformity and legality, reinvention, cultural blending, and mélange, drawing on the works of scholars as Bauman, Brubaker, Kristeva, and Nederveen Pieterse (Bauman 2004; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Kristeva 2002, 2016 [1990]; Pieterse 2003).

In Chapter 8, the collective identification of co-migrants or those with 'ethnic' or migration similarities is explored in the context of identity frameworks connected to ethnicity, nationality, or cultural affiliations. These affiliations may include Russian language proficiency and a sense of Russianness cultivated within the German context. The term 'russaki' emerges as a prominent identity framework within this community, offering insights into the various dimensions of emigrant and immigrant experiences and how group identities are socially constructed, recognized, or assigned. This identity framework is the result of diverse experiences, cultures, generational perspectives, and multiple affiliations.

Part Five *The Silence of Polyglots – Language Practices and Language Use through the Prism of Migration* focuses on a perceptible aspect of agency: language practices or an expressive element of immigrant agency. Sociolinguistics offers valuable insights into understanding the individual and collective aspects of language use in the context of migration and multilingualism (Weinreich [1953] 1979; Isurin 2011, 2013; Mazak and Herbas-Donoso 2014). The complexities of language use in this context are illuminated through what Julia Kristeva describes as the 'silence of polyglots' (Kristeva 2002, p. 275), where coping strategies are required to overcome this linguistic challenge (Chapter 9). One such strategy involves accommodating a standard language. In our case, this encompasses both Hochdeutsch as a language of integration and social advancement for post-Soviet immigrants in Germany and Russian as the language of loyalty to the past and, perhaps, place of origin, as well as means of connecting with to the broader Russian-speaking immigrant population in the German settings, as discussed in Chapter 10. This presents a normative perspective on languages, drawing from Bourdieu's framework. Further, the section on translanguaging explores the phenomenon of linguistic deviation from the norm, which is characterized at times as 'immigrant language,' and elucidates the reasons behind language interference, both from German to Russian and vice versa. This section sheds light on how language practices are shaped and adapted in the context of migration, offering a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of language use.

Finally, **Part Six** *Entrepreneurial Endeavors – From Small Ventures to Transnational Networks* and **Part Seven** *Unveiling Cultural Auto-Exoticism and Dynamic Transformations: A Study of Serious Leisure* delve into social actions as operational element of immigrant agency. These actions are also intricately linked with identity formations and language use. While these two parts may seem quite different, as they address entrepreneurial activities and leisure pursuits, they share notable similarities. Both require a sense of self-determination, choice, and freedom to fulfill intended purposes: the embodiment of agency in achieving self-employment, independent of labor

market conditions, and the ability to engage in recreational activities during one's free time, deciding how to spend it.

Self-employment and recreation often have a highly social nature, relying on social networks with their intricate ties and connections that can be challenging to explain through purely structural reasoning or structure-agency relations. This is where actor-network analysis, as proposed by Bruno Latour (1996a), comes to the forefront and is applied in both cases: to analyze networks of entrepreneurs and networks of a selected leisure-time cultural association. In both cases, a strong dependence on local communities, national and transnational social spaces is evident. The urban scalar perspective, as presented by Nina Glick Schiller (2007), is also employed to understand the role of mid-sized cities in the well-being of the investigated group. In the first case, entrepreneurial activities are scrutinized through the example of immigrant-owned retail shops that have evolved into a transnational supermarket chain across Europe over the last 23 years, exemplified by Mix Markt (Part Six). In the second case, the investigation into leisure activities focuses on the Scheherazade dance group, which has been actively engaged in its community for the past decade (Part Seven). These parts also shed light on how the Soviet internationalist ideology of 'camaraderie of nations' found expression in cross-cultural patterns, behaviors, and hybrid spaces, exemplified by the immigrants of the fourth East-West wave, as seen in the Mix Markt marketing strategy of East European culinary fusion and the multicultural auto-exoticism of the Scheherazade dance group.

The last four parts shift the spotlight onto the immigrant agency theory, an outcome derived from and firmly anchored in the comprehensive multimethod research conducted between 2012 and 2020 in two mid-sized cities in Western Germany. The presentation of the immigrant agency theory in the final section marks the conclusion of the thesis, providing a response to the research question on immigrant agency and proposing potential paths for future investigation.

PART ONE
Traversing Boundaries – The Dynamics of Post-Soviet Immigration to Germany

> "It is from those who have suffered the sentence of history - subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement - that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking… the affective experience of social marginality … transforms our critical strategies"
> (Bhabha 2007 [1994], p. 246)

Diving into the case of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who relocated to Germany during the 1990s and early 2000s, this migration is situated within the context of the fourth wave of East-West European migration of the 20th century, spanning the pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet eras (Bade et al. 2008; Sotnikov 2010; Bazanov 2012). The migration of the 1990s is intricately linked to the political and social liberalization of the Soviet Union during the Perestroika period in the 1980s that ultimately culminated in the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Sotnikov 2010, pp. 12–13). I explore the multifaceted nature of this migration and its unique characteristics, such as the diverse motives that drove individuals and groups to leave their homelands. While both German and Eastern European scholars contribute to our understanding of this migration wave, there is a noticeable discrepancy in how migration motives are portrayed. German-based scholars tend to emphasize discriminatory practices and ethnic disadvantages experienced by ethnic German resettlers and Jewish refugees[1] (as seen in Dietz 2000). As will be illustrated later, these two groups represent the most numerous and extensively studied among various groups in post-Soviet migration. Notably, the case of (late) ethnic German resettlers stands out, with extensive data available for this group, surpassing the data available for any other relevant for my investigation immigrant populations in Germany (Süssmuth 2004).

[1] Throughout the text, I employ the terms '(late) ethnic German resettlers' and 'Jewish refugees' to refer to the specific admission policies that were implemented to accept the immigrant population from the post-Soviet space (Dietz 2000, pp. 635-639; pp. 639-640).

On the other hand, scholars from post-Soviet areas tend to focus on the economic hardships during the early post-Soviet transition and the 'zagranica effect' (e.g., as explored in Bazanov 2012; Popkov 2013; Popkov and Popkova 2019).[2] This foreign land effect is rooted in fascination with the West and the Western lifestyle, reinforced by the Soviet official narrative that demonized the West as a center of 'capitalist evil.' Paradoxically, this demonization of the West triggered an opposite response: a significant portion of the population fantasized about the imaginary West due to limited access to international travel to the Western countries (Yurchak 2005, p. 158).

Different approaches to explaining emigration and immigration motives are not the only divergent aspects in the study of post-Soviet immigrants. Theoretical and methodological perspectives also vary. Within German scholarship, a prominent focus lies on an integration-oriented approach (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2003; Bade 2007; Dietz 2008; Kissau 2008; Grünheid 2012; Kröhnert and Woellert 2013). However, it is notable that integration often stems from policy-driven considerations in research. Alternating with this integration approach are perspectives of transnationalism and cultural hybridity (Sienkiewicz et al. 2015; Savoskul 2015; Sommer and Gamper 2018; Kurilo 2015). A substantial portion of publications emerges from medical and care studies (Mayer and Becker 2011; Aronson 2011; Immerfall et al. 2012; Schimany et al. 2012; Nesterko et al. 2014; Rudakova-Safir 2014; Heimann 2006; Haug et al. 2008; Zakhalev 2008). These studies focus on aging and issues related to deviant behavior such as alcoholism, drug addiction, and minor crimes. Such research orientation reflects an emphasis on internal German concerns and raises questions about integration.

Another notable characteristic of research on immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Germany is the analysis along cultural or ethnic lines. This includes the separate or comparative study of late ethnic Germans and Jews (Becker 2001; Baerwolf 2006; Ballenthien and Büching 2009; Kurilo 2015). Comparative research also examines FSU ethnic German resettles alongside other major German immigrant populations, such as Turkish migrants or Polish resettlers (Eder et al. 2004; Geiling et al. 2011). The extent to which German migration policy with all its evolution, pursued an essentialist ethnic agenda in admitting (late) ethnic German resettlers or Soviet Jewish refugees, remains a topic for debate (Dietz 2000; Bade 2007). However, the outcomes of these policies have played a role in perpetuating the persistent division among ethnicized groups, a phenomenon that remains evident in scholarly discussions spanning integration studies to research on medical and deviant behavior.

In contrast, Eastern European scholarship offers a culture-oriented approach to studying either post-Soviet immigrants or those groups depicted as ethnic Germans in Ukraine or Russia (Pobeda 2010; Popkov 2016; Werner 2017; Linchenko et al. 2019). In the case of

[2] In their analysis, these scholars conducted fieldwork with Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany, which was complemented by academic exchanges, including those facilitated by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service).

ethnic Germans residing within the post-Soviet space, the research focuses on values, language use, maintenance of cultural practices (celebratory traditions, rituals, cooking), and relations to other population groups through intercultural families or associations with different cultural unions. Regarding ethnic Germans in Ukraine, Nelly Pobeda reflected on the establishment of ethnic consciousness and highlighted the renaissance of their cultural practices in the Ukrainian context (Pobeda 2010). Tatiana Smirnova investigated, among other things, the establishment of ties between German-based organizations and ethnic Germans in Russian, strengthening cultural exchanges and German language learning (Smirnova 2010a). Concerning post-Soviet immigrants, Ludmila Isurin studied the formation of the Russian diaspora while analyzing post-Soviet Jews in Germany, Israel, and the USA. She focused on cultural practices related to language use and maintenance, overarching practices of Russian-speaking communities in these countries, and memory preservation (Isurin 2011, 2013).

This brief overview reveals some paradoxes and incoherences stemming from the comparative analysis used to study FSU immigrants within both German and post-Soviet scholarship. First, this scholarship emerges out of distinguishing national or transnational academic discourses on mobility and settlement. This distinction becomes even more pronounced when we consider numerous scholarly works on Russian-speaking immigrants of the 1990-wave in the USA, Israel, Canada, or in the Baltic states (Laitin 1998; Elias and Lemish 2011; Cheskin 2014; Jurcik et al. 2015; Isurin 2019). When compared, the contextual nature of research and its (national) embeddedness becomes apparent and must be underlined. Second, the differences in scholarship highlight nuances while studying structural settings, immigrant agency, and experiences in the transition between and while navigating various social, political, cultural, and economic realities. Therefore, Part One has a dual objective. Firstly, I offer a socio-demographic portrait of the post-Soviet migrant population in Germany, admitted under various policy premises during the period between 1990-2005. Secondly, I delineate personal and collective transformations in response to societal changes both before and after migrating to Germany.

Chapter 1: Post-Soviet Immigrant Population Between the 1990s-2000s

Jannis Panagiotidis, a historian specializing in the post-Soviet migration in Germany, estimated that almost 3.5 million immigrants originate from the former Soviet Union in Germany nowadays (Panagiotidis 2020a, p. 277). This estimate surpasses the populations with Turkish and Polish backgrounds, which stand at 2.77 million and 2.1 million, respectively (ibid). The majority of post-Soviet immigrants arrived in large numbers, particularly in the 1990s (Destatis 2011a, p. 44; Worbs et al. 2013, p. 28). Ethnicization, feminization, and liberalization are three defining features of FSU migration. As mentioned earlier, the two largest groups consist of immigrants admitted on ethnic policies: (late)ethnic German resettlers and Jewish refugees. Regarding gender composition, a proportionally significant share of female immigrants contributes to the

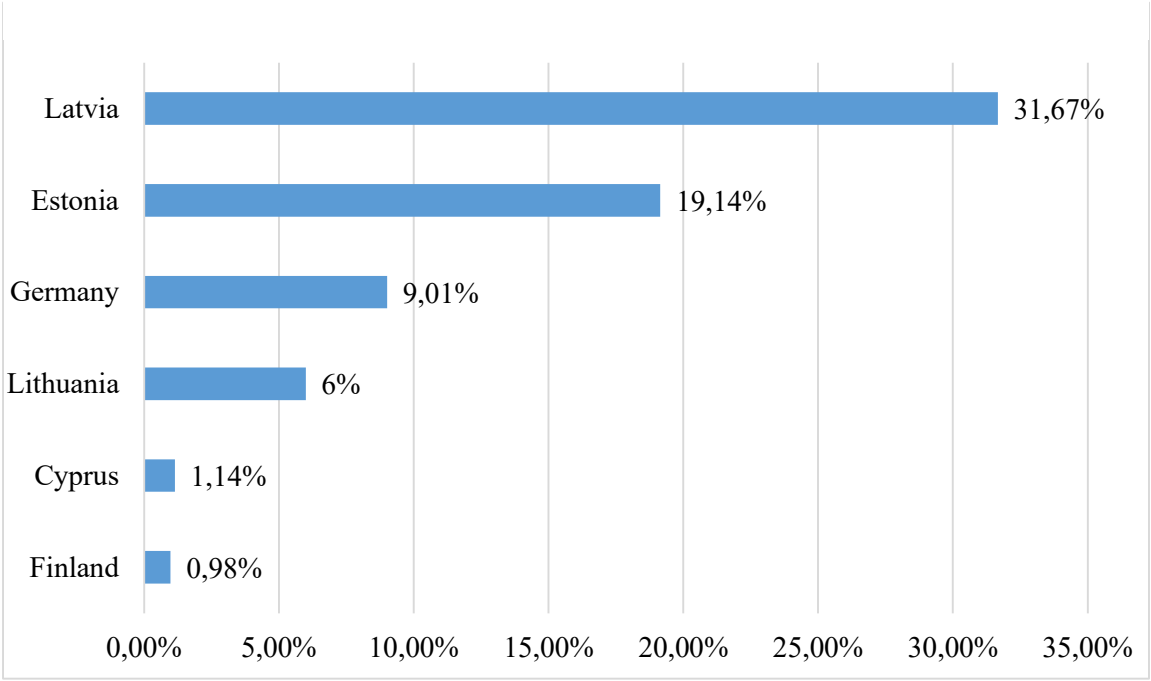
demographic composition of this migration. Most frequently women arrived from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Additionally, the fall of the Iron Curtain liberalized mobility regimes across Eurasia, fostering individual and group mobility along the East-West European axis, especially in the wake of the 1990s transformations. Repatriation, family-driven, work, and study exchanges were the most frequent reasons for mobility during the study period, as reflected in the following sections.

How relevant is it to use a term post-Soviet while describing these groups of immigrants and to what extent does it outline their specific characteristics? Panagiotidis depicted the relevance of post-Soviet in geographic and historical terms, though he reflected on how problematic it is to apply groupism toward this large share of the immigrant populations:

> "… constructing an immigrant "group" from an aggregate number based on geographic origin from a defunct multiethnic empire is somewhat misleading. "Post-Soviet" is, first of all, a geographic and historical notion: geographic, since we are talking about immigrants from a particular space, which used to be known as the Soviet Union…; historical, because the bulk of these people migrated when the Soviet Union was dissolving or had already ceased to exist—hence post-Soviet. The term also has certain cultural implications, as the vast majority of these migrants used Russian as their first language. But these commonalities do not necessarily produce a "group" (Panagiotidis 2020a, pp. 277–278).

Apart from geographic and historical aspects, linguistic and cultural perspectives define post-Soviet immigrants. Russian is still used as a language of everyday use for the vast share of this population in Germany. Oftentimes it is a vernacular variation of Russian-German translanguaging (Havlin 2022b). The Special Eurobarometer on language use in the EU illustrated in 2012 that the younger generation in Germany (presumably second and third generations) uses Russian as well. Thus, approximately 9 percent of young people between ages 15 and 34 claim to speak Russian as their 'mother tongue' in Germany (European Commission 2012). According to Figure 1: *Russian Proficiency as 'Mother Tongue' in the EU, Age 15-34*, this share of young people in Germany who claimed Russian proficiency is the highest in the EU and is outnumbered only by two former post-Soviet states such as Latvia and Estonia.

Figure 1: Russian Proficiency as 'Mother Tongue' in the EU, Age 15-34



Source: languageknowledge.eu 2012.

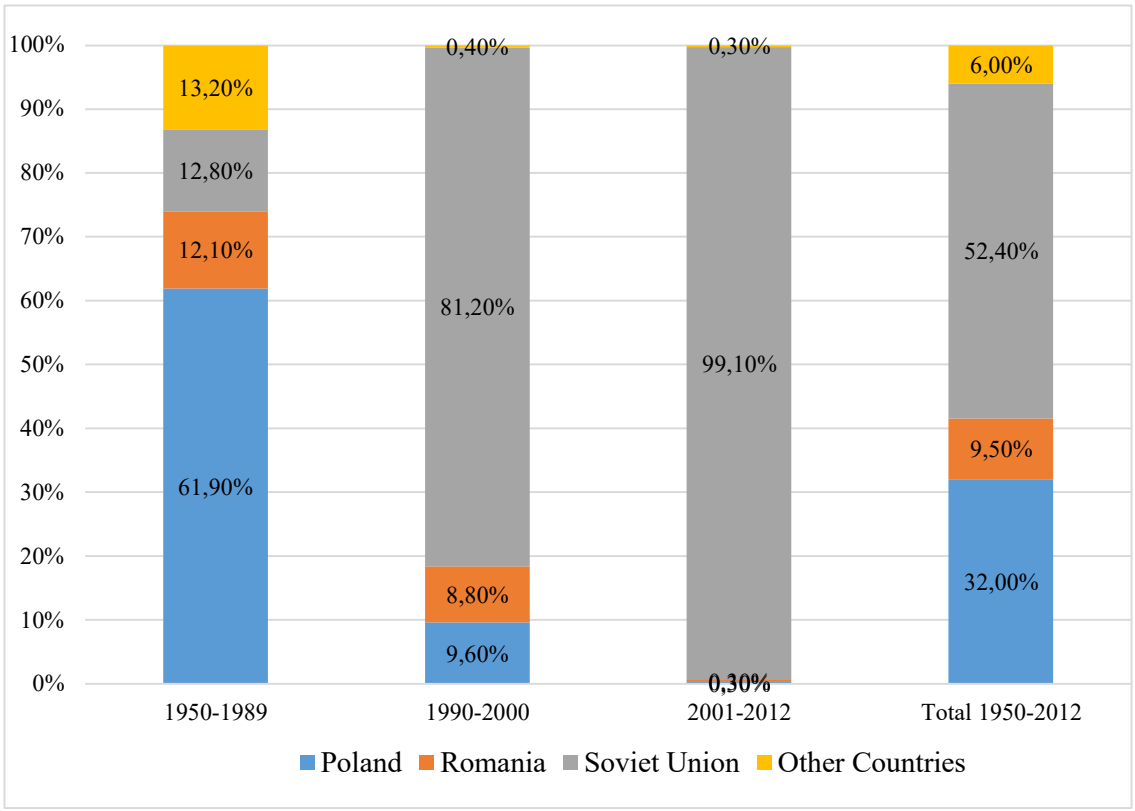
The international and regional implications of post-Soviet migration have sparked a range of evaluations, often yielding contradictory assessments. The Human Development Report (HDR) of 2009, for instance, recognized the restrictive control imposed on people's movement by repressive regimes, such as that of the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, it underscored the significance of the newfound liberties and freedoms that followed its dissolution (UNDP 2009, p. 15). However, it also noted a caveat, suggesting "the independence of these new nations [emerging from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia] generated an artificial increase in the number of migrants, which should not be interpreted as a real increase in the prevalence of international movement" (ibid, p. 31). While the HDR of 2009 somewhat underplayed the importance of migration flows triggered by the post-socialist and post-Soviet transition, the statistics tell a different story. In Germany, for instance, 53 percent of immigrants arriving in the 1990s hailed from the East-West European axis, a substantial increase compared to 18 percent recorded in the 1960s (idem.). The considerable scale of this migration wave within the national German context necessitated specific policy adjustments and spurred extensive research, as exemplified at the outset on Part One. Subsequent sections will delve into the principal groups originating from the former Soviet Union in Germany, examining their socio-demographic distribution and the prevailing research priorities associated with these groups.

1.1 Ethnic German Resettlers

The largest part of the post-Soviet immigrants belongs to so-called ethnic German resettlers [Spät/Aussiedler]. Only between 1990-2003 1,984,909 million had been admitted in Germany from the former Soviet republic (Süssmuth 2004, p. 28). Tatiana Smirnova, an established specialist on ethnic Germans in Russia, reported slightly distinctive statistics for the comparable period: Approximately 2.2 million ethnic Germans left Russia for Germany in the period between 1992 and 2008 and received a status of late resettlers while still preserving Russian citizenship (Smirnova 2010a, 2010b, p. 196). Here we must consider an important fact that the admission numbers gradually decreased in the 2000s on the German side.

Figure 2 illustrates a composition of ethnic German resettlers according to their region of origin. Though the category of ethnic German resettlers covers immigrants from Poland or Romania, nonetheless, a share of the (late) German resettlers from the former Soviet Union by far outnumbered other groups between 1990-2000 and 2001-2012. The discrepancies in numbers can be explained as follows: the applicants from Poland or Romania, particularly during the periods 1950-1989 and 1990-2000, were required to demonstrate that they had encountered discrimination based on their German ancestry (Worbs et al. 2013, p. 29). In contrast, such discrimination was presumed for applicants from the former Soviet Union (Süssmuth 2004, pp. 26–27).

Figure 2: Composition of Ethnic German Resettlers According to the Region of Origin, 1950-2012



Source: Worbs et al. 2013, p. 29.

The majority of resettlers moved to Germany in the 1990s and onward. The data in Figure 2 reveals that only a fraction, approximately 13 percent, made this journey from the USSR to Germany prior to 1990. This trend was facilitated by the liberalization of border regimes, the German migration policies, and the existence of supportive networks on the ground. This factors collectively favored the inflow of ethnic Germans in the 1990s, as many were reclaiming their historical ancestry. Nevertheless, due to their blended cultural experiences and multiethnic family backgrounds, ethnic German resettlers often appeared to the public as too Russian or insufficient German. This perception contributed to a narrative of feeling foreign at home (Ipsen-Peitzmeier and Kaiser 2006). This narrative was aptly articulated by Beck-Gernsheim, who explained that many resettlers arrived in Germany with expectations of feeling close, connected, and part of the native German community. However, what they often experienced was quite the opposite. Instead of the sense of belonging they had anticipated, they were met with a feeling of being outsiders, perceived as foreigners, and often labeled as 'Russians' (Beck-Gernsheim 2004, p. 25).

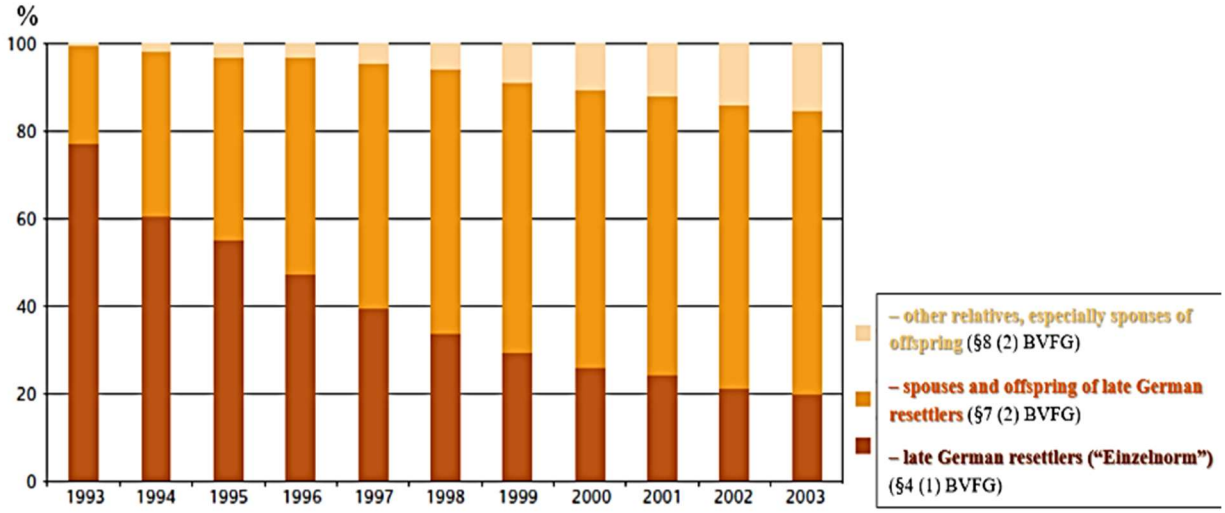
A similar paradox, perhaps more common in multicultural contexts, is elucidated by Tatiana Smirnova. Based on her empirical research, she concluded that ethnic Germans often perceive themselves as Germans in Russia and Russians in Germany (Smirnova 2010a, pp. 197–198). This conclusion was drawn from a longitudinal study conducted by Smirnova and colleagues in Russia in 1989 and 1999. Unfortunately, comparable studies focusing on ethnic Germans in Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan have not been encountered. However, some studies conducted in Ukraine reported a revival of German culture among ethnic Germans residing there (Evtuch and Chyrko 1994; Pobeda 2010). The acceptance of ethnic Germans into Germany was based on solid ethnic categories, encompassing ancestry, language, culture, traditions, and the perceived discriminatory experiences associated with prescribed ethnic belonging. Consequently, ethnic German resettlers, particularly those who arrived later, were faced with high expectations of integration in Germany (Eder et al. 2004; Panagiotidis 2015, 2017b).

At the beginning of my research study on Russian-speaking immigrants, I planned not to include ethnic German resettlers in my empirical sample. Initially, I sought people who moved to Germany from the former Soviet Union in the period between the 1990s and 2005, who either openly declared their affinity to the Russian language and culture or used Russian as a lingua franca in their daily life in Germany. In the process, I realized that it was challenging to avoid so-called FSU ethnic German resettlers for several reasons. First, FSU resettlers differ in terms of diverse cultural backgrounds already upon arrival to Germany as Figure 3 illustrates. According to this Figure, the share of people who were admitted as late ethnic Germans (§4 (1) BVFG)[3] gradually declined, while the share of accompanied persons (their spouses, offspring, other relatives of stepchildren) increased. In the case of the latter other legal regulation with different sets of rights were

[3] BVFG refers to the „Gesetz über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge" (Bundesvertriebenengesetz) or The Federal Law on Refugees and Exiles (BMJ).

applied (§7 (2) and §8 (2) BVFG). Second, arriving from nation-states of the post-Soviet space, they were socialized in the Soviet culture until 1991, when the Russian language played a pivotal role. Third, Russian-speaking groups have been blended culturally and language-wise in the German context (refer to Figure 3).

Figure 3: Late German Resettlers' Status and Admitted Groups, 1993-2003



Source: Süssmuth 2004, p. 27.

German resettlers in Germany arrived mainly from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Ukraine (Table B-2 in Appendix B). Their ancestry line goes back to German land colonizers who were recruited mainly from Swabia or Prussia in the 18th century by Catherine II of Russia (Dalos and Zylla 2014). A high degree of special concentration of the German populations in the earlier periods of colonization in the Russian Empire and into the 20th century strengthened the collective and family memory of German ancestry. This memory had been prolonged for centuries and preserved over approximately ten generations despite all obstacles (including at times prosecutions based on cultural background). While Western academic literature often debates which generation, whether the second or the third, overcomes insecure belonging and feels native in the country of settlement (Alba and Foner 2017; Bade 2007; Ballenthien and Büching 2009 to name just a few), various factors provide plausible explanations for the enduring memory preservation among former German land colonizers. These factors include the compact living conditions in the Russian empire and later in the Soviet Union, known as German villages, attempts to create an autonomous republic in the newly established USSR, traumatic experiences during collectivization,[4] WWII deportations from the European to Asian parts of the USSR, and restrictive labor camps [трудармия] until the 1950s. Parts

[4] As mentioned earlier, collectivization in this context refers to the Soviet state's policies of expropriating private property such as land or farms during the period of 1928-1940, which coincided with industrialization and agricultural reforms.

of ethnic German resettles from the post-Soviet space illustrate to us that a native status (gained through naturalization, assimilation, and cross-cultural marriages) may not prevent from keeping the ancestry memory or cultural identity from the area of origin.

The late history of Soviet Germans in the 20th century was highly dependent on the political conjuncture: How the Soviet governments treated Soviet Germans was synchronized with official relationships between the USSR and Germany. So, in different historical periods, being an ethnic German was either an advantage or a disadvantage (Petersen 2019). On the one hand, the experience of Soviet ethnic Germans embraces the creation of an autonomous ethnic German Republic in Soviet Asia close to the Chinese border in the first half of the past century, support of German culture, language, and associations; on the other hand, especially during the WWII and later – brutal deportations or labor camps – left deep imprinting on people's biographies for generations (Rosenthal 2005, p. 311; Smirnova 2010a, p. 200).

Comparable to other minority groups, Soviet Germans underwent Sovietization in the process of creating a Soviet citizen that included the acquisition of the Russian language, cultural assimilation, and ideological education (Kreindler 1982). The use of the German language (later a cornerstone of admission and integration policies in Germany) was reduced to a school subject as a foreign language, vernacular use at home or in local communities In the process of urbanization Soviet Germans were moving away from ethnically concentrated villages and mingling with the other population groups (Smirnova 2010a, p. 191). Those villages nearly disappeared in Russia with the massive migration in the 1990s (ibid). In the Soviet internationalist melting pot, this group had a high degree of intergroup marriages leading to blended cultural backgrounds, visible in the statistics (refer to Figure 3).

The regional distribution of ethnic German resettlers in Germany illustrates a large concentration in the old states of Germany as we can see from Figure 4 with the clustering in the North and the South. Though this distribution includes also resettlers from other regions (e.g., Poland, Romania), yet the largest share of resettlers arrived from the FSU. This distribution is relevant later when we analyze entrepreneurial activities and transnational networks of post-Soviet immigrants in Germany described in Part Six. Besides (late)German resettlers, Jewish migration is another comparably large and distinctively noticeable group of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The subsequent Section elaborates on the peculiarities of this group drawing some parallels to German resettlers.

Figure 4: The Share and Distribution of (Late) German Resettlers to the Entire German Population, Micro-census 2011



Source: Worbs et al. 2013, p. 101.

1.2 Jewish Contingent Refugees

People admitted as Jewish contingent refugees [Jüdische Kontingentflüchtlinge] compose the next most numerous group in the post-Soviet migration flow (Haug 2005, p. 6). Under this admission program, 219,604 immigrants arrived in the period between 1991 and 2004. Jewish migration is a result of the German commitment to rebuild a Jewish community that was destroyed before and during WWII (Dietz 2003; Tress 1997, p. 21); this policy was still initiated by the GDR government at the end of its existence (Panagiotidis 2020a, p. 280) and applied after the German reunification (Dietz 2003, pp. 10–11). As data suggests the admission of Soviet and post-Soviet Jews led to a rejuvenation of the German Jewish population (Dietz et al. 2002).

Jewish immigrants compose the scientific agenda of German scholarship but in comparison not as extensively as the previous group. Considering reasons for admission, the focus lies on the establishment of a new Jewry in Germany (Schoeps et al. 1999). Besides, several comparative studies have been conducted on new Jewry emerging from Soviet and post-Soviet migration in the USA, Israel, and Germany (Tress 1997; Elias and Lemish 2011; Gitelman 2016; Isurin 2011). These studies compare adaptation processes and socioeconomic integration in those countries with the largest newly formed Russian-speaking Jewish communities. Besides some studies identify and analyze the common cultural bonds among Russian-speaking Jews that continue to unite them in their new respective environments (Tress 1997; Isurin 2011; Gromova 2013). Transnational ties and family constellations, media use, and information access build another comparative research focus directed at this group (Elias 2008, 2011; Elias and Lemish 2011).

Like Soviet Germans, Soviet Jews had faced ambiguous experiences in the country with the 'dictatorship of the proletariat.' Soviet cultural assimilation also had a great impact on people identified as Jewish, mixing their cultural backgrounds and (religious) identities in the strictly secular Soviet context. As Panagiotidis noticed: "In both cases, their "ethnic" languages, German and Yiddish, were increasingly replaced by Russian, the lingua franca of the multiethnic state and of social advancement" (Panagiotidis 2020a, p. 279). For this reason, post-Soviet Jews who arrived in Germany have had poor connections to Judaism, Jewish culture, and tradition. Liat Yakhnich and Hasida Ben-Zur reported similar observations with Russian-speaking Jews in Israel whose attachment to Judaism has been relatively weak, therefore "[t]heir massive migration to Israel in the 1990s is defined more as immigration than as repatriation, and is assumed to be based on financial motives…" (Yakhnich and Ben-Zur 2008, p. 154).

Before and during the 1980s Israel and the USA opened their doors to admitting Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union (Goldstein 1979; Isurin 2011; Elias 2008), whereas Germany joined in this process during the 1990s. Arriving in Germany secular Soviet Jews were attached for spiritual supervision with already established Jewish communities and Jewish religious centers in Germany (Beck-Gernsheim 1999, p. 91). Therefore, this group – admitted based on an ethnic distinction – faced some expectations not only to

Germanize but also to learn how to become properly Jewish from a religious point of view. For many newly arrived immigrants, open and welcoming Jewish centers were a lifebuoy offering some psychological and financial support to ease adjustment hurdles in Germany as the interviews with people admitted as Jewish refugees illustrated during my fieldwork.

After migrating to and joining existing Jewish communities in Germany, many newcomers underwent the process of 'collective repositioning,' one of the ethnic boundary-making strategies (Wimmer 2008a, p. 1040). "Even when a boundary has disappeared through massive assimilatory shifts," as it happened to Jewry, especially after WWII, the ethnic boundary (i.e., the Jewish ancestry) was 're-discovered and filled with new meaning' in the German context in the 1990s (ibid). Some immigrants admitted as contingent refugees in Germany underwent re-invention and rediscovery of their identities as the empirical results illustrate. They re-interpreted and re-evaluated their (sometimes partial) belonging to their respective ethnic-religious groups (Wimmer 2008a, p. 1037).

In her book *Juden, Deutsche und andere Erinnerungslandschaften* [Jewish, German and Other Memory Landscapes], Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim reflected on the challenges of 'being Jewish' or belonging to Jewry. To highlight these challenges, she asked: „Wie definiert sich, wer Jude ist? Durch Religion, Volk oder gar Rasse? Durch Mitgliedschaft in einer jüdischen Gemeinde oder durch Zugehörigkeit zu einer Schicksalsgemeinschaft? Über das Urteil der anderen … oder über die Selbstdefinition (Jude ist, wer Jude sein will)?" (Beck-Gernsheim 1999, p. 155). The variety of responses to these questions underscores a dilemma in Jewish identities that the author ironically anticipated as 'Passjuden, Schicksalsjuden, Als-ob-Juden, nicht-jüdischen Juden' (Beck-Gernsheim 1999, p. 162). Further Beck-Gernsheim underlined a peculiar position of Jewish contingent refugees from the FSU in Germany:

> "Ihre Erfahrung mit dem, was Judentum heißt, ist vom Leben im Sowjetstaat geprägt. Dort galten die mit jüdischem Vater, so die damals übliche Zuordnungspraxis, als der jüdischen Nationalität zugehörig, und als jüdisch wurden sie auch im sowjetischen Paß ausgewiesen. Wenn sie nun in Deutschland ankommen, erfahren sie plötzlich, dass nicht der Vater entscheidend ist, sondern die Mutter. So diese fehlt, sind sie hier keine Juden, jedenfalls keine echten, sie sind bloße „Paßjuden" nur… 25 bis 50 Prozent der Neueinwanderer … sind nach halachischem Recht keine Juden… Für die Sowjetunion war Jüdischsein eine Nationalität, für die deutschen Behörden ist es eine Religionsgemeinschaft, für die Halacha ist die jüdische Mutter entscheidend" (Beck-Gernsheim 1999, pp. 155–156).

The ambiguous position of post-Soviet Jews in Germany emerges from the different approaches to how to define criteria for who can be ascribed or considered as Jewish (especially in religious terms). Yet not all newcomers felt prone to define their Jewishness through Judaism or by joining a local religious Jewish community. As statistics illustrate, the majority remained secular in their daily life. Thus, around 100,000 people in Germany

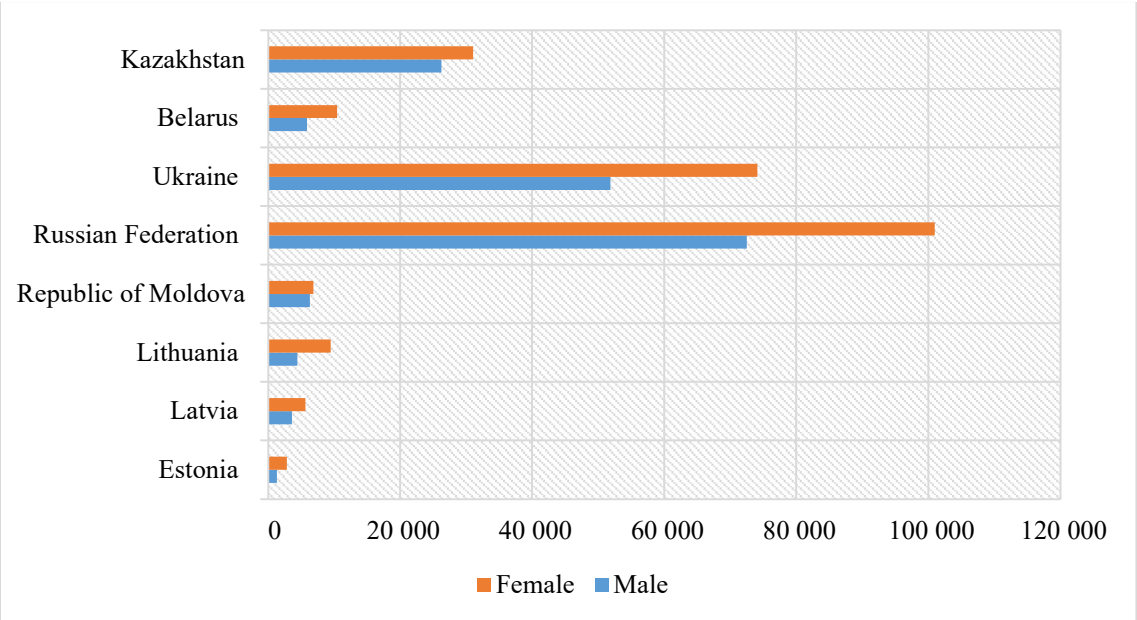
belong to the Jewish community as parishioners [Gemeindemitglieder] with 30,000 members in North Rhine-Westphalia. This German region received the largest share of newcomers admitted as Jewish contingent refugees (Haug 2005, p. 5). Approximately 90 percent of community members arrived from the former Soviet Union (juedische-lebensgeschichten.de).

Besides ethnicized migration from the former Soviet Union as in the case of ethnic German resettles and Jewish contingent refugees, we can distinguish feminized labor-driven migration as depicted below.

1.3 Family, Labor, and Student-Related Migration

Another subgroup in the post-Soviet migration is connected to labor migration from low-qualified to high-qualified. The feminization of migration from the FSU is another noteworthy aspect of post-Soviet migration to Germany, contributing to the characterization of labor mobility. The proportion of female immigrants from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine on average is 10 – 15 percent higher than the proportion of male counterparts. This pattern – feminization of migration – is reproduced also in the case of the Baltic states, though in smaller absolute numbers as in Figure 5. The statistics presented in the figure illustrate the gender-citizenship distribution in 2003 and are the earliest data that I was able to acquire on this subject. We can observe these dynamics also in the subsequent years 2004 – 2006 (Destatis 2011a, 2011b). Besides, the feminization trend is supported by the naturalization numbers: a share of FSU women who are naturalized is higher comparable to the male counterparts in Germany as Figure 5 and Figure 6 show.

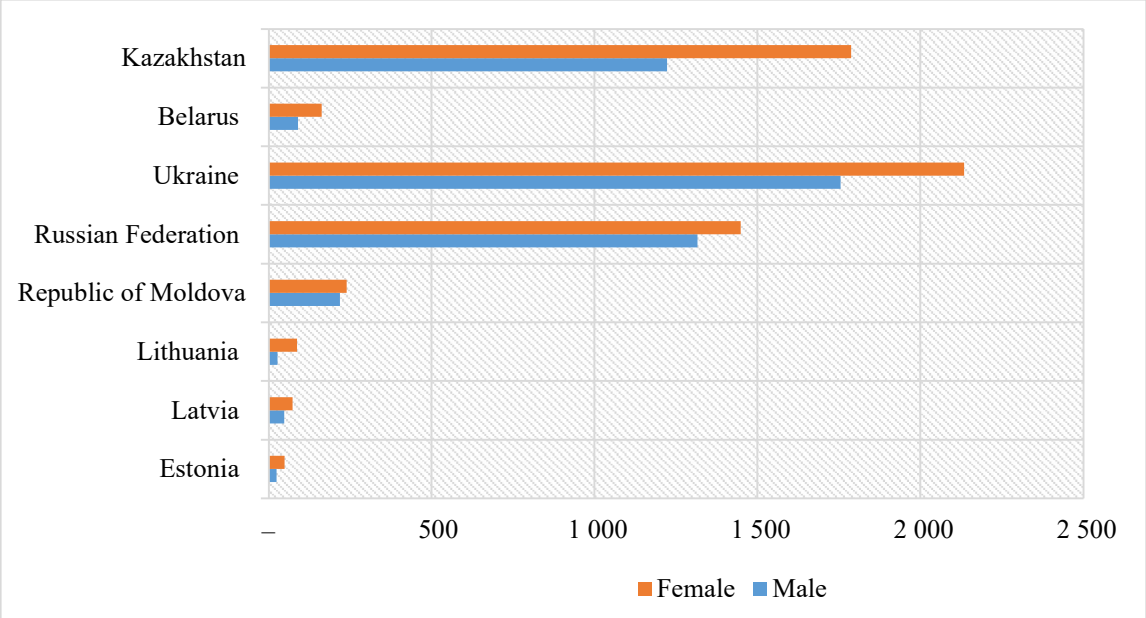
Figure 5: German Foreign Population from the former Soviet Union: Citizenship and Gender, 2003 (absolute numbers)



Source: Custom diagram created using data from Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis 2011a).

In contrast to detailed information on the previous two groups, available statistics do not provide a detailed account of this trend. The first possible explanation is that female immigrants have been fulfilling a Western labor market demand for so-called care capital occupying jobs such as caregivers for children and elderly people, and household helpers (Marchetti 2013; Cvajner 2019; Friese 1995). In 2008, in immigrants' gender distribution, women outnumbered men in Italy, Spain, and France, contributing to the general trend in Europe and around the world called the feminization of migration (Eurostat 2011, p. 19). This trend is even more notable if we consider previously a low share of women migrating on their own for labor purposes. Earlier I reflected on this subject elsewhere (Havlin 2015). Besides Eastern European women in the German care system not only compose an important pillar of this labor sector currently but highlight historical connections going back to the forced labor or 'Zwangsarbeit' during WWII (Lutz 2017, p. 95). In addition to gendered labor mobility, another plausible explanation for the higher proportion of women from the FSU can be attributed to the growing number of intermarriages between German men and East European women, influencing the gendered migration from Eastern to Western Europe (Beetz and Darieva 1997; Nottmeyer 2011; Beck-Gernsheim 2004, pp. 64–72). Thus, for instance, women from Russia and Ukraine belonged to top-ten nationalities marrying German nationals (men) in 2004 (Nauck 2009, p. 700). Also, from my fieldwork observations and interviews, male immigrants from the former Soviet Union are more prone to search for a wife in Eastern Europe.

Figure 6: Naturalization in Germany according to FSU Citizenship and Gender, 2003 (absolute numbers)



Source: Custom diagram created using data from Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis 2011b).[5]

[5] Additionally, Figure B-1 in Appendix B illustrates evolving trends in naturalization in Germany among of immigrants from Russia and other regions, 1998–2006, in 1,000. In the late 1990s, the proportion of naturalized immigrants from Russia was notably high compared to those from other regions, largely due to

From the women's perspective in the 1990s, marrying a Westerner was 'an especially favorable strategy' in the wake of economic and political uncertainties (Beetz and Darieva 1997), which is also supported by my fieldwork observations. From the perspective of German men, East European women – perceived as domesticated, good-looking, caring, and not too much emancipated in the Western feminist tradition – created a popular myth or rather a stereotype of an ideal Slavic wife, also reproduced by some FSU immigrants (the fieldwork observations). Whether in respect of educational, labor, or marriage aspirations, the Au-pair-program has provided a window of opportunity, especially, for women to gain access either to the German labor market sector or to the dating/marriage market (Rohde 2014; my fieldwork observations).

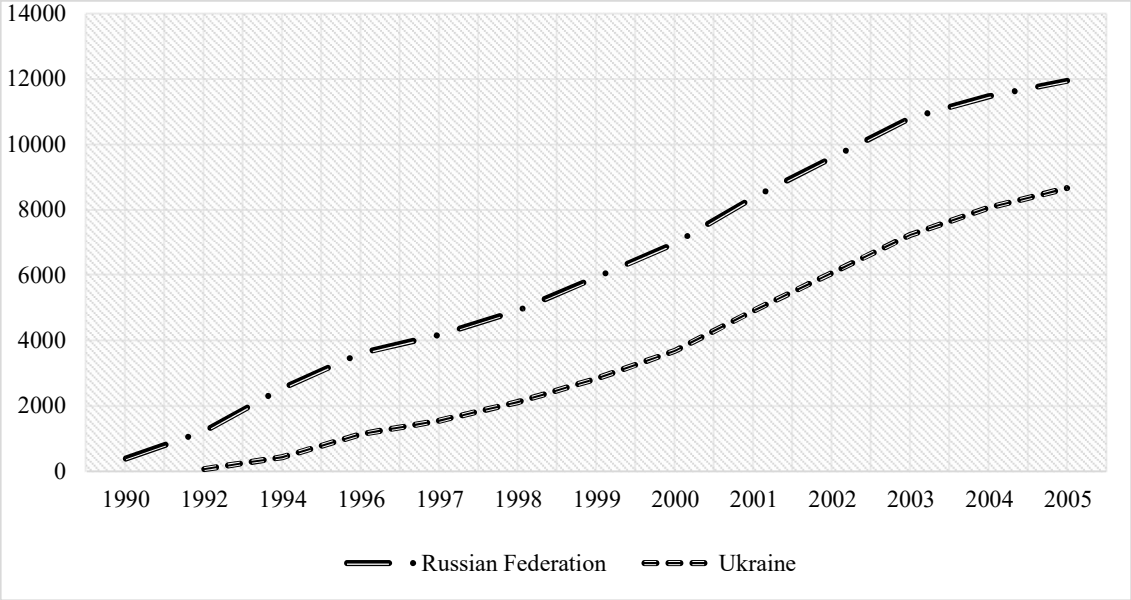
Worth mentioning that the liberalization of border regimes led to an increase in low-skilled or high-skilled labor and student mobility (Dietz 2011, p. 35). Especially remarkable is the growth in the numbers of Russian and Ukrainian students (Figure 7): from nearly nonexistent in the yearly 1990s to approximately 12,000 and 9,000 annually 15 years later (BMBF 2020). The data on students' mobility for other post-Soviet countries, depicted in the previous figures, unfortunately was not available. However, we observe a trend of educational mobility, which can also be attributed to the gradually improving economic situation in Russia or Ukraine. This improvement has created new opportunities for young people to pursue studies abroad, including participation in various exchange programs and scholarships. Besides, groups of labor or life-style related immigrants slowly emerge. The transformation of economic relationships has enabled working migration of low-skilled mainly, for seasonal agricultural jobs) and high-qualified immigrants (i.e., engineers, medical personnel, and academics) (Amelina 2013).

Considering these diverse immigrant groups from the FSU to Germany, we can hardly talk about them in terms of a diaspora but rather dispersed communities consolidating in the 1990s and early 2000s around such factors as the Russian language as lingua franca, shared memories and present (immigrant) experiences (Isurin 2011). These immigrants build pockets of social interaction or concentration circles of overlapping and engaging groups.

the substantial migration flows following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, in the 2000s, this proportion saw a significant reduction, which can be attributed, in part, to changes in admission policies, especially regarding late ethnic German resettlers.

Figure 7: Foreign Students in Germany from Russia and Ukraine, 1990-2005

(absolute numbers)



Source: Custom diagram generated with data from The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF 2020). Note: Students' numbers are consistently reported for winter semesters (e.g., WS 1990/1991, WS 1992/1993, and so forth).

The representation of the aforementioned groups aligns with the individuals I encountered during my fieldwork. The most prevalent groups I engaged with were individuals admitted as late ethnic German resettlers and Jewish contingent refugees, followed by Eastern European female spouses from mixed marriages and labor immigrants, as illustrated by the interviewees' profiles. These encounters are consistent with the spatial distribution of (late) ethnic German resettlers (outlined above by the Figure 4) and contingent refugees within my fieldwork locations in North Rhine Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate, which will be discussed in detail later. However, I observed dense communities of Ukrainian, Georgian, or Armenian minorities gravitating around their distinct languages, respective nation-states, and religious denominations such as the East European Orthodox Church or Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. While each group has its unique history and experiences, these distinct minority groups overlapped, interacted with, or participated in multiple diverse communities while communicating with each other in Russian. Furthermore, I elaborate on my approach to Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany as an umbrella term, referring to specific experiences of individuals arriving from the post-Soviet space in the 1990s and 2000s.

1.4 Russian-Speaking Immigrants and Citizens in Germany

Following the examination of the socio-demographic profile of the post-Soviet migration, the subsequent questions emerge: If ethnic groupism[6] fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of post-Soviet immigrants, what alternative approaches can be employed to explore connections among them? How can these diverse groups be characterized, considering their language practices and migratory experiences as unifying factors? Andreas Wimmer's flexible ethnic boundary-making approach informs my analysis of Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany (Wimmer 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). Wimmer's approach elaborates on how (ethnic) boundaries can be perceived as a strategy of flexible or firm boundary-making. In the author's view, "ethnicity is not primarily conceived as a matter of relations between pre-defined, fixed groups … but rather as a process of constituting and re-configuring groups by defining the boundaries between them" (Wimmer 2008a, p. 1027). As an agency-rich approach, this analytic frame grasps "how repeated encounters between actors pursuing different goals may lead to the stabilization of ethnic dividing lines" (Wimmer 2008a, p. 1028). Thus, actors can maintain and protect existing (ethnic) boundaries (i.e., as 'Russlanddeutsche' or Russian-speaking Jews, Georgians, Ukrainian, or Russians), or attempt to overcome, or shift them while including or excluding some groups or individuals. Inclusion or exclusion emerges in daily encounters, during creative or sports activities, cultural associations as illustrated in the example of the dancing group Scheherazade (Part Seven) or business models as in the case of the Mix Markt supermarket chain (Part Six). Besides, non-ethnic modes of classification and social practice may create a divide or build a bridge between group formations (e.g., the mentioned 2022 full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine that polarized the Russian-speaking population even stronger).

One of the appropriate examples to illustrate flexible boundary-making is the Russian Club in Ycity I came across during my fieldwork. Despite Russian in the title, this club included approximately 50 members of various origins and cultural backgrounds demonstrating blended social networks. The club included people from the former Soviet Union, currently Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Ukraine. There was a large share of Germans as recently naturalized (e.g., ethnic German resettlers) or usually male spouses originating from Germany. Bilingual in essence, the Russian language dominated when German-speaking members were absent. During my fieldwork in the 2010s, this club made an impression of a strong union that gravitated around female friendship and solidarity with active involvement in arranging common leisure activities. Active leisure included cultural, sport, creative, festive, and tourist activities. With the national tricolors, this poster was presented by members originating from the Russian Federation to one of the Russian embassies in Germany while attending a cultural event there in the late 2010s. In the daily exchange, national or ethnic elements played rather a subordinate role on the surface and were either politely avoided or activated in certain contexts as in the case of the poster. During that time, this Russian club was a suitable

[6] In Chapter 4, I elaborate specifically why the term diaspora is not appropriate to apply in relation to Russian-speaking communities in Germany.

example to illustrate one of the communication pockets of a blended Russian-speaking community.

Earlier tensions among Russian-speaking groups began to emerge in 2014 with the Russian annexation of Crimea and the initiation of the Donbas hybrid war in Eastern Ukraine. Whereas the 2022 Russian full invasion of Ukraine and subsequent brutal war have led to a significant divide within Russian-speaking communities. The ethnic and national boundaries re-emerged due to the polarized understanding of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the involved players;[7] these boundaries drew novel demarcation lines or even led to alienation in these communities. These developments transformed the communication dynamic of the above-mentioned Russian Club. It presents an important analytical task to investigate the divide in the German Russian-speaking communities caused by the current Russian-Ukrainian war. My analysis here and my interpretation of empirical data further gathered in the 2010s depict Russian-speaking communities before the 2022 Russian invasion, prior severe polarization and alienation between various groups of the post-Soviet migration in Germany. In my analysis, I focus on identity formations (Part Four), language use (Part Five), entrepreneurial activities (Part Six), and free time associations for recreational or artistic leisure (Part Seven). Considering that my fieldwork took place in space and time, presented observations and analysis of Russian-speaking mixed groups have their limitations and by no means claim to be representative for all immigrants from the post-Soviet space in Germany.

While relying on Wimmer's approach, I applied three following premises while analyzing Russian-speaking communities throughout the thesis. First, through the constructivist premise ethnic groups can be seen as "a reversible social process of boundary making, rather than as given component parts of the social world" (Wimmer 2007, p. 17). Resulting in 'classificatory struggles,' ethnicity can be contested as it was in the example of immigrants admitted as Jewish contingent refugees and problems defining Jewishness. I address further the non-essentialist approach to ethnicity in the methodological preliminaries with a focus on the transnational social spaces. Second, the differentiation premise helped me to conceptualize the difference between internal and external boundary-making: "ethnic boundaries result from the actions of individuals on both sides of the boundary and from their interactions across the boundary" (ibid). Such internal and external distinction highlighted the difference in the interaction between Russian-speaking among themselves and other social groups who do not understand Russian or those who do not share the post-Soviet background. On the one hand, I elaborated on self-identification and identification practices of other co-migrants, partially addressing such differentiation in Part Four. On the other hand, even though external boundary making or crossing was not the purpose of this thesis, some observations make a point. Oftentimes, when people hear Russian-sounding speech or accent, they automatically assume that these are Russians. That may be true but not in all cases: hypothetically Russian-sounding

[7] In addition to the Russian Federation and Ukraine as direct parties to the military confrontations, the indirect involvement of the USA and the EU provoked strong anti-Americanism and critical attitudes toward Western Europe, which were apparent in the arguments of both open and covert Russian supporters.

speech could derive from all FSU immigrants or at least in the case of the first generation. Third, communities of blended ties and diversified connections do not always overlap with an ethnic composition based on standardized language or dialect, ways of dressing, or shared traditions: “ethnic categories are relational and segmentary in nature and that therefore not all correspond to communities held together by dense webs of social ties” (idem, p. 16).

So, instead of reproducing ethnic boundaries within immigrants from the FSU, I analyzed how Russian-speaking communities are established; how they differentiate themselves and unite through identity formations, language practices, and social actions in the field of business and leisure; how they create networks with each other and with other population groups in Germany. Rather than engaging the term diaspora, multiple dispersed Russian-speaking communities, networks, or communication pockets suit better to describe the post-Soviet migration (Darieva 2004; Aronson 2011; Koneva and Tikhomirova 2016; Popkov and Popkova 2019). Depicted as Russian-speaking, Russian or Russianness does not necessarily correlate with the Russian Federation as a nation-state or the Russian culture there. In the German context, the phenomena of Russian-speaking and Russianness have been formed and established over the last 30 years while, on the one hand, utilizing the Russian language as lingua franca in multicultural and multilingual settings; on the other hand, constructing a cultural mashup, a unique emergent in time and space. Such cultural mashup and pluralism I exemplify with the help of trickster-like identity formation as russaki in Germany presented in Part Four, at the same time I use the examples of the Mix Markt supermarket chain (Part Six) and cultural associations as the Scheherazade dance group (Part Seven).

While I reflect on the methodological limitations to defining and addressing research subjects as Russian-speaking immigrants, nevertheless the Russian language has been playing a pivotal role in the post-Soviet migration in Germany. Regarding the language aspect, this section delves into the following two questions: What is the social status of Russian in Germany as a country of settlement? How have historical developments transformed Russian into a lingua franca among the immigrant population from the former Soviet space? Concerning the first question, the 2017 Census [Mikrozensus] illustrated that Russian together with Turkish, Polish, and Arabic belongs to one of the most spoken foreign (minority) languages in multi-person households in Germany (Destatis 2018a). The 527,000 households describe Russian as the primary language of communication; these are 14 percent of the total amount of households that declare to speak daily another language than German (Table 1). Besides, Russian and Turkish are two major heritage languages in the German educational system (Olfert and Schmitz 2016, p. 1). Yet, as minority languages, these languages are considered ‘less prestigious and valuable’ than German as the majority language or popular foreign languages such as English, Spanish, and French (Olfert and Schmitz 2016, p. 2). Moreover, according to the representative study *What People in Germany Think About Language*, those respondents who disliked foreign accents (43%) found Russian and Turkish accents unlikeable [unsympathisch] (with 17% and 13% respectively) (Gärtig et al. 2010, p. 247).

That is the two languages that belong to the typical languages of the immigrant populations of the country.

Table 1: Language Question Results in the German Micro Census 2017

Language	Absolute Frequency	Percent	
German	35,918,000	87,0	
Not specified	1,623,000	3,9	
'Not German'	3,763,000	9,1	
of that			within 'Not German'
'Other European language'	782,000	1,9	20,8
Russian	527,000	1,3	14,0
Turkish	522,000	1,3	13,9
Polish	336,000	0,8	8,9
Arabic	303,000	0,7	8,0

Source: Adjusted from Adler 2019, p. 209.

Post-Soviet immigrants including those who were admitted as ethnic German resettlers and Jewish contingent refugees show ambiguous attitudes towards Russian language maintenance in Germany. On the one hand, they illustrated high motivation to acquire the German language upon arrival; on the other hand, being perceived as foreigners (esp. in the case of resettlers) led to 'a reorientation … toward a Russian identity' (Olfert and Schmitz 2016, p. 6). Such reorientation has fostered the motivation to maintain the Russian language in daily practices and as the family language. Whereas Turkish is mostly taught as a heritage language, in contrast, Russian is offered as a foreign or heritage language. Like other heritage languages, Russian is taught on a voluntary basis as an extracurricular activity at regular (idem, p. 9) or weekend schools (Kreß and Roeder 2022, p. 147) and less as classes offered by foreign agencies as consulates (Mediendienst Integration 2019). Such institutional support contributes to the better maintenance of the Russian language outside familiar or private contexts (Brehmer 2021, p. 855).

After a brief overview of the social standing of the Russian language in Germany, I address how Russian plays out in relation to the post-Soviet population. In the context of migration, the Russian language serves as a unifying and dividing element or as internal/external differentiation: It brings together those who are proficient in this language (and are willing to use it); it excludes those who are not. Even though Russian belongs oftentimes to private and familial settings (ibid) , nevertheless it creates a certain niche in the public domain in Germany. It shapes the cultural niche with musical or comedian concerts, theater plays, children's shows and movies in the cinema, printed newspapers, and magazines (Darieva 2004; Elias and Lemish 2008; Smoliarova and Nigmatullina 2015).

In the context of migration, Russian language proficiency among the post-Soviet population in Germany re-emerged from the Soviet context where this language was widely spread and prioritized over other national and minority languages. Administrative rationalization and dissemination of the Russian language served as an important component in imposing Russian imperial rule (Laitin 1998, pp. 38–39) that, in turn, prepared grounds for the offensive language policy and linguistic, cultural assimilation in the Soviet period (idem, p. 368). In the USSR, the Russian language had a changing status: The periods of soft language policy (earlier Soviet years) were replaced with offensive russification (Kreindler 1982). In the periods of offensive language policies, Russian was presented as 'the language of 'inter-nationality' communication and friendship of peoples' (idem, p. 13) and later as 'the language of Soviet people' in general (idem, p. 16). Isabelle Kreindler distinguished three implicit roles that the Russian language fulfilled in the USSR context: first, Russian served "not merely a neutral instrument of communication but in its very nature contains the message of Communism" (idem, p. 18). Second, as 'an all-Soviet treasure' Russian was privileged in the official and educational use (as well as those who were fluent in it) and as such had a greater impact on national, minority, or regional languages of the Union republics (idem, p. 19). Third, the Russian language played an instrumental role in 'the formation and development of the New Historical Community – the Soviet People' (idem, p. 20). Such developments impacted linguistic biographies and cultural choices of various social groups that migrated from the post-Soviet space to Germany in the 1990s and 2000s.

Besides addressing the fact that the Russian language was spread through the Russian imperial and later Soviet rule, we need to acknowledge another important aspect of the sociolinguistic hierarchies. That is spreading Russian as a standard language. The establishment and formalization of standard languages had been strongly intertwined with the nation-building processes and the rising power of nation-states during the 19th century and onwards (Bourdieu 2003). Standard languages such as, for instance, English, Russian or German (the linguistic repertoire of my research) can hardly be detached from political, economic, and social developments: first the imperial expansions and later the nation-building. Those processes had made them dominant among a wide range of other regional languages, spoken on the territory of current Germany, Russia, the UK, and beyond. Those processes granted them the status of lingua franca in their respective regions or internationally, as a few studies illustrate the example of Russian soft power impacting public opinions of Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany (Golova 2020; Decker 2021). I present further methodological reflections on multilingual research conduct and the role of the researcher's linguistic biography in Chapter 6. Besides, in Part Five I offer a detailed account of language use stemming from the data analysis acquired during my empirical study with Russian-speaking communities in Germany.

After presenting the socio-demographic portraits of the post-Soviet migration of the 1990s and 2000s in Germany, I contemplate how societal transitions of that period could affect individual transformations in the process of migration between two ideologically, politically, culturally, economically distinct regions as the (former) Soviet Union and Germany were.

Chapter 2: Personal Transformations Amidst Shifting Societal Landscapes

While contemplating the political and social transitions in Europe during the early 1990s, Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka remarked, "The revolutions of 1989 in Eastern and Central Europe rank among the world-historical events of greatest significance" (1993, p. 85). He emphasized that the shift in Central and Eastern Europe from socialist and communist ideologies was evident on the surface. However, at its core, it represented a departure from Soviet-state totalitarian control over the population, economy, and politics. Across the globe, in 1994, American sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander wrote about a transition of this nature:

> "In the last five years, for the first time in the history of social science, "the transition" has come to mean something that neither of these earlier treatments could have foreseen. It is the transition from communism to capitalism, a phrase that seems oxymoronic even to our chastened ears. The sense of world-historical transformation remains, but the straight line of history seems to be running in reverse. In this recent period we have witnessed perhaps the most dramatic set of spatially and temporally contiguous social transformations in the history of world… The second great transformation … has produced an unexpected, and for many an unwelcome, convergence in both history and social thought. It is impossible even for already committed intellectuals to ignore the fact that we are witnessing the death of a major alternative not only in social thought but in society itself" (Alexander 1994, p. 166).

Alexander depicted the end of the socialist project in Eastern and Central Europe as the demise of a significant alternative in social thought and social formation, one that stood in opposition to the capitalist order and liberal democracies. In the wake of such societal change, questions about transition emerged. Undoubtedly, one of the most significant events, particularly for Germany, was the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of the country after 41 years of division. The demolition of the Berlin Wall also marked a phase of ideological transition from communism to capitalism. Considering the assessment of these historical events and the societal changes they engendered, genuine questions about the impact of such a profound transition on people's lives naturally arise. An effective approach would involve consulting the individuals themselves. For example, recent studies on post-Soviet attitudes have examined public opinion in the nation-states that formerly composed the USSR. These studies yielded ambiguous results. In the late 2010s, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was perceived with more remorse in Armenia, Moldova, and Russia than in Lithuania, Estonia, or Ukraine (Masci 2017; Levada Center 2020). The recent Russian war in Ukraine further illustrated a violent departure of the Ukrainian population from the Soviet past or Soviet nostalgia, as Russia is viewed as a Soviet prototype (IKDIF 2023). Such attitudes are closely tied to the developments in specific post-Soviet countries after gaining independence in the 1990s.

The transition perspective has garnered scholarly recognition for studying and explaining the behaviors, practices, and experiences of the population in the post-Soviet space (Burawoy and Krotov 1992; Zaslavskaya 2000; Markovic 2006; Bureychak 2011; Sharafutdinova 2019; McKinney 2020). To the best of my knowledge, no study has been conducted with the FSU migrant population in Germany that reflects on their attitudes and experiences in the wake of the transition caused by a drastic system change involving ideology, economy, political regime, and core values. Likewise, there is currently no study that provides insight into the individual or group transitions from Eastern to Western Europe, from closed to open border regimes, from Soviet socialism to liberal democracies, from state-controlled to social market economies, or from communist internationalism to ethnic pluralism, as well as from collectivism to individualism.

In this context, we can only draw parallels and make hypothetical assumptions across various domains – political, ideological, economic, cultural, and social – to better comprehend how these changes might have influenced the transitions and, respectively, individual and collective agency of the studied group. Therefore, this chapter aims to analyze the transitions that immigrants of the 1990s experienced beyond cross-border mobility and the crossing of linguistic and cultural borders. It considers the historical and social developments in both the former Soviet Union and Germany. The chapter begins by analyzing the border regime and mobility policies within the USSR before and after its dissolution, leading to the liberalization of mobility control from the European Union. Next, I delve into an examination of the modalities of self-fashioning and subjectivities that developed under the conditions of Soviet socialism and totalitarian state formation. This is contrasted with the concept of selfhood in liberal democracies. After scrutinizing the political and ideological settings, I proceed to evaluate the transition from planned to market economies. Finally, I examine in detail the shift from communistic internationalism to ethnic pluralism, along with cosmopolitanism and integration policies of Western societies. This angle holds considerable importance within the context of the diverse population exposure during the post-migratory period.

2.1 Transition from a Closed to Open Border Regime

Regarding the border regime and people's perspectives, US-American anthropologist Alexei Yurchak observed the following paradox, "Most Soviet people believed that the communist ideals and values they represented to the world were fundamentally "internationalist" and outward looking, and yet they were also aware that travel to that world beyond the borders was in fact impossible" (Yurchak 2005, p. 158). Traveling beyond the borders of the socialist bloc was a legal privilege reserved for party-loyal groups within the vast population that was confined behind ideological and physical barriers. From its construction in the early 1960s until its demolition in the late 1980s, the Berlin Wall stood as a lasting monument and a tangible representation of the stringent border regime aimed at controlling population mobility from the socialist and Soviet blocs to Western European countries and beyond. While spatial mobility within the internal borders of the USSR was feasible, settling elsewhere, different from the registered place

of residence [propiska], was intricate and not easily accessible to all groups. Thomas Piketty and Arthur Goldhammer elaborated on privileges and double standards in terms of mobility as follows:

> "… the regime organized its inequalities in other ways by offering in-kind benefits and privileged access to certain goods to its officials. These are difficult to take fully into account. There were also stark status differences: the mass incarceration of whole classes of people is only the most extreme instance of this; there was also a sophisticated internal passport system, which restricted the mobility of some, including the ability of peasants, who suffered greatly from the collectivization of agriculture and the forced march toward industrialization, to migrate to the cities" (2020, p. 585).

Restricted external and internal mobility, along with censored and limited interaction with Western cultural products and commercial goods (such as literature, music, clothes, and household items), contributed to a romanticized image of the West and fueled euphoric migration aspirations among the Soviet population. Partially, such romanticization contributed to the zagranica-effect (foreign-land effect) mentioned earlier in the introduction to this Part. The rigorous control of borders and internal mobility in the Soviet Union gave way to the relaxation of border restrictions among the former Central and Eastern bloc nations in the late 1980s. This transition was further accelerated by the dissolution of the USSR at the beginning of the 1990s. These events led to 'dramatic expansions of the freedoms' (UNDP 2009, p. 15) enjoyed by people as a result of the Soviet Union's dissolution.

Freedom of mobility suddenly became possible for the population after decades of a closed border regime and restrictive mobility policies. These processes, as described by Heinz Fassmann and Rainer Münz in the edited volume *Ost-West-Wanderung in Europa* (Fassmann and Münz 2000a), reflected on the possibilities of legal and non-bureaucratic travel from East-Central and Eastern European countries. The volume portrayed the conclusion of the East-West political and ideological conflict in the 1990s, which proved advantageous for people from this region. Such transformations gave rise to significant migration movements within and from these countries. Partially, this migration was influenced by the determination of mobile population groups to reestablish cultural connections with their respective republics of origin.

In terms of mobility to Western Europe, the majority arrived as tourists and consumers, while others came as merchants and labor migrants (Fassmann and Münz 2000b, p. 26). Some individuals received legal instruments, such as asylum or ethnic repatriation, that allowed them to settle in Western Europe (Zlotnik 2005, p. 24). The region experienced a significant diversification of migration forms, ranging from labor mobility to transit migration, and to forced migration due to asylum-seeking and refugee movements. In many countries of the region, immigrants with varying legal statuses appeared for the first time in post-war period. Notably, there was a fundamental shift from long-term migration to short-term mobility, often following cyclical patterns (Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2005, p. 4).

Beyond individual aspirations for mobility, the migration process was facilitated by Western European states' policies of open borders with the former socialist countries for a certain period (Fassmann and Münz 2000b, p. 26). Amanda Klekowski von Koppenfels (2003, p. 311) illustrated how geopolitical transformations in Central and Eastern Europe led to a significant shift in migration patterns to Germany from the region. Factors contributing to this migration surge included uncertainty surrounding the success and stability of the post-Soviet system change, the prospect of greater economic well-being through emigration or cyclical mobility between Western and Eastern Europe, and the rise of ethno-national conflicts in the newly formed post-Soviet nation-states (Fassmann and Münz 2000b, p. 26). This increase in migration is particularly evident in the case of repatriation migration in Germany.

So far, I have highlighted how the Soviet border regime imposed mobility restrictions, cultivating a romanticized image of the West and fueling migration aspirations during the post-Soviet transition. The disintegration of the USSR in the late 1980s brought about a significant relaxation of border restrictions, enabling newfound freedoms and migration possibilities. These transformative changes led to substantial migration movements within and from Central and Eastern European countries. In the following section, I will delve into an analysis to self-fashioning and agency within the context of the transition from Soviet socialism to liberal democracies.

2.2 Transition of the Self from Socialistic Totalitarian State to Liberal Democracy

Emerging from the late 19th-century communist movement, the Soviet Union can be described as a Janus-faced state entity, or as interpreted by Tlostanova (2008), a Janus-faced empire. On the one hand, Soviet socialism aimed to mitigate class inequalities and ethno-national sentiments, aspiring toward a communist, internationalist society characterized by equal distribution among individuals, genders, and ethnic groups. The phrase attributed to Soviet socialism and its ideology, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,"[8] as articulated by Louis Blanc, resonated with the principles of equitable resource allocation. This slogan encapsulated 'a commonsense view of fairness' (Carens 2003, p. 155), conveying the concept of allotting resources and advantages based on an individual's capabilities and communal necessities.

On the other hand, beneath the surface of Soviet socialism lay a totalitarian state exercising complete control over politics, ideology, and the economy. It implemented radical measures to regulate and censor the private sphere of everyday life. In her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt presented a valuable framework for understanding a totalitarian state by examining it through the lens of a totalitarian movement. This framework offers insights into the relationship between such a

[8] Original version "De chacun selon ses facultés, à chacun selon ses besoins" (Blanc 1851, p. 92).

movement and individuals, offering implications for understanding the dynamics between the Soviet Union and its citizens. Arendt stated:

> "Totalitarian movements are mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals. Compared with all other parties and movements, their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member. … Where, however, totalitarian rule has not been prepared by a totalitarian movement (and this … was the case in Russia), the movement has to be organized afterward and the conditions for its growth have artificially to be created in order to make total loyalty – the psychological basis for total domination – at all possible. Such loyalty can be expected only from the completely isolated human being who, without any other social ties to family, friends, comrades, or even mere acquaintances, deserves his sense of having a place in the world only from his belonging to a movement, his membership in the party. Total loyalty is possible only when fidelity is emptied of all concrete content, from which changes of mind might naturally arise" (Arendt 1962 [1951], pp. 323-234).

Total loyalty to the Soviet state could lead to a comfortable existence within the system, but it was not a guarantee, given the arbitrariness of terror, which Arendt described as 'the ultimate consequence of rule by terror.'[9] This arbitrariness provided no assurance of security or immunity to 'nobody, not even the executors,' who were never free from the fear of prosecution (Arendt 1962 [1951], p. 6).

In the late 1980s and beyond, critical questions began to surface within the USSR: What kind of society was being constructed within the territory of the Soviet Union in its pursuit to establish a communist classless society? (Zaslavskaya 1990; Geulen 2003; Isurin 2011). Politically, the answer was evident: a state-monopolistic economy coupled with a totalitarian political regime. In this regard, Tatyana Zaslavskaya wrote: "All three forms of state power – legislative, executive and judicial – are openly or latently subjected to the party authority" (1990, p. 4). Soviet elections featured only one candidate, the communist party, resulting in a lack of trust in political institutions and processes (idem, p. 20). This lack of trust may be somewhat relevant to the German context and could explain for the limited engagement of (late) German resettlers (the extensively studied group from the FSU) in political parties, committees, and parliaments at both the communal and national levels in Germany (Panagiotidis 2017a).

As time has passed, evaluations of the 1990s and the transition from Soviet socialism to liberalism and capitalism, whether within the post-Soviet space or beyond, have yielded mixed and uncertain perspectives. In the early 1990s, shortly before the dissolution of the USSR, Russian sociologist Tatiana Zaslavskaya (drawing from a 1990 empirical study) depicted prevailing social attitudes as characterized by social pessimism: a breakdown of

[9] The Red Terror coerced the initial establishment of the Soviet state, accompanied by the suppression of national and ethnic movements across the 15 constituent republics of the USSR (Baberowski 2007).

trust in political institutions, a lack of confidence in the future, anticipation of hardships, a profound ethical vacuum resulting from the failure of communist ideology and the devaluation of Soviet values, a resurgence of previously suppressed religious values, an increasing influence of religious institutions, an inclination toward mysticism, and societal resentment toward more affluent segments of the population (Zaslavskaya 1990, p. 20). Contrastingly, Danilo Markovic portrayed the same historical period prior to the USSR's collapse as characterized by a 'feeling of social security and protection' and 'egalitarian beliefs' from the perspective of the second half of the 2000s (Markovic 2006, p. 26). Soviet nostalgia of the late 2000s began to emerge, manifested in the flirtation with Soviet symbolism in the German context through mass culture or consumer goods.

Having elucidated the political and ideological landscape of the Soviet Union, a subsequent set of inquiries emerges: What forms of subjectivities and self-fashioning emerged within the context of Soviet socialism and the formation of a totalitarian state? Furthermore, how can an examination of Western concepts of the modern self enhance our understanding of the process of selfhood formation in this specific context during the transition period? In their paper *Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity* (2008), Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone delved into the analysis of four modalities of self-fashioning and agency to conceptualize Soviet subjectivities.

First, the totalitarian self encompassed a "transcendental desire of the masses and the elites to lose themselves in a higher cause" (Chatterjee and Petrone 2008, pp. 971–972), such as the aspiration to construct a postnational, classless, communist society. Earlier, Arendt argued that the totalitarian leadership was not merely tyrants; instead, "thanks to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion, totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within" (Arendt 1962 [1951], p. 325). As mentioned before, total loyalty demand and the arbitrariness of terror were tools in the Soviet toolkit to ensure regime legitimacy and durability.

Second, the pragmatic self represented the ability to construct one's narrative 'in the face of a coercive state,' not just to safeguard one's life but also to gain access to consumer goods, educational opportunities, and career advancements (Chatterjee and Petrone 2008, p. 974). The pragmatic self bears a resemblance to the trickster subjectivities extensively discussed by Madina Tlostanova when describing the subjectivities of the regions of Caucasia and Central Asia regions. In my perspective, the trickster self presents a remarkable mode of interaction with the Soviet state, 'based on mocking and outsmarting Soviet/imperial authority' (Tlostanova 2012, p. 133). In further decolonial reflections on the (post-)Soviet space, Madina Tlostanova and Walter Mignolo postulated that "a trickster sensibility of a particular kind, incorporating various cultural, ethnic, religious, epistemic traditions and demonstrating particular intersubjective models of treating the other, managed to survive and was in some cases even strengthened by the imperial control" (2012, p. 88).

Third, the autonomous self is an illusion stemming from the internalization of normative discourses, leading to self-monitoring, censorship, and behavioral restraint (Chatterjee

and Petrone 2008, p. 976). Finally, the banal self originated from 'the banality of everyday life in the Soviet Union' (idem, p. 980) , marked by scarcity of consumer goods and a deficit in living standards. "With or without official rationing, the availability of consumer goods was always a low priority. For decades Soviet citizens were told that they were preparing for a glorious future and that sacrifice today was necessary to achieve the promised abundance later," noted Judith McKinney in her analysis of the daily experiences of Russian women at the end of Soviet socialism (2020, p. 21).

These four modalities of self-fashioning and agency provide insight into the interactions between the Soviet state and its citizens, elucidating both limitations and arenas for actions and self-actualization. An understanding of 'Western' self-fashioning modalities aids in perceiving the distinct transitions from Soviet socialism to liberal democracies, as exemplified in the experiences of post-Soviet immigrants. Chatterjee and Petrone have delineated the modern, reflexive self, which presumably signifies subjectivities influenced by the democratic and liberal processes:[10]

> "The reflexive self is an active agent that scrutinizes both itself and the world it inhabits and thus plays a dynamic role in creating its own narratives of itself… modern selfhood is constructed at the intersection of individual agency, the workings of state power and social and political institutions, and the cultural codes and normative discourses deployed by professionals and experts, but they are divided about how much weight to ascribe to the role of agency in self-fashioning" (Chatterjee and Petrone 2008, pp. 967–968).

In other words, individuals actively engage in self-examination practices and interact with their environments, dynamically creating their narratives and shaping their experiences. Modern selfhood emerges from the interplay of individual agency, political systems, social structures, cultural norms, and expert opinions. In addition, non-structural elements like networks, frames, or arenas, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, are equally important for the formation of the modern, reflexive self.

Another distinction between Soviet socialism and Western liberal democracies, involving a shift from communism to capitalism, lies in their approach to the collective and the individual. The former emphasized collectivism through communist ideology and collectivization policies, while the latter prioritized individualism centered on individual responsibility and self-awareness. Focusing on the initial phase of the Soviet era,[11] Ukrainian philosopher Irina Zherebkina emphasized that, from an ethical standpoint, the concept of 'individual activism of self-realization' primarily embraced a self-sacrificing disposition for the collective benefit of all – whether that pertained to all individuals or society as a whole (2006, p. 123). This type of individualism, as self-sacrifice or for the sake of the collective, contradicted Western-style individualism. According to Zygmunt

[10] Among various conceptualizations of the self, the autonomous self, as articulated by Michel Foucault, is categorized within Western-styled subjectivities.

[11] The author referred to the Stalin epoch (1927-1953), one of the most repressive Soviet periods (Zherebkina 2006; Baberowski 2007).

Bauman, Western-style individualism involves "transforming human 'identity' from a 'given' into a 'task' and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (also the side-effects) of their performance" (2006, pp. 31–32). In contrast to Soviet ideological collectivism, Western individualism shifted its emphasis 'from living for others to a life of one's own' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, p. 54), with further implications that "ones lives become the biographical solution of systemic contradictions" (Beck 1992, p. 137).

Considering some of these immense differences between the Soviet Union and Germany, we can only speculate about the personal and collective (in a group sense) transitions that immigrants from the post-Soviet space underwent upon their arrival and settlement in the West, particularly in Germany. Edgar Goldstein (1979) and Carmella Leipzig (2006) have offered some insights into understanding the personal and collective costs of East-West transitions: unrealistic expectations regarding identity and status, neurotic competitiveness and aggression, the quest for professional identity, the clash between a paternalistic parenting style and the challenge to compel offspring to conform to parental authority, impeding offspring from making their own decisions. Edgar Goldstein concluded that

> Soviet "totalitarian cultural structures provide greater opportunities for the development of overdependency, rigidity, and extreme experiences of all kinds… with all of its extreme experiences, this strong quest for freedom meets a need for a strong authority to control and suppress disintegrative forces… The inner coercive system thus created is maintained when the immigrant moves to a new society, and it causes confrontation with values of that society and interferes with the process of integration. Even though some Soviet immigrants come from backgrounds similar in many respects to those of most Americans – with a strong emphasis on economic success and advancement – their attitudes toward and conditioned ways of achieving this success are different from those of American society. They have been brought up to feel uncomfortable about their needs for achievement and success, uncomfortable when in competition with others, and uncomfortable with authority" (1979, p. 158).

Goldstein's conclusion about the persistence of the 'inner dictator' within post-Soviet immigrants aligns with his observations on the impact of Soviet totalitarian cultural structures. His findings suggest that even after departing from the totalitarian regime, the coercive internal system established by these structures continues to exert control over individuals' thoughts and actions. This phenomenon, coupled with inner censorship, creates challenges for immigrants as they navigate and settle in their countries of destination. The clash between the ingrained values and behaviors influenced by the Soviet and post-Soviet systems and the expectations and norms of their host countries may impede the integration process or require a reflective transition between the conflicting systems.

After analyzing the self modalities shaped by political and ideological contexts, my focus shifts to evaluating the transition from a planned, state-owned economy to a market, property-based economy. The close interconnection of the Soviet economic system with other spheres of sociopolitical and sociocultural life undoubtedly contributed to self-fashioning and agency during the Soviet period and in times of transition.

2.3 From Planned to Market Economies

I will start by outlining the socioeconomic division of Soviet society, contrasting it with the class distribution of Western societies due to its socioeconomic and sociopolitical system (i.e., capitalism) (Dahrendorf 1959; Giddens 1973; Wright 2005; Havlin et al. 2016). The Soviet economy operated under state ownership and centralized economic planning, leading to a unique class stratification that differed significantly from that of Western capitalist societies. As such, I will outline the features of the economic system that contributed to the actual class composition of Soviet society. I will reflect upon the role of social ownership prioritized over individual and private ownership in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, I will contemplate the mechanisms of the planned economy, which, among other things, undermined entrepreneurial activities and people's economic initiatives. These aspects are particularly important in the context of the post-Soviet immigrant in Germany as illustrated in Part Six of the thesis.

In 1990, Tatyana Zaslavskaya described the Soviet economy as follows: "Economically, the Soviet society is based on the state means of production, centralized economic planning, as well as a powerful apparatus for the accumulation and redistribution of material and financial resources" (1990, p. 4). The Soviet economy heavily relied on state monopoly and its associated ideology. Additionally, Zaslavskaya noted that the Soviet economy could be characterized by features such as low-cost labor (where engineers or medical doctors earned nearly similar incomes to factory workers), low qualifications, poor product quality, and a lack of competitiveness (idem, p. 5). Such equality of payment regulated or prevented the composition of distinct social classes.

Ideologically, the Soviet state aimed for the economic eradication of classes, an approach that Hannah Arendt considered to be 'positively disastrous for the Soviet economy' (Arendt 1962 [1951], p. 322). Instead of completely eradicating classes, the Soviet regime established a system of stratification, not based on merit or economic capital but rather on one's affiliation with the party and ideology. Zaslavskaya depicted late Soviet society as profoundly polarized with the upper and lower classes divided by an in-between class. She contended:

> "The upper class is composed of the so-called "nomenklatura," which encompasses the highest echelons of party, military, state, and economic bureaucracy. They are the all-powerful masters of society, controllers…, and owners of the majority of the national wealth, disproportionately spending a significant portion of it on themselves… The lower pole of Soviet society is formed by the class of state wage workers, encompassing industrial workers,

> collective farm workers, and large segments of the intelligentsia… The social stratum between the upper and lower classes of Soviet society is numerous and heterogeneous. It consists of social groups that serve the nomenklatura, assist them, and satisfy their diverse needs. This primarily includes workers in the managerial sphere who directly carry out the instructions of the nomenklatura and constitute its main social support" (Zaslavskaya 1990, p. 5).

In terms of economy, this stratification system created the conditions for one of the predominant characteristics of social relationships for decades: the economic exploitation and political suppression of the working population by the nomenklatura. This party-state bureaucracy enjoyed distinct political and economic privileges within Soviet society, a topic extensively described by Mikhail Voslensky in his book *The Ruling Class in the Soviet Union* ([1984] 1990). During the initial phases of Soviet state-building, the nomenklatura substituted the former bureaucracy of factory managers and engineers, which "finally deprived industrial enterprises of what little experience and know-how the new Russian technical intelligentsia had been able to acquire" (Arendt 1962 [1951], p. 322). These processes contributed to rendering the Soviet economy unsustainable and noncompetitive in the long run.

According to the US-American scholar of economics, Judith McKinney, two fundamental features distinguished the Soviet economy. The first one was the prioritization of social *ownership* of the means of production over private ownership. Hypothetically, this implied that Soviet citizens collectively owned "the country's capital stock – its factories and machinery, its oil rigs and coal mines, its shops and restaurants" (McKinney 2020, p. 14). However, in practice, the Soviet state, dominated by the communist party and the nomenklatura, exerted control over this social ownership. Nevertheless, this prioritization had repercussions on the individual lives of citizens, as it shaped state policies against private ownership, aiming to minimize it (Conquest 1987; Yakubova 2004). These restrictive policies led to the demise of the class of wealthy farmers and manufacturers in rural areas. Among various population groups, former German colonizers who primarily resided in rural regions were significantly affected by these damaging policies.

The state-owned economy fostered the perception that "Soviet Communism was based on the complete elimination of private property and its replacement by comprehensive state ownership" (Piketty and Goldhammer 2020, p. 578). Nonetheless, the situation with property and ownership was more intricate. While the ideology claimed to eradicate private ownership, in practice, personal property and certain facets of private property endured:

> "Some elements of private property, which, in theory, are supposed to fade away with the victory of Socialism, still exist in the Soviet Union, a nation which officially considers itself to have already entered the phase of gradual transition to Communism" (Kimura 1970, p. 64).

Hiroshi Kimura's observation highlighted the disparity between political and ideological assertions and the actual circumstances on the ground, where the actual situation could deviate from official declarations. Nevertheless, the active promotion of ownership was absent, and stringent policies concerning property rights contributed to the sacralization of private property, a trend that gained momentum with the ascent of economic liberalism in the 1980s and persisted into the 1990s (Piketty and Goldhammer 2020, p. 578). The sacralization of property and ownership can provide a plausible explanation for the relatively high proportion of home ownership among (late) German resettlers compared to other population groups with an international family history in Germany. In the comprehensive study on (late) ethnic German resettlers, Worbs and colleagues delineated a noticeable tendency toward establishing home ownership through new construction, particularly starting from the 1990s (Worbs et al. 2013, p. 8). The authors expanded on this point:

> „… die besondere Situation von Russlanddeutschen bezüglich des Wohnens: Vor allem aus den beengten Verhältnissen in Mietwohnungen sei deren Bedürfnis nach selbstgenutztem Wohneigentum als adäquater Wohnraum für ihre (zunächst) überdurchschnittlich großen Familien entstanden. Russlanddeutsche nutzten nach ihrer Zuwanderung verwandtschaftliche Netzwerke zum Bau von neuen Häusern, um schließlich durch die Unterstützung im Rahmen von öffentlichen Förderprogrammen einen Anteil von Wohnungen in Ein- und Zweifamilienhäusern von rund einem Drittel zu erzielen, bei Personen ohne Migrationshintergrund sind dies über 50%" (idem, p. 108).

Worbs and colleagues asserted that constrained living conditions in rental accommodations impelled ethnic German resettlers to aspire to own homes. While I do not intend to diminish this valid reasoning, I also propose that the sacralization of private property, extensive privatization involving the transfer of ownership into private hands during the 1990s (McKinney 2020, p. 164), and the subsequently increased rates of home ownership in former socialist and Soviet states (Statista 2021) collectively contribute to explaining the notably high home ownership rate among the FSU immigrants in Germany.

The second fundamental feature of the Soviet economic system revolved around the allocation of national resources through the mechanism of central planning. Mandated by the Constitution, communist leaders held the responsibility to guide the nation, encompassing the authority to chart the path of economic development and the redistribution of wealth. McKinney's reflection on this situation goes as follows:

> "Between World War II and the early 1980s, most Soviet citizens could count on having their basic needs met. Rents were low and stable, as were prices of basic foodstuffs and children's necessities. Medical care and education—from pre-school through graduate school—were provided free of charge. Even those with low income could therefore generally obtain these goods and services. At the same time, a high income did not guarantee access to

> something more or better. That required connections, luck, a willingness to engage in the second economy, or some combination thereof. There were two significant avenues for acquiring especially desirable goods or services—Party channels and networks of friends and family" (2020, p. 17)

Because the communist leadership was accountable for top-down planning and wealth redistribution, entrepreneurial initiatives and business activities were actively discouraged and selectively criminalized, leading to imprisonment or labor camps. Throughout the Soviet era, entrepreneurship carried a negative connotation, perceived as exploitation of the people. Entrepreneurs faced repressive measures from the totalitarian authorities (Ostropolska 2013, p. 29). The stigmatization and criminalization of entrepreneurship caused this segment of the socioeconomic sphere to move deeply underground, resulting in the emergence of a significant *illegal (shadow) economy* legalized during the transition of the 1990s (Ageev et al. 1995, p. 366). This was often referred to as the 'second economy,' essentially equated with the market (Sampson 1987, p. 121). Despite the challenge of accurately measuring the extent of such a shadow economy, certain indirect indicators provided a basis for estimating its scale. Thus, interviews with Soviet emigrants indicated that approximately 18 percent of total consumption expenses were allocated to private individuals, and around 30 percent of household food purchases were made outside the public sector or through personal connections (idem, p. 125). Steven L. Sampson suggested that numerous underground entrepreneurs belonged to ethnic minorities (e.g., Jews) who were 'denied avenues of social mobility in the universities, army, policy, or party apparatus,' while ethnicity served 'as a mobilizing network and as a shield against controls' (idem, p. 129). Entrepreneurship under challenging circumstances and the significance of mobilizing networks (built on co-migrant and ethnic connections) hold relevance for my subsequent analysis of entrepreneurial activities among post-Soviet immigrants in Germany.

Thus, the Soviet state-owned, planned economy had several effects on the population, including shaping work ethics, influencing attitudes toward property, and constraining entrepreneurial behavior. In this section, I delineated how these effects could potentially have influenced behavioral patterns during migration and the transition to a market economy. In the upcoming section, I will explore the contrasting dynamics of transitioning from Communist internationalism to societies rooted in nationalism and ethnic pluralism. This context holds significant relevance to the migration experiences of individuals from the post-Soviet space to Germany.

2.4 From Communist Internationalism to Ethnic Pluralism of a Nation-State

Internationalism, characterized by universal governance and a shared global language, signifies the practice of collaboration, solidarity, and engagement among diverse people on a global scale. This concept stands in contrast to the ideology of nationalism (Halliday

1988, p. 187).[12] Throughout seven decades of the last century, communist internationalism was implemented, often forcefully, across the vast expanse of the Soviet Union, encompassing more than 288 million individuals across eleven Eurasian time zones. This spanned a multitude of national majorities and ethnic minorities, contributing to the blurring of ethnic boundaries at both the state and individual levels. The inherent 'worldliness and internationalism of Soviet culture' were evident in how Soviet individuals maintained profound connections to history (Yurchak 2005, p. 158). They saw themselves not limited by state borders but as integral components of a global and historical continuum. International events resonated personally, intertwining with their lives on an existential scale. This innate global perspective of Soviet identity was further enriched by the diverse experience of belonging to the USSR. The tangible coexistence of various cultures within Soviet society, combined with the principles of collective unity and equal treatment for different ethnic groups, fostered inclinations that could be described as a notably "cosmopolitan" identity (idem, p. 159) . Nevertheless, 'good internationalism' and 'bad cosmopolitanism' were ideologically juxtaposed: the latter was represented as values of the bourgeois world, while the former symbolized 'the realism of common people's culture' (idem, p. 164).

Publicly, ethnicity was regarded as a private matter in the Soviet context (Pobeda 2010, p. 5). However, the Soviet internationalist agenda obscured the significance of ethnicity, which covertly influenced state policies, particularly concerning ethnicized groups perceived as unreliable. This included the forced resettlement of Soviet Germans and Crimean Tatars from North Caucasus and Crimea to Kazakhstan and Central Asia during World War II. Tlostanova critically highlighted this dual standard, revealing that despite the Soviet Union's proclaimed internationalist ideals, it created a secondary category of Soviet citizens within the colonial context. These individuals were meant to evolve into future Soviet Mestizo/a, emphasizing the fusion of ethnic identities under the influence of Russian culture and Soviet ideology (Tlostanova 2012, p. 137).

In contrast, the unaffected majority lived a life characterized by a sense of camaraderie among nations. For instance, the late Soviet anthem proclaimed: "Unbreakable Union of freeborn republics / Great Rus' has welded forever to stand! / Created in struggle by will of the peoples, / United and mighty our Soviet land!" (Soviet History Archive n.d.). However, despite the songwriters' intention to portray the multinational composition of Soviet society, 'the lyrics conveyed a message of Russian primacy,' suggesting a shift toward 'Russian-centered national pride' imposed on the extensive Soviet populace (Geldern n.d.). In hindsight, Irina Zherebkina described the Soviet internationalist project as 'a violent conglomerate of nations' friendship' (2006, p. 148). The violence manifested itself through the restrictive treatment of specific ethnic minorities, involving deportations, and a repressive approach toward nationalist movements or dissidents within the union republics. From the vantage point of post-Soviet coloniality, Tlostanova emphasized the persistent impact of this legacy in the present post-Soviet space:

[12] In contemporary terms, internationalism is akin to postnationalism (Zherebkina 2006, p. 148; Braidotti and Regan 2017, pp. 186–187).

> "… intersection of the postcolonial and the post-Soviet is in the use of language. Soviet language policies, as all other discourses, were based on contradictory double standards – officially promoting the flourishing of national languages and literatures, while at the same time erasing or rewriting all non-Russian traditions in accordance with the linguistic and cultural master-narrative created by Soviet scholars and scientists with a particular teleology in mind. This was one of the most devastating consequences of the Soviet brand of coloniality, which even the present generation is still unsuccessfully struggling with, particularly considering a substantial number of people of non-Russian ethnicities living in the CIS who speak only Russian" (Tlostanova 2012, pp. 137–138).

The prevalence of Russian as a shared language was partly a consequence of the colonial legacy of the Russian empire, as discussed earlier in the role of the Russian language. In this context, the usage of Russian did not necessarily indicate an endorsement of Russian nationalism, as empires operate beyond national boundaries. A parallel can be drawn with the spread of English, influenced by colonial and post-colonial historical factors, thereby contributing to the contemporary global coloniality (idem, pp. 135–137), as argued earlier.

The increasing importance of nation-states in the post-Soviet space since the 1990s has led to a profound transformation in ethnic and national consciousness. The Soviet slogans that concealed ethnic disparities and tensions, along with the discourse of international unity and 'druzhba narodov' (camaraderie among nations), have been overshadowed by a diverse array of national flags that symbolize the assertion of self-identity among peoples whose individualities were previously confined within predefined frameworks (Suny 1992, p. 22). This thesis primarily focuses on individuals who migrated to Germany between the 1990s and the early 2000s. This implies that they have, to some extent, and perhaps moderately, been influenced by the emerging nation-states with their respective national ideologies. The dissolution of the Soviet Union prompted a movement of people returning to their places of origin, with approximately 25 million individuals relocating within the post-Soviet region (UNDP 2009, p. 31). Similarly, around three and a half million people arrived in Germany as discussed earlier. At this point, we will postpone the discussion on how these migrants have been influenced by the national ideologies of countries such as Armenia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, or other post-Soviet republics during their time in Germany.

The transition from communist internationalism to the ethnic pluralism of the German nation-state carries significant implications. On the one hand, certain indications of the previous camaraderie can be observed within the Russian-speaking mixed groups and communities in Germany. On the other hand, we can only speculate about the impact of openly discussed ethnic pluralism in Germany, the prevailing discourse on migration, and political concerns about integrating foreigners. This may have contributed to the rising popularity of right-wing populist parties among ethnic German resettlers, as indicated by

Tatiana Golova (2017). Unlike the Soviet Union, where such matters were absent from public discourse and were instead relegated to the domain of tacit policies aimed at addressing intricate ethnic or nationalist matters.

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This Part has provided an understanding of the East-West migration resulting from the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and beyond, with a focus on immigrants from the former Soviet Union who settled in Germany. In respect of the East-West migration, I introduced three key features characterizing the post-Soviet migration of the 1990s: ethnicization, feminization, and liberalization. Firstly, I discussed the two major immigrant groups admitted based on ethnic policies: late ethnic German resettlers and Jewish refugees. Secondly, I highlighted the demographic composition of this migration, noting a higher proportion of female immigrants compared to men. These women are often engaged in the feminized labor sector (such as caregiving or housekeeping) or migrate for marriage and family-reunification reasons. Thirdly, I discussed how the relaxation of travel restrictions led to increased and diverse mobility across Eurasia, particularly along the East-West European axis, during the transformative 1990s. The prevalent motives for mobility encompassed repatriation, family reunification, work opportunities, and educational pursuits. While primarily composed of various sociocultural groups, Wimmer's flexible ethnic boundary-making approach (2007, 2008a) permits an assessment of the diverse Russian-speaking communities formed during the process of settling in Germany.

Relying on the transition perspective, I provided explanations for comprehending the personal transformations that post-Soviet emigrants underwent while moving from the former Soviet Union to Germany. I aimed to explore how societal changes, such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, affected and impacted individuals on the ground. Therefore, I delved into the shifts between closed and open border regimes, the contrast between self-fashioning under the Soviet totalitarian regime and the selfhood of liberal democracies, the transition from planned to market economies, and the evolution from communist internationalism to the ethnic pluralism of a nation-state. This analysis holds particularly relevant in the context of the diverse population's experiences during the post-migratory period.

This opening Part served as scaffolding, combined with the theoretical background preparations in Part Two and methodological premises in Part Three. The scaffolding aims to support the construction of the empirically grounded immigrant agency theory, which is presented in Parts Four to Seven. Although presented linearly, the genesis and construction of the thesis and the immigrant agency theory have a spiral character. This approach implies constant checking, comparing, and reviewing between theory, research design, methodological solutions, empirical material, and their analysis together with the existing studies on the subject (Corbin and Strauss 1990, p. 421). I proceeded with my research, analysis, and writing in this iterative manner.

PART TWO

Toward the Immigrant Agency Theory – Background Preparations and Frameworks

I am rooted, but I flow

(Braidotti 2011, p. 137)

The concept of agency presents various challenges when employed as an analytical category. Before delving into its empirical research applications, I address several theoretical and methodological considerations. Simultaneously, the process of migration, unfolding across time and space, leads to profound transformations, changes, and adjustments by individuals, groups, and institutions engaged in this journey. The irreversible impact of migration on human lives and biographies becomes even more pronounced when considering long-term international migration aimed at settlement in the destination country. In this context, agency and long-term migration serve as foundational frameworks that inform my approach to understanding immigrant agency within this thesis. To elucidate these dimensions, Part Two embarks on an exploration of agency and long-term international migration within the realm of social thought. This exploratory journey provides the essential theoretical framework for examining immigrant agency though both methodological and empirical lenses, ultimately culminating in the development of an immigrant agency theory generated and grounded in empirical research.

Chapter 3 delves into the multifaceted concept of agency within the field of social sciences, tracing its historical evolution, navigating through disciplinary debates, and assessing its practical applications in the context of social theory development. In this chapter, I address critical questions: How is agency conceptualized within the theory building framework of the social sciences, particularly sociology? What nuances and disciplinary variations exist in the understanding and application of agency? Is agency a phenomenon in itself or rather an analytical tool enabling us to comprehend human behavior and actions? How can agency be operationalized in empirical research, guided by grounded theory? Lastly, how is this category utilized within diverse scholarly traditions, particularly in the context of multilingual settings, as is pertinent to this thesis?

Chapter 4 focuses on international long-term migration, dissecting it as both a process and an experiential journey, offering a comprehensive examination from both individual and collective viewpoints. Within this context, the chapter establishes a framework for analyzing levels and units of analysis relevant for my interpretations of agency. It delves into significant theories that shape our understanding of immigrants' behaviors and activities during migration and settlement. I explore these theories ranging from assimilation to integration, elucidating their positions within the spectrum of immigrant incorporation practices. These theories depict behavioral patterns and strategies that promote convergence and embedding for both individuals and groups, aiming to blur the boundaries that traditionally separate mainstream societies from immigrant populations. Furthermore, I introduce the pivotal concept for this thesis – transnationalism. This concept offers a unique perspective on immigrant incorporation that transcends national borders, allowing us to comprehend immigrants' activities in constructing social fields while bridging their country of origin and host country. This understanding is crucial for grasping the multifaceted dimensions of immigrant agency. Additionally, I present the simultaneity hypothesis, suggesting that experiences depicted as transnational, neoassimilation, or integration can coexist harmoniously. The section draws upon scholarly works arguing for the compatibility of these concepts, illustrating how migrants can simultaneously incorporate into their host country while maintaining transnational connections. This perspective encourages breaking free from the confines of a nation-state in the construction of social theories and methodologies, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of immigrant agency.

Chapter 3: A Century of Contemplating Agency

The relation between society and individuum belongs to one of the fundamental concerns in social science. This concern brought to the fore "endless debates about social order and social role, structure and agency, and cultural discourses and processes of subjectification," which flourished in the 20th century (Davis 2008, p. 45). Debates have continued in this respect in current social science: Renewed scientific vocabularies and novel methodologies, actualized contexts and analytical frames carry on scholarly attempts to grasp the relation between society and individuum of the 21st century. No wonder agency-structure debates have gained a reputation as 'a conceptual morass' (Hitlin and Elder 2007, p. 171) or 'a blind alley' (Favell 2001, p. 393). Some questions accompanying endless agency debates are whether humans can define their choices and actions, whether structural settings determine human behavior, or whether we can contemplate agency in a non-structural way. By addressing these questions, I explore possibilities and limitations of engaging the term human agency while reflecting on actions, experiences, and orientations of individuals and groups in the process of migration. This undertaking requires to discover immigrant agency by means of theoretical, methodological, and empirical toolkit. This toolkit will allow me to contemplate an actor-driven approach to immigration, yet acknowledging hierarchical,

structural, and non-hierarchical settings of the respective environments as sending and hosting societies, networks, transnational social spaces, etc.

In the subsequent discussion, I delve into the discourse on agency within the realm of social science, elucidating ontological and epistemological aspects dimensions associated with this conceptual category. I commence by providing an overview of how the notion of agency has evolved across various disciplines, shedding light on the attributes ascribed to agency and its operationalization in scholarly dialogues. Given that sociological perspectives on agency are a central focus for further exploration, I elaborate on the ontological foundations of social theory. These foundations explicitly or implicitly incorporate discussions on agency and structure in the macro- and micro-level discourse. Subsequently, I juxtapose this discourse with the nonhierarchical, network-driven argument, advancing an understanding of social interactions and arrangements. Finally, I evaluate agency through the lens of socio-conditioning factors and power relations, prompting a critical inquiry into knowledge production, scientific objectivity, and its geographical neutrality. Epistemologies rooted in feminism, nomadism, and postcolonialism provide a critical framework to engage with the concept of agency, offering insights into human experiences within the evolving social contexts.

3.1 Disciplinary Divide on Agency

Before delving into disciplinary discourses, I would like to address some fundamental considerations regarding the category of agency. This category resides within one of the oldest conceptual and semantic battlegrounds within the social sciences. Exploring agency in research introduces multiple complications inherent to this category. First, one must grapple with a multitude of meanings and interpretations associated with agency, such as an administrative division in state governance, a relation between principal and agent in economics, business, and management, a connection between a ruler and a governor in political science, and aspects like acting self, subjectivity, self-determination, identity, capacity, and life course in sociology. Second, there is an issue of translation if we deal with comparative research navigating among multiple academic languages. Especially if we rely on non-English and yet well-established academic traditions. The international domination of academic English is a novel development as Michael D. Gordin illustrated in his book *Scientific Babel* dedicated to the rise and fall of academic languages through the historical prism (Gordin 2015). Such domination impacts hierarchical relations among languages in theory building and knowledge production, which among other things brings translation to the fore. Thus, translation limitations appear if there is a need to operationalize the category agency in for instance German or Russian, the main languages involved in the current study. Since we do not find a precise linguistic equivalent, we must use quality descriptions and a set of attributions associated with the notion of agency. Third, there is a need to assign features, qualities, and components to the specific variation of agency in use to make it empirically tangible. Otherwise, agency runs a danger to be an elusive, commonsensical term; its meaning must

be comprehended depending on the context of an application. Therefore, while doing research on agency, its definition and operationalization allocate a great effort.

The diversity of meanings that the term agency carries in social science is striking. Development and use of agency or efforts to construct an agency theory have been widespread (Giddens 1984; Archer 2000; Shapiro 2005; Kiser 1999; Hitlin and Elder 2007). Scholars utilize the notion of agency according to disciplinary traditions, theoretical frames, methodological, and research agendas. They focus on and favor a specific aspect of agency, which is then instrumentalized and channeled for research purposes in a specific study. Implications of economic, political, and social facets of agency prove this point. In what follows is a brief outline of the conceptual use of economic and political agencies, followed by an extensive sociological account on social agency.

Economic and Political Agency as Relations

The economic theories of agency refer to commercial and legal differentiations between principal and agent. In such relations the agent is "granted the capacity to act autonomously on behalf of the former" by signing contracts, managing assets, and yet is restricted by contractual aspects and interests of a principal (Calhoun 2002, p. 7). Being embedded in the hierarchy of the principal-agent relationship, an agent is subjected to the asymmetry of power shifts: an agent carries out a task, and a principal allocates it and controls its realization (Vetschera 1998, p. 133). Despite hierarchies and subordination between a principal and an agent, the self-interest and opportunism of agents complicate the issue of controlling and regulating them (Shapiro 2005, p. 268). In economic terms, an agency also highlights a relationship of acting on behalf of another. As, for instance, managers act on behalf of stockholders, and employees on behalf of employers (Hendry 2005; Arch 2007; Wiseman et al. 2012).

Engaging agency in economics occurred as a part of the new institutionalism and was widespread predominantly in the US-American context in the early 1970s. Economists study agency mainly in the corporate context and the marketplace. The empirical inquiry focuses on economic organizations and firms (Kiser 1999, p. 150). According to the economic models, agency is based on the underlying rational and optimizing behavior in the narrow context of economic organizations. For what this model has been heavily criticized (Vetschera 1998, p. 133; Kiser 1999, p. 146). The economic theory of agency draws strongly on rational choice models of individual and organizational behavior. Rational choice models gained popularity in sociology (Esser 1991b; Alexander et al. 1987, p. 135) as well as in migration studies (Massey et al. 1993, pp. 434–436; King 2012, pp. 13–14). How the rational choice theorists depicted an individuum James M. Jaspers explained as follows:

> "Two images of humans have dominated the social sciences in recent decades. One is the autonomous individuals of economics, a calculating decision maker whom rational-choice theorists claim to have discovered behind all human

> institutions. He is the character found in most game theory, who knows what he wants and searches for the means to get it. … In stark contrast is the conformist favored by most sociological and anthropological traditions, hemmed in by culture, norms, discourse, and the constant negotiation she must undertake with those around her. She is the character of the situation, responding socially in order to construct a reality in collaboration with those around her" (Jasper 2006, p. 3).

To illustrate his point, Jaspers contrasted the rational choice theory with the conformist theory. The latter emphasized individuals' dependence on external structures, such as culture, normative regulations, and institutions, prevalent in sociological reasoning during the second half of the 20th century. Besides economics, such conceptual operationalization of agency framed within the rational choice serves the purpose in management, banking, corporate law, etc. Moreover, legal applications of agency intertwine with economic applications, adding another layer of complexity and ambiguity to the term. Legal applications originate from 'corporate governance, and corporate law principles and cases' (Lan and Heracleous 2010, p. 294).

Deriving from the economic model of agency, preoccupation with incentive alignment presents relevance in management: in particular compensation policies aim at discouraging 'self-interested behavior by managers' (Shapiro 2005, p. 270) and reducing agency costs. Focusing on reciprocity, cooperation, embeddedness, and trust allows organizational structures to mitigate or reduce agency costs emerging out of self-interest. Potential problems derive from conflicting interests, opportunism, informational asymmetry, agent selection, monitoring, sanctions, incentives, and agency costs (idem, p. 274). These frictions highlight embedded tensions in the principal-agent relationship and demonstrate how "different combinations of recruitment, monitoring, and sanctioning practices yield different administrative systems" (ibid). These external mechanisms target to control or restrict agency.

In contrast to economic agency, political agency underscores a distinct type of connection, especially ruler-staff relations. This lens directs our attention to the interactions between elected politicians and their appointed staff. Investigating these relations necessitates an understanding of how the power dynamics are established and how democratic mechanisms are upheld. As Edgar Kiser pointed out:

> "Contemporary political scientists have begun to use agency theory to explore one of the most significant issues Weber ([1922]1968) raised about contemporary politics: can elected politicians control the appointed bureaucrats who implement state policies, and if not, does the power of unelected bureaucrats threaten democracy? However, they have borrowed both theory and method from economic agency theory, not from Weber" (Kiser 1999, p. 154).

Moreover, Edgar Kiser elaborated on Weber's viewpoint, emphasizing the crucial role of the relationship between rulers and their administrative staff in understanding political history. Rulers encounter difficulties in controlling these agents because the agents' interests may diverge from those of the rulers. This situation exemplifies what is commonly referred to as an agency problem, characterized by issues of control due to conflicting interests and informational imbalances that tend to favor agents. Weber's analysis delved into key aspects such as the selection of agents, the efficacy of monitoring, and the application of both positive and negative sanctions. Weber's approach fundamentally embraced the concept of microfoundations, reflecting his methodological individualism (Kiser 1999, p. 157). This perspective asserted that any comprehensive explanation must include an account of the motives and actions of individual actors.

The ruler-staff divide predominantly concerns policymaking, where politicians initiate policies and bureaucrats execute them through specific actions. Barry M. Mitnick, in his article *The Theory of Agency*, raised key questions regarding the ruler-stuff division, shedding light on an emerging policing paradox (Mitnick 1974). These questions revolve around ensuring that policies remain aligned with the political agenda throughout the implementation process and how to exercise effective control and monitoring over policy execution.

The economic agency theory exercises a significant impact on an understanding of political agency: political systems occur as 'a complex network of principal-agent relationships' (Shapiro 2005, p. 271). This network is composed of citizens/voters and nation-states, politicians and bureaucrats, lawmakers and policymakers, administrative entities and courts, international organizations and diplomatic missions, the military, and the police. In a democratic state, principals as voters and citizens delegate their authority to agents as, for instance, politicians, parties, politicians, and bureaucrats. This authority stands for voters' representation and carries out their political preferences ideally. In an authoritarian or totalitarian state, principal-agent relationships are twisted: politicians with a repressive apparatus are principals who strive to exceed their control over the everyday life of citizens.

Certain conceptual parallels emerge between how agency is approached in economics and political science. Despite being inspired by economic thought, current sociological debates offer further possibilities to interpret agency. As mentioned earlier, multiple and at times contrasting the meaning of agency is one of the largest criticisms while using this category. The confusion only increases if we consider the fact that above mention disciplines (i.e., economics, political science, and sociology) have drawn a considerable part of their inspirations in respect of agency from the classical work *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* by Max Weber (Kiser 1999, p. 146). In this work, Weber did not use the term agency, there is also no immediate equivalent in German language. Instead, the classic operated with the term social action [soziales Handeln] (Weber [1922] 2002). Not every action can be categorized as a social action, a

concept Weber linked to a subjective sense of intention and the ability of agents to position themselves within the context of social relations (Weber 1984, p. 19). Thus, soziales Handeln may be, as will be shown later, attributed to human agency. Since Weber extensively wrote about bureaucratization [Bürokratisierung], rationalization [Razionalisierung], and authority [Herrschaft], these foci explain interest from political science and economics in associating the term agency with Weberian soziales Handeln. Relying on the same classical source, the criticism of polarity and multiplicity of meanings does not spare the category of agency. This multiplicity can be misleading but, at the same time, may offer some possibilities for conceptual explorations. How is agency approached in sociological thought, connecting but also departing from economic and political interpretations of the term?

Social Agency as Action

Social agency as human agency can be discovered amid macro- and micro-theoretical discussions. In this debate, agency emerges either as a binary opposition or as a conceptual sub-element of social structure as in the agency-structure link. This understanding highlights the scale perspective – a hierarchical approach that situates structure on the macro-level and agency on the micro-level (Giddens 1984; Archer 1982). Agency points to actors' ability to act autonomously within a social structure (Calhoun 2002, p. 7). The issue of autonomy raises a question about codependence between actors and a social structure. This codependence outlines a dualistic voluntarism-determinism dichotomy. At the same time, there are less noticeable efforts to conceptualize agency in non-hierarchical settings and outside of the scale perspective, as in the case with frames (Goffman 1975), arenas (Jasper 2006), and networks (Latour 1996a). Considering these hierarchical and non-hierarchical differentiations, the conceptual development of agency has further nuances in sociology. There is an influential economic interpretation of agency in sociology deriving from the Weberian tradition as presented above. Here agency is interpreted as acting for relationships, and Susan Shapiro noted: "Although agency theory may not occupy a niche in sociology, agency relationships are omnipresent, under cover of other aliases – bureaucracy, organizations, professions, roles, markets, labor, government, family, trust, social exchange…" (Shapiro 2005, p. 282). In this interpretation, the agency reflects the specific type of relations, depicted above in the context of economic and political agency.

Besides the concept of agency has various conceptual expressions belonging to the vocabulary of a specific period in the social science development. In their article *Time, Self, and the Curiously Abstract Concept of Agency*, Steven Hitlin and Glen H. Elder presented such conceptual plethora: existential agency, identity, life course, and pragmatic agency (Hitlin and Elder 2007). As existential agency, a notion of the self had derived from George H. Mead's theory of self. In his classical work *Mind, Self, and Society,* Mead defined the self as a social emergent:

> "The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is,

> develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (Mead [1934] 2015, p. 135).

Mead believed that as a social emergent, the self was constructed from the reflective process based on an individual ability being 'an object to itself:' "The body does not experience itself as a whole, in the sense in which the self in some way enters into the experience of the self" (Mead [1934] 2015, p. 136). Hitlin and Elder expanded on Mead's concept of the self, portraying it as a core of agency that forms the basis for identity, life course, and pragmatic agency. The latter refers to the ability to actively respond to social incentives, and the temporal orientation of individuals in their specific contexts determines the form of agency exercised at a given moment. This understanding of agency aligns with the Western philosophical tradition "where individuals are the locus of social action" (Hitlin and Elder 2007, p. 171). These insights lead us to another significant representation of agency through the concept of social action, which played a crucial role in sociological debates of the 20th century.

The concept of agency, viewed as action-driven, similarly originated from Weberian tradition, and it was further developed by Talcott Parsons and his associates into a theory of social action. This theory aimed at establishing "a conceptual scheme for the analysis of the behavior of living organisms" (Parsons and Shils 1976, p. 53). According to Parsons and Shils, such behavior is motivational, goal-oriented, and norm-regulated, it is framed by certain situational context and costs some energy or effort in execution (ibid). Parsons emphasized the importance of the action frame as a reference and undertook an effort to reconcile a notion of rational action and social structure. For Parsons, social structure presented a set of abstracted and aggregated norms rooted in patterns of individual interaction. These norms, in turn, contextualize and inform subsequent interactions. Individuals benefit, Parsons suggested, from the recognition by others that a normative action bestows (Parsons [1949] 2008).[13] The action frame has been broadly present also in the late German sociological context as acting [handeln] or an action [Handlung] (Esser 1991a; Nolte 1999; Cappai 2012).

In the 1980s, significant theoretical advancements regarding action and agency unfolded in North American and Western-European sociological contexts, holding relevance to my argument. This period witnessed an intensive reexamination of micro- and macro-sociological paradigms and a dispute between Margaret Archer and Antony Giddens concerning the integration of structure and agency (structure-agency link). Additionally, Habermas introduced a theory of communicative action that emphasized the role of language. While the micro-and macro-revision and a structure-agency link are discussed in detail in the section dedicated to the structure-agency dilemma, I briefly reflect on the importance of incorporating language for an understanding of action and, therefore, agency.

[13] For an in-depth exploration of the Parsonian theory of action, refer to Leslie Sklair (1970).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Jürgen Habermas directed his theoretical efforts toward understanding human action by connecting it to language use, conceptualizing it as a communicative action ([1981] 2011).[14] In the earlier version, he introduced a theory of communicative competence [Theorie der kommunikativen Kompetenz] (Habermas 1975), which later evolved into a theory of communicative action. Within this theoretical framework, Habermas emphasized the emancipatory power of communicative acts and actions expressed in communication between two or more participants to make sense of a situation. Some key aspects of this theory relevant to the context of migration include situative language use and the intersubjective context of language use, as Habermas pointed out: „Konkret nenne ich eine Äußerung, die in einer bestimmten Situation gemacht wird und deren Bedeutung auch von kontingenten Randbedingungen, sowie von der Persönlichkeitsstruktur und dem Rollenkontext der Sprecher/ Hörer bestimmt wird" (Habermas [1981] 2011, pp. 106–107). Colloquial language use is composed of a double structure of communication, including an intersubjective level and a level of objects: "a) die Ebene der Intersubjektivität, auf der die Sprecher/ Hörer miteinander sprechen, und 2) die Ebene der Gegenstände, über die sie sich verständigen (Gegenstände als „Dinge, Ereignisse, Zustände, Personen, Äußerungen und Zustände von Personen")" (Habermas 1975, p. 105). Inspired by Habermas's approach to language and action, in Part Five *The Silence of Polyglots – Language Practices and Language Use through the Prism* of *Migration,* I conceptualize human agency as communicative agency, an integrative part of understanding immigrant agency.

Comparing the implications of agency across disciplines reveals variations in how the term is operationalized and its underlying meanings. In sociology, human agency finds expression through actions, language, self, identity, life course, and relationships. This stands in contrast to the political and economic interpretations of agency, which revolve around principal-agent dynamics, representation, acting on behalf of others, and considerations of agency costs. When examining the experiences of individuals within the context of migration, the changes they undergo, and their transformations, a deeper understanding can be gleaned through the lens of identity, their actions, and their use of language. As I will show in later sections of my thesis, these aspects provide more insight than the economic or political interpretations of agency.

A common thread running through the concept of agency in all the aforementioned disciplines is the interplay between voluntarism, which pertains to the choices made by individuals and their interactions, and determinism, which emanates from structural configurations such as society, organizations, corporate hierarchies, and control mechanisms. The following section delves specifically into voluntarism and determinism, situating them within the realm of social theory and initiating a discussion on the relationship between structure and agency.

[14] For a comprehensive analysis of Habermas' theory of communicative action, please consult John B. Thompson (1983).

3.2 Structure-Agency Dilemma

As mentioned above, the 1980s witnessed extensive scholarly debates revolving around and attempting to resolve the structure-agency dilemma, the dilemma of voluntarism and determinism. This structure-agency dispute overlapped with the revision of micro- and macro-sociological paradigms in social science (Collins 1981a, 1981b; Knorr-Cetina 1981; Coulter 1982). A macro paradigm situated structure with large societal aggregates as, for instance, society, nation-state, and social system in the center of theory building. Whereas a micro paradigm focused on individuals, actors, and agency (i.e., self, identity, and actions) as the points of reference. In this lasting agency-structure dispute, an approach to an individual action has gained relative autonomy, placing the subjectivist perspective in opposition to the objectivist one (Calhoun 2002). In Jürgen Klüver's article, *Formal Reconstruction and Comparative Framing of Sociological Theories* (1991), four approaches to social theory building are identified: macro, micro, immanent, and linking. These approaches delve into the relationships between society and individuum, as well as the dynamics between structure and agency.

According to the macro-approach, structure shapes and modifies agents. While striving to construct a grand theory, macro-theories do not neglect agency or individuals, but rather prioritize classes, systems, societies, and institutions as, for instance, the Marxian class theory (Marx and Engels [1848] 2009) or Luhmann's system theory (Luhmann 1975). Jürgen Klüver pointed out some deficiencies of such theory building: "… A macro-theory, which tends to be structurally incomplete, exhibits either empirical deficits or lacks 'universality' (Luhmann) of its core elements, and, therefore, inclines to the excessive generalization" (Klüver 1991, pp. 217–218).[15] An understanding of a social structure as composed of social classes or comparable equivalents (i.e., strata, milieus, lifestyles) has had an enormous impact on social theorizing. The Marxist and Weberian traditions – two competing conceptual approaches in the social structure analysis – find their manifestations in stratification theories up to the current day (Havlin et al. 2016, pp. 8–13). In respect of this type of theory building, Margaret Archer criticized that "agency – the acting subject became increasingly lifeless whilst the structural or cultural components enjoyed a life of their own, self-propelling or self-maintaining" (Archer 1982, p. 455).

According to the micro-approach, individual actions and interactions compose 'the social structure of the world of daily life' or 'the intersubjective world' as depicted in Schuetzian microsociology (Schuetz 1945a, p. 542, p. 533). Working with such categories as a stranger and a member of an in-group (Schuetz 1944, p. 506), homecomers and homestayers (Schuetz 1945b, p. 371), the author elaborated on group interactions, on a well-known 'us – them' dichotomy, highlighting an intersubjective dimension of relations and various possibilities of their meaning and understanding (Schuetz 1945a, p. 535). This microsociological line of thought has been further developed based on the assumption that experiences and actions constitute the empirical reality of individuals, contrasting with

[15] All translations from non-English texts are mine, TH.

abstract structures that are challenging to perceive through individual practical experiences and empirical conduct. Randall Collins stressed that "radical micro-sociology is epistemologically and empirically much more thorough than any previous sociological method" (Collins 1981a, p. 82). Yet, neglecting an abstract feature of social structure may lead to 'an extreme micro-empiricism' as in the case of ethnomethodology (idem, p. 83). Empirically grounded theories explore human agency through actions, relations, and experiences.

According to the immanent scale approach, structure and agency are always implicit components of any theory, which can be restored through a proper theory reconstruction. In this understanding, a sociological theory consists of vertical layers such as micro, meso and macro: "… every sociological theory that deserves to be called this way displays such vertical layers at the core of its theoretical composition; yet there are variations between theories as to what extent reality can be recognized in its distinguishing layers" (Klüver 1991, p. 216). In other words, such theory building incorporates small scale/large scale: The micro-level represents the level of individual actions, the meso-level stands for an organizational component, and the macro-level includes a society in general, a nation-state. Approaching society as a set of vertical layers finds its expression also in migration theory (to name just a few Laitin 1998; Pries 2015; Havlin 2013).

Finally, explicitly connecting agency and structure has composed a fundamental problem throughout the history of sociology; the structure-agency link goes beyond a recognition of the implicit scale perspective in theory building. The link debate emerged as a discussion "over whether it is possible to integrate structural and action-oriented analysis in a single theoretical perspective and, if so, which dimension (if either) should have priority" (Calhoun 2002). The linking approach aimed at reconciling actor-centered and structure-centered theories, attempting to solve the structure-agency dilemma. Two influential efforts of such reconciliation are Archer's theory of morphogenesis (1982, 2000) and Giddens' structuration theory (1984). The latter one comprehended 'the nature of human action and the acting self' by focusing on human agency and abstract social institutions (Giddens 1984, p. xvii). The dualism of agency and institutions (as structure) Antony Giddens reconceptualized as a duality, the duality of structure (idem, p. xx) . The former one literally means changing shape, which contrasts with morphostasis. Archer used social morphogenesis to highlight dynamic relations between agency and structure, "where the structure predates the action that in turn may transform it and where the transformed (or reproduced) structure postdates this action" (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2018, p. 867). Comparing these two theories, Archer pointed out:

> "Both the 'morphogenetic' and 'structuration' approaches concur that 'action' and 'structure' presuppose one another: structural patterning is inextricably grounded in practical interaction. Simultaneously both acknowledge that social practice is ineluctably shaped by the unacknowledged conditions of action and generates unintended consequences which form the context of subsequent interaction. The two perspectives thus endorse the credo that the 'escape of human history from human intentions,

> and the return of the consequences of that escape as causal influences upon human action, is a chronic feature of social life'. Where they differ profoundly is in how they conceptualize it, and how, on that basis, they theorize about the structuring (and re-structuring) of social systems" (Archer 1982, p. 456).

Further Archer denounced an immanent dualism between voluntarism and determinism, between synchrony and diachrony, and between individual and society present in the structuration theory. Whereas the theory of morphogenesis is "sequential, dealing in endless cycles of – structural conditioning/social interaction/structural elaboration – thus unravelling the dialectical interplay between structure and action" (Archer 1982, p. 458), between environment and a subject. Because "[t]he properties and powers of the human being are neither seen as pregiven, nor as socially appropriated, but rather these are emergent from our relations with our environment. As such they have relative autonomy from biology and society alike, and causal powers to modify both of them" (Archer 2000, p. 87).

Despite the immense impact of the scale perspective on social thought, Bruno Latour strongly criticized it as devastating to the development of social theory (Latour 1996a). The author challenged the traditional hierarchical order that often characterizes society with a clear 'top' and 'bottom.' This conventional approach categorizes elements as either macro-scale (e.g., 'b') and micro-scale (e.g., 'a'), treating them as fundamentally different and necessitating distinct research methods. However, this perspective falls short in capturing the dynamic processes through which an element can transition from an individual, micro-scale state ('a') to a collective, macro-scale state (b), and vice versa.

Latour contested this inflexible, top-down or bottom-up view of society, highlighting the need for a more nuanced and adaptable approach that recognizes the intricate interplay between individual and collective elements. He argued that the metaphor of scales, moving from the individual to the nation state through various intermediate levels as family, kinship, groups, institutions, should be replaced by a metaphor of connections and ties (idem, p. 371). According to Latour, a network is not inherently larger or smaller than another; it is merely longer or more densely interconnected (ibid). This shift in focus from hierarchical structures to connections, quality of relations, and the network of connections, arenas, and frames leads to a non-structural theory building, which, in turn, provides new possibilities for conceptualizing and embedding human agency. The following section delves into the question of whether it is feasible to contemplate agency beyond structural settings or to envision human agency in a non-hierarchical way.

3.3 Agency in the Non-Structural Context

The actor-network analysis by Bruno Latour and a theory of strategic action by James M. Jasper offer us their conceptualization of agency in non-structural and non-hierarchical ways. In these cases, networks and arenas are social environments for human agency and actions. Networks and arenas are the most recent conceptual entities. Much earlier Erving Goffman explored concepts such as (primary) frameworks and frames to explain human

experiences and subjective involvement in social events, patterns of thinking and interactions studied with the frame analysis as a methodological tool to examine 'the organization of experience' (Goffman 1974, p. 11). Instead of focusing on the organization of society, he addressed "the structure of experience individuals have at any moment of their social lives" (idem, p. 13). The author distinguished two types of primary – natural and social – networks, which differ in degree of organization: "Some are neatly presentable as a system of entities, postulates, and rules; others – indeed, most others – appear to have no apparent articulated shape, providing only a lore of understanding, an approach, a perspective" (idem, p. 21). According to Goffman, individuals are not capable to guide an outcome of natural frameworks prevailed from 'full determinism and determinateness.' In contrast, social frameworks:

> "… provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being. Such an agency is anything but implacable; it can be coaxed, flattered, affronted, and threatened. What it does can be described as "guided doings." These doings subject the doer to "standards," to social appraisal of his action based on its honesty, efficiency, economy, safety, elegance, tactfulness, good taste, and so forth" (idem, p. 22).

For Goffman, agency as guided doings is connected to actions, to the evaluation of these actions by personal and social qualities, which define their meaning. With his understanding of the term 'frame,' the author claimed that daily individuals find themselves embedded in different frameworks that evoke various attitudes and experiences of social reality. The contradiction of such experiences forces actors "to develop a creative capacity of practical evaluation, mediation and judgment" (Rebughini 2021, p. 16). In situations when frames cannot be applied or when an individual's framing of activity is meaningless, they might be broken or replaced with other frames (Goffman 1974, p. 347). The frames are changeable and so does the agency. Built on Goffman's ideas, James M. Jasper developed his theory of strategic action.

Actors, Strategic Actions, and Arenas

Jasper's concept of human agency extends beyond mere action and strategy within a broader social context. He introduced a term 'arena' as an alternative to the structure-agency dichotomy. An arena, according to the author, is a dynamic collection of rules and resources that facilitate various interactions, resulting in outcomes that can range from formal or casual. While some arenas clearly define their participants, others are more open (Jasper 2006, p. 141). Jasper noted that despite the structural appearance of some arenas, players often accept and operate within the rules. Players also develop interests within these arenas that contribute to their identities as participants, sometimes even legally. However, the scholar emphasized that it is always possible to challenge the rules,

create new strategies, or reshape the arenas themselves, allowing for agency within the defined boundaries of these arenas (idem, p. 167–168).

Resources and skills empower an individual to navigate across various arenas such as the workplace, market, and relationships, which may differ based on individual goals, objectives, and motivations to enter them. Individuals who are per se purposeful and strategic can change an arena while pursuing their efficacy. In this pursuit humans "form groups, develop identities, engage in conflicts, construct goals", and fulfill them (idem, p. 4) . Action and confidence in one's action strengthen agency, it provides an individuum with "a sense of agency, a belief that the world responds to your actions, that you are in control of events," Jasper elaborated (idem, p. 110). Furthermore, he questioned the meaning of structure as some imagined social system, which turns into a fiction without (strategic) actions, without human agency. He argued:

> "Most barriers come from other players trying to block us. Structures should be constraints (and aids) that operate independently of strategic intent – a rare condition. Behind every "structure" is usually another player hard at work" (idem, p. 167).

While in his book *Getting Your Way. Strategic Dilemmas in the Real World* (2006), James M. Jasper focused on an individual strategic action and intersubjective element while navigating various arenas (markets, sports, workplaces, interpersonal relations), collective agency as multitude[16] finds its expression in Jasper's cultural understanding of social and protest movements (Jasper 2014). In his book *Protest. A Cultural Introduction to Social Movements*, the scholar applied structural and action-centered theories to examine a growing tendency to social movements over the last 250 years across the globe. In respect of structural theories, he pointed at the deficit toward an understanding of constraints of action while addressing "one particular kind of constraint, namely those imposed by resources and arenas. They overlook the constraints imposed by other players, who are pursuing their own strategies, making their own decisions, and often trying hard to block the initiatives of protestors" (Jasper 2014, p. 34). For this reason, he arranged his analysis to capture collective actions of protesters enabled and constrained not only by structural obstacles but also by a collective effort of other players involved (opponents, opposing parties, and other conflicting movements).

While Goffman's and Jaspers' theoretical efforts still either engaged with or acknowledged a social structure in their analysis, Latour excised strong criticism toward structural theories or a scale model in theory building that he considered devastating for social theory.

[16] Further details on the concept of collective actions as multitude and its role in protest movements can be found in Havlin and Aronson (2015).

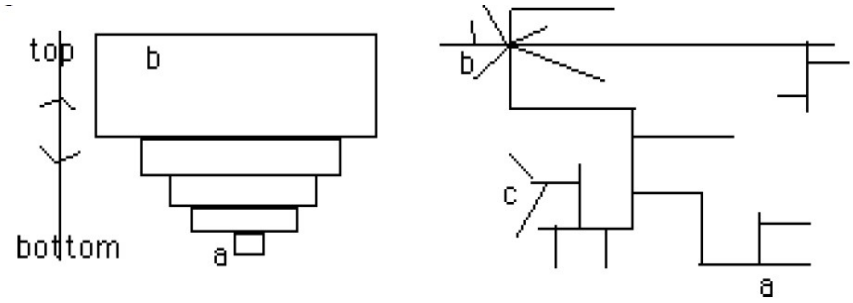
Actors and Networks

Actor-network theory (ANT) by Bruno Latour (1996a) provides an alternative perspective to overcome structural determinism, gaining resonance across academic disciplines internationally (Murdoch 1997; Bruni and Teli 2007; Fenwick 2010; Sayes 2014). Together with or merely within post-humanism, ANT confronts a scale perspective to structure and agency and its claims related to the micro-macro-distinctions. In his critique, Latour accused a scale perspective of dominating social theory building for far too long. He argued:

> "… the ANT claims that modern societies cannot be described without recognizing them as having a fibrous, thread-like, wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary character that is never captured by the notions of levels, layers, territories, spheres, categories, structure, systems. It aims at explaining the *effects* accounted for by those traditional words without having to buy the ontology, topology and politics that goes with them" (Latour 1996a, p. 370).

Figure 8 exemplifies a scale and network distinction.[17] The scale perspective follows a logic of top-down and bottom-up distinction, which Latour found doubtful, since society has neither top nor bottom. Besides this perspective "implies that the element "b" being macro-scale is of a different nature and should be studied thus differently from element "a" which is micro-scale" (idem, p. 371). Moreover, a scale is not able to capture a reciprocal relation between individual, collective, and societal. By using a concept network to explain social reality, Latour strived to solve three dilemmas related to far/close (global/local), small scale/large scale, and inside/outside. In the far/close relation, a network passes a geographic proximity defining space as "neither social nor "real" space, but simply associations" (ibid).

Figure 8: Scale and Network Distinction



This attribution through associations is especially important in the context of transnational social spaces that are relevant to my methodological approach (Section 5.1) and employed to explain mundane transnational social spaces on the example of an entrepreneurial network stretching across Europa and Asia (Part Six).

[17] I adopted the delineation of this distinction from Latour's work (1996b, p. 5).

Furthermore, a network opposes a small scale/large scale and regains "some margin of maneuvers between the ingredients of society - its vertical space, its hierarchy, its layering, its macro scale, its wholeness, its overarching character" (Latour 1996a, p. 372). The network enables thoughts about a highly connected global entity, which remains continuously local: "Instead of opposing the individual level to the mass, or agency to structure, we simply follow how given element becomes strategic through the number of connections in commands, and how it loses its importance when losing its connections" (idem, p. 372) . Finally, an inside and outside dilemma is diminished by a notion of the network since the latter "is all boundary without inside and outside… Literary, a network has no outside" (ibid). Instead of the significance in far/close (global/local), small scale/large scale, inside/outside, an application of network shifts the focus to associations and connections (as a-b-c in Figure 8), relevant for the analysis of the transnational social networks later.

The actor-network theory presents an opportunity to move beyond the theoretical dualism of structure-agency and of micro-macro paradigms; besides ANT questions and undermines social determinism by accounting for realms beyond social reality. In doing so, ANT contemplates agency within its social, biological, technological, and physical interactions imbedded in networks. Latour (1996b, p. 1) elaborates on his intricate conception of agency or agencies: First, "to attribute them to naturality" involves associating them with nature, aligning with the domain of natural science. In the case of humans, this expression is manifested in corporality (body) and physicality. Second, "to tie them to the social fabric" involves attributing sociality to them, connecting agency with the realm of social science. Third, approaching agency as a semiotic construction necessitates recognizing that agency carries meaning, which forms the basis for interpretation. Thus, simultaneously agency emerges as a physical, social, and semiotic entity. In this way, Latour insisted on rethinking and redefining an actor and its/his/her agency. For him, an agent (actant) can be a human or non-human (Latour 1996a, p. 369). What matters are their interconnections and the networks they form, the linking nodes they create, their intensity and dispersion. Furthermore, "instead of thinking in terms of surfaces – two dimensions – or spheres – three dimensions – one is asked to think in terms of nodes that have as many dimensions as they have connections" (idem, p. 370).

In the field of migration studies, deliberate efforts have been undertaken to integrate networks – both collectives and social networks – into analysis at both macro- and micro-levels. The aim is to conceptualize these networks as an intermediate meso-level, positioned between structure and agency (Hugo 1981; Castles and Miller 2009; King 2012, pp. 20–22; Pries 2015). It is crucial to emphasize that these endeavors diverge from the Latourian perspective, which transcends the limitations of scale. This specific distinction underscores the significance of Actor-Network Theory and other approaches discussed in this subsection for my study, where I aim to present considerations of agency within and beyond both structural and non-structural approaches to theory building. Further clarification on how I apply these non-structural approaches to study networks is exemplified in the examination of immigrant businesses (Chapter 12) or an immigrant leisure group and its community engagement (Chapter 15).

This Section portrayed agency within non-structural settings as a means to transcend traditional structural determinism and challenge conventional notions of structure and agency in social theory. This perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of potential influences on immigrant agency outside of structural settings. To conclude the discussion on variations of application of agency in social thought, it is essential to consider foundational perspectives that contribute to our nuanced understanding of agency, taking into account social-conditioning factors, and power relations. These perspectives encompass feminism, intersectionality, nomadism, and postcolonialism. They aim to illuminate the processes involved in shaping human agency and identities, including gendered and intersectional agency, as well as the strategies deployed to confront power hierarchies, exemplified by postcolonial agency.

3.4 Agency, Socio-Conditioning Factors, and Power Relations

In this section, I explore agency through the lens of socio-conditioning factors and power relations, building upon the earlier epistemologies. This approach involves a critical examination of classification categories and their profound influence on individual and collective actions, identities, and the concept of human agency. When viewed through the socio-conditioning lens, agency takes on a gendered, racialized, nationalized, and ethnicized character, molded by societal perceptions and individual experiences. It emerges as a force in direct opposition to oppression, underrepresentation, and objectification.

Utilizing socio-conditioning factors for classification, hierarchization, and identification offers a range of strategies to cultivate and nurture a sense of agency. These strategies include politicizing female agency by merging the personal and political, decolonizing agency to liberate postcolonial subjectivities and subaltern positionalities, and what agency means in the context of nomadic subjects. When exploring the dynamics of power relations, several key aspects come into focus: systems of oppression and subordination, power structures, and power struggles. This analysis is facilitated by the use of innovative conceptual tools such as intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991; hooks 1994; Lykke 2011), postcolonial theories (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012; Ponzanesi and Colpani 2016; Boatcă et al. 2018), nomadic thought (Braidotti 2011; Braidotti and Regan 2017).

It is important to note that these theoretical and methodological tools draw inspiration from the first-wave feminism but have also evolved independently. This theory building process is not confined to purely academic settings; it is deeply rooted in activism or often emerges from social and protest movements. In the following subsections, I will delve into agency from the perspectives of feminism, intersectionality, postcolonialism, and nomadism.

Gendered Agency in Theory and Practice

Throughout its development, feminism has prominently addressed the subject of gendered agency, examining concepts like self-organization, female selfhood, gendered identity, sexuality, self-determination, and self-expression (Irigaray 1979; Nave-Herz 1997). This exploration has also sparked discussions about gender-sensitive language (Pusch 1991; Renegar and Sowards 2009) and broader acceptance of diverse bodily practices (Price and Shildrick 1999; Villa 2007). The pursuit of gendered agency has meant a recognition of a crisis within traditional notions of womanhood and prompted a quest for solutions. In the process, it has raised fundamental questions about how female agency is shaped and influenced by political, social, and sexual emancipation and liberation. The pursuit of female agency has taken various forms, including theory development, activism, and sometimes conflicting grassroots movements. All these expressions contribute to the analysis of the notions and feelings of selfhood that are essential for a comprehensive understanding of individual and collective agency and the way in which societal structures impact these concepts (Clegg 2006, p. 310).

Feminist theory building and activism in terms of agency refer to but do not exhaust such issues as gaining a feminist voice (hooks 1984), freedom of choice, sexual freedom, and right of self-determination primarily for women (Millett 2000), work and life balance outlining such issues as equal pay, child- and elderly care, female well-being (Billson and Fluehr-Lobban 2005). Some of these issues have been originating from the initial 1960s agenda of the feminism in the so-called Western or Western-influenced world, which gradually transformed into the post-millennial program and the broader international context. Focusing on these issues embodies and fosters a sense of female (gendered) agency in the political, public, and intimate realms. According to bell hooks, "politics becomes a condition for reasserting the relationship between agency, power, and struggle" within the feminist movement and theory building (hooks 1994, p. 129). Coming to voice through politics, scholarship or public debate, hooks saw as a "democratization of voice wherein everyone's words will be given equal time and be seen as equally valuable" (idem, p. 186) . Furthermore, hooks emphasized that the contemporary feminist movement has laid the cultural foundation for legitimizing gender-based scholarship (idem, p. 126), which, in turn, has introduced innovate and often contradictory perspectives for assessing womanhood and female agency.

The concept of contradiction, particularly prominent in the context of the further developments of feminism, transcends simple opposition. It provides a multifaceted framework that includes ambiguity, paradox, multiplicity, complexity, anti-orthodoxy, opposition, and inconsistency. Third-wave feminists intentionally employed these contradictions to disrupt conventional notions of identity and agency, introducing ambiguity, divergence, incompatibility, and alternative modes of thought. Contradiction is strategically utilized to navigate the interplay of opposing elements. This performative and participatory use of contradictions opens avenues for self-determination, transcendence, and the cultivation of counter-imaginations, ultimately fostering and relying on a sense of agency (Renegar and Sowards 2009, p. 6).

Earlier Luce Irigaray (1979) had identified contradiction and ambiguity as intrinsic qualities on feminist theory . She advocated for a feminist theory that refrains from asserting 'unambiguous truthfulness' and instead actively engages in self-critique and theoretical reflection within the ever-evolving theoretical and methodological debates. According to Irigaray, feminism should not be preoccupied with answering the question, 'What is a woman?' Rather, it should prioritize fostering discussions on matters related women and female agency. In essence, Irigaray's view entailed a feminist theory that embraces its inherent contradictions and ambiguities, avoiding the pursuit of definitive answers and promoting introspection within the theoretical discourse. She underscored further that theoretical constructs should refrain from portraying women as lacking or merely representing the absence of a subject. Instead, they should recognize that even within categories that express subordination and domination, social resistance and empowerment can emerge (Irigaray 1979, p. 80). This perspective is exemplified in the following subsection through an intersectional analysis. This analytical approach serves the dual purpose of addressing structural inequalities and discrimination while highlighting the formation of identities within subordinated groups.

Intersectional Agency: Discrimination and Identification

In alignment with critical and reflective developments in theory building, the intersectionality debates in the 1980s and early 1990s had brought a transformative dimension to feminist theory. The intersectional approach has enriched feminist discourse by providing a conceptual framework to address complex identity formations and layered discriminatory practices. Acknowledging these developments, bell hooks highlighted the significant contributions of black women and women of color in challenging and deconstructing the conventional notion of woman. Their insistence that gender alone does not encompass the entirety female identity has profoundly impacted feminist theory, challenging the prevailing feminist discourse primarily shaped by white academic women and initiating a revolutionary paradigm shift (hooks 1994, p. 63).

While this thesis cannot comprehensively cover the diversity of intersectional approaches, it primarily focuses on two foundational paradigms that have laid the groundwork for subsequent theoretical and methodological developments in this field. Kimberlé Crenshew's analysis (1991) delved into the intersections of gender and race, particularly through the experiences of African-American women facing structural discrimination in the workplace. In her legal work and writings, the author addressed the structural injustices stemming from the convergence of racism and sexism. Crenshaw's intersectional approach is two twofold. Firstly, she explored structural intersectionality as a frame for understanding how race and gender intersect in the context of violence against women of color (idem, p. 1296). Secondly, she emphasized representational intersectionality as a means to reconcile the tension between claims of multiple identities and the ongoing need for collective political action (ibid). According to the scholar, social categories such as gender, race, and class possess significance and implications in social interactions. The key lies not merely in the existence of these categories but in the specific

values assigned to them and how these values give rise to social hierarchies (idem, p. 1297). Crenshaw underscored that the process of categorization itself is an exercise of power, urging us to discern the nuances within this process:

> "First, the process of categorizing – or, in identity terms, naming – is not unilateral. Subordinated people can and do participate, sometimes even subverting the naming process in empowering ways. One need only think about the historical subversion of the category "Black" or the current transformation of "queer" to understand that categorization is not one way street. Clearly, there is unequal power, but there is nonetheless some degree of agency that people can and do exert in the politics of naming. And it is important to note that identity continues to be a site of resistance for members of different subordinated groups. We all can recognize the distinction between the claims "I am Black" and the claim "I am a person who happens to be Black" (Crenshaw 1991, p. 1297).

The expression "I am Black," as argued, involves the application of socially imposed identity. However, by using this identity, one transforms this expression into 'an anchor of subjectivity' (ibid). This act transcends mere description or subordination, evolving into a statement of resistance, essentially a 'positive discourse of self-identification' Conversely, the statement "I am a person who happens to be Black" conveys another message, emphasizing that the person is primarily an individual and that their Black identity is circumstantial. This statement aims to establish a form of universality in self-identification, highlighting its contingent, contextual, and non-deterministic character. While both categorizations are trustworthy and valid, their effectiveness varies depending on the political and social context. Crenshaw underscored the importance of occupying and defending a politics of social location as a 'critical resistance strategy' for marginalized groups, rather than vacating or destroying it (ibid). In line with Cranshaw's perspective, bell hooks believed that by acknowledging subjectivity and the limitations of identity, we disrupt the objectification inherent in a culture of domination (hooks 1994, p. 1).

Butler's intersectional analysis, in turn, delved into the interplay among gender, sexuality, and sex, significantly influencing the queer debate and queer feminism in the early 1990s. In her seminal work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler emphasized the need to recognize the multiplicity of "cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of 'women' are constructed" ([1990] 1999, p. 20). She identified a political problem when feminism assumed that the term woman represented a singular, common identity. Rather than being a stable signifier that universally encompasses those it aims to describe and represent, the term women, even in its plural form, became a contentious term, a site of contestation, and a source of anxiety. Butler argued that being a woman is not an exhaustive identity because gender is not consistently or coherently constituted in various historical contexts. Moreover, gender intersects with other dimensions, such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and regional identities (idem, p. 6). Consequently, separating gender from other cultural and

political intersections becomes impossible since these intersections inevitably contribute to its construction and maintenance.

Beyond race, class, sex, and gender, the scholarly debate further highlighted other frequently discussed intersections, including ethnicity, nationality, and body (Davis 2008; Villa 2010; Degele and Winker 2011; Lutz et al. 2011; Lutz 2014; Lutz and Amelina 2017). Intersectionality, as an analytical tool, offers a complex approach to understanding power differentials, normativities, and identity formations in the context of categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age, nationality, and more (Lykke 2011, p. 208). It allows us to examine how these categories influence an individual's position in society concerning discriminatory or privileging practices.

Paola Rebughini has elucidated the widespread adaptation of intersectionality beyond the realms of gender studies and feminism. Its analytical potential lies in its ability to approach phenomena and dissect the "multidimensionality, simultaneity, pluralism and situatedness of the social construction of categorizations, as well as the way in which single subjects deal with them" (Rebughini 2021, [10]). Social categorizations like gender, ethnicity, race, and class play a pivotal role in shaping individual agency. According to the scholar, employing an intersectional analysis to explore agency can help uncover a dual facet of agency. It encompasses the subject's capacity to contend with pertinent social categorizations (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity) and the situated nature of agency, where it becomes a temporary subjective synthesis of social reality amidst the ever-changing currents of social life (idem, [1]). Furthermore, linking intersectionality with agency facilitates the examination of how agency is situationally constructed when confronting forms of domination through categorization and the endeavors to resist them. Crenshaw and hooks similarly emphasized that intersectionality frames agency as an emergent concept within a specific intersection, where individuals attribute meaning to their actions within a distinct social context and a particular moment in time. This approach investigates the formation of the categories we employ to make sense of reality, highlighting the significance of their boundaries and varied definitions. Intersectionality acts as an analytical framework to scrutinize the agency of individuals positioned at the transient crossroads of multiple and dynamic categories (idem, [18]).

Intersectionality, initially conceived as a theory of social injustice, has evolved not only into a framework for understanding intricate forms of discrimination but also for examining identities and human agency. In the context of intersectional identities, individuals or their representatives can engage in activism either for themselves or on behalf of others to confront or surpass intersectional inequalities. The means to address these inequalities may involve vocal advocacy, challenging conventional norms, or subjecting them to critical examination. Much like feminism in its broader sense, intersectionality transcends the bounds of academia and actively seeks to bring about change through activism. This is exemplified by Kimberlé Crenshaw's recent involvement in the #SayHerName movement (2016), which aims to raise awareness about Black female victims of police brutality. This highlights the intertwined relationship between theoretical development and activism, an essential aspect of epistemologies that

delve into power dynamics and socio-conditioning factors, as further demonstrated in the realm of postcolonialism, which will be explored further.

Postcolonial Agency

Matters of agency and individual subjectivity belong to the problem area that creates tension within and around postcolonial theory (Williams and Chrisman 1993, p. 6). On the one hand, there are attacks on individualism as a Western and 'bourgeois liberal concept' (ibid). On the other hand, postcolonial critique questions the unequal cultural representations 'in the context for political and social authority within the modern world order' (Bhabha 2007 [1994], p. 245). In this respect, Homi K. Bhabha argued that "postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of 'minorities' within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South" (ibid). Colonial testimony or in other words Orientalism is not only a political topic or a geographical division but rather 'a distinction of geopolitical awareness' penetrating culture, scholarship, and institutions; it is a discourse of 'an uneven exchange with various kinds of power' (political, intellectual, cultural, moral) (Said [1978] 1979, p. 12). These powers among other things define, control, and manipulate a subaltern, colonial subject. In contrast, 'a Subject of the West,' a 'concealed Subject' pretends it has 'no geo-political determinations' as claimed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her influential essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* First in 1988 (1993, p. 66). Spivak unraveled the critique toward European subjectivity contrasting with the subjectivity of subaltern.

In general, postcolonial discourse promotes a trope agents not victims that according to Gudrun Dahl aims at overcoming subvert risks of passivity and non-responsibility attached to the role of victim:

> "To be described or treated as a victim would be seen as involving a risk of permanently looking at yourself as a victim, rejecting responsibility for your situation and incurring blame on others. The notion of such 'victim mentality' is not entirely separate from another abhorrence of contemporary neoliberal discourse: aid-dependency" (Dahl 2009, p. 396). Further she argued: "The textual obliteration of agency is sometimes treated as an obliteration in the absolute sense: people become passive when they are described as passive" (idem, p. 394).

Rejecting the notion of victimhood stands as a key feature of postcolonialism when reevaluating postcolonial subjectivities. Irina Zherebkina, a notable philosopher from Ukraine specializing in feminism and post-Soviet studies, contended that such rejection puts an end to "humiliating him/her with practices of ruthless compassion or cynical consumption" (2006, p. 156). From the perspective of postcolonial subjectivity, this signifies moving away from rhetoric that perpetuates victimization and instead reexamining "what has been done to us" and contemplating "what can we do for each other" (Zherebkina 2007, p. 79). This reassessment necessitates a revision of the political

activities and daily practices of all involved parties. The author further emphasized that postcolonial discourses enable a dialogue between the seemingly irreconcilable worlds of the West and the East. So, what changes in terms of agency have occupied in this renewed dialogue between the West and the East? This new dialogue has led to a transformation from potential (exotic, indigenous, ethnic) informants to postcolonial-aware, capable subjects. Postcolonial agency, in this context, does not solely emanate from former colonies (Mignolo 2000; Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012).

In this thesis, the primary focus deviates from Anglophone and Francophone postcolonialism, which is deeply rooted in the resistance dynamics between former empires and their colonies. Instead, it delves into an alternative dimension of post/coloniality, specifically pertinent to the thesis topic: agency actualized within the framework of migration and settlement, as exemplified through the experiences of post-Soviet immigrants in Germany, who can situated within postsocialist coloniality (Amelina 2022, p. 2405). This manifestation of postcoloniality (and concurrently, postcolonial agency) originates from post-Soviet, post-socialist, former 'second world' contexts. As Anna Amelina elucidated, considering the Soviet Union as a subaltern empire, "socialist coloniality/ies as a subaltern (in relation to the "West"), anti-Western materialist project of (class) equality and progress (of state socialism)" (ibid) provides a nuanced understanding of the impact that post-socialist (imperial) relations exert on immigrants and individuals from former post-socialist countries. She further emphasized, "In the context of current post-socialist relations, coloniality/ies continue to be articulated in the superiority and missionizing claims of former socialist societies (towards themselves and other regions) that still function as an essential source for individual and collective belonging ..." (ibid).

In the context of postsocialist coloniality, such postcolonial agency represents a liberation or decolonization from the totality of a state, from current or former totalitarian regimes as in the case of post-Soviet subjectivities (Tlostanova 2015, p. 40), processing postcolonial modalities beyond the historical Anglophone and Francophone traditions.[18] Madina Tlostanova critically analyzed post-Soviet discourses, especially relations between (former Soviet) Russia and its ex-colonies. Such analysis undermines the dichotomous scheme of West versus East, and North versus South indicating the differences between historical colonialisms and the phenomenon of global coloniality. Postcolonialism is not only regionally located in the former colonies. Inevitably it connects to the global coloniality incorporating 'today's ex-third-world, ex-socialist and western subjects alike' (Tlostanova 2012, p. 133). The author differentiates between colonialism as 'a specific socio-historical configuration' and coloniality as an aftermath of colonialism. Without critical reflection, coloniality is expressed in behaviors and (in)sensibilities resulting in "uncritical acceptance of the existing world hierarchy in

[18] See Chapter 2 for an in-depth analysis of personal transformations within evolving societal landscapes, encompassing transitions across various modalities of colonialities — from Soviet coloniality to post-socialist dynamics (regions of origin) and ultimately to Euro-centered coloniality (destination region).

which everyone is assigned a strict and never-questioned place" (ibid). For this reason, a postcolonial approach is supposed to question existing world hierarchies in everyday life but also scholarship and research. Postcolonialism undermines uncritical and never-questioned attitudes toward the global world that "is subordinated to the general logic and structure of power, firmly linked with capital, exploitation and violence, as well as the idea of race, resulting in the specific control of labor, state and, more importantly, subjectivity (coloniality of being) and knowledge (production and distribution)" (ibid). Tlostanova depicted the coloniality of the Russian/Soviet Empire as follows:

> "… [it] strove to build its own separate variant of globality/modernity – an Orthodox kingdom and, later, a Soviet world ... On the other hand, the concrete strategies of building Russian/Soviet modernity had to be attuned to the western one... Here Russia chose a doomed way of catching up with Europe and proving that it can out-west the west. This wish has alternated periodically with a rejection of everything European and a retreat into the jingoism that we also witness today. The Janus-faced empire always felt itself a colony in the presence of the west... In the Soviet Union, the actual dominance of racial discourses was always masked by a more intricate ethnic and religious configuration... In relation to its colonies the Soviet tactic became more cruel and refined, based on methodical elimination of all alternative thinking and being" (idem, p. 135).

Trickster as a remarkable in-between subjectivity is one of the postcolonial agencies that emerged in the post-Soviet space 'based on mocking and outsmarting Soviet/imperial authority' (idem, p. 133). The detailed account of tricksterism and tricksters, Tlostanova in the co-authorship with Mignolo offered in the book *Learning to Unlearn. Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* (2012). They engaged "the contemporary understanding of the term, which is linked with yet departs from the classical mythological, religious, and folklore meaning" (i.e., God-like creatures or people with supranatural characteristics) (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012, p. 88). The recent applications of the term feature such qualities associated with tricksters as: "ambiguity, deceit of authority, playing tricks on power, metamorphosis, a mediating function between different worlds, manipulation and bricolage as modes of existence" (ibid). In the context of the book, the authors depicted suspended indigenous agency through transcultural tricksters in the non-European Russian or previously Soviet regions (i.e., the Caucasus and Central Asia). In the colonial and postcolonial beliefs, "tricksterism acts as a form of resistance and re-existence" (idem, p. 89). Tricksterism as the agency of (post-)Soviet coloniality contrasts other modalities of selfhood produced by the Soviet state: totalitarian, pragmatic, autonomous, normative, and banal selves (Chatterjee and Petrone 2008, in details elaborated in Chapter 2). Despite the specific contextualization of tricksterism, such a type of agency can be transferred to other transcultural and transnational contexts that emerged from international migration as will be illustrated later (Part Four). In a postnational context, tricksters, characterized by cross-cultural and transnational features, find resonance, aligning well with the realm of nomadism.

Nomadic agency completes the analysis of radical epistemologies and their unique approaches toward agency and its implementations in the multidimensional social reality.

Nomadic Agency

'I am rooted, but I flow' serves as the epigraph opening Part Two and encapsulates the underlying logic of nomadism, as elucidated by Rosi Braidotti to describing 'a new figuration of subjectivity in a multidifferentiated nonhierarchical way' (Braidotti 2011, p. 137). Nomadism, in contrast to previous epistemologies, is envisioned in a post-identitarian and non-hierarchical manner (D'Andrea 2006, p. 101). It diverges from the scale perspective and structure-agency reasoning. This perspective resonates with my experiences in conducting and analyzing semi-structured interviews. Participants refrained from framing themselves strictly through intersectionality categories such as nationality, gender, class, and ethnicity. Instead, they articulated their positionalities in a manner aligned with what Braidotti describes as 'a multidifferentiated nonhierarchical way' of being, acting, and subjectivity (2011, p. 137).

With a philosophical and feminist background, Braidotti conceptualizes nomadism as, in essence, an inclusive approach that combines social, natural, and technological elements to conceptualize subjectivity. The author laid the basis of this theory in the early 1990s and re-examined it in the early 2010s (Braidotti 1994, 2011). Braidotti argued that

> nomadic thought "invites us to rethink the structures and boundaries of the self by tackling the deeper conceptual roots of issues of identity. It is particularly important not to confuse the process of nomadic subjectivity with individualism or particularity. Whereas identity is a bounded, ego-indexed habit of fixing and capitalizing on one's selfhood, subjectivity is a socially mediated process of relations and negotiations with multiple others and with multilayered social structures… the emergence of social subjects is always a collective enterprise, "external" to the self, while it also mobilizes the self's in-depth structures. Issues of subjectivity raise questions of entitlement, in terms of power as restrictive (potestas) but also as empowering or affirmative (potentia)" (Braidotti 2011, pp. 3–4).

Individuals engage in intricate interactions involving both human and non-human elements, all while bearing multiple layers of identity and belonging as subjects-in-process (Braidotti and Regan 2017). An intriguing parallel emerges between this notion and Latour's efforts to synchronize actor-network analysis, creating a comprehensive framework encompassing social, physical, and semiotic realities. This alignment can be seen in cases like Latour's exploration of the new climatic regime within the Gaia hypothesis (Latour 2018). Both Braidotti and Latour endorse a posthuman and non-anthropocentric perspective on subjects, which stands in stark contrast to the anthropocentric viewpoints presented in other approaches to agency, self, and

subjectivity. In this non-anthropocentric paradigm, posthuman subjects encompass not just the human but also the nonhuman, illustrated in Latour's interpretation earlier.[19] In contrast, Braidotti's nomadic subjects may embody technologically mediated human agency, where technology significantly influences their interactions. This mediation takes a broad form, ranging from the impact of medical technology on human corporeality to the transformation of human sociality through information and communications technology (ICT). This latter aspect is of particular relevance when conceptualizing international migration and the evolving dynamics of immigrants' relations in the 21st century (Barbosa Neves and Casimiro 2018; for more details, refer to Havlin 2019a).

Further nomadism questions 'a binary logic of self-other opposition' because such logic reduces differentiation 'to pejoration, disqualification and exclusion' (Braidotti 2010, p. 409). Sameness postulates subjectivity 'as coinciding with the dominant image of thought and representation of the subject' (ibid). This sameness revolves around a "dominant image of the subject as masculine/ white/ heterosexual/ speaking a standard language/ property-owning/ urbanized" (ibid) This kind of post-humanism frames not only in technological terms rather primarily in a philosophical sense. And as such it opposes the humanism of the 18th century with its understanding of subject, subjectivity, and agency: a knowing, rational, conscious, moral subject, a man who contradicts the other. Who is the other then? Braidotti reflected the pervasive construction of 'Otherness' in Western philosophy. This construction often occurs through the lenses of sexualization, racialization, and naturalization. The marginalized groups, including women, sexual minorities, natives, non-Europeans, and non-human entities like animals and the Earth itself, have historically been subjected to exclusion, exploitation, and dispossession. This violence is closely tied to the assertion of universalism and the oppositional view of consciousness (ibid) .

Now, nomadism emerges from Western post-humanism and non-Western neo-humanism with its dynamic style and boundary-crossing attitude. By the same token, it alters hybridity, diasporas, and creolization by "means of regrounding claims to connections and alliances among different constituencies" (idem, p. 411). With the intensified migration flows in the European Union and growing encounters with otherness, Braidotti contemplates novel ways of European identity formations and new models of European subjectivity. In doing so, she aims at overcoming destabilizing effects in the interaction with the other, at de-mobilizing "the dangerous binary oppositions into which cultural, racial, and religious differences" (Jusová 2011, p. 56). As a highly political project, Braidotti's work focuses primarily on political agency, which together with ethnic origin and national identity, composes 'basic components of the liberal view of citizenship' (Braidotti 2011, p. 19). Such understanding of agency increases variants of how agency can be approached.

[19] For more insights into this topic, refer to Jonathan Murdoch (1997).

Nomadism completes a comprehensive exploration of epistemologies grounded in socio-conditioning factors and power dynamics, offering vital theoretical and methodological interventions concerning subjectivity, self, and identity, demanding flexibility and multiple belongings. These epistemologies integral to this exploration, emphasize the recognition of agency that is often suppressed or marginalized (hooks 1994, p. 172). Beyond providing alternative frameworks for understanding agency, subjectivity, and self, these epistemologies advocate for a methodological departure from traditional subject-object research logic or researcher-researched relationships. This departure challenges assumptions about neutral and objective standpoints, highlighting that perspectives are geopolitically located, shaped by class, gender, and race-infused values, and historically contingent (Boatcă et al. 2018, p. 435).

Such a premise resonates with the researcher's accountability and the need for rigorous self-analysis (Braidotti 2017, p. 191), aligning with the self-reflexive turn in sociology (Amelina and Faist 2012, p. 1709). Braidotti urged: "You have to start from where you are at and acknowledge that you're a part of the problem, and then read the situation from there to become part of the solution" (Braidotti and Regan 2017, pp. 191–192). The liberation of agency extends to a deep scrutiny of ingrained categories, as exemplified by Sara Ahmed's reevaluation of the concept of a stranger (Ahmed 2013), critical questioning knowledge production (Amelina 2022), and recognition of the limitations of research methods (Khosravi 2010; Alonso Bejarano et al. 2019). The practical applications of self-reflexivity and accountability in knowledge production hold particular importance for the argument presented later in the part dedicated to researcher positionality.

3.5 Agency as an Analytical Tool

In this section, I conclude the discussion on the framework for understanding agency at this point and explore potential methodological applications aligned with the thesis's objectives and scope. Social thought offers us a kaleidoscopic view of agency. The concept of agency, as illuminated by social thought, presents a kaleidoscopic view. While various social sciences, including economics, political science, and sociology, provide distinct approaches to analyzing agency, common threads inform my approach within this thesis.

Firstly, agency is intricately linked to the realm of individuals, encompassing their relationships, experiences, and actions. It delves into the core aspects of individuals, including their self-concepts, identity, and subjectivity.

Secondly, individual and collective agency is not merely a product of individual will; it is shaped, reproduced, and influenced by structural characteristics imbedded in entities such as societies, nation-states or institutions, and social-conditioning elements like social classes, gender, , nationality, race, and ethnicity.

Thirdly, a non-structural perspective on agency underscores the importance of understanding the connections, associations, and interactions between various agents –

whether human, nonhuman, or posthuman. These agents are grounded in their social, physical, and technological environments, and their interactions are dynamic and multifaceted.

The first and second avenues create a tension between agency and structure, a dilemma that has been discussed and refined over the years, particularly through the development of the structure-agency link in the 1980s. The third avenue, which advocates for a non-structural approach, presents is relatively novel perspective that diverges from the dominant theoretical frameworks in social science, focusing often on the macro, meso, and micro levels. This non-structural approach challenges the conventional understanding of society as structured into layers or hierarchies, bridging the gap between macro and micro elements and addressing the divide between individual and collective agency. It not only considers interconnections within the social realm but also extends its scope to encompass broader contexts such as environmental and climate regimes (as seen in actor-network theory), the impact of corporality and technology (as in nomadism), and indigenous cosmologies (as in postcolonialism).

Given the thesis's focus on immigrant agency, the relevance of these avenues become evident. Immigrant agency involves active and mobile individuals navigating across borders and boundaries, dealing with challenges both individually and collectively. At the same time, various structural elements, such as social, legal, political, economic, cultural, symbolic, and linguistic boundaries and distinctions, may enable or constrain individuals and groups during the immigration process. Immigration presents a unique context where individuals interact with multiple societies and occupy multiple positionalities, transitioning between nation-states and their stratification systems. On the other hand, a non-hierarchical approach offers innovative insights and interpretations of migration experiences that may not be adequately captured by either macro or micro paradigms. This approach draws inspiration from various thinkers, such as Jaspers, Latour, Braidotti, and Tlostanova, who provide fresh perspectives on the postcolonial setting and the complexities of migration.

However, thinking beyond the confines of structure perspective can be challenging, as the mainstream logic of social theory building often adheres to the scale perspective. Combining aspects of the agency-structure convergence with the insights from actor-network analysis helps address criticisms of methodological individualism and emphasizes the existence of complex systems of vertical and horizontal constraints and opportunities, as well as unexpected connections and relationships that emerge during migration.

In summary, the aforementioned avenues outline the discursive field around the concept of agency, providing a foundation for the analytical framework within the thesis. Another conclusion arises when we compare the interpretations of agency across different disciplines. Agency as a concept, does not pertain to any specific phenomenon but rather serves as a versatile analytical tool. It can be wielded in various ways, each serving distinct purposes. It can be utilized to focus on the relations and autonomy of individuals, emphasizing their capacity to act on their own behalf. Alternatively, it can be employed to highlight the complexity of agency, incorporating different variants of agency.

Additionally, it can be used to examine the actions of agents, particularly communicative and intersubjective actions. It is important to note that agency, as an analytical tool, may be inherently tied to the domain of human beings, their experiences, and their actions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that agency, as a concept, extends beyond human realm and is also applied to describe nonhuman entities and physical objects acting as actants. In the context of this thesis, the focus remains on the realm of human beings within their associations and networks, which encompasses individual and collective aspects.

The use of agency as an analytical tool necessitates explicit and thorough explanations of the components that constitute this toolset. This is essential to avoid the risk of turning it into a mere rhetorical device or a black-box category that are referred to without fully considering its implications and contextual relevance, as cautioned by Nina Lykke (2011, p. 210). The author pointed out that concepts, when used as black boxes or buzzwords, can become markers of disagreement or agreement and may be employed in a decontextualized manner. To avoid the risk of oversimplifying agency while maintaining the flexibility of theory construction, it is crucial to delineate the key categories that constitute the analytical framework for agency within the thesis, particularly when illustrating agency in the context of migration and settlement. Through a nonlinear composition of the thesis and an analysis of the empirical data collected based on grounded theory principles, certain core categories have emerged. These categories are identity formations, language use, and social actions. It is worth noting that these categories have a long history of application, addressing issues related to agency, structure, networks, and the interactions of individuals and groups.

It is of paramount importance to clearly delineate the components that constitute an analytical toolset for agency. Without specifying these categories, agency can become rhetorically seductive and may, in essence, serve as an explanation in and of itself. For instance, if immigrant agency is explained solely through experiences and perceptions, it might seem as everything has already been said about this phenomenon, leading to a premature halt in analytical exploration, with vital questions left unexamined. However, by considering elements such as identity formations, language use, and social actions in the context of immigrant agency, a host of critical questions emerge. These questions prompt deeper investigation and provide a more comprehensive understanding of immigrant agency:

1. What precisely are identity formations and identity frameworks, and how do they evolve in the context of international mobility?
2. What is the significance of language use within the framework of migration, and how do individuals navigate multilingual transnational environments?
3. What types of actions are pertinent in the realm of international migration, and how do these actions influence individual and collective transitions across boundaries?
4. How do these actions and strategies relate to the micro- and macrosocial aspects of migration, and to what extent are they informed by non-structural networks?

I will address these questions systematically using the example of FSU immigrants dedicating specific chapters to explore identity formations, language use, and social actions through the lens of the migration experience. The orientation for addressing these questions is illustrated in the schematic representation, which I intend to further develop as my argumentation progresses.

Agency, when attributed to individuals and groups, encompasses their understanding, reflections, actions, and positioning within social settings and processes, including migration and transformations. These settings or environments are conceptualized in various ways within the realm of social thought, including as social relations, groups, networks, arenas, societies, or structures. As such, agency can be approached as a producer, a carrier, or even a product of these settings. Regarding individual agency, it reflects the orientations, identity formations, and actions of an individual, essentially representing the acting self. On the other hand, collective agency pertains to the ability to act within a group, encompassing collaborative efforts, group identification, and a sense of belonging, thereby creating opportunities that emerge from these associations. Collective agency also includes an intersubjective element. Since immigration is inherently intertwined with broader social processes, individual migration journeys are not isolated events. Consequently, both individual and collective facets of human agency form a continuum that is essential to constructing networks and maintaining relationships.

In the forthcoming chapter, a series of questions will be raised to delve into the interplay between migration and agency, addressing fundamental aspects: How is human agency expressed in the realm of international mobility? In what ways does immigrant agency unfold in prolonged or settlement-oriented migration? Which factors play a crucial role in operationalizing agency within the dynamics of the migration process? These inquiries will serve as guiding elements for the exploration of the intricate relationship between migration and agency in the following sections.

Chapter 4: Agency through the Prism of Long-Term Migration

Within the exploration of agency throughout the thesis, the focus shifts to long-term and settlement-oriented migration as the defined processual frame in this chapter.[20] I begin with describing a relevant analytical field within migration studies to investigate long-term and settlement-oriented mobility while differentiating between units and levels of analysis within the disciplinary lens. Then, based on a literature review, I explore immigrants' experiences, embedding and maintenance practices upon migration connected to a host country and to a country of origin. For this reason I explore these practices from relevant theoretical directions: neoassimilation or integration, transnationalism, and a simultaneity hypothesis. Finally, I offer an analytical framework steaming from presented approaches to migration and agency, offering an outlook how this theoretical vocabulary is further implicated in the thesis.

4.1 Outlining the Field: Levels and Units of Analysis

Operating within various levels of analysis, migration theory, as a component of social thought, grapples with the deterministic and voluntaristic dilemma often discussed in the relationship between society and the individual. This dilemma emphasizes the intricate relationship between human agency and social structure in the realms of migration, mobility, circularity, and settlement. Examining migration theories through this lens, Oliver Bakewell has highlighted that they often sidestep the challenge posed by the problem of structure and agency. He noted that "the problem of structure and agency is a major stumbling block for the development of an integrated and coherent theory of migration" (Bakewell 2010, p. 1692).

Mirroring the macro-micro divide discussed earlier, migration theories tend to gravitate toward either end of the spectrum. Some theories concentrate on the study of macro-factors influencing international human mobility, such as the new economics of migration, dual labor market theory, and world system theory (Massey et al. 1993, pp. 346–440), employing models like the push-pull model or historical-structural model of migration (King 2012, pp. 13–18). The rationale behind these theories centers on macro-factors like the world power hierarchy, the influence of political and economic institutions, and conditions in labor and wage markets, as well as push and pull factors like poverty, inequalities, natural catastrophes, wealth, wage differences, and lifestyle prospects. Within this theoretical frameworks, individuals and groups find themselves embedded in settings beyond their control, compelled to act under the influence of prevailing circumstances.

According to Stephen Castles, institutions, class and stratification, social order and conflict belong to 'traditional' categories to approach international migration (Castles

[20] I use the terms (international) migration and immigration interchangeably, both denoting the mobility of individuals or groups (including families) across international borders.

2007, p. 354). Most recent approaches investigate international mobility in terms of socio-conditioning factors (gender, ethnicity, race), networks, social exclusion and inclusion, the author contrasted. These approaches resonate with epistemologies discussed earlier in the context of power relation. We can assume that such change in categories to analyze migration illustrates among other things a conceptual shift to investigate immigrant agency and capabilities, their choices and free will, memory and belonging, voluntaristic actions as decision making, moving, or settling processes, while navigating within existing cross-border networks or communities (Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2007; Näre 2014; Isurin 2019; Faist and Ozveren 2017). Reflecting on the new keywords in migration studies, Maribel Casas-Cortes and colleagues pointed out that the recent developments "seek to overcome conceptions of migration as a derivative or dependent variable of 'objective' factors like wage differentials or 'structural' forces such as the destruction of subsistence economies through the expansion of capitalism" (Casas-Cortes et al. 2014, p. 83). Further, they argued:

> "It is this subjective dimension of migration that we seek to highlight with the concept of 'subjectivity', which oscillates between the subject as subjected by power and the subject as imbued with the power to transcend the processes of subjection that have shaped it… This recognition of subjectivity avoids the voluntaristic and individualistic undertones that haunt the notion of agency. More precisely, it avoids the framing of migrants as atomized individual rational-choice actors confronting external structures" (ibid).

Yet, Caroline Brettell and James Frank Hollifield (2008b) underlined a disciplinary divide in how international migration is theoretically framed where levels of analysis define units of analysis. Thus, demography, political science, and sociology incline to the macro-level focus exploring institutions and power structures, political and international systems, stratification and social classes, whereas anthropology and history tend to the micro-level investigating individuals, households, and groups (Brettell and Hollifield 2008b, p. 3). Though questions of immigrant self-organization, identity and belonging have entered a sociological agenda, yet the macro-focus and migration-integration debates shape primarily the sociological analysis (Pries, p. 157). Despite such a disciplinary divide, we have to acknowledge the increasing interdisciplinarity of migration studies, while contemplating migration as a scientific agenda over the historical period of time and space (Bade [2002] 2018).

As mentioned earlier, the distinction between traditional and contemporary (recent) foci in migration research originated from Stephen Castles' reflection on the placement of the migration theme within sociology. He posed questions such as: "Where does the sociology of migration fit into the social-scientific division of labour? Does it simply address the classical themes of sociology as they affect migrants and ethnic minorities resulting from migration?" (Castles 2007, p. 354). These classical themes encompass tensions between individuals and society, group behavior, and the relationships between

social structure and social action, as the author continued: "Key traditional analytical categories include institutions, class (or stratification), integration, anomie, solidarity, power, social order and social conflict. More recent categories include gender, ethnicity, identity, agency, networks, social exclusion/inclusion and social capital" (ibid). Leveraging Stephen Castles' logical framework, I crafted Table 2,[21] which, while not exhaustive, plays a crucial role in illustrating the dynamics of migration studies within sociology and migration studies over time, capturing the evolution of migration vocabulary. It contributes to conveying the increasing nuances in the interdisciplinary nature of migration research and the evolving landscape in migration studies.

Table 2: Evolving Trends in Migration Studies – Traditional and Contemporary Foci

Traditional Foci	Contemporary Foci
Ethnicity	Gender, ethnicity, class, and their intersections
	Symbolic ethnicity Flexible ethnic boundary-making
Nationality	Citizenship - Denizenship
	Multicultural, dual citizenship
Class and stratification	Social, economic, cultural, symbolic capital
Institutions	Borders, mobility regimes; borderscapes; frontiers
Social order	Agency and structure
Local – strangers, us – them	Identities; multilingualism
Anomie, disorientation	(Patchwork) biographies
Hegemony/ Authority	Networks; communities
Assimilation (melting pot)	Integration; social inclusion and exclusion
Social conflict	Migrant struggles
Nation-state	Transnational social fields, scalar perspective
Push- and pull factors	Globality and cosmopolitanism
Solidarity	Post-coloniality
Diaspora	Nomadism and posthumanism

[21] Additionally, I referred to other literature, including works by Simmel (1908), Schuetz (1944), Thomas et al. (1996), Portes (1995), Favell (2003, 2022), Beck-Gernsheim (2004), Massey et al. (2005), Rosenthal (2005), Rajaram and Grundy-Warr (2007), Brettell and Hollifield (2008a), Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009), Amelina and Faist (2012), Goulbourne (2010), Latour (2018), Boatcă et al. (2018).

Moving beyond the traditional nation-state perspective, transnational, postcolonial, and nomadic viewpoints, coupled with non-essentialist and denaturalization approaches toward ethnicity, nationality, race, and their social-conditioning factors, shape the exploration of mobility and associated human experiences. While the structure-agency dilemma remains crucial in migration research, the non-structural approach, integrated into my argument, provides a sophisticated perspective on migrant experiences. This includes navigating transnational communities, networks, or family lives across borders. As I will illustrate later in presenting my methodological approach and evaluating my empirical results, the conventional structural logic of macro, meso, and micro does not always offer comprehensive answers or adequately reflect the intricate connections and relations that transcend structural settings in the realm of transnational multilocal network-like entities.

Structural approach refers the scale-perspective (macro-, meso-, micro-) and highlights the power relations with potential power struggles and conflicts resurfacing in the context of human mobility as Casas-Cortes and colleagues justly pointed out:

> "This structural relation between 'migration' and 'struggles' fundamentally derives from the fact that practices of mobility that are labeled as 'migrations' are captured, filtered and managed by migration policies and techniques of bordering. Migrations are therefore eminently caught within relations of power. They are located within conflicting fields of force, which are also fields of struggle, within which modifying, challenging, or interrupting the configuration of power is always at stake" (Casas-Cortes et al. 2014, p. 81).

As a part of structural relations, power struggles emerge, on the one hand, through the categorization of individual and group experiences based on class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and their intersections. We observe an increasing number of scholarly attempts to engage structural and identarian intersectionality within migration studies (Shinozaki 2012; Anthias 2012; Grosfoguel et al. 2014; Lutz and Amelina 2017). While an intersectional perspective is not the primary focus of my analysis, I employ intersectional reasoning to contemplate the identity formations of the research subjects, business and leisure activities, as well as when reflecting on researcher positionality. On the other hand, structural elements find expression through institutions as a state and international entities, their hierarchical relations and tensions, political and ideological regimes, and mobility politics (Rass and Wolff 2018; Brickner 2013; Castles 1995; Horvath et al. 2017). From this perspective, it was particularly intriguing to observe how immigrants transitioned from post-Soviet, post-socialist, state-controlled spaces into the realms of market-driven, atomized democracies, and transnational social spaces. In Chapter 2, I outlined the peculiarities of such a transition. At last, legislature and policies predefine which groups are compliant for 'legal' mobility and which are not, they regulate migration flows and immigrants' incorporation practices (Goodman 2015; Feldman 2012; Brubaker 2016; Castles 2017). Though there is no separate chapter dedicated to policies

and legislature, yet relevant migration policies are reflected upon throughout the thesis and especially in the opening part dedicated to the socio-demographic composition of post-Soviet migration (the 1990s and early 2000) to Germany.

In addition to recognizing structural features and their impact on migration development in this thesis, the non-structural approach serves to emphasize migration effects, immigrants' experiences, and networks that emerge through horizontal connections. This argument diverges from the logic of the scale perspective, especially in terms of how the scale logic informs social theory building. To exemplify: the category of a network, viewed as a non-structural entity in Latour's interpretation, is utilized to visualize and highlight horizontal, non-hierarchical connections and nodes within communal, national German-wide, transnational European, or Eurasian contexts of interactions among FSU immigrants. Therefore, I found it intriguing to investigate whether and how these horizontal connections and nodes influence the formation of transnational social spaces through immigrant agency and their social actions. It is crucial to note that, by additionally incorporating the non-structural perspective, I do not assert the irrelevance of structural elements such as power relations, hierarchies, institutions, and policies. Instead, the non-structural perspective enriches the analysis, illustrating actions and connections that may not be as pronounced in the scale perspective. The thesis particularly focuses on two domains of social actions: transnational entrepreneurship and active leisure activities, covered in Parts Six and Seven, respectively. These actions also exhibit a processual quality. If human mobility involves breaking out of routine through transition, then settling or embedding establishes a new routine stemming from becoming acquainted and familiar, and emerging from change and renewal.

Agent as a unit of analysis

In the subsequent discussion, I delve into individuals as agents and group formations of individuals as units of analysis, examining them through the migration and settlement lens, which is relevant for answering my research question. Commencing with an agent as a unit of analysis, it is noteworthy to recall Helma Lutz's critique two decades ago. As an esteemed scholar in migration and gender studies, Lutz noted the prevailing tendency in both disciplines to perceive migrants not as active subjects but as mere puppets of predetermined narratives, cast in a tragic (victim) role (Lutz 2000, p. 39). While this deterministic perspective on immigrants endures, recent scholarly endeavors have increasingly focused on agency of immigrants (Brettell and Alstatt 2007; Näre 2014 to name a few).

Within the context of this thesis, this involves a concentration on FSU emigrants/immigrants as agents who engaged in cross-border mobility between the post-Soviet space and Germany in the 1990s and 2000s. Typically oriented towards settling, some studies also shed light on return migration (Mattock 2015; Suppes 2015; Kaiser and Schönhuth 2015) and the impact of state policies impacting on such return movements (Molodikova 2017). As mobile population, immigrants are at times investigated in relation to non-movers, such as 'left behind' stayers or locals considered indigenous or 'natives' who are standing in relation to newcomers (Hage 2009). The growing interest

in multi-sited research has expanded scholarly attention to spaces that emerge between immigrants and related actors, particularly those connected to the places of origin (Tauschwitz 2006; Sienkiewicz et al. 2015; Tauschwitz 2015).

Simultaneously, scholarly exploration has turned toward relationships between immigrants, conceptualized as imaginary others, and locals (natives) within the logic of the receiving country (Anderson 2013; Kristeva 2016 [1990]; Beck-Gernsheim 2004; Mau 2007, with the last two sources focusing exclusively on the German context). These attempts bridge the gap between the local population, immigrants, and stayers, emphasizing reciprocal relations between them and their relevance in the application of the transnational perspective, which has gained popularity in studying FSU migrants (Sanders 2015; Savoskul 2015; Sommer and Gamper 2018; Golova 2018, 2020; Golova and Sablina 2023). Despite the significance of all actors involved, with different intensity of involvement in migration dynamics, this thesis focuses on the perspective of movers – international immigrants with their experiences during and post-migration, during settlement, and while maintaining the contacts or establishing networks with the places of origin and beyond.

Migration as an act undertaken by an individual, may assume different connotations. The individual engagement in this mobility act, while crossing borders and trespassing boundaries, varies in meaning depending on the individual evaluation criteria and the starting point of the assessment. Many of my interviewees often reported that their decision to move to Germany was connect to familiar considerations or their desire to provide better life chances for their offspring, which emigration entailed for them at that point. Some linked migration with a process of gaining freedom across borders, as individuals sought to escape the constrains of the post-Soviet system or the struggles related to the hardship of transition. The joy of freedom could be attached to the anticipation of a new beginning in a novel place of settlement (Beck 2006a, p. 331). However, the challenges of settling and struggles connected to the identity formations, involving individual and professional negotiations, underscore the complexities of living a life marked by difference (Popkov 2013; Gitelman 2016; Baerwolf 2006).

Nevertheless, movers or immigrants perceive themselves as embodiments of the processes toward improvement: personal, existential, economic, and political advancement, as some studies illustrate (Darieva et al. 2012; Havlin 2013). However, mobile individuals accumulates pre-colored and ambiguous demarcations, exposing themselves to struggles that unfold in realms such as legality and illegality, security and insecurity, citizenship and denizenship, privilege and disadvantage, cultural native and cultural other, and so on. These demarcations and struggles in the wake of migration and settling may, in some cases, result in what Beck-Gernsheim referred to as ‘a profound biographical recess, a break’: „Migration beinhaltet immer einen tiefgreifenden biographischen Einschnitt, ja Bruch. Ob Menschen und Landschaften, ob Gerüche, Farben und Klänge: man verläßt, freiwillig oder gezwungenermaßen, womit man aufgewachsen ist und um Innern verwachsen“ (Beck-Gernsheim 2004, p. 23). This is what I observed with the individuals I investigated. Following this profound biographical

fracture, individuals have to confront and manage their transforming selves, including how they understand themselves, their identities, motives, emotions, aspirations, capabilities and limitations to adjustment and/ or resistance, as well as memories and experiences (Rosenthal 2005; Ballenthien and Büching 2009; Lokschin 2011; Havlin 2014). How individuals manage and navigate their biographical developments in the process of migration is another frequent focus on other migrant cases that appears in connection with an individuum and migration (Lutz 2000; Kutzner 2009; Behrensen and Westphal 2012; Nowicka 2014). While individual biography does not take a central focus in this thesis within the context of individual mobility, I concentrate on selected biographical episodes of the research participants covering their migration and settlement experiences. From this standpoint, I consider migration, in the words of Beck-Gernsheim, as a biographical recess in the cases of FSU immigrants I encountered.

Examining social and psychological distress as individual experiences amid biographical shifts is another area of focus, positioning an immigrant as an agent at the forefront. This distress may be triggered by "significant losses and stresses that are part of the adaptation to a host country and are viewed as a normative temporary reaction to such life events as immigration" (Yakhnich and Ben-Zur 2008, p. 152). Especially early years upon settlement, individuals may undergo profound distress due to limited social and financial resources, pressures to acquire a new language, employment and housing searches, lack of familiarity with the local culture and community, possibly high expectations for successful and immediate integration, along with potential hostility from some population groups (ibid). Therefore, problem- and emotion-focused coping, high tolerance of ambiguity, and cognitive flexibility are personal resources that help individuals manage such distress in the process of settling and becoming familiar with the host society (idem, pp. 153–154). One reason why some FSU immigrants tend to gravitate toward Russian-speaking or East European communities, as identified by Ludmila Isurin, is the pursuit of 'acculturation consequences' in an attempt to enhance individual comfort though collective belonging (Isurin 2011, p. 64). This notion further amplifies the role of culturally close communities for individual livelihood. The understanding of individual migration experiences is intricately linked with the analysis of collective aspects in the process of migration and settlement of the research subjects. This dual perspective – individual and collective as a continuum – constitutes a crucial element in the methodological conception of the given thesis, relevant for the subsequent development of the immigrant agency theory.

Group formations as units of analysis

Examining group formations as units of analysis provides another focal point for me to contemplate collectives and group entities in the process of moving and settling. Identities, motives, emotions, aspirations, and experiences also bear collective relevance (Isurin 2019; Falicov 2005; Svašek 2010; Wimmer 2008b). Group formations as units of analysis encompass various types of relations – family, co-migrants, community, friends, and colleagues – significant in different stages of mobility. Simultaneously, the quality, intensity, and dynamics of such relations (engaging, belonging, distancing, or marginalizing) can be differentiated and investigated. Ethnic boundary-making through

culture, religion, linguistic practices, comparable migratory experiences, places of origin, and lived historical events are some of the categories that may serve as demarcation lines either imposed or selected by an in-group to draw intergroup boundaries and preserve differences, such as affiliation with different Russian-speaking communities. These categories belong to classificatory practices that either divide or unite. In this respect, Andreas Wimmer noted: "Still, the world is made up by clearly demarcated communities of identity and shared culture, albeit now including some deterritorialized communities stretching over several nation-states" (Wimmer 2007, pp. 11–12). Immigrant groups may stand out from national majorities in the context of cross-cultural encounters. With the boundary-making approach, Wimmer invites us to denaturalize these distinctions, explicitly elaborating on the numerous strategies of ethnic boundary-making, as the author pointed out:

> "Who is counted as an immigrant (including second and third generations), and who is not varies from country to country and from situation to situation… The distinction between immigrants and nationals varies because it is part and parcel of different definitions of where the boundaries of the nation are drawn" (idem, p. 19).

The detailed account of how I employ Wimmer's ethnic boundary-making approach concerning immigrants from the former Soviet Union I present earlier in Part One. At the same, I elaborated on how post-Soviet migration was essentialized through admission policies upon arrival to Germany.

In research, immigrant groups receive differentiated attention depending on the quality and purpose of the connection. At the collective level, researchers investigate families and generations (Rosenthal 2005; Rosenthal et al. 2011; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Barbosa Neves and Casimiro 2018; Bryceson 2022), goal-oriented interest groups, for instance, migrant NGOs or cultural associations with various degrees of institutionalization (Pries 2015; Priemer et al. 2017; Havlin 2019b), communities or imagined, ethnic, religious communities (Castles 2002; Beck-Gernsheim 2004; Falicov 2007). Diaspora presents a larger and at times deterritorialized entity at the collective level of analysis based on migration, settling and belonging (Brubaker 2005; Vertovec and Cohen 1999).

Though some authors apply the term diaspora while investigating immigrants from the former Soviet space (Isurin 2011; Nikolko and Carment 2017; Brubaker 2005), I am reluctant to use this term in relation to post-Soviet immigrants in Germany. According to Rogers Brubaker, "one can identify three core elements that remain widely understood to be constitutive of diaspora… The first is dispersion in space; the second, orientation to a "homeland"; and the third, boundary maintenance" (Brubaker 2017, p. 122). Considering these criteria, the term diaspora appears to be problematic to describe post-Soviet

Russian-speaking immigrants[22] for the following reasons. First, though being from the post-Soviet space, orientation to a homeland is not applicable, since these immigrants have different countries of reference (new nation-states emerged in the early 1990s) that may or may not be considered homelands. Referring to one or another country as a homeland may be conflictual considering the developments in the post-Soviet space and Russian revisionist (postcolonial) wars for domination in the region, especially in Moldova in the 1990s, Georgia in the 2000s, and Ukraine since 2014 (Matveeva 2022; Muradov 2022). Second, the logic of boundary maintenance is eroded through lacking homeland orientation. Migrating from the post-Soviet space in the 1990s, speaking Russian as a common language, and sharing collective memories (especially in the case of the first generation fully or partially socialized in the USSR) offer some grounds for community-building as a community of friends, interest groups, cultural associations, or migrant NGOs, but do not construct a diaspora. Also, religion (if relevant) does not emerge as a unifying factor but disperses FSU immigrants: in the case of active churchgoers, they belong to different religious denominations and attend catholic or protestant churches, Greek-Catholic, Ukrainian, Russian Orthodox churches, synagogues, or mosques.

For these reasons, the community perspective informs my approach to post-Soviet immigrants. In contrast to the ethnicized admission policies, I investigate how post-Soviet immigrants interact and operate on the ground: That is as diverse culturally mixed multilingual communities. They resemble concentric circles of communication that gravitate around (extended) family relations, formal and informal businesses and activities, and common interests such as cultural associations or leisure clubs. In the course such interactions and relations, these communities develop unique identity formations and linguistic practices in Germany different from Russian-speaking communities in the USA and Israel (Al-Haj 2002; Münz and Ohlinger 2003; Elias 2011; Gorbin 2014; Gitelman 2016).

Furthermore, family and an intergenerational aspect are relevant for my analysis in particularly in the context of repatriation migration as in the cases of ethnic German resettlers and partially in respect of Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union. These groups were eligible to move to Germany as extended families, not solely as nuclear families, as is often the case with group migration or subsequent family reunification facilitated through individual mobility and settlement. On the one hand, the family contributes to the complexity of the migration and settling processes (Rosenthal 2005; Ballenthien and Büching 2009; Rosenthal et al. 2011). On the other hand, extended family

[22] In this thesis and throughout, I employ the term Russian-speaking as an inclusive descriptor that encompasses a broad spectrum of immigrants from the FSU who used various policies to gain admission to Germany. These policies include admission based on ethnicity, as exemplified by ethnic German resettlers (referred to as Russian Germans, Kazakh Germans, or Ukrainian Germans), or Jewish refugees. Additionally, the term encompasses those who have entered through family reunification processes associated with the two aforementioned groups, along with individuals who have arrived for purposes of employment or education. I provided in-depth exploration of these distinct groups at the beginning of the thesis.

structures may serve as an additional resource (Gresch and Kristen 2011) as I will also illustrate later on the example of family-driven businesses.

The diverse applications and relevance for engaging categories such as community and family as units of analysis create possibilities to elaborate on the collective agency of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The empirical research, driven by grounded theory, allowed me to outline categories that reflect immigrant agency as a continuum, ranging from individual and collective, through identity frameworks and formations (Part Four), the specificity of language use within and beyond the in-group (Part Five), the roles of family, community, and networks in entrepreneurial activities (Part Six), and the building and maintenance of groups, communities, and networks through active leisure activities, such as semi-professional dancing (Part Seven). These units of analysis will be discussed in the indicated order throughout the thesis.

Subsequently, I explore various theoretical approaches to conceptualize the incorporation processes of immigrants, namely neoassimilation or integration on the one hand, and transnationalism on the other. Long-term migration, as both a process and practice, entails individual and collective experiences of uprooting, settling, re-settling, multicultural and transnational belongings, assimilation into or disconnection from the mainstream society, and the maintenance of ties with the country of origin. The theories analyzing long-term migration and settlement primarily focus on immigrants' attitudes, relations and actions within host communities, receiving societies, and communities of origin. (Neo)assimilation and integration theories predominantly describe and analyze the interactions between immigrants and receiving societies, local populations, and communities. Conversely, the transnational perspective consolidates a set of theories that emphasize relations and processes depicting immigrants navigating between a country or region of origin and a country of destination. A simultaneity hypothesis offers an alternative to these dominant approaches, combining transnational and integrational perspectives while analyzing the complexity of immigrants' experiences during long-term migration and settlement. In the following sections, I gradually present these three main interpretative frames in the context of long-term migration and settlement.

4.2 Neoassimilation and Integration in the Continuum of Incorporation Orientations

Neoassimilation and integration can be positioned within the broad spectrum of incorporation that reflect societal needs driven by a state or the host community. They can also be seen as strategies of convergence and embedding for individuals or groups. With nuanced distinctions, neoassimilation and integration refer to the blurring of boundaries between the mainstream society and immigrant populations, signifying immigrants' blending into or adopting the host society. These processes transform immigrants into nationals, eases distinctions, and promotes accommodation and facilitation of their incorporation into the host society. It is essential to distinguish between neoassimilation, which is conceptually related to integration, and the 'melting pot' assimilation of the past century (Favell 2022, p. 33). The latter is characterized by intolerance of differences and an expectation of conformity, while the former

acknowledges that some differences may persist, particularly within a short-term framework, offering a more lenient version of neoassimilation, akin to integration.

In their book *Strangers No More* (2017), Richard D. Alba and Nancy Foner conducted an in-depth analysis of second-generation migration and settlement experiences in North America and Western Europe. This scholarly work represented a shift toward neoassimilation distinct from the traditional assimilationist approach. Neoassimilation theory, as defined by authors, focused on the cultural and social proximity of immigrants to the mainstream society and its impact on their life opportunities (idem, p.7). The theory recognizes that immigrants often undergo various forms of assimilation concurrently, driven by the pursuit of better opportunities in their host country. Social mobility within mainstream institutions can also promote certain aspects of assimilation. Importantly, this theory does not presume a specific sequence of assimilation dimensions but highlights their mutual interaction. As assimilation processes, group distinctions between the majority and minority populations may lessen, resulting in fewer social boundaries. Notably, assimilation does not necessary lead to cultural homogeneity, as the mainstream society can incorporate elements of immigrant-group cultures, allowing for a degree of cultural diversity (ibid). Despite these theoretical advancements, Glick Schiller criticized that the notion of neoassimilation perpetuates a fundamental social division in society based on certain distinctions: natives and foreigners, endogenous and outsiders, us and them (Glick Schiller 2007, p. 57).

Conversely, the concept of integration, akin to a form of inclusive neoassimilation, thrives within the European context and has a great impact on the European and German scholarly, public, and political discourses (Bade 2007; Hunger et al. 2008; Esser 2009; Phillips 2010; Carmel et al. 2012; Anthias et al. 2013).[23] Integration, particularly concerning mass migration, primarily revolves around addressing practical issues related to social support, economic opportunities, and housing for newcomers (Favell 2022, p. 58). In contrast to neoassimilation, the concept of integration does not inherently prioritize cultural and social transformations. It is perceived as being more considerate of immigrant families' autonomy in determining significant socio-cultural aspects of their lives. This expanded perspective on neoassimilation, known as integration, recognizes the coexistence of various cultural practices, ethnicized identities, and institutions "within an acceptance of the dominant language and institutional fabric of the host nation-state" (Glick Schiller 2007, pp. 57–58). The maintenance of ties with a country of origin and participation in transnational networks are tolerated as long as they do not hinder the integration process. However, it is worth noting that Adrian Favell urged caution when utilizing the concept of integration, highlighting it as a 'a full-blown theoretical concept' (2019, p. 3). He also underscored the normativity of integration, which at times may not represent an autonomous facet of the scientific discourse but rather 'a form of thinking-for-the-state' (idem, pp. 4). This perspective within scientific discourse contributes to

[23] For further insight into integration within the German political discourse, refer to the following sources: Bischof et al. 2007; Bertelsmann Stiftung 2009; BMVBS 2010; BMF 2013.

neocolonial knowledge production (Schinkel 2018) and contrasts with reflexive postcolonial knowledge production, as described earlier.

From the perspective of agency-rich analysis, Andreas Wimmer explored (neo)assimilation and re-classification as "the main strategies to 'shift sides' and escape the minority stigma" within the context of flexible ethnic boundary-making approach (Wimmer 2008a, p. 1039). In contrast with a re-classification strategy, assimilation is strongly associated with individual or group behaviors aimed at crossing boundaries between minority and majority. This transition is one of the ways for groups that were previously considered foreign or immigrant minorities to progress into becoming full-fledged members of a nation (Wimmer 2007, p. 20). Proficiency in the mainstream language is a key requirement for crossing these boundaries, although Wimmer highlights notable regional differences in the expectations for speaking national languages, as he noted, "But while speaking with thick accents and bad grammar is acceptable for many jobs in the United States, as long as the language spoken is meant to be English, is it much less so in France" (idem, p. 22). Earlier I applied Wimmer's ethnic boundary-making approach to elucidate the practices of Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany. The primary focus, however, is on flexible boundary-making, as opposed to boundary-crossing, as observed in the case of neoassimilation (Wimmer 2008a, p. 1037).

Jan Nederveen Pieterse's interpretation of the term assimilation provided further insight into the evolving nature of the neoassimilation debate. In his influential work, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange* (2003), Pieterse encouraged to view assimilation though a hybridity lens. He presented the idea of a constructed continuum of hybridities, ranging from assimilationist hybridity that aligns with the mainstream, adopts conventional norms, and mimics hegemony, to destabilizing hybridity that blurs the established norms, challenges the current order, and subverts the center. The scholar categorized hybridities based on their components in the mélange, including assimilationist hybridity where the center prevails and passive or active hybridity that disrupts the norm and its categories (idem, pp. 73–74). Pieterse's assumption of multiple incorporation practices from blending in (assimilating) to destabilizing hybridity is important because it leaves a possibility for a variety of incorporation orientations.

Neoassimilation or integration, the ethnic boundary-making approach involving re-classification, and the concept of mélange as a continuum of hybridities represent various ways to understand contemporary forms of neoassimilation. While this selection outlines several possibilities, it acknowledges the existence of numerous other interpretations beyond the scope of this thesis. For example, the combination of assimilation, multiculturalism, and diversity is a subject of study (Faist 2009; Vertovec 2011). The proximity of these concepts is evident, each capturing specific nuances of individual and collective behavior, while situating them within social, cultural, political, and economic contexts, and differentiating them. For the purposes of this thesis, it is relevant to consider practices of neoassimilation or integration that are tolerant to difference and diversity. Later, I elaborate in detail about further implications of such open approach during the

theoretical background work. Meanwhile, the following section delves into transnationalism, often seen as a contrasting perspective on immigrant incorporation.

4.3 Navigating the Analytical Landscape of Transnational Perspectives

In one of the first joint articles by Nina Glick Schiller and colleagues, transnationalism describes a process "by which immigrants build social fields that link their country of origin and their country of settlement" (1992, pp. 3–4). Moreover, this publication takes a critical stance by calling accountable structural settings such as Gramscian hegemony of a nation-state or Wallerstein's world-system. These structural settings 'monopolize power and foster ideologies of identity' (idem, p. 15) as, for instance, strict admission rules along ethnic lines, favoring ethnic groupism of migrants. Yet, as the authors pointed out "identity, fields of action, ideology, or even legal rights of citizenship of transnational migrants are not confined within the boundaries of any one single polity" (ibid).

Originating as a process, the term transnationalism has evolved to encompass a spectrum of interpretations and meanings. Alejandro Portes and colleagues recognized multitude of transnationalism types, contingent upon the level of institutionalization (Portes et al. 1999, p. 222), thereby allowing for various interpretations. Capturing the essence of this phenomenon has become increasingly challenging, as it is viewed both as a process that transcends nation-states and as practice that embraces them. While Glick Schiller and colleagues (1992, p. 46) initially defined transnationalism as a process involving two units of analysis – international migrants and at least two nation-states – the analytical scope for investigating transnationalism has become remarkably intricate due to the expanding academic debate on the subject (Faist 2000b; Glick Schiller 2007; Mau 2007; Faist et al. 2013; Beichelt and Worschech 2017).

Within the extensive transnational debate, transnational social spaces, urban scalar perspective, and transnational methodology hold particular relevance for this thesis. Since the exploration of ethnic, multilingual, multicultural, and spatial (urban) categories is discussed in the chapter dedicated the methodological preliminaries, I focus at this point on social spaces informed by transnational practices and experiences. Transnational social spaces denote "triadic relationships between groups and institutions in the host state, the sending state … and the minority group," as exemplified in the case of ethnic minorities, immigrants, or refugees (Faist 1998, p. 217). These spaces emphasize the transnational links and ties actively or passively maintained by immigrants with different degree of engagement through relationships such as family connections, networks, and organizations, as highlighted by Thomas Faist:

> "Transnational social spaces are combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places. These spaces denote dynamic social processes, not static notions of ties and positions. Cultural, political and economic processes in transnational social spaces involve the accumulation, use and effects of various sorts of capital,

> their volume and convertibility: economic capital, human capital, such as educational credentials, skills and know-how, and social capital, mainly resources inherent in or transmitted through social and symbolic ties. The reality of transnational social spaces indicates, first, that migration and re-migration may not be definite, irrevocable and irreversible decisions—transnational lives in themselves may become a strategy of survival and betterment. Second, even those migrants and refugees who have settled for a considerable time outside the original sending country, frequently entertain transnational links" (idem, pp. 216–217).

Normalization through transnational social spaces may have several effects on how immigrants see themselves or their families, which strategies they apply and how they measure their success and failures resulting from migration. Thus, Elisabeth Stone and colleagues reported an increase in transnational motives in the family stories of immigrants that they connected to the growing tolerance to cultural pluralism that newest immigrants have encountered in the USA (Stone et al. 2005, p. 382). Or, in line with Faist's argument about the 'effects of various sorts of capital' accumulated within transnational social space, Magdalena Nowicka offered a reevaluation of migrants' experiences with labor market integration. Transnational orientations, described as "social incorporation in multiple rather than single social spaces," along with multiple organized memberships, are viewed by the author as biographical resources (Nowicka 2014, p. 74). This perspective sheds new light on immigrants' advantages and disadvantages in the labor market, particularly in situations where deskilling is predetermined (Vouyioukas and Liapi 2013).

If transnational social spaces conceptualize certain experiences, relations and practices and make them visible, transnational methodology frames empirical research procedures while undermining methodological nationalism criticized for being a 'container theory of society' (Glick Schiller 2007, p. 43). In Chapter 5, I will elaborate in detail on how I employ transnational methodology during my empirical research while operationalizing further relevant categories such as urban scalar perspective, ethnicity and multilingualism that help me to construct the immigrant agency theory. Engaging the concept of transnational social spaces helps me, on the one hand, to describe mundane social spaces benefiting from transnational engagements and to illustrate the outreach of entrepreneurial activities, on the other. With the urban scalar perspective, I measure spatial distribution and evaluate incorporation practices, community engagement and cohesion of the research subjects (Part Six and Seven). Language use and identity formations highlight how cross-cultural experiences find their expression in identity formation (Part Four) or languaging practices in the multilingual context (Part Five). These activities – from multiple identities to transnational business or community engagements in the country of settlement – are not thinkable without maintaining ties with the region of origin but also without settling and integrating into the receiving society. This observation poses the following question: What if transnationalism and integration or neoassimilationism are neither opposing nor binary ways to explain

incorporation strategies, but compatible experiences of immigrants? A simultaneity hypothesis enables a comprehensive answer to this question.

4.4 Bridging Transnationalism and Neoassimilationism - Simultaneity Hypothesis

The simultaneity hypothesis represents scholarly attempts to explore the compatibility of transnationalism and neoassimilationism/integration (Faist 2000b; Falicov 2005; Beck-Gernsheim 2004). In the seminal article *Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society*, Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller argued that assimilation and transnational practices are 'neither incompatible nor binary opposites' (2004, p. 1002). The authors urged to surpass national boundaries of social theory building and methodology to underpin processes, relations, connections, and activities that take place in the transnational social field: "Migrant incorporation into a new land and transnational connections to a homeland or to dispersed networks of family, compatriots, or persons who share a religious or ethnic identity can occur at the same time and reinforce one another" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, p. 1003).

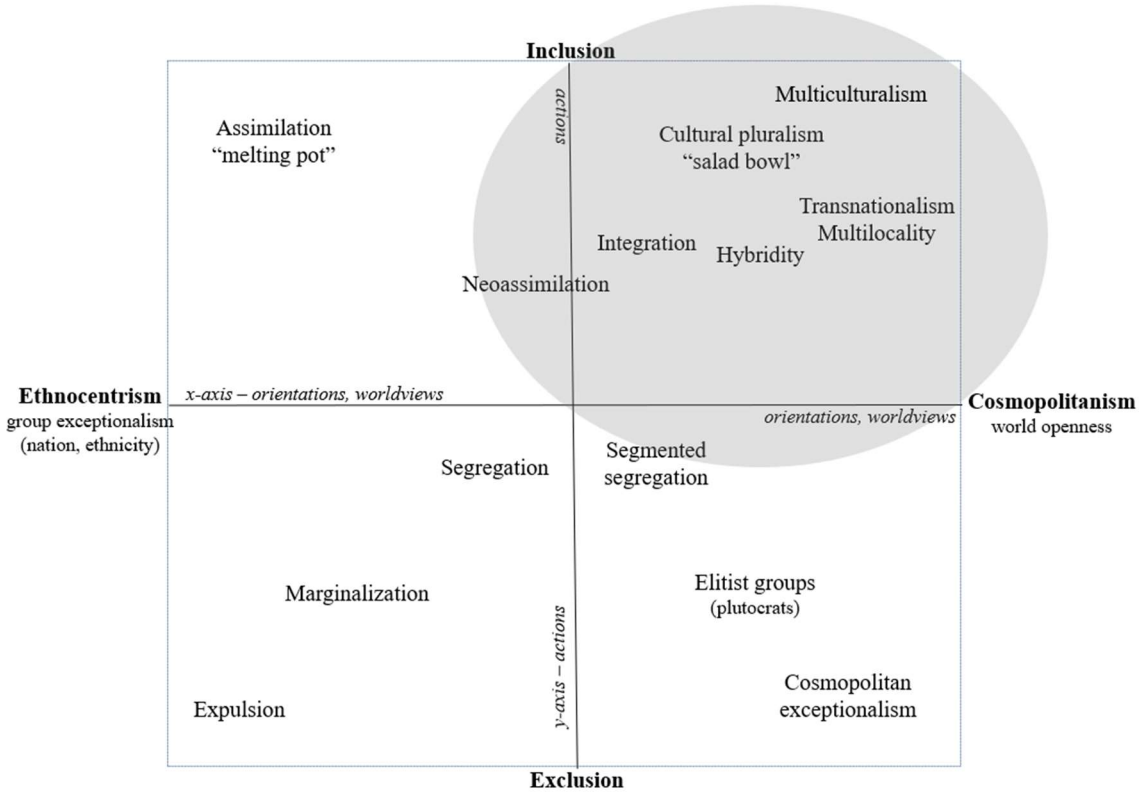
The development of the simultaneity hypothesis is influenced not only by the increasing cultural pluralism of receiving societies, exposing them to greater diversity. The simultaneity perspective can also reinterpret the outcomes of historical migration research, shedding new light on the incorporation of immigrants a century ago, as recent findings of Félix Krawatzek and Gwendolyn Sasse (2018) have demonstrated. While analyzing 150 years of private migrant correspondence between 1830 and 1970, the authors pointed out that with the lacking restrictive host state policies German-speaking immigrants in the USA could simultaneously feel German and be American. These findings question a notion about offensive, melting pot assimilation in the USA a century ago. Academically "underexplored dimensions of continuity and change in both the context [sending and receiving countries] and practices of transnationalism" led to an assumption of one-way assimilation in the country of destination (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018, p. 162).

A tendency to primarily focus on adaptation practices in a destination country, coupled with reluctance to investigate ties and connections to a country of origin, illustrates the limitations of migration research within the historical framework constrained by interpretation boundaries. Lacking or biased knowledge can lead to misinterpretation or one-sided evaluation of results as Zygmunt Bauman (2011) pointed out earlier while drawing a parallel between the approach to human mobility a century ago and how it informed analysis of wasps' mobility: since immigrants as newcomers face obstacles upon migration in a new country, by the same token it was assumed that wasps met obstacles while moving from one nest to another. Until the opposite was proved on the account of wasps who unproblematically mingle with wasps from another next. Bauman concluded: "… the selfsame beliefs that not so long ago were imagined to be reflections of the 'state of nature', have been revealed now, retrospectively, to have been but projections upon the insects of the scholars' own human, all-too-human, preoccupations and practices" (Bauman 2011, p. 427). Since most migration research was conducted

predominantly in so-called receiving countries, approaches to investigate immigrant experiences were rooted in a nation-state frame (i.e., methodological nationalism).

Aligned with the simultaneity hypothesis, I explore potential arrangements to consider the compatibility of neoassimilationism and transnationalism as a continuum of multiple practices characterizing primarily intergroup relations and related social actions, as I illustrate in Figure 9, titled *Exploring Intergroup Relations in the Context of Migration and Settlement*. The composition of this figure is informed by theoretical frameworks on intergroup relations and embedding practices upon migration. This illustration also draws from Carlo M. Cipolla's depiction of human behavior (2015 [1988]). From the viewpoint of immigrants' experiences, this figure demonstrates, on the one hand, the complexity and variety of incorporation practices with different orientations and interpretative frames; on the other hand, it may serve as a reconciling step to bring a debate on assimilation, integration, transnationalism that applies to a wide range of players (immigrants-natives, institutions-policies). A possibility of negative intergroup effects and outcomes of hindered or failed convergence is also anticipated and depicted on the left and in the lower part of Figure 9. The first factor on the x-axis illustrates worldviews ranging from ethnocentrism as the exceptionalist attitudes of one group (i.e., a nation, ethnicity, or race) to cosmopolitanism as the acceptance and tolerance, a cosmopolitan vision (Beck 2006b).

Figure 9: Exploring Intergroup Relations in the Context of Migration and Settlement



Source: Original diagram.

Ethnocentrism, in this context, is understood as one's own cultural assumptions or biases used to measure a society or a group as superior or inferior (Scott and Marshall 2014, p. 222). The second factor on the y-axis stands for social actions reinforcing either group's exclusion or inclusion (Casas-Cortes et al. 2014, p. 79). Based on these factors, there is a distribution of incorporation practices that could be defined as neoassimilationist, integration-oriented, or transnational actions. A grey circle, as depicted in Figure 9, emphasizes this area in the upper half of the graphic. This circle reflects on practices and experiences I encountered during my fieldwork with Russian-speaking immigrants and naturalized citizens in Germany. The fact of encountering individuals and group formations ranging between neoassimilation and transnationalism also illustrates a certain bias of my fieldwork accessibility and availability of those research subjects who were willing to contribute to my research.[24] Another important aspect of this illustration is a clear outline that incorporation practices are not rigidly defined and may vary based on individual and collective actions, which can demonstrate either voluntary choices or responses to contextual demands like political regimes, policies, and economic settings.

A simultaneity hypothesis poses another question: How does a combination of transnational and assimilationist lens enrich our explanations of immigrants' practices and their daily routines? Celia Jaes Falicov, who worked extensively with Latino immigrants and their families in therapy in the US-American context, reported her observations in the article *Emotional Transnationalism and Family Identities*:

> "As therapists, we are curious about the multiple ways in which migrants and their children combine transnational and assimilative practices inside and outside their homes at different stages of their lives, and they use these various combinations to construct their flexible hyphenated identities… The protagonists in the migration saga include those who leave, those who stay, and those who come and go for generations to come. Children of transnationals also develop objective and subjective ties to their ancestral homes" (Falicov 2005, p. 400).

Falicov's academic interest in the compatibility of transnational and assimilative practices is deeply rooted in the empiricism of therapies with immigrant families, encompassing both parents and children, those who leave and those who stay, focusing on family dynamics, gender issues, illnesses caused by immigration, and mental and social outcomes (Falicov [1998] 2000, 2007, 2010). Drawing from her empirical observations, the author concluded that rapid assimilation and the rejection of one's cultural heritage and migrant family story may have psychological and social repercussions for immigrants. These observations apply to both parents and their children, as flexible adherence to one's traditional culture appears to provide protection from depression in immigrant groups (Falicov 2003, p. 384). Metaphorically, Falicov likened European immigrants who arrived in the US a hundred years ago, living with 'the broken heart,' to

[24] More on the access to the empirical field are in the Chapter 6.

current European immigrants who live 'with two hearts' (ibid). Living with two hearts, or, in the theoretical debate, adhering to a simultaneity hypothesis, may offer a way to capture multiple belongings, as the epigraph to this Part claims, *I am rooted, but I flow*. Moreover, open, culturally pluralistic, and democratically oriented societies seldom demand rapid assimilation today; instead, they encourage tolerant and gradual forms of adaptation upon migration in the country of settlement (Goodman 2015; Michalowski and van Oers 2012). Perhaps, a salad bowl is a better metaphor to describe the cultural pluralism and cultural hybridity emerging from the interaction between natives and immigrants who are transnational to some extent or another. Therefore, a combination of 'transnational and assimilative practices inside and outside' of immigrants' homes (Falicov 2005, p. 400) seems to become widespread, accepted by receiving societies and practiced by immigrants themselves, as I will illustrate through my findings and analysis later.

Ewa Morawska provided another empirically grounded study, which enriches an understanding of the simultaneity hypothesis. The author investigated different patterns emerging out of coexistence between assimilation and transnational engagements and the heterogeneity of the forms it assumes in the practices of Polish and Jewish Russian immigrants in the USA (Morawska 2004, p. 1400). The coexistence of assimilation and transnational engagements Morawska explained through the following definitions:

> "Transnationalism here denotes sustained regular or situationally mobilized involvements of immigrants and their children in a few or several economic, political, social, and cultural (symbolic and material) affairs of their home or other countries at different national or local (households, informal communities, institutions) levels. Assimilation is likewise a multipath process, involving the incorporation of immigrants and their offspring into the economic, political and social institutions and culture of different segments of the host society" (Morawska 2004, p. 1375).

Building on the ideas of Morawska, processes connected to assimilation and transnationalism evolve in a context-conditioned mode; these processes may have nonlinear, manifold, and concurrent manners of individual or group conduct. Immigrants' ways of being, their actions, and daily practices illustrate different forms of assimilation as incorporation in the receiving society (including co-migrant or ethnic ties) and transnational engagements as connections with the places, societies or countries of origin.

In addition to studying transnational migrants, exploring the extent of transnationalization among natives reshapes perceptions of the local population. Steffen Mau's representative empirical study on the transnationalism of German population, presented in his book *Transnational Sociation* [Transnationale Vergesellschaftung] (2007), revealed that cross-border social relationships are widespread, with almost half of the respondents (46.5%) reporting regular private contact with at least one person abroad. On average, these transnationally active Germans maintain 3.35 social relationships with individuals

overseas. While similar proportions have contact with foreigners abroad or Germans living abroad, the average number of contacts with foreigners is slightly higher than with Germans abroad (idem, p. 103). Therefore, examining immigrants' experiences through a transnational lens is not an isolated phenomenon. Consistent with Mau's findings, there is a growing trend of transnationality among various population groups, whether in host or sending countries, and irrespective of their majority or minority status within a society.

In conclusion, the demonstrated compatibility of assimilationism and transnationalism allows to draw on Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim's insightful rhetorical approach (1999, 2007). By exploring the complexities of social constructions and the multiplicity of identities among both Germans and immigrants, Beck-Gernsheim highlights the paradox inherent in rigid category preservation and the pursuit of clear definitions. As she provocatively notes, the world appears chaotic, challenging established norms and prompting unconventional categorizations such as "native foreigners" and "foreign Germans" (Beck-Gernsheim 1999, p. 174),[25] exposing the limitations of nation-state logic. In embracing a 'both...and' rather than an 'either...or' methodological approach, Beck-Gernsheim encouraged to navigate the intricate interplay between transnational and assimilationist dynamics, recognizing the nuanced and context-dependent nature of individual and collective behavior. This echoes her broader methodological stance that life-long questions of nationality demand responses beyond simplistic dichotomies, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of rights, obligations, and entitlements in various institutional contexts.[26]

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Braidotti's expression *I am rooted, but I flow* opened this Part with attempting to outline the conceptual references of the given thesis. 'I am' stands for an individual, I-related point of reference, expression and acting. On this account, Antony Giddens suggested: "The 'I' is an essential feature of the reflexive monitoring of action" (1984, p. 51). This monitoring of actions I undertake later from the individual and collective standpoints. At first sight, the reference to the specific actions as 'to be rooted' and 'to flow' seem to contradict each other: the passive rootedness and the active mobility. Yet, Rosi Braidotti combined them making an act of flowing as moving, evolving, transforming, settling, maintaining and a static being, belonging compatible. Mobility as a flow does not contradict settling or maintaining roots. Paraphrasing the selected expression: An

[25] "So ist die Rede nun von „einheimischen Ausländern" und „fremden Deutschen", von „Inländern mit fremdem Paß" und „Fremden mit deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit", von „Bildungsinländern" und „Bildungsausländern", von „echten Ausländern" und „Ausländern nur im statistischen Sinn", von „pendelnden Ausländern", „etablierten Ausländern" und „Quasi-Fremden", nicht zuletzt auch von „Bindestrich-Deutschen" und „Anderen Deutschen" (ibid).

[26] "Die Frage nach der Nationalität begleitet uns lebenslang, und erwartet werden einfache Antworten, eingepaßt ins Grundmuster von Ja/Nein, Entweder/Oder, die institutionell bearbeitbar sind. Von deren Inhalt hängt ab, was uns an Rechten, Pflichten, Ansprüchen zusteht (ob Militärdienst, Arbeitserlaubnis oder Aufenthaltrecht)" (idem, p. 21).

individuum can have roots and backgrounds yet be mobile and/or multilocal. Borders and boundaries can be transgressed, yet roots and connections are actively preserved or maintained. The Braidottian expression speaks of agency. It speaks of individual agency of mobile people. Moreover, this formula shows us the possibility to reconcile being rooted, moving, and settling. An emigrant-immigrant agency dilemma emerges, that is living and navigating in the multilocal and multireferential contexts, in the transnational social spaces. Immigrant agency brings to the fore an actor-driven perspective. Thus, immigrants are actors who trespass, navigate, adjust, combine, cope, settle and resettle. The emigrant-immigrant dilemma resurfaces out of the discussion of whether immigrants settle (adjust, integrate, assimilate, etc.) or keep on navigating within various national, cultural, and symbolical spaces. The solution to this dilemma depends on how the experiences prior and postmigration are reconciled and developed further.

Part Two explored the possibilities and limitations of applying the category of agency in the broader realm of social thought and, specifically, within the field of migration studies. That means discovering immigrant agency utilizing the theoretical, methodological, and empirical toolkit. This toolkit allowed to examine the advantages and restrictions of the actor-driven approach to immigration while acknowledging hierarchical (structure) and non-hierarchical settings of the respective environments as sending and hosting societies, networks, and transnational social spaces. In the upcoming Part Three, I will reflect on the open multimethod research design that relies on grounded theory, transnational methodology, and an interpretative approach. Additionally, I will provide methodological considerations for conducting research on this specific group of immigrants.

PART THREE

Navigating Immigrant Agency – A Research Odyssey

> "… a theory does not "emerge" from the data through passivity, but rather the researcher proactively comes to the data with their background and knowledge and constructs the resultant theory" (Birks et al. 2019, p. 4).

This Part delves into the core of the research endeavor, elucidating the design and methodology employed to navigate the intricate terrain of immigrant agency. The data collected during extensive fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2020 forms the empirical foundation for the Immigrant Agency Theory, presented in the subsequent chapters. Throughout the research process, data collection, background research, and data analysis unfolded simultaneously. Some findings and methodological insights have been presented at international conferences, workshops, and colloquia, as detailed in *Appendix A: Record of Academic Contributions*.[27] Numerous publications related to my research have contributed to the refinement of my arguments (Havlin 2012, 2013, 2015, 2022a, 2022b, 2024). However, the comprehensive approach presented in this part, and the thesis as a whole, is the culmination of extensive effort and serves as the primary foundation for constructing the Immigrant Agency Theory.

[27] I would like to express my gratitude to all the students who actively participated in my research-oriented courses, including *Transnationalism* (winter 2018-19), *Society on the Move* (summer 2016), and *City Lab* (winter 2015-16) at the University of Siegen. The dedication and engagement of these students were truly commendable as they delved into research projects focused on migrant entrepreneurship and cultural associations. This involved extensive fieldwork within cultural associations, businesses, and various migrant initiatives undertaken in their local communities. Our pre-field and post-field discussions, along with the valuable insights and field notes provided by the students, were not only stimulating but also thought-provoking for me. Further didactical considerations on teaching research-orienting seminars, I have elaborated in the book chapter titled *Society on the Move: Research-Based Teaching in the Field of Sociology of Migration* (Havlin 2022a).

Crafting the Methodological Framework establishes the methodological foundation for the research design (Chapter 5). It comprises three essential elements that guided the empirical work. First, the transnational methodology explores the rationale and principles underpinning the transnational and simultaneity approach used in this research, shedding light on its influence on the study's conceptual framework. Second, the grounded theory methodology elucidates its relevance to the open research design and outlines how it played a pivotal role in the development of the flexible empirical approach. Third, the interpretative perspective provides insights into how the analysis of collected data framed the findings and outcomes.

Unveiling Immigrant Agency – A Multifaceted Empirical Approach provides a comprehensive overview of the multimethod research design adopted to capture the intricate dimensions of individual and collective immigrant agency (Chapter 6). This chapter is divided into five sections. *Sampling Procedures* offers insights into the measures taken to select research participants, explaining the rationale behind the sample composition. *Research Methods* outline the diverse set of empirical tools employed during the fieldwork and further analysis, detailing their relevance in capturing the complexities of immigrant agency. The section *Access to the Field and Fieldwork Process* offers a practical view of conducting fieldwork with post-Soviet immigrants in Germany. It includes discussions of the challenges faced and the insights gained. The Section *Conducting Multilingual Research* delves into the nuances of conducting research in a multilingual environment, providing insight into navigating language diversity within the research context. Finally, *Researcher Positionality* critically reflects on the researcher's position within the study, considering factors such as cultural background, gender, linguistic biography, disciplinary bias, and affinity. In general, Part Three highlights the active role of the researcher in shaping the study's outcomes.

Chapter 5: Crafting the Methodological Framework

I approach methodology as 'a living thing' (Charmaz 2014, p. 235) with changes occurring in the process of research conduct related to methods, to studying subjects, or to a researcher. The premises of grounded theory and transnational methodology together with the interpretative approach frame the methodological layout of the current study; their constructive interaction served as research guidelines. In the following sections, I provide a detailed account of how each of the methodological frames informed the research process, fieldwork settings, data collection, and analysis. These methodological choices have shaped the outcomes and composition of the immigrant agency theory.

5.1 Transnational Methodology

As was reflected earlier, transnationalism belongs to a well-established theoretical and methodological approach within migration studies that explains immigrant experiences and practices of the prior, post-, or circular migration. This approach elaborates on a complex system of interactions within and beyond the nation-state frame, on different

(individual, organizational, institutional, and urban) levels of interaction. It deals with contested categories such as ethnicity or nationality and reveals how they contribute to identity formations and practices that lead to disparities and inequalities. Within the current thesis, transnational methodology shaped my approach toward ethnicized categories (Wimmer 2007; Amelina and Faist 2012), multilingual and multicultural contexts (Schittenhelm 2017), transnational social spaces (Faist 2000a), and urban scalar perspective (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009). These categories build conceptual pillars of my investigation and are engaged in research based on the following methodological principles of transnationalism.

When considering ethnicized categories, proponents of the transnational methodology emphasize the need to move beyond ethnic essentialism and denaturalize ethnicity (Amelina and Faist 2012, p. 1710). To achieve this denaturalization, I employ two strategies. First, I utilize a flexible ethnic boundary-making approach that enables me to focus on culturally diverse communities and networks, as is the case with post-Soviet and Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany. It is worth noting that the Russian language or the interaction in Russian can also be seen as boundary-making (Wimmer 2008a, p. 1028). However, legitimate counterarguments exist, rooted in the colonial and postcolonial history, dedicated to the transition from communist internationalism to the ethnic pluralism of a nation-state. The Russian language, despite its associations with imperial and colonial power (the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and current Russia), is appropriated and adopted by immigrant communities of diverse cultural backgrounds in Germany, Israel, and the USA. Furthermore, while studying individual and collective practices, Andreas Wimmer cautioned against assuming 'communitarian closure, cultural difference, and strong identities' (2007, p. 30). These aspects are highly situational and contextual, as exemplified in the discussion of language use depending on intimate, familiar, public, and professional contexts.

Second, the transnational methodology accommodates cultural mashups, hybrid, mélange, or mixed categories. These categories emerge from post-Soviet, postnational, and multicultural practices, shaped by cross-cultural unions and diverse local, national, and transnational networks (Pieterse 2003, pp. 71–74; Perianova 2019, pp. 50–66). These mixed, hybrid, and mélange entities tend to disappear when rigid ethnic categories are applied, as seen in the case of the studies on so-called ethnic German resettlers or Jewish refugees in Germany. Saskia Sassen's methodological suggestion is relevant here: while studying a specific category, such as a particular ethnic group, we must ask ourselves what lies behind it and what we might be overlooking (Sassen 2013, p. 80). Working with fixed ethnic categories in multicultural contexts presents a challenge, as the next methodological principle, the denaturalization of culture and language, illustrates.

This principle expands on the multicultural contexts within transnational settings, which not only encompass mélange or mixed categories but also often involve daily multilingual practices. Karin Schittenhelm emphasized the importance of not taking multilingual practices for granted and called for a mindful examination of the intertwining of language and knowledge transfer that is not coincidental, and it necessitates careful and reflective

consideration (Schittenhelm 2017, p. 102). This principle applies not only during the research process but also in the reflection on the multilingual practices of both researched subjects and researchers (Havlin 2022b).

During the research process, we can ask how different languages are utilized for the purposes of the research design. On the other hand, the multilingual practices of all involved parties raise a different question: What does it mean to practice multilingualism in the daily lives of immigrants and researchers? When studying transnational experiences and conducting research within the field of migration studies, different languages come into play at all stages of the research process, from fieldwork preparations and data collection to subsequent data analysis, presentation, and dissemination of findings. Multilingualism serves as a means of communication, knowledge transfer, and construction, making it functional aspect of transnationalism.

In the context of the current research, various linguistic modalities were employed, including standard German, Russian, and English, occasionally Ukrainian, and different variations of translanguaging, primarily German-Russian. These language choices were determined by the researcher's language proficiency, which, in turn, influenced the language choices of interviewees. Proficiency of these language facilitated access to specific contexts during the ethnographic study or the selection of media sources for further empirical investigations. For instance, without proficiency in Russian, I would not have been able to explore the Mix Markt phenomenon to the extent presented in this thesis.

Working in multilingual contexts requires an understanding of cultural nuances and a thoughtful approach to different linguistic and cultural translation techniques, focusing on the appropriation of meaning rather than attempting to Germanize the text (Bassnett-McGuire 2011, p. 6). Another methodological technique, especially in situations of mixed language use, involves preserving 'a sporadic language change' in transcription and later in interpretation (Schittenhelm 2017, p. 109). This encompasses aspects such as language interference (Weinreich [1953] 1979, p. 71) or code-switching (Cindark 2013). In the next chapter, I dedicate one of the sections to reflecting on the peculiarities of conducting research in multilingual settings. Meanwhile, Part Five of the thesis presents the analysis of language use, including discussions of instances and reasons for language interferences and translanguaging among research participants. Multicultural and multilingual elements are inherent features that shape transnational social spaces, constituting the next principle of transnational methodology.

The principle of transnational social spaces highlights an outreach of the current study across borders and cultural dimensions, into the transnational realm I conducted the interviews and ethnographic study in two mid-sized German cities of Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia. The fieldwork and data analysis raised transnational aspects of the research questions that I was able to answer while contemplating transnational social spaces and extending my methodological tools (e.g., while using digital ethnography). This additional method extended the outreach of my primary focus. Such outreach related especially to the issue of transnational social spaces,

and transnational networks stretching beyond the German national context, and which could not be reduced to the two mid-sized cities chosen for the fieldwork initially.

Various transnational layers construct an understanding of social spaces (Pries 2001). On the one hand, transnational spaces can be concentrated within a single geographic space. Some examples are a cross-cultural marriage or partnership, an immigrant community, or a diaspora. Part Seven reflects on the cultural pluralism of Scheherazade, an immigrant dancing group, which is an excellent example of the transnational social space within one geographic space. Further, transnational social spaces concentrated in one location find their expression in mélange identity formations (Part Four), multilingual practices (Part Five), cultural reproduction and consumption (festivals, church services, ethnic shops), technology for sustaining cross-border relationships or watching TV from a country of origin, etc. (Stone et al. 2005).[28] On the other hand, there are those transnational spaces that extend over more than one geographic unit as a region, a state, a continent, or the globe in general. Thus, transnational social spaces may also appear as "multidimensional in terms of the social-spatial categories – that is, local, global, and national – and different actors and institutions involved" (Barglowski et al. 2014, p. 215). This type of transnational space is reflected in numerous examples of the present study. The best illustration is the transnational networks of the Mix Markt supermarket chain spreading across the Eurasian continent. Such transnational entrepreneurial network encompasses transnational social spaces on various levels, serving as transnational kinship groups, collaborative partners, and communities (Faist 2000b, p. 195). Thus, I understand transnational social spaces as multidimensional spaces, stretched across borders, kinship groups, and communities; besides, they can be layered in one place piling the combination of various cultures and their hybridity, multilingual practices, interpersonal interactions, and relations. Apart from immigrant' transnational outreach, immigrants' daily experiences take place to spatial and physical spaces of various urban units.

The principle of urban scalar perspective or transnational urbanism (Glick Schiller 2007, p. 55) composes another principle from the transnational methodology relevant to my research design. This principle stands for a sociospatial feature of transnational social spaces but also it stands for horizontal connections of urban entities across national borders through the ties and connections that emerged within transnational social spaces. I focus on the experiences and practices of immigrants who reside in the two mid-sized German cities or follow immigrant retail businesses that emerged from these types of cities in Germany and exported in the EU-wide context. My attempt to focus on these urban units was informed by Nina Glick Schiller's critique: "Only occasionally do researchers working in cities of smaller scale examine variations in local opportunity structures as they affect migration incorporation" (2007, p. 56). The author explains this in terms of 'globe spanning hierarchies of economic and political power' where global cities, metropoles, and large cities are winners in the fight for capital, talent, and brain, leaving behind in the shadow other urban units (idem 2007, p. 60). To the best of my

[28] Emotional transnationalism is a term coming from the therapy studies. It highlights the social, psychological, and physiological costs of international migration (Falicov 2005; Albrecht 2019).

knowledge, there is no systematic study, analyzing experience and practices of FSU immigrants in cities of smaller scale (with approximately 100,000 inhabitants or less). Such mid-sized cities could be classified in Jennifer Robinson's category of ordinary cities (Robinson 2006), invisible or less visible forces of urban life. This invisibility of or lacking attention to these types of cities in scientific analysis leads, among other things, to neglecting experiences and practices made or lived in these urban units. At least, when we speak about the population in the focus, post-Soviet Russian-speaking immigrants populate these types of cities extensively. However, there is an understandable methodological pragmatism motivating a researcher (especially with limited funds) to conduct research in a metropolis or large city with a high concentration of immigrant communities, and visible as well as easier accessible immigrant infrastructures.

A thorough examination of two specific immigrant shops in selected cities led to a detailed analysis of the Mix Markt supermarket chain and its distribution across Germany.[29] This supermarket chain primarily operates in the specified category of cities as I will illustrate later in Part Six. Furthermore, tracking the entrepreneurial activities of Mix Markt stores reveals a concealed transnational business network extending from ordinary German cities across the EU and the Eurasian continent. Three distinctive features characterize this network: transnational orientation connecting the regions of origin (FSU) with the country of settlement (Germany), the marketing strategy based on the East European culinary mashup , and orientation on the larger East European immigrant communities in Germany and the EU, following not only the demographic distribution of the FSU immigrants but also Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian immigrants.

Denaturalization of ethnicity, plurality of cultural and linguistic use, transnational social spaces and transnational urbanism build the cornerstone principles of how I apply transnational methodology in the given thesis. These principles of transnational methodology define how such categories as ethnicities, identities, multiple languages, and entrepreneurial and leisure activities are framed. In general, such methodological implications help me to oppose methodological nationalism grounded in essentialism and territoriality, assuming the congruent relation among society, nation-state, and territory (Faist et al. 2014, p. 27). In turn, the simultaneity hypothesis enriched the approach toward understanding of immigrants' experiences classified as integration in the host society, yet without devaluing or neglecting transnational elements. Such an assumption stems from the open research design guided by the grounded theory methodology, the next element of my methodological setup.

[29] Chapter 6 delves into the specifics of sampling rationale, while *Table 3: Multimethod Research Design for Immigrant Agency Theory* outlines the ramifications of empirical data for the theory construction.

5.2 Grounded Theory

As a form of social science hermeneutics, grounded theory methodology (GT) helps to construct a data-generated and reality-based theory (Hunger and Müller 2016, p. 260). Such a reality-based theory relies on theoretical sampling, which Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss understood as "the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (2006 [1967], p. 45). When accumulating additional data fails to reveal additional insights into the characteristics of emergent theoretical categories or researched subjects (Charmaz 2010, p. 167), the ground theorist attains theoretical saturation. The latter implies that, with the current data, a researcher can define the 'properties of the category' (Glaser and Strauss 2006 [1967], p. 61), and while additional data adds value, it is not necessary required to bolster the researcher's empirical confidence in the saturation of a category (ibid).

Utilizing the theoretical sampling, I develop and control the emergence of the immigrant agency theory, whereas theoretical saturation indicates elements of the studied phenomenon and its properties. My initial decisions for data gathering in line with the GT approach were based on my general training as a sociologist (e.g., the problems of interaction between society and individuum) and on my knowledge of the problem area (migration studies, East-West European migration, post-Soviet migration), yet my initial decisions were not stemming from any preconceived theoretical framework. Such an approach to research conduct and theory building requires sufficient theoretical sensitivity on the part of the researcher to 'conceptualize and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data'(idem, p. 46). With this objective in mind, I extensively elucidated how the conceptualization of relations between society and the individual has evolved in social thought and migration studies across various disciplines and debates. The outline of theoretical background related to agency and long-term migration framed my comparison of selected individuals, groups, and their experiences. Since '[t]he possibilities of multiple comparisons are infinite,' groups have to be selected based on 'theoretical criteria' (idem, p. 47). Yet grounded theory relies on emerging concepts and phenomena generated from data collection and analysis rather than presuming them prior empirical research; besides these analysis and collection are intertwined, their connection has a cyclic character through the constant comparison (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 5).

In the constitution of the empirically grounded immigrant agency theory, I relied on two developments in grounded theory: on the one hand, these are the research principles deriving from the groundbreaking work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss (2006 [1967]) laying an early base for the grounded theory; on the other hand, the elaborations of Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss (1990) impacted the subsequent developments in the grounded theory as, for instance, coding procedures or data quality management (Mey and Mruck 2011, p. 29). To illustrate my applications of grounded theory I will outline the emerging phenomena identified during my

fieldwork, describe the rules governing the comparison and verification of empirical data, and explain the arrangement of the coding procedures.

Emerging Phenomena

Grounded theory methodology enables a researcher to capture emerging phenomena or those aspects, which are either novel or underrepresented in research. Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany as well as post-Soviet migration are, without doubt, a well-studied phenomenon as Part One illustrated. In the last three decades, post-Soviet migration have received profound attention within German academic scholarship, in the academic settings of the post-Soviet space (though unevenly distributed) as well as within the comparative international scholarship, as Chapter 1 illustrated. Nevertheless, the topic is far from being fully exhausted: Still certain aspects are either not present or not fully covered with the available approaches and studies. Four aspects make a point:

(1) The ambiguity of identity formations shaping self-identification and identity frameworks to identify co-immigrants. The analysis of contextual applications of russaki [руссаки], a common description of Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany, allows to contemplate this ambiguity (Part Four). To the best of my knowledge, russaki as an identity formation of post-Soviet migrant population in Germany is underexplored in the academic literature.

(2) Multilingual and translanguaging practices of Russian-speaking immigrants involving German and Russian (Part Five). These practices exemplify the contextuality of language use, highlight language hierarchies (standard vs vernacular, majority vs minority languages), and comprehend language use as languaging. The latter stresses a processual feature of language that emerges in the moment of direct communication.

(3) Emergence of the Mix Markt transnational supermarket chain generated from the family-based entrepreneurial activities of the Russian-speaking immigrants (Part Six). This phenomenon also outlines the establishment of and demand for the East European culinary mashup concept in Germany and the EU context (Part Six).

(4) Everyday cultural pluralism and auto-exoticism exemplify leisure time activities and derive from the example of Scheherazade, an immigrant dancing association (Part Seven). Such cultural association belongs to a wide range of creative and recreational leisure activities that characterize research subjects.

These emerging phenomena brought to the fore aspects of immigrant agency and outlined its diverse facets (identity formations, multilingual practices, and strategic actions) that I strive to explore throughout my extensive fieldwork and simultaneous data analysis. Such a discovery of the elements of immigrant agency resulted from theoretical sampling and data analysis, which at the same time informed my composition of the theoretical outline in Part Two. An agency-based approach in the context of migration allowed me to investigate immigrant ways of representing and expressing themselves through identity

formations and language use as well as to capture their actions, experiences, and practices in the process of immigration and long-term settlement.

To explore these aspects meant, first of all, to rely on an open-method design and acceptance of changeability, that is 'to build change, through process, in the method' (Corbin and Strauss 1990, p. 419). Second, it implies avoiding deterministic as well as nondeterministic paths to capture an interplay of agency and structural elements. A rejection of determinism as well as nondeterminism redirects us to a structure-agency link discussed earlier. Structural settings contain, constrain, and enable individual agency:

> "… actors are seen as having, though not always utilizing, the means of controlling their destinies by their responses to conditions. They are able to make choices according to perceived options. […] grounded theory seeks not only to uncover relevant conditions but also to determine how the actors under investigation actively respond to those conditions, and to the consequences of their actions" (Corbin and Strauss 1990, p. 419).

Applying this to research practices, it is a researcher's responsibility to demonstrate specific linkages between agency (identity formations, language use, and actions) and conditions (nation-states, sending and receiving societies, policies, labor markets) (idem, p. 423). As, for instance, in Chapter 2 I illustrated the societal change during the 1990s and contemplated its impact on people's agency under investigation. Apart from establishing a structure-agency link, a researcher carries a responsibility to look beyond structural settings and a structural conditioning matrix that strongly informs a theory building of social science. Looking beyond the structural settings implies an analysis of ties and connections that emerge despite such matrices or constraints from structural settings. In doing so, the departure from macro-, meso- and micro-layers opens new possibilities for analysis and interpretation as, for instance, translanguaging as a way to overcome the dominance of standard languages (Part Five) or nonhierarchical networks of transnational business ties (Part Six).

Comparison and Verification of the Empirical Data

For a consistency check, the grounded theory relies on a comparative method that additionally reduces researcher bias (Corbin and Strauss 1990, p. 421). As 'a general method of comparative analysis' (Glaser and Strauss 2006 [1967], p. 1), I rely on three types of comparison while engaging grounded theory principles in the given thesis:

First of all, existing empirical studies were compared with acquired data and composed datasets in the process of extensive fieldwork: as interviews and their transcripts, fieldwork notes, iconographic evidence (own video recording and images, images from print/social media), selected newspaper articles and relevant posts on social media. Based on the international scholarship, the following studies have been essential for the comparative analysis and verification with own empirical data: Laitin 1999; Dietz 2000; Rosenthal 2005; Smirnova 2010a; Isurin 2011; Sommer 2011, 2020; Panagiotidis 2020b.

Second, the established context of the study was compared with the empirical data for constructing a new theory informed by empirical reality. For this reason, I consulted the following theories: a set of approaches to agency in the context of structure and networks, conceptual frames of international migration and theories of incorporation as neoassimilation, transnationalism or simultaneity hypothesis. Together with original empirical data, they laid grounds for constructing the immigrant agency theory.

Third, qualitative and quantitative datasets established during my fieldwork were studied and complemented each other for more comprehensive theory building (Glaser and Strauss 2006 [1967], p. 17). The interview and iconographic materials underwent qualitative examination by means of open, axial, and selective coding procedures with the help of the Atlas.ti software. I subjected the coded data to interpretative analysis, engaging actor-network analysis, and sequence and micro-situative action analysis. Whereas an original dataset of the Mix Markt businesses (Table E-5 in Appendix E) underwent evaluation with quantitative tools such as median value, geographical distribution, clustering, and mapping using Excel.

Comparison and verification of empirical data took place on all stages of data gathering, processing, and analysis. Besides, the cyclic character of grounded theory research conduct allowed me to reveal methodological inconsistencies and subjective bias illuminated with coding procedures.

Coding Procedures

Since grounded theory processes data through coding, it is relevant to reflect on the principles of coding procedures and how they were employed. Through coding a researcher gains access to the thematical variety of data, preselects relevant pieces and analyzes in detail the selection (Strübing 2019, p. 535). I processed the empirical data with open, axial, and selective coding, which served different purposes (Corbin and Strauss 1990, pp. 423–424). In what follows I exemplify how the coding procedures structured the interview data. The theme language use from the empirical data illustrates my point.

First, the subset of data was prepared, that is twenty transcribed interviews.[30] According to Gabriele Rosenthal, the transcription was understood as ‘word for word and without any omissions’ (2018, p. 83); at the same time I kept a record of understandable speech and signals, as well as preserved pauses, emphases, mistakes, language switching or language interference. I avoided punctuation marks as required in the written text, instead indicated pauses (Table C-6 in Appendix C).

After the transcription of audio data, I subjected the transcripts to an open coding, the first step of the coding procedures. Open coding allows for ‘identifying important words, or groups of words, in the data and then labelling them accordingly’ (Birks and Mills 2011,

[30] Table 4 presents all interviews, which were transcribed.

p. 10). I facilitated open coding by means of Atlas.ti that helped me to process an extensive among of text. Along the coding process I could embed custom-made memos that I integrated later in my further analysis by establishing thematic, methodological, or interpretative connections between the interviews.

Open coding breaks through a researcher's subjectivity by constant questioning and comparing between emerging concepts and categories: "Open coding and its characteristics of making use of questioning and constant comparisons enable investigators to break through subjectivity and bias. Fracturing the data forces examination of preconceived notions and ideas by judging these against the data themselves" (Corbin and Strauss 1990, p. 423). For instance, how might various interview partners articulate their experiences in the context of migration? In what manner would they express their experiences? How would they depict challenges they face, and what solutions might they propose? At this stage, the codes were generated at first as literal entities (i.e., language acquisition and mixing languages) or in vivo codes as 'verbatim quotes from participants' (Birks and Mills 2011, p. 10). Subsequently, I united thematically related codes into abstract categories (e.g., linguistic competencies, language of communication).

Next axial coding enabled searching for conditioning factors of the established codes and categories by open coding. Once language interference or translanguaging between German and Russian was recorded, the next step required comprehending in which cases and instances the interviewees were inclining to blend languages: context-based, topic-related, mimicking someone else, or expressing authoritative manners. Additional pertinent questions surfaced: To what extent did language blending occur? Which terms best capture these experiences: language borrowing, language interference, or translanguaging? Using the axial coding, conceptual linkages were established that led in turn toward the conceptual density in the process of theory building (Corbin and Strauss 1990, p. 423). Simultaneously to the establishment of the conceptual linkages, systemizing memos helped to capture the overarching themes among the interviews, the processual or methodological challenges, to unravel open questions and address them.

Finally, I applied selective coding in the latest phase of the data assessment and reassessment, after I adjusted and transformed the codes, categories, and concepts increasing their degree of plausibility, reliability, and checkability. While coding twenty interviews one after another, the coding book required constant refinement along the way. In doing so, codes and categories gained greater precision and expressiveness to cover all analyzed interviews. The selective coding helped to unify the refined codes, meta-codes, and categories around a central concept: language use and language as an expressive element of immigrant agency.

The open, axial, and selective coding procedures of the interview transcripts allowed me to establish the measurable components of immigrant agency: language use and identity formations, labor-oriented (paid work) and leisure-oriented (cultural associations) actions. Not only do these components have their relevance in the context and process of immigration, but their combination also offers a comprehensive picture to reflect on

immigrant agency. Besides while conceptualizing agency, the differentiation between agency in the individual sense and collective sense emerges. The former carried person-related features, and I-oriented expressions; the latter covered group-related aspects (family, mating, friendships, networks). Yet I struggled to draw a line between the individual and the collective that poses also one of the fundamental problems in social science as reflected earlier. Therefore, I decided to treat the individual and collective sides of agency as a continuum stressing in the situations of importance the dominant side. Subsequently, these measurable components as identity, language, and actions in the light of individual and collective were verified with the existing theoretical and empirical backgrounds from social thought in general and migration studies. Further reflections on coding procedures I included in the subsequent section elaborating on data and text types, and subsequent interpretation.

In the case of the given thesis, the advantage of the grounded theory consists in being able to capture emerging phenomena, develop an agency-based approach to immigrant experiences with consideration of structural and nonstructural elements, to adjust the methodological toolkit in the process of research. The challenges of the grounded theory methodology entail a need to accept the uncertainty of an open-method design; a need to process the extensive amount of empirical textual, visual, and statistical data to generate the empirically grounded conceptual frame and to build a comprehensive data-driven theory. On the one hand, grounded theory does not provide explanatory frames for the analysis but allows a researcher to discover them in the research process. Therefore, transnational methodology provided a comprehensive approach to an understanding of mélange identities, ethnicity, multilingual and multicultural practices, transnational social spaces, actions, or urban scalar perspective. On the other hand, grounded theory opens and invites multiple possibilities for the interpretative analysis accompanying the research conduct.

5.3 Interpretative Approach

Later developments in grounded theory move it closer to interpretative social science and the tradition of interpretative sociology (McGuire 1981, pp. 180–181). My interpretative approach relies, on the one hand, on the premises of hermeneutics as a study of understanding through interpretation (Ricœur 1976; Gadamer 2000a). Its epistemology derives through an interplay between language(s), individuals, and reflexivity (Gadamer 2000a, p. 7). On the other hand, I draw inspiration from constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2014). The latter "places priority on the studied phenomenon and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships" (idem, p. 239) with research participants involved in the research conduct as researchers and researched. According to Kathy Charmaz, 'guiding interpretive theoretical practice' rather than 'providing a blueprint for theoretical products' (idem, p. 233) is one of the important developments in grounded theory since 'the resulting theory is an interpretation' (idem, p. 239). The theory building that I am striving for with my work is the interpretative immigrant agency theory.

But where does interpretation begin? I distinguish between sensitive, processual, and deep interpretations (Havlin 2022b, [51]). Since empirical research in migration studies oftentimes has to do with multiple languages and translation, for Jo Reichertz, translation is already an act of interpretation. Therefore, he criticized any kind of external translation services (Reichertz 2016, p. 250): either a translator becomes a part of a research group or a researcher translates. Such a solution leads to another suggestion: The sensitive interpretation of the multilingual or intercultural data resembles 'an unpacking of the precious porcelain' (ibid), with great care and sensitivity. For Gabriele Rosenthal, data transcription presents already an act of interpretation (Rosenthal 2018, p. 83). In other words, who makes a transcript, and by which means has significance. This points us to the processual interpretation. Further, Hans-Georg Gadamer (2000b, p. 48) brought to our attention deep interpretation: the first act of meaning transfer and interpretation is already in listening or in reflective listening that is addressed further. The author referred to active listening: listening to an interviewee's narration transfers something invisible through language, by means of unspoken, and observations. If the meaning emerges in the act of speaking and listening, it is inextricable from an understanding (idem, pp. 49-50). Sensitive, processual, and deep interpretations do not contradict one another. They follow each other and refer to distinct stages of research conduct intertwined with unfolding interpretation and meaning production. Thus, all stages of the reflective research conduct incorporate different layers of meaning constructions and their interpretation. This also coincides with meaning constructions by a research participant or by a researcher (Charmaz 2014, p. 241).

Since interpretation begins already early in the process of applying a method and data gathering, addressing data acquisition and its format present important methodological implications (audio and textual, video and audio/visual). In data acquisition, we cannot overlook the importance of language. The significance of language, speech acts, and verbal expressions derives from the epistemological assumption of the interplay between language(s), individuals, and reflexivity (Gadamer 2000a, p. 10). As in the case of interview conduct, reflectivity initiates at the beginning of an interview and remains as it progresses. Since an interview is the realm of spoken language primarily, reflexive listening refers to an understanding of invisible but spoken (Gadamer 2000b, p. 48). Such understanding of invisible (i.e., audible, spoken) occurs through the transition from an audio recording to a textual transcript, as demonstrated in the utilization of the interview method.

Figure 10: Scheherazade Rehearsal: A Micro-Situative Action Decision-Making Circle



Processed primarily in the written form through text-transcripts, an interview method – contributes to 'shaping social reality through text' ['die Textförmigkeit sozialer Wirklichkeit'] according to Ralf Bohnsack (2003, p. 240). Evidently, Hans-Georg Gadamer (2000a) or Paul Ricœur (1976) worked with the written text, though they recognized the difference between oral and written texts. Textual dependence presents one of the methodological challenges in interpretation for the qualitative methodology. The visualization of social reality as in the case of a visual method (i.e., ethnography combined with a video recording for studying the immigrant hobby dancing group) requires a methodological adjustment of data processing and an interpretative method. An interplay of language(s), individuals, and reflexivity is still valid but gains complexity in terms of interpretative practice. Video recordings allowed to capture spoken (oral) and unspoken (movement or set of movements) languages. From the beginning, an interview method is oriented on the speech act, on the conversation, on the questions and answers, and later the textualization of the (pre-recorded) conversation. Ethnographic observations (may or may not) include speech, there are more unspoken (unexpressed or undefined) elements that could be authentically gained through observations or a video method. Unspoken language (movements, body postures) or uncommented, unexplained actions captured in video recorded situations complicate interpretative practice enormously. Thus, reflexivity in the case of a visual method is based on two dimensions: reflexive listening and reflexive gaze. That means engaging more perceptive senses in the research conduct (Pink 2006). Charlotte Bates (2018, p. 2) described a video recording in terms of sensual imagination that this method fosters while allowing us to live a video-recorded situation once again. Moreover, Svetlana Ban'kovskaya (2016, p. 141) highlighted the multimodality of the video method in contrast to other methods. As in the case of interviews, video-audio data requires a translation: a dynamic video gains either a textual depiction or a summary in a video-script. A single cut (Figure 10) or a sequence of cuts may compose an analytical unit as was applied in the analysis of a micro-situative action. An application of situative schemes is another form of translation that I applied (Appendix F, Figures F-17 – F-18).

Depending on the method, imbedded reflexivity holds different expressions: in attentive listening and questioning, later transcribing an audio record, coding, and analyzing the transcripts as in the case of an interview; in listening, gazing, or observing, selective filming, transcribing a video- and audio-record, coding, and processing as in the case with video-scripts of video-audio data to document real time ethnography. These expressions produce distinct levels of meaning: First, a research participant creates meaning through the act of narration or modified behavior, whether during an interview or through

observation in ethnography. Second, a researcher creates meaning while observing, recording, listening, questioning, guiding an interview, interfering occasionally in a course of events during the fieldwork. Third, meaning is created while processing and interpreting the data: transcription, photo-scripting, coding, and interpreting. During post-fieldwork data processing, opportunities to address misunderstandings or confirm understanding are generally limited unless the researcher has included a participatory element and actively reaches out to participants again for clarification and further discussion (Crean 2018, [9]).

These different levels of meaning emphasize 'the interconnection and interdependence of various levels of interpretations' (Knorr 1981, p. 29). In other words, multiple meanings contribute to manifold interpretations: "It is always possible to relate the same sentence in different ways to this or that sentence considered as the cornerstone of the text" (Ricœur 1971, p. 330). Considering the richness of data formats such as a transcript, a sequence, a picture, and a video script, such plurality can reveal multiple realities (Charmaz 2014, p. 231) and be open to several readings, and to several re-constructions. While there is usually more than one possibility of 'construing a text,' to act in a situation, to express ideas, 'it is not true that all interpretations are equal' (Ricœur 1971, p. 331). The logic of a guess, an empirical assumption, and its validation take place 'in the light of what is known,' as Ricœur claimed (idem, p. 330). The (scientific) knowledge is situative and socially constructed (Charmaz 2014, p. 240); it derives from the methodological, empirical, or theoretical framing of specific research conduct. Such a notion requires reflecting on a researcher and research participants, how they interpret meanings and actions, which role plays their positionalities.

Since the empirical data of the current project is composed of a plurality of formats, I would like to clarify how I understand the text and how I processed it considering the purposes of my study. Diverse types of data required distinct methodological procedures to extract meanings and explain them.

(1) *Audio/written text*. Interview audio recordings were transcribed in written form and coded. Open, axial, and selective coding and comparison across twenty interviews brought three elements essential in terms of immigrant agency: language use (language acquisition, languages interference and its contextual flexibility), identity formations (connected to an identarian quest and multiple layers of self-perceptions as a result of migration, as well as identification of others in comparable settings), and social actions. Emerging from the interview data analysis, later these themes were closely investigated in further data acquired with other methods.

(2) *Visual text.* While establishing these three elements, ethnographic video recordings of immigrant cultural associations were approached using selective coding, depicting specific situations oriented on identity, language, and strategic actions. The available text was not narrations (such as interviews), but actions or conversations of research participants documented as a video text. For the later analysis, the video text was reduced to single cuts as images and a set of cuts as sequences. Section 6.2 (Ethnography of

cultural associations) provides further methodological reflections on this matter; also, some examples in Appendix F prove the point.

(3) *Fragmented text*. The establishment of the original dataset aimed at covering entrepreneurial activities of the specific supermarket chain initiated by immigrants from the FSU. The text in this case was composed of dispersed information pieces – iconographic, oral, written (typed), printed, and digital – that together reflected on the business activities of immigrants from the post-Soviet space, their identity formations, and language use (Part Six, Appendix E).

In the wake of the pictorial turn (Bohnsack 2003), such an approach to text does not present a novelty. Moreover, empirical data does not usually occur as written but is processed and presented in a written form according to the specific rules. These three major text types – audio/written, video/visual, and fragmented – allowed me to interpret data in total or its parts, comparing various parts of data and arranging them in meaningful patterns. The example of the dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU*[31] that I composed to unravel the entrepreneurial activities of researched subject proves my point: I compiled this dataset out of different unrelated data pieces dispersed and collected from at least a dozen printed or digital sources, from my ethnographic observations. Separated as such these pieces are not as informative as when assembled in a dataset and subjected to the analysis. A single Mix Markt store as a separate shop may disclose a story about a family business embedded in the local community. A complex and larger pattern emerges when I compared approximately 300 Mix Markt stores. This pattern as a transnational supermarket chain informs different meanings of network and community building. The supermarket chain does not undermine the meaning of a single Mix Markt store but rather offers another interpretative frame. If applied from the scalar perspective, the large Mix Markt network in small and mid-sized cities emerges. This example emphasizes 'the interconnection and interdependence of various levels of interpretations:' every interpretation of a situation or text "ultimately depends on yet another set of interpretations, thus leading to an infinite regress of meanings" (Knorr 1981, p. 29).

After outlining the methodological preliminaries of my empirical research, in what follows I present the peculiarities of the multimethod design including sampling strategies, methods, fieldwork access, and multilingualism, as well as reflect on researcher positionality from the standpoint of the reflexive research conduct.

[31] Table E-5 in Appendix E provides an overview of the classification categories and data sources that were used to create the dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU*.

Chapter 6: Multifaceted Empirical Approach

As applied in the current study, the following discussion explores the research procedures rooted in the multimethod research design (Kvale and Brinkmann [1996] 2009, p. 8). This approach aligns with the principles of grounded theory research (Glaser and Strauss 2006 [1967], pp. 17–18). Furthermore, the use of a multimethod research design is well-established in the field of migration studies (Hedberg and Kepsu 2008; Vargas-Silva 2012; Casas-Cortes et al. 2014, p. 70; Schittenhelm and Schneider 2017). Reflecting on the combination of methods in migration research, Oliver Bakewell emphasized the importance of ensuring a coherent theoretical foundation for a multimethod approach, rooted in the chosen epistemology (Bakewell 2010, p. 12).

Grounded theory, as a research framework, implies the discovery of insights through fieldwork and simultaneous data analysis, serving as a foundation for theoretical sampling and leading to the ongoing adjustment of selected research methods, as discussed earlier. This orientation guided the incorporation of new research methods and ways of data documentation to complement the interview method, which served as the initial approach to data gathering and analysis.

Based on a multimethod approach, a set of studies served as an example of how using methods may serve different purposes. Some of them are Stefan Kutzner, Ueli Mäder and Carlo Knöpfel's research (2004) on the working poor in Switzerland combining a survey method with an interview method; Andreas Wimmer's study (2012) on nationalism, state formation, and ethnic exclusion that required a creation of a large historical dataset between 1816-2005; Karolina Barglowski, Anna Amelina and Basak Bilecen's study (2014) on transnational social protection combining semi-structured interviews with in-depth ethnography, document and statistical analysis. In my previous comparative, multilingual, and multimethod research design to investigate gender role transformations in Ukraine, Germany, and the Czech Republic, I combined a survey method, visual media analysis, and textual content analysis (Havlin 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). I illustrate the processing methods employed in the current study in the following sections.

6.1 Sampling Strategy and Selection Procedures

The sampling strategy employed in this thesis was rooted in Grounded Theory principles, relying on a comprehensive approach aligned with theoretical sampling and data-generated, reality-based theory construction, as detailed earlier. Such sampling strategy allowed me to progressively develop selection criteria for research subjects and group formations (Schittenhelm 2009, p. 12), adapting to various fieldwork periods and research methods.

Figure 11: The Core Concepts of the Emerging Immigrant Agency Theory



Source: Original Diagram.

In my selection process, I primarily adhered to theoretical considerations, prioritizing the representativeness of studied concepts over that of individual persons or organizations (Corbin and Strauss 1990, pp. 420–421). This meant that the focus was not on the number of cases but on the emergence of phenomena related to immigrant agency, related concepts, their meanings, forms, and expressions that contributed to theoretical explanations of agency in the context of immigration and settlement. Consequently, the application of theoretical sampling required ongoing methodological reflection and flexibility throughout the research process.

Additionally, the multimethod design necessitated distinct levels of selective procedures during fieldwork. To gain insights into migrant individual agency, cases for problem-centered interviews were chosen using explicit selection criteria. The interview analysis revealed three core components that formed the basis of the emerging immigrant agency theory: *identity formations, language use,* and *social actions* (as depicted in

Figure 11), which construct immigrant agency, and detailed in the following manner:

Identity Formations: These are conceived as multidimensional identities that potentially carry a character of project-identities. They are continually under construction or renegotiation throughout the process of migration and settlement, as discussed in Part Four of this thesis.

Language Use is an evolving experience, particularly in the context of migration and settlement. This often includes the acquisition of new languages at the destination point while preserving primary language(s). The nuances of language use will be explored in Part Five.

Social Actions: Within the array of social action conceptualizations, my focus lies on actions stemming from the prolonged process of migration. Specifically, I will examine actions propelled by the goal of settling, embedding into the destination country, and maintaining connections with the country or region of origin. My analysis will center on entrepreneurial actions (Part Six) and the exploration of recreational and leisure activities (Part Seven).

These elements allow for the comprehensive exploration of different dimensions of immigrant agency, both at the individual and collective levels, across various temporal and spatial contexts. In terms of duration, long-term migration entails actions related to settling, maintaining, bridging, and connecting, often characterized as transnationalism, integration, or the simultaneous pursuit of multiple objectives. Regarding spatial dynamics, the migration of people across borders is evident in both cross-border relations and the tangible, everyday realities of spaces that immigrants directly and physically occupy. These core concepts, which conceptualize immigrant agency as an analytical tool, is employed to delineate the individual and collective capacity for being, becoming, and acting within the intricate web of interpersonal relationships (networks) and structural settings that shape the immigration process.

Based on these core concepts, I determined 'where and how to collect or generate the next tranche of data' (Birks et al. 2019, p. 4). In other words, I decided what to select next while adhering to theoretical sampling in the construction of the emerging theory. This additional sampling procedures were aimed at addressing specific units, cases, or questions that emerged from the interview analysis, with the goal of ensuring 'maximum variation in the sample' while keeping 'the quantity of data for analysis to a manageable size' (ibid). Once theoretical saturation was achieved, I completed sampling procedures.

Initially focusing on individuals and their agency, the interviews revealed the need to study immigrants' collective agency. The selection of group formations as units of analysis stemmed from interviewees' reflections on the significance of cultural associations and retail shops with the East European orientation in their daily lives. For instance, after one of the interviews, an engaged interviewee took me to a local Mix Markt shop with the comment: "*when I miss home* (.) *I come here*" (from the interview with Matilda). Another interviewee, Lisa Bardo, invited me to visit a rehearsal of the dance group she initiated. I followed these suggestions and began attending activities of various immigrant cultural organizations and creative hobby groups, as well as regularly visiting a local Mix Markt. Karin Schittenhelm referred to this selection method as a 'practiced sampling procedure' ['praktizierte Samplings'] (2009, p. 9), wherein cases and units of analysis are chosen based on the developments observed during the fieldwork. Another example illustrates this point. Some of my interviewees continuously used the word 'russaki': in some instances, 'russaki' served as a self-description, while in others, it was an ambiguous portrayal of Russian-speaking migrants in Germany. As with the cases of East European oriented shops and cultural associations, the interview data alone was insufficient to fully explore the meanings of 'russaki.' Emerging from the interviews, these suggestions guided my research in different directions, such as culture- and recreation-oriented leisure groups, retail businesses initiated by Russian-speaking immigrants, and collective identification and identity frameworks. These new areas of theoretical sampling required additional selection procedures and methodological adjustments. Therefore, in these cases, I applied multimodal (real time and digital) ethnography to acquire data about the Mix Markt business network and cultural associations, as well as to unpack the meanings of the ambiguous collective identifier 'russaki' within the semantic field.

The real time ethnography conducted in two different cities revealed, on the one hand, a plethora of creative and educational initiatives, such as cultural centers or weekend (Sunday) schools that integrated singing, dancing, acting, and music activities for immigrants from the post-Soviet space. While I encountered other comparable creative leisure groups, I chose to focus on one such group for in-depth analysis in Part Seven, using the others for comparative purposes. On the other hand, the background investigation of two Mix Markt shops in Xcity and Ycity redirected me to other comparable shops connected as a supermarket chain across Germany and the EU (discussed in Part Six). Since most the information about these shops was publicly available, I compiled a dataset that included 249 stores.[32] These sampling procedures represent a gradual selection process while relying on ongoing analysis and theory building grounded in theoretical sampling.

Lastly, it is important to emphasize the urban scale or urban scalar perspective as a crucial aspect of my sampling process. I conducted interviews and real time ethnography in two mid-sized cities, Xcity in Rhineland-Palatinate and Ycity of North Rhine-Westphalia,[33] which share comparable characteristics. Both cities have a population of around 100,000 inhabitants, with approximately 11 percent being foreign-born residents. Quantifying the number of post-Soviet, Russian-speaking immigrants posed a practical challenge, as a significant portion had undergone naturalization processes by the time of my research project, rendering this immigrant group partially invisible in statistical data. Therefore, I relied on relative characteristics that pointed to the presence of a significant number of the studied group. In both cities, there were vibrant and visible Russian-speaking communities actively engaged through cultural associations and small to medium-sized businesses. For instance, in each city, there were two East-European-orientated shops, one of which was a Mix Markt. The visibility of the post-Soviet communities in these cities overlapped with the presence of late ethnic German resettlers and FSU Jewish refugees and their geographical distribution.

The selection of these mid-sized cities, Xcity and Ycity, directed my focus toward ordinary small or mid-sized cities. Background research revealed that the experiences of post-Soviet immigrants in these types of cities are understudied and, therefore, invisible. Considering the fieldwork locations, many available studies have primarily concentrated on large German cities or metropolises such as Berlin and its surroundings (Darieva 2004; Baerwolf 2006; Aronson 2011), Hamburg (Isurin 2011), Munich (Popkov and Popkova 2019), Duesseldorf (Sommer 2012), and Frankfurt am Main (Savoskul 2015). Some of these cities are classified as global cities in Sassen's terms (Sassen 2001), while others are significant regional centers. Furthermore, the Mix Markt data analysis supported the notion of the importance of mid-sized cities in the lives of post-Soviet immigrants. To

[32] More details on dataset composition can be found in Appendix E, Table E-5.

[33] For anonymity reasons, I will designate the cities where I conducted real time ethnography as Xcity and Ycity. When I specify particular cities, it signifies the use of data from open-access sources, where real time ethnography was not undertaken.

overcome the urban bias of large cities,[34] I examine the positions and experiences of post-Soviet immigrants in small and mid-sized cities, collecting their accounts through interviews and exploring their collective actions within cultural associations and businesses using multimodal ethnography.

6.2 Methods and Data

In response to challenges and demands during the fieldwork, I complemented an interview method with real time and digital ethnography. As a result, this combination proved to be effective to answer my research questions and to develop an emerging theory of immigrant agency. Applied methods not only interacted and strengthened each other but also influenced each other (Kvale and Brinkmann [1996] 2009, p. 8). Table 3: *Multimethod Research Design for Immigrant Agency Theory* illustrates concisely the important aspects related to each method: a way of data documentation, samples, urban scale, amount of data and its processing, outcomes from the specific method, and their implications for the theory building. A detailed account of each method follows the table illustrating the specificity of its fieldwork implementation. Besides, I reflect on the peculiarities in the conduct of the ethnographic study of emerged phenomena: Mix Markt businesses, cultural associations, and an identity formation russaki.

[34] Figure C-1 in Appendix C illustrates that large cities and metropolises do not constitute the majority of the German population distribution by community size.

Table 3: Multimethod Research Design for Immigrant Agency Theory

Research and Documentation Methods	Fieldwork Timeframe	Sample	Data Processing	Urban Scalar	Elements of Immigrant Agency Theory
Problem-centered, semi-structured interviews Audio-recording, transcripts	**2012-2014** Phase 1: Xcity **2014-2016** Phase 2: Ycity	N=22; 16 women and 6 men Average interview duration approx. three hours: ranging between 1 - 8 hours	Text transcripts; GT coding procedures; interpretative approach	Mid-sized cities 100,000 – 150,000 inhabitants	**Individual and Collective Components** *Identity formations* and *identity frameworks,* Part Four and Appendix D *Language use.* Topics: multilingualism, language interference, translanguaging discussed in Part Five and Appendix D
Real time ethnography Video recording, fieldwork notes, video scripts	**2012-2016**** Phase 1: Oct 2012 – May 2014 Xcity Phase 2: Jun 2014 – Jan 2017, Ycity	Approx. 50 hours shooting time, N=237 gigabytes Cultural associations, educational projects, festivals, and businesses,	GT coding procedures of iconographic evidence (videos and picture); interpretative approach; sequence analysis; ANT	Mid-sized cities 100,000 – 150,000 inhabitants	**Collective Components:** *Immigrant leisure associations,* Part Seven and Appendix F *Social actions:* cohesion-oriented, routinized, micro-situative actions. Strategies: community engagement, flexible ethnic boundary-making, Contextual and flexible *language use* *Identity frameworks.* Topics: cultural pluralism, self-exoticism, hybrid/intersectional identities
Digital ethnography Dataset composition, fieldwork notes	**2019-2020** Phase 3: composition of the original dataset	N=249 of Mix Markt Stores across Europe (incl. n=165 in Germany)	Selective coding GT, qualitative and quantitative (distributions, median, etc.) analysis; mapping with Excel/Google map; ANT	Small cities under 99.999 inhabitants Mid-sized cities 100,000 – 199,999 inhabitants	**Collective Components.** Immigrant businesses, Part Six and Appendix E *Entrepreneurial actions*: fostering socioeconomic cohesion; facilitating sociocultural involvement; promoting professionalization; embracing and navigating mundane transnational social spaces; marketing strategy based on promotion of the East European culinary fusion. *Identity frameworks* in cultural consumption, food memory *Language use:* flexible multilingual contexts

In-Depth Interviews

The interview method is a potent tool for constructing of personal narratives and experiences, allowing researchers or interviewers to gain brief yet intimate glimpses into the interviewee's private world (Atkinson and Silverman 1997, p. 315). Through in-depth interviews, individuals become the focal point where the interview process shapes the construction of the self (Kvale 2006, p. 493). Problem-centered and semi-structural interviews laid the foundation for my initial project, titled *Einwanderer aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion*: *Ankommen und Einleben in Deutschland* [*Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union: Arrival and Settlement in Germany*]. These in-depth interviews, as a qualitative research method, played a pivotal role in collecting individual accounts from participants reflecting on their migration experiences and settlement practices in Germany. This type of interview is considered a theory-generating method and is closely aligns with the research procedures of grounded theory.

Prior knowledge and background research act as a framework for generating questions during interviews (Birks et al. 2019, p. 4). It emphasizes the idea that participants, through storytelling, reveal what they consider significant, thus shaping the research process. My research approach was informed by a transnational perspective and an integration approach to international migration, as discussed earlier. Additionally, my experiences as an immigrant partially shaped this knowledge, along with my interactions with immigrant communities in Germany. For example, I had been involved in the local *Migration Integration Network,* which aimed to foster the political and social engagement of immigrants in their communities. As Birks and colleagues noted, based on Charmaz's assumptions: "… a theory does not "emerge" from the data through passivity, but rather the researcher proactively comes to the data with their background and knowledge and constructs the resultant theory" (ibid).

In employing conversation techniques, the problem-centered interview allows for a certain degree of flexibility in a communication situation while focusing on the individual respondent, as highlighted by Andreas Witzel (2000, [4]). During these interviews, I guided and continually questioned the interviewee's reflections and narrations, resembling the core of a dialogue. Conversation strategies were employed to inspire and facilitate a storytelling process in a pseudo-dialogue-like situation. Steiner Kvale (2006) cautioned about referring to an interview as a dialogue due to the hierarchical relationship with an asymmetrical power distribution between the interviewer and the interviewee. He pointed out that, "In contrast to the mutuality of dialogue, in an interview, one part seeks understanding and the other part serves as a means for the interviewer's knowledge interest" (Kvale 2006, p. 483). The author provided several reasons for this power asymmetry in interview settings (idem, pp. 484-485). First, the interviewer leads the interview based on a research problem and interview guidelines. Second, the interview is a one-sided dialogue in which one party asks questions (interviewer), and the other party follows a lead and answers (interviewee). Third, the interview is an instrumental and

manipulative dialogue, serving the interviewer's need for narrative material for interpretation and analysis (further publication), while the interviewee may not be privy to the interviewer's hidden agenda. Finally, the interviewer holds the monopoly to interpret and report the worldviews of research subjects. These factors do not diminish the explorative potential of the interview as a valuable research method. However, researchers must be aware of these ethical issues and address them throughout the process of research process and beyond (idem, p. 496).

While mitigating this power dynamic and encourage meaningful conversation, I strived to establish mutual trust, openness, seriousness, and a sense of anonymity within the interview settings. The effectiveness of this setup depended on the emotional readiness or resistance of the participants, the location of the interview, its ambiance, and the overall atmosphere. Conducting interviews, a direct method involving face-to-face interactions with recorded responses, was occasionally emotionally intense for all participants, including both interviewees and myself as the interviewer. This emotional intensity was especially evident when research participants delved into negative experiences related to migration and relived past traumas, such as failed professional expectations, rejecting plans for a second child upon migration, life-threatening injuries during professional requalification, and instances of bullying against their children at school due to their migration background. Hence, the choice of the interview location held significant meaning. In terms of selecting interview locations, I tried to accommodate the preferences of the interviewees and ensure their comfort when discussing their experiences. To achieve this, I conducted interviews in various settings, including their homes, offices, places of study, and even in a hospital during a dialysis therapy session. On some occasions, interviews took place in my university office, and less frequently, in my apartment (four and three times, respectively).

To establish trust and rapport with the interviewees, I occasionally drew upon my own cultural background and experiences when necessary. Kathy Charmaz (2008) emphasized the importance of the mutuality effect in the relationships between the researcher and research participants, highlighting that both parties co-construct the data. This means that researchers are an integral part of the research situation, and their positions, perspectives, and interactions can significantly influence the process (idem, p. 402). Leveraging my personal experiences proved useful in connecting with interviewees and appearing authentic, as we shared comparable cultural backgrounds. Being born in Soviet Ukraine in the 1980s, having an in-depth knowledge of movies, songs, and cartoons from the Soviet period, and my multilocal experiences across three generations of my family contributed to this shared cultural context. My daily use of multiple languages in Germany also fostered this connection.[35]

In addition to employing effective conversational strategies, I utilized strategies for generating comprehension during the interviews. This involved the use of interview guidelines and questions designed to enhance understanding (Witzel 2000, [16]). The

[35] Further reflections on multilingual research in Section 6.4 and on researcher positionality in Section 6.5.

development of these guidelines was informed by the background research, which served to establish a context for the study (Birks et al. 2019, p. 4). The interview guidelines[36] primarily served as a navigational tool, helping interviewees reflect on events from the past 10 to 40 years and how these experiences might shape their present and future. These guidelines ensured that consistent themes were explored in all interviews, facilitating comparative analysis at a later stage. Although the interviews followed a semi-structured format, they remained open to the emergence of novel and unforeseen topics during the conversations. When interviewees introduced new and relevant subjects not initially covered, I encouraged them to elaborate further. The interview topics covered a broad spectrum, including pre-migration and migratory experiences, decision-making and transition, settlement and adaptation, social connections and networks, educational and professional activities, cultural and language competencies, daily routine and housing arrangements, community engagement, as well as the maintenance of ties to the place of origin, such as visits and contacts, and future orientations. Following a brief introduction to the research subject and obtaining interview consent, I recorded all interviews using a voice recorder. Additionally, I administered a short questionnaire to gather information about the interviewees' profiles.[37] Simultaneously to conducting interviews, I processed, transcribed, coded, and evaluated the earlier interviews. Detail on coding procedures can be found in the previous chapter.

As the selection of interview participants was based on explicit criteria, I will provide further context regarding the composition of the interview sample. Table 4: *The Interviewees' Profiles 2012-2014*, furnishes a comprehensive overview of all interviews conducted between 2012 and 2016. These interviews, on average, extended for approximately three hours, with the shortest lasting one hour and the longest spanning two sessions, totaling eight hours. Table 4 encompasses specific details about the interviewees, including their age and gender, place of origin, year of arrival in Germany, reason for admission, family status, parental experiences, educational level, occupation at the time of the interview, language proficiencies, and the predominant language used during the interviews. To safeguard the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were employed to replace their actual names. In summary, the interview sample consisted of sixteen females and six males, ranging in age from 21 and 59. Out of the twenty-two interviews conducted, twenty, which were considered more relevant for theoretical sampling, were transcribed. The interviewees primarily originated from Armenia, Kazakhstan, Russia, or Ukraine and arrived in Germany between the 1990s and the early 2000s. While most the interviewees initiated their migration, four followed their parents as young children or teenagers and were students at the time of the interviews. Despite their high educational levels, many research participants experienced various degrees of employment difficulties and often held temporary and precarious jobs.

[36] The interview guidelines are presented in Table C-2 in Appendix C.

[37] The Interview Consent (Figure C-3) and Questionnaire for Accompanying Interviews (Figure C-4) are available in Appendix C.

Although gender and education were not the main sampling criteria, they invite explanations for the sampling 'distortions' in these aspects. In terms of education, a researcher's influence and willingness to participate in interviews are possible explanations. Regarding the former, I presented myself as a sociologist and university researcher conducting a study within university premises. Concerning the latter, we can assume that the level of education may correlate with readiness to reflect on migration experiences, inclination to self-reflexivity, and self-expressive abilities in an official, recorded, interview format. Yet, additional justifications on my part were required, including a declaration of consent and audio-recording procedures for each interview. Regarding the overrepresentation of women, there was no attempt or requirement to ascertain or represent gender differences in the depiction of interview partners. However, the high proportion of female interviewees undoubtedly influenced the material elicited, at least in the case of interviews. I had previously reflected on gender effects in international migration elsewhere (Havlin 2015). Furthermore, ethnography balanced these gender and educational distortions, enabling outreach to individuals with more diverse educational backgrounds and a greater gender distribution. For instance, a sample on entrepreneurial activities included a larger share of male owners or managers, although there was a high proportion of female entrepreneurs (Figure E-2 in Appendix E).

This concurrent data collection and analysis approach facilitated a learning effect during the research process and allowed for the refinement of conversation strategies, interview guidelines, data processing, and guided further theoretical sampling. During the interview analysis, my goal was to identify overarching and contrasting patterns across interviews, primarily to understand individual perspective. This endeavor necessitated the development of a conceptual framework for examining structural, collective, and non-structural (networking) factors in the context of migration and settlement. This analytical approach aligned with the GT coding procedures and ultimately led to the development of core categories for immigrant agency, including identity formation, language use, and social actions, as noted earlier. These core categories served as the foundational elements for the emergent theory building process.

Table 4: The Interviewees' Profiles 2012-2014

Pseudonym	Age	CoO[38]	Gender	Arrival[39]	Admission[40]	Family status	Children	Education[41]	Occupation at the time of interview[42]	Language proficiency L1[43]	L2[44]
Eva	39	RU	F	2002	JR	2nd marriage	2	Law UD / CoO Social work UD / CoS	Social worker (NT)	RU_{C2}, DE_{C1}, HE_{A2}	RU
Katia	51	RU	F	1992	JR	Marriage	1	Engineering economics UD / CoO Business administration PT / CoS	Self-employed, sales Job seeker for T/NT job	RU_{C2}, DE_{C1}, ENG_{B2}, HE_{A1}	RU
Tania	53	KZ	F	1994	MLEG	Divorced	2	Art design CD / CoO	Self-employed, catering	RU_{C2}, DE_{C1}	RU
Martha	21	KZ	F	1998	LEG	In relationship	-	Teacher training UD (NF) / CoS	Student	DE_{C2}, RU_{C1}, ENG_{B2}, S_{B1}	DE
Diana-Anoush	46	AR	F	1999	AS	Divorced	2	Teacher training UD / CoO	Social benefits due to chronic illness Cleaner (unofficial)	ARM_{C2}, RU_{C2}, DE_{C1}	RU
Liza Bardo	57	KZ	F	1991	LEG	3rd marriage	2	Teacher training UD / CoO Physiotherapy PT / CoS	Physiotherapist (NT) Trainer (NT)	DE_{C2}, RU_{C2}, ENG_{B1}	RU / DE

[38] Country of origin (CoO): AR – Armenia, KZ – Kazakhstan, RU – Russia, UA – Ukraine.
[39] Year of arrival in Germany.
[40] Reason for admission: JR – Jewish refugee, LEG – late ethnic German resettler, MLEG – married to LEG, L – labor migrant, S – studies, MNG – married to a German national, AS – asylum seeker.
[41] Education: CoS – a country of settlement; UD – university degree, CD – college degree, PT – professional training (German 'Ausbildung' 2-3 years). NF – Not-finished university degree, undergraduate
[42] Occupation: T – Tenured position, NT – Not tenured, MJ – Mini-job, a state program to reintegrate the long-term unemployed.
[43] Language proficiency (L1) with the estimated level: A1-A2 basic; B1-B2 independent; C1-C2 proficient user (Council of Europe 2001, pp. 24–27). ARM – Armenian, DE – German, ENG – English, F – French, HE – Hebrew, JP – Japanese, RU – Russian, S – Spanish, UA – Ukrainian.
[44] Language of the interview (L2). Some elements of translanguaging (RU-DE or DE-RU) were recorded in almost all interviews.

Table 4 continued

Pseudonym	Age	CoO	Gender	Arrival	Admission	Marital status	Children	Education	Occupation at the time of interview	Language proficiency	L2
Mila	46	KZ	F	1994	LEG	Marriage	2	Medical nursing PT / CoO	Nurse and caregiver (T)	RU_{C2}, DE_{C1}	RU
Diara	47	KZ	F	1993	MLEG	Marriage	2	Choreography CD / CoO	Assembler (MJ) Cleaner (unofficial)	RU_{C2}, DE_{B2}	RU
Anna	41	UA RU	F	1995	MNG	Marriage	2	Civil engineering UD / CoO Construction planning PT / CoS	Housewife (not willingly)	DE_{C2}, RU_{C2}, F_{B1}, UA_{B2}	RU
Galina	55	KZ	F	2001	LEG	2nd divorced	1	Teacher training UD / CoO	Social worker (T)	DE_{C2}, RU_{C2}	RU
Alona	50	RU	F	2005	MLEG	2nd marriage	1	Economics PT / CoS	Job seeker/ Housewife	RU_{C2}, DE_{C1}	RU
Ksenia	39	RU	F	2008	LEG	2nd divorced	-	Economics UD / CoO	Kitchen assistant (MJ)	RU_{C2}, DE_{B1}	RU
Elena	27	RU	F	1997	LEG	Single	-	Engineering UD (NF) / CoS	Student	DE_{C2}, RU_{C1}, ENG_{C1}, JP_{A2}, S_{B2}	DE/RU
Liubov	30	KZ	F	1996	LEG	In relationship	-	Sales PT / CoS	Sale assistant (T)	DE_{C2}, RU_{B1}	DE
Matilda	48	RU	F	1999	MNG	Divorced	-	Teacher training UD / CoO Business administration PT / CoS	Job seeker after PT	RU_{C2}, DE_{C2}, ENG_{B2}	RU
Stella	59	RU	F	1989	MNG	Marriage	1	Teacher training UD / CoO Translation PT / CoS	Self-employed in translation; Housewife	RU_{C2}, DE_{C2}	RU
Alex or Al	31	UA	M	1997	JR	Single	-	Engineering UD / CoS	PhD student	DE_{C2}, RU_{C2}, ENG_{C1}, UA_{C1}, JP_{B1}, HE_{B1}	RU
Nikita	22	RU	M	2010	RU	Single	-	Engineering UD (NF) / CoS	Student	RU_{C2}, DE_{C1}, ENG_{C1}	RU
Igor	28	KZ	M	1990	LEG	Single	-	Handcraft PT / CoS	Student (to increase qualification)	DE_{C2}, RU_{C1}	RU/DE
Vlad	23	KZ	M	1994	LEG	In relationship	-	Engineering UD (NF) / CoS	Student	DE_{C2}, RU_{C2}, ENG_{B2}	RU
Oleg	38	UA	M	1999	JR	Single	-	Engineering UD / CoO Industrial work PT / CoS	Industrial worker (NT)	RU_{C2}, DE_{B2}	RU
Taras	45	UA	M	1996	L	In relationship	-	Engineering UD / CoO Handcraft (electro) PT / CoS Engineering UD / CoS	Engineer (T)	UA_{C1}, DE_{C2}, RU_{C2}, ENG_{B1}	UA

Multimodal Ethnography

I applied an ethnographic study to reflect on collective aspects of immigrant agency, on the interaction between individual and collective aspects of immigrant agency. Ethnography as a research strategy stands for 'the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of these others' (van Maanen 2011, p. xiii). The world of others may be unfamiliar and strange for a researcher, yet ethnography poses a task of in-depth interactions with the researched subjects and their social realities as 'multiple realities' (Charmaz 2014, p. 231). As I reflected earlier on the sampling strategies, several collective entities required further investigation: leisure associations and retail businesses organized and managed by immigrants from the former Soviet Union. I also required additional knowledge on identity formations and frameworks that emerged during some interviews (e.g., russaki). To receive a detailed account of immigrant cultural associations, I had to become a member of the hobby dance group, to face the challenges and problems that the group faced while pursuing this creative recreational activity with limited funds and, therefore, with high dependence on individual and communal resources. My attempts to understand the meaning of immigrant businesses, their development, and their role in immigrant communities compelled me to become a customer of those shops that previously did not belong to my private outreach. Whereas the cultural association was welcoming and integrative once becoming a member, immigrant enterprises were inviting to the degree of their business interests. In contrast to the cultural associations, retail businesses were limited in their accessibility if we consider the law of trademarks, undisclosed trade secrets, and intellectual property rights (Bouchoux 2013; Ohly 2020). It required me to be creative in acquiring knowledge of how these businesses operate and form networks. Despite the differences in fieldwork access and data collection, both fields were novel for me. I had to learn how to socialize within them and how to navigate these cultural and working spaces. Van Maanen explained these efforts of operating in unknown realms while establishing the fieldwork access:

> "To do fieldwork apparently requires some of the instincts of an exile, for the fieldworker typically arrives at the place of study without much of an introduction and knowing few people, if any. Fieldworkers, it seems, learn to move among strangers – while holding themselves in readiness for episodes of embarrassment, affection, misfortune, partial or vague revelation, deceit, confusion, isolation, warmth, adventure, fear, concealment, pleasure, surprise, insult, and always possible deportation" (van Maanen 2011, p. 2).

Thus, the fieldwork required me as a researcher not only to be observant and attentive, to manage technics specific to ethnographic research procedures, but also to come to terms with emotions evoked by close encounters with other people's fortunes and misfortunes, attitudes, and positions. Certainly, this aspect resembled the process of conducting interviews where interviewees projected their emotions, stories, and worries onto me as their interviewer, as their conversation partner, and as a person with whom they trusted

their life stories. In contrast to the mechanics of audio or video recording, I had to deal with these projections that affected me as an attentive and empathetic observer. Occasionally I struggled to reconnect with my reality, detaching from emotions or worries evoked by the fieldwork. This distancing was especially challenging in the initial stages of the research.

Further ethnographic fieldwork demands a part-time withdrawal from own daily practices and re-socialization into the realities of others. Robert M. Emerson and colleagues stressed that certain a 'degree of resocialization' (2011, p. 2) is inevitable while actively participating in the daily affairs of researched subjects. This resocialization allowed me to get closer and to access 'physical and social proximity to the daily rounds of people's lives and activities' I was studying (idem, p. 1). The ultimate goal of this access is to "seek a deeper immersion in others' worlds to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important," to comprehend "positions in the midst of the key sites and scenes of other's lives in order to observe and understand them," to gain access to "fluidity of others' lives" and embrace their sensitivity toward events around them (ibid). The process of getting close, in other words ethnographic immersion, has a twofold purpose: in the one hand, being around others to see 'how they respond to events as they happen' (idem, p. 2); on the other hand, experiencing for oneself as a researcher those events as well as circumstances that trigger them.

As a research strategy, real time ethnography incorporates participant and nonparticipant observations, informal conversations, and group discussions over a longer period: A researcher 'observes and learns while participating in the daily rounds of life of others' (ibid) . As much as for the interview conduct, the interactional aspect during ethnography also plays a pivotal role: Ethnographic field research "is particularly suited to documenting social life as process, as emergent meanings established in and through social interaction" (idem, p. 14). That is especially valid in the case of participant observations when the research is involved and engaged in social interaction.

The ethnographic study met three objectives of the empirical research: first, to acquire knowledge about immigrant cultural associations; second, to reflect on russaki*,* an identity formation and framework that emerged during interviews; third, to gain data on immigrant businesses as Mix Markt shops or sometimes Russian shops in the vernacular use. In the first case, I refer in this thesis primarily to my real time observations of Scheherazade, the hobby dancing group, whose activities I followed for two years. In the second case, I was able to distinguish four clusters of meanings that the word russaki conveys while used in the Russian-speaking contexts in Germany. Here real time and digital observations allowed me to interpret ambiguous and inconclusive data gained during interviews on this account. In the third case, digital ethnography enabled me to access and accumulate information on Mix Markt stores that enriched my real time ethnographic observations of two specific Mix Markt stores in Xcity and Ycity. In all instances, I attempted to answer the following questions related to the core concepts of immigrant agency: How are identity formations and frameworks actualized in daily interactions of studied subjects? What are the key features of language use in their

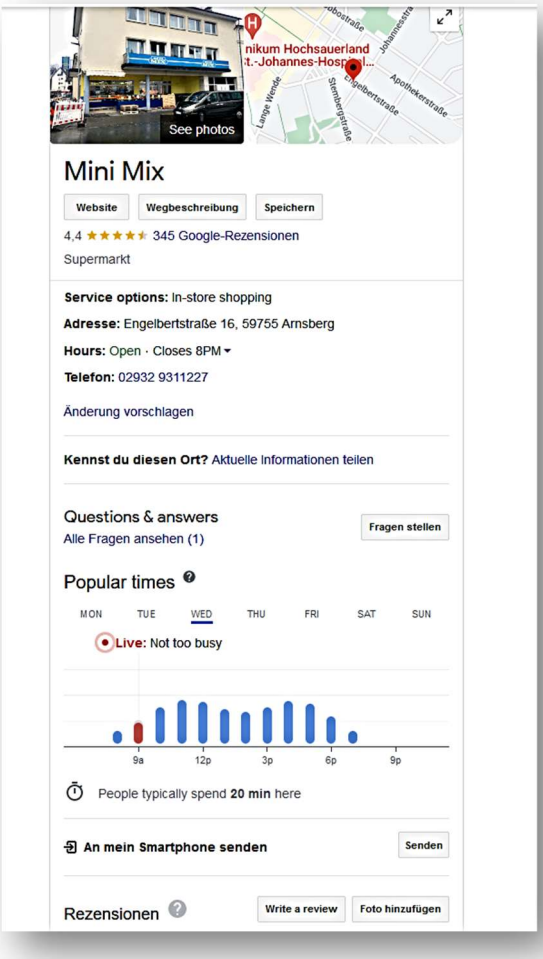
mundane affairs? Which actions can we call significant in pursuing agendas of cultural associations and retail businesses?

The ethnographic study required long-term engagement and my presence in cultural associations and businesses. This element of the study contrasted with the interview conduct, where I primarily found out about immigrant experiences in terms of identity, language use, actions, and strategies through communication and dialogue with interviewees over a brief period of time. During the ethnographic observations, I was able to observe first-hand how identity formations and frameworks, language use, and social actions were exercised in specific situations rather than retrospectively reflected upon the interview settings. With constraints and limitations, ethnographic observations offered another level of authenticity, partially gained through the durability of my presence in the field. As a researcher, I became a part of the field that required my resocialization into the researched communities: I became a member of the cultural associations, and a hobby dancing group, first attending some meetings and rehearsals, then I began with my research practices when the situation seemed to be comfortable to other members. I began exploring East-European-oriented shops, which constituted the focal point of my research, to understand customer experiences and sample the products they offered. This included products that appealed to both local (immigrant and non-immigrant) communities.

The data availability in the digital realm inspired me to apply digital ethnography additionally to real time ethnography. This digital data was specifically related to Mix Markt stores and an identity formation russaki in Germany. Time, place, and access distinguish my understanding of real time and digital modalities of ethnography. Real time ethnography took place simultaneously with activities undertaken by research participants as long as I had an invitation to join. As a rule, I had limited control over the observation duration: If I wanted to ensure continuity, the observations had to last. For instance, in my ethnographic study of the hobby dance group, an observation frequency was determined by rehearsal sessions between two and three hours twice a week or by events when this dance group performed during communal festivals or semi-private parties. Real time is also meant to be physically present in spaces where activities unfolded, where social interaction of research participants happened, and where I found acceptance as a researcher. Those were meeting and rehearsal places, their homes, schools, shops, and other relevant locations. On the contrary, digital ethnography did not require concurrent involvement on my part: Asynchronous observations offer a researcher more freedom to adjust to their schedule The digital space, relevant for me, comprised social media platforms (e.g., networks and blogs), official business websites or company registers, and online newspapers, all contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Usually, digital space had a lower access barrier since it did not require an invitation or permission to enter (apart from a Facebook membership or other social media, closed groups there, for instance). For this reason, real time ethnography has a higher level of accessibility barriers in comparison to digital one. Yet, digital ethnography dealt with representations: Those constructed images targeted insiders and outsiders who read online articles or blog contributions, check an

advertisement, or visit an official webpage. These images purposefully wanted to attract, communicate, or advertise on behalf of businesses, cultural associations, or people engaged.

Figure 12: Screenshot of Public Information for Mini Mix Markt



Even though the digital ethnographic fieldwork took place online, 'its epistemological remit remains much the same' (Murthy 2008, p. 838): The remit served a purpose to depict actions, attitudes, and representations of researched subjects. According to Dhiraj Murthy, the possibilities that digital ethnography provides connect to 'the advent of new digital technologies' (ibid), extending the field of social interactions onto the digital realm of the Internet and, therefore, expanding the fieldwork outreach. This development does not only validate the experiences of individuals who are active online, participating on social media or contributing to blog and chat discussions; at the same time, this development opens new possibilities, for instance, for businesses striving to attract attention and establish a presence beyond the physical proximity.

To illustrate the effectiveness of digital fieldwork outreach, consider the information available to customers (and researchers) about a Mix Markt store using the wide-spread Google Map. Figure 12 displays a screenshot of the publicly accessible information about Mini Mix Markt in Ansberg, North Rhine-Westphalia accessed on 23.02.2022. This figure underscores the relevance and advantages of employing digital ethnography to monitor the online presence of investigated businesses that may not be in close proximity to the researcher. Despite not being an official store webpage, the Google Maps app provides comprehensive details about the featured shop, including exterior and interior images, location, contact details, reviews, and the shop's rating based on customer feedback. It also offers insights into popular visiting times and the average duration of customer visits. Given its interactive nature, users can contribute by adding reviews or asking questions. In this case, there were 345 reviews in German, English, and Russian on Google Maps at the time of access, resembling a diverse collection of feedback and

suggestions. The digital infrastructure enhances communication between shop owners and customers, making information accessible to a wide audience, including present and future clients, business advertisers, and researchers investigating businesses and their clientele, proving insights into the languages used in comments[45] and the issues raised.

Despite of public availability of such data, Murthy invited us to be aware of the digital divide stemming from technological use while engaging in digital ethnography because 'access to these technologies remains stratified by class, race, and gender of both researchers and respondents' (Murthy 2008, p. 839). The customers' reviews contain a bias based on this divide: customers, using the Google Map App, and write reviews are, at least, smartphone users willing to participate in digital social sharing. Therefore, real time and digital modalities of ethnography must complement each other to mitigate the bias of the digital divide, whereas digital ethnography ought to rely on plurality of digital sources for comparison and confirmation.

Besides the digital divide, other ethical issues must be addressed that are related to a researcher as a covert observer while conducting digital ethnography (idem, p. 849): A researcher is not always in a position or neither there is always a necessity to announce the research intentions to people who are observed (or the product of their work – businesses, blog contributions, etc.). Murthy asks to what extent "bloggers, chatters, and newsgroup users are comfortable being covertly observed or covered" (idem, p. 841). Some digital data about studied businesses or about the use of russaki by the immigrant communities were not current or even recent but were inactive at the time of research (yet, available online). Though this ethical side remains ambiguous, there are other methods (e.g., content analysis of print media, social media analysis, or historical analysis) that do not require consent on the part of people who produce data. Online publications can be interpreted as a de facto consent that blog contributions or posts can be used for research purposes, as long as the researcher sticks to the boundary of fair use.

About the advantages of multimodal (real time and digital) ethnography, Murthy noted that "a balanced combination of physical and digital ethnography not only gives researchers a larger and more exciting array of methods to tell social stories but also enables them to demarginalize the voice of respondents in these accounts" (idem, p. 839). The compilation of data gained through real time and digital ethnography as well as by problem-centered interviews provided me with a unique possibility to combine various data sources while constructing the theory of immigrant agency. Real time ethnography reflects and reacts to 'traditional physical configurations' (idem, p. 849) of social research, while digital ethnography depicts social reality and interactional practices of immigrants, their businesses, or other types of associations that are increasingly moving into the digital realm. The empirical research presented in this thesis reflects both such

[45] I observed a broader spectrum of languages used in the reviews for other Mix Markt stores on Google Maps. Typically, the language aligns with the local language of the country where the Mix Markt store is located (such as German for the Ansberg store). However, reviews are also found in English, as well as languages like Bulgarian, Rumanian, Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian. The linguistic diversity indirectly hints at the cultural diversity of the customers.

developments: everyday life simultaneous encounters in real time and physical dimensions as well as asynchronous, shifted in time and space digital encounters and representations.

Ethnography of Immigrant Businesses

The ethnographic study took place in two Mix Markt stores located in the mid-sized cities of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate sporadically in the period between 2015-2018. Initially I aimed at understanding the relations between 'Russian' shops (i.e., Mix Markt) and the local (Russian speaking) communities. Additionally, I sought to reflect on entrepreneurs' profiles, family, and community involvements (as employers and customers), and the community needs (memory of food, memory, and identity) of Russian Germans and other Russian-speaking immigrants. The identities of the two shops, where the ethnographic fieldwork took place, I kept anonymous. I address these shops as a Mix Markt in Xcity and a Mix Markt in Ycity. Besides, I briefly visited a dozen other Mix Markt shops located in North Rhine-Westphalia or Baden-Württemberg.

Upon realizing that the two shops with East European orientations, where I conducted my ethnographic observations, are part of a larger network comprising over a hundred shops across Germany and Europe, my objective shifted toward reconstructing a detailed account of this extensive network. As digital ethnography provided access to data about the Mix Markt supermarket chain and individual stores, constructing an original dataset seemed a plausible solution to manage an extensive amount of qualitative and quantitative data from various fragmented and dispersed sources. These sources included the Mix Markt official webpage (Mixmarkt.eu 2020), a commercial register and other websites generating information about businesses (firmenwissen.de; Northdata; Unternehmensregister 2020), the newspaper *Resettler Messenger* [Aussiedlerbote][46] and a range of publications in the local and national newspapers and magazines as, for instance, *Ost-West Panorama. Russlanddeutsche Zeitschrift* (Panorama 2009), *Schwäbische Zeitung* (Richter 2017), or *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (Vogt 2004). As a result, the original dataset generated 249 stores' profiles including two initial ones where I conducted real time ethnography in Xcity and Ycity. Out of the total amount of stores, 165 were based in Germany, the rest mainly in the EU. While generating the dataset I found additional 18 Mix Markt stores that were permanently closed for various reasons in the fieldwork period 2019/20: failed businesses, ownership transfer, or succession

[46] The monthly *Aussiedlerbote* or *Переселенческий вестник* [Resettler Messenger] is a German online and print newspaper in Russian and German, affiliated with the business association *Hamburger Verein der Deutsche aus Russland e.V.* (HVDAR n.d.). Primarily focusing on ethnic German resettlers, especially those from the post-Soviet space, this newspaper positions itself as dedicated to the lives of resettlers, encompassing "not only Germans, but Jewish, Russians, Ukrainians, all who speak Russian" (Aussiedlerbote 2020). It covers a diverse range of topics, including business, history, culture, migrant communities, and legal advice related to labor, homeownership, and immigration policies. Additionally, it features a significant number of advertisements from (Russian-speaking or community-related) businesses.

(Unternehmensregister 2020). The amount of such stores is much higher, yet the information about them is not openly accessible or circulated on the official channels.

In the sample with 249 stores, forty-five stores had a detailed profile (including all categories of Table E-5 in Appendix E), and 204 stores with fragmented profiles. The data for 45 Mix Markt store profiles were complete, first of all, thanks to the interview-styled advertisements in Aussiedlerbote (2014-2020). One of such advertisements is presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Mix Markt Advertisement from Aussiedlerbote


10 Наши предприниматели

www.aussiedlerbote.de 13 10.2018 переселенческий вестник

Anzeige

Прошедшее лето для продовольственной сети Mix-Markt оказалось очень плодотворным. Она пополнилась сразу несколькими новыми магазинами. Сегодня мы расскажем о супермаркетах, которые открылись в Бад-Вальдзее и во Фридрихсхафене (земля Баден-Вюртемберг). Управляют предприятиями Юрий Виндхольц и Лидия Пистер.

– Юрий, расскажите, пожалуйста, как Ваша жизнь оказалась связанной с супермаркетами Mix-Markt?
– До того, как погрузиться в сетевой проект, я вёл свой продуктовый магазин во Фридрихсхафене. В 2013 году принял решение кардинально сменить вектор своей работы в сторону данной торговой сети дискаунтеров. Вскоре наше предприятие провело перерегистрацию, поменяло название на супермаркет Mini-Mix-Markt (прежнее название Wiwa) и присоединилось к розничной сети магазинов.

– А как пришло понимание, что нужен аналогичный магазин в Бад-Вальдзее?
– Супермаркет в Бад-Вальдзее находится на самой начальной стадии развития – открылся в первых числах августа. И пока управление им полностью сосредоточено в моих руках. Но его действительной владелицей является моя жена Лидия, которая вместе с моими родителями – Эдуардом и Ольгой Виндхольц, работает в магазине во Фридрихсхафене. Вообще, надо сказать, что я захотел заниматься бизнесом по примеру мамы, от которой перенял руководство предприятием Wiwa. Через этот магазин вошёл в свою профессию и пропитался её духом.

– Бад-Вальдзее – городок хороший, хотя месторасположение глуховатое. И всё же не исключаете ли Вы возможности когда-нибудь открыть здесь ещё одну торговую точку?
– Скажите, в котором часу начинается ваш рабочий день?
– Мой рабочий день начинается в 6 часов утра. Сначала я проверяю, как работает наш магазин во Фридрихсхафене, затем еду в Бад-Вальдзее. Там я открываю магазин, принимаю товар, выставляю его на полки. Потом возвращаюсь во Фридрихсхафен, где работаю с документами, занимаюсь бухгалтерией. Вечером снова еду в Бад-Вальдзее, чтобы закрыть магазин. Домой возвращаюсь в 22 часа.

– Как Вы считаете, станет ли Mini-Mix-Markt новой точкой притяжения для всех здесь живущих?
– В этом я нисколько не сомневаюсь, потому что с первых дней работы магазина, покупатели рассказывают, что раньше им приходилось ездить за привычными покупками в другой город. Теперь у них есть свой супермаркет, где можно найти любимые продукты хорошего качества и по приемлемым ценам. Покупатели благодарят за новый магазин.

– Скажите, а Ваши дети тоже задействованы в магазинах?
– Наши дети – Дмитрий, Максим, Николь, София и Эвелин являются большими помощниками в семейной бизнесе. Все они учатся ещё в школе, но во время каникул и в свободное от учёбы время, охотно нам помогают. Недавно в нашей семье произошло пополнение – родилась дочь Таисия. Будем надеяться, что и она, когда подрастёт, тоже станет нам помогать.

– И здорово, если дети станут продолжателями вашего дела.
– Всем нам нравится путешествовать, особенно на автомобиле с жилым фургоном (Wohnwagen). Любим ездить в Италию. Прекраснейшие места! По дороге останавливаем свой автодом и наслаждаемся природой, смотрим, как живут в этой стране люди.

– Юрий, спасибо за беседу. Мне остаётся лишь пожелать Вам, чтобы супермаркеты были востребованы посетителями и развивались дальше.

MIX Markt

русский Наш магазин

Mini-MIX-Markt in Bad Waldsee und Friedrichshafen
Eschlestr. 4, 88339 Bad Waldsee • Ekkehardstr. 27, 88046 Friedrichshafen

Source: A screenshot from the digital copy of Aussiedlerbote in October 2018 (Siemens 2018a, p. 10), retrieved from the newspaper's digital archive. The green highlights correspond to elements of GT open coding, as explained in more detail earlier.

These advertisements introduced different stores across Germany, and several in Italy and Portugal: 32 ads were accessed in the 2018-2020 newspaper's digital archive; 13 ads were chosen in the period between 2014-2017 in different printed copies collected during the fieldwork. Written in Russian (or with minor degree of Russian-German translanguaging), the journalist Swetlana Siemens authored these ads arranging them as an interview with an owner or a manager of a respective store. Often pictures accompanied these interviews featuring an owner(s) and his/her family, a shop team, or products depicted in the interior or exterior design of a respective shop (Figure 13). As a rule, such interviews include the Mix Markt store's information: an address and location

(a blue box), biographical details about the owner(s) and seldom about a manager, store size, number of shop employees and a story of the development of the business. Interviews with owners provided personal details about their migration history, professional and entrepreneurial experiences, family involvement, and free time preferences.

Neither the Monolith group (the MG, the umbrella enterprise of the Mix Markt chain) nor any of the Mix Markt stores, which I mentioned openly or anonymously, have been actively involved in any way in this research project. Their contributions have been indirect: I relied strongly on the data available on the Mix Markt webpage or other mentioned webpages, as well as on the public presence of selected Mix Markt entrepreneurs, who gave public interviews to the newspapers (print/online) or left other digital traces on the Web. Except for my field notes, all empirical data used in my analysis was publicly available either online or in different Mix Markt locations in the period between 04/2014 and 08/2020. I extracted these data utilizing multimodal ethnography and arranged them as the dataset for the subsequent evaluation. Analyzing statistical and geographical distributions (with Excel and Google Map) made it possible to reflect on the scale of Mix Markt business distribution in the German and European contexts, to trace how the Mix Markt network and the Russian-speaking community spread, interacts, and operates on the Eurasian continent (Part Six). The detailed account of data documentation and categories of analysis related to the Mix Markt dataset I present below in Data documentation and in Appendix E.

Ethnography of Cultural Associations

Struggling to find interviewees for the project *Arriving and Settling in Germany*, I came across Scheherazade. Such struggles emerged in the pilot stages of my empirical research. Liza Bardo,[47] with whom I had a semi-structured interview, enthusiastically invited me to visit one of the rehearsals of the Scheherazade dance group and, potentially, to join a group. I accepted her invitation hoping to gain better access to Russian-speaking immigrant networks and win more interviewees. What started as an access to immigrant networks turned into a long-lasting ethnographic study, analyzing (among other things) how these networks formed and accessed, and which role they play in their respective community. During the empirical study, I came across several cultural associations (registered and not) managed by or including FSU immigrants in Xcity and Ycity. Also, the fieldwork during the Harmonica talent show (more in Chapter 15) contributed to my insight into the leisure, creative, and recreational activities of Russian-speaking immigrants and naturalized German citizens. Yet, for the in-depth analysis, I dedicate Part Seven primarily to Scheherazade while drawing parallels to other comparable groups.

[47] All names of the interview partners have been anonymized.

My ethnographic fieldwork related to the dance group took place between October 2012 – May 2014.[48] The ethnographic study included participatory observations of the group's activities, semi-structured interviews, and informal conversations with group members and those related to the group (family members, friends, colleagues, and collaborators). I used fieldwork notes as a documentation method. Additionally, I complemented ethnography from the initial stages with a video method (earlier reflections in Section 5.3). Such combination allowed me to collect a large amount of iconographic evidence, including video clips and pictures. Here, I understand iconographic evidence as photographic or visual material depicting or relating to a subject of investigation. In contrast to the textual evidence, iconographic material helps to mitigate the 'dominance of the text interpretation model' ['Dominanz des Modells der Textinterpretation'] in social science (Bohnsack 2003, p. 241).

Developed and adopted in the process of the fieldwork, such a method could be described as visual ethnography or filming ethnography. Since 'film has increasingly become one of the forms of our culture and our lives' (Nancy and Kiarostami 2001, p. 14), the reality of images, gained in the process of filming, becomes the way to 'access to the real itself' (idem, p. 16). Making a documentary film was my narrative that the group members accepted and never questioned.[49] That reasoning justified my continuous presence with the group. A camera had found its way to the backstage of the group's life, to their worries and their joy, dedication, and frustration. The moment I had a video camera in my hands I turned into paparazzi, as the hobby dancers liked to call me. Though I conducted my research as an independent scholar and respectively undertook filming alone, I was called a plural Italian form of paparazzi instead of a singular paparazzo.[50] From a still and one-location camera, over time I switched to an active camera following the subjects (Paul 2005; Gamaley 2007). Initially I was afraid to disturb the group members with the mobile camera during rehearsals; later in the fieldwork, I gained the confidence to replicate the movements of the participants by following them, looking behind the shoulders.

In total, I attended thirty-five rehearsal practices, twenty of which were video recorded. Also, I filmed nine public and semi-public performances of the group, twelve private gatherings at members' homes for photo-shooting, birthday celebrations, lunches, and work-in-progress discussions, but also such occasions as assisting them in private matters as helping with a job application, translations from German to Russian, writing official letters. Such researcher involvement reflects the collaborative aspect of research conduct and data collection (Birks et al. 2019, p. 4). Additionally, I accompanied some members

[48] The chronological time frame of the fieldwork is depicted in Figure F-1 in Appendix F.

[49] The cinematographic literature played a vital role in operating the camera, its placement and shot depiction as camera-subject distances. Internationally acclaimed expert in the philosophy of cinema, Oleg Aronson provided generously me with substantial support in this field: from expertise in the field of film images, to documentary-making, to technical suggestions and literature recommendations (Aronson 2003, 2007; Nancy and Kiarostami 2001).

[50] Detailed reflections on a researcher's presence transformation I describe in Section 13.1.

to five group-related events as, for instance, two meetings of multilevel marketing events organized by some of the group's members or the conference *250 years of Russian-German history* in Augsburg (2013) organized by Association of Germans from Russia.[51] At the end of the fieldwork, the video-recorded material contained 237 gigabytes of iconographic evidence (approximately 50 hours of filming total).

Since I was working with one camcorder, a practical way of video recording was in short clips ranging from ten seconds to a maximum of five minutes. Doing so allowed me to capture, on the one hand, different focuses, perspectives, and motives. On the other hand, this duration correlated with the time frequency of the group's interactions during rehearsals (Chapter 14). As, for instance, an average music-track ranges between four to five minutes. This duration defined the sequence analysis that I applied for data interpretation: actions related to cohesion and the group's integration, or actions related to community engagement (Chapter 15). Recording of long 30-minute uninterrupted cuts (the camera's capacity) was an exception, usually in situations where I actively participated: birthday celebrations, grill parties, lunch meetings, helping with private matters such as assistance with job applications, or in dealing with official correspondence.

With the extensive amount of empirical data, a secondary sampling (Schittenhelm 2009, p. 23) focused on identity formations, language use, and social actions. A secondary sampling allowed me to extract these phenomena predefined by the interview analysis and select iconographic evidence for sequence depiction and situational schemes. In turn, they were utilized for the visual sequence analysis (VSA), inspired by Andrew Abbott's sequence analysis (Abbott 1995), to recreate a micro-situative action and its types, as well as chronological reconstruction of costume making actions. I combined the visual sequence analysis with field notes and audio-to-text transcripts of videos for more comprehensive examination and illustration.

Actor-network analysis allowed me to reproduce a group's network with its strong and weak ties, and vertical, horizontal, and diagonal connections (Chapter 15). The network connections were approached in the form of nodes: "Instead of thinking in terms of surfaces – two dimension – or spheres – three dimensions – one is asked to think in terms of nodes that have as many dimensions as they have connections" (Latour 1996a, p. 370). In contrast, to initial Bruno Latour's approach, a reduced approach to the actor-network analysis was applied, focusing primarily on social connections. Even though the collected empirical material and the theme (i.e., corporality of dance) would allow me to stand by Latour's core thesis about the interconnection of social, semantic, and biological agencies. That is to bring focus via dance on human corporality, its sociality, and its biology (age, shape, ability): a physical body becomes a social body or perceived primarily as a social body (controlled, censored, represented). Through its ability and limitations such a body connects to the world of nature or technology (considering medical alteration or improvements of a body employing technology and artificial

[51] Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland e.V. (LMDR 2019)

intelligence). These aspects are without doubt interesting but lay far beyond the scope of this thesis. Additionally, I examined the selected publications about the Scheherazade dance group in the local newspapers of their community. The analysis of publications allowed me to compare the inside and outside perceptions about the activities of the group. One of the examples I present at the beginning of Part Seven that highlights a problem identifying the group in terms of nationality or ethnicity.

Ethnography of Identity Formation and Framework Russaki

Three examples during the open coding of interviews caught my attention. Example one: "*… for God's sake who did he bring with him* (.) *was their reactions as they told me later* (..) *I was small red-headed and additionally russachka*" Liza ironically told me a story about how her husband (a German national and well-known medical doctor in Xcity) introduced her to his social circle. Example two: "*keep away from Germans* (.) *they are not good* (..) *you are going to have troubles* (..) *better stay in touch with russaki* (.)" Diana-Anoush reflected on the advice she received in the refugee camp upon arrival to Germany. Example three presents an excerpt from the interview dialogue between me and Igor where he reflects on his first and short visit to Kazakhstan (below as 'there') after his family settled with him in Germany (below as 'here') for eight years:

Translation with preserved German elements of translanguaging	Original
Igor: (.....) the difference well here (..) when I was there[52] the difference I noticed they are polite (.) they are politer zu einander (..) #00:13:49 # **TH**: than who? **Igor:** than those people those russaki who live (.) not those who just arrived (..) in general those who have been living longer [[in Germany]] (.) I am about (...) I think this depends on (...) von der Gesellschaft | this is a big factor | #00:14:07#	**Igor:** (.....) разница вот тута (..) когда я там был разница я заметил они вежливые (.) они больше вежливые были zu einander (..) # 00:13:49 # **TH**: чем кто? **Igor:** чем те же люди те же руссаки которые живут (.) не только что приехали (..) а вообще уже подольше живут (.) | это я за (...) я думаю (...) von der Gesellschaft зависит | это большой фактор | #00:14:07#

As these examples illustrate, the label russaki reappeared on separate occasions during some interviews and required an additional effort to understand the perplexity of this emerging phenomenon. My unfamiliarity with the word russaki in the context of Russian-speaking communities in Germany and its awkwardness in regular Russian language use played an important role in my decision to add this emerging phenomenon to the

[52] The interview participant Igor referred with 'there' to Kazakhstan during his short visit after settling with his family in Germany for eight years.

theoretical sampling for further analysis.[53] To the best of my knowledge, the use of this word is not common in the post-Soviet space in contrast to Germany where it is often used among Russian-speaking communities. It contains multiple and, at the same time, contradictory meanings, frequently referring to people from the post-Soviet space. The signifier russaki slips (nearly) by chance into a swirl of conversation and belongs to the oral Russian-speaking culture in Germany. Its various and conflicting meanings populate informal spoken or written contexts and besides the vernacular use is non-existent. It is a grey zone, a shadow in the plurality of existing lifestyles and identity formations of (naturalized) immigrants from the post-Soviet space. Occasionally, some interviewees used it to identify ironically themselves, to describe others, or to outline a dichotomy between us (immigrants, russaki) and them (locals, Germans); yet, in other contexts, it may trigger offense and dislike. On social media sites including the blogosphere, this word has been widely discussed, debating whether its application is appropriate or not. Generating the instances and contexts from the interviews, I understood the word russaki and its meanings as integral experiences of Russian-speaking circles in Germany; for this reason, I added russaki as an emergent identity formation to the theoretical sampling of my study. Therefore, I remained cautious and theoretically sensitive during real time and digital ethnography while building the semantic clusters of meanings and interpretations attributed to the word russaki.

I used ethnographic notes to record instances in the application of russaki from real time ethnography. In the cases of digital ethnography, I used search engines of YouTube, Facebook, Vkontakte,[54] and Google (to search in blogosphere and forums) exploring variants of the word russaki attributed to the German Russian-speaking contexts: russaki / rusaki, russak/ rusak, russachka / russachka (and their Russian equivalents). The following online sources were identified on social media: individual blogs (usually as a text), several discussion forums (de-online.ru 2013; hip-hop.ru), YouTube contributions in the form of video clips, and several Facebook groups with their posts. When I identified contributions elaborating on russaki, they were extracted and subjected to the GT coding procedures. Coding allowed to build four clusters of meanings and their contexts deriving from the use of russaki among the Russian-speaking communities in Germany. Later I compared these meanings with the use of russaki during the interviews. This strategy of the meaning extraction I name metaphorically an onion strategy: while having a vernacular word I intended to pill a meaning after meaning revealing its ambiguity, its contextuality, and its implications in terms of identity formation. I elaborated on the purposes served by the term russaki and the modifications it undergoes depending on the speaker and context in Chapter 8.

Later the background check illustrated that the word rusak [русак] derives from the Russian language, though there are instances in Polish. The Russian version of rusak has

[53] What caught my attention initially about the word russaki was its novelty to me as fluent and experienced person with Russian language. Chapter 6 offers further reflections on language, multilingual research, and researcher positionality.

[54] Vkontakte [Вконтакте] is a Russian based social media, an equivalent of Facebook.

two meanings. The first one is a hare, a gray rabbit and can, for instance, be found in Lev Tolstoy's work (Tolstoy 1982, p. 115). The second one refers to a person from Ruthenia, the Kievan Rus' (Dostoevsky 1916; Rakovskij 1959). The first meaning is more common in Russia, while the second one is less widespread and, therefore, less known. Following the most frequently reappearing variant russaki [руссаки] in interviews and blogosphere in Germany, I adopted this variant in the thesis. Russaki is a plural form and refers to a group of persons with certain shared characteristics; seldomly I encountered gendered variants such as a male singular russak [руссак] or rusak [русак], or a female singular russachka [руссачка]. Despite its literary roots and depicted meanings, all variants of the word russaki are not commonly used.

Through my inquiry, I did not intend to determine the correctness or incorrectness to using the term russaki, identify specific group, or highlight particular experiences. I intended to capture its complexity and ambiguity, its contradictory meanings, its ironic use, and the problems of its applications. My analysis does not offer an exhaustive answer to what the word russaki signifies entirely but demonstrates how russaki functions as a signifier that populates a complex semantic field and embodies different, at times conflicting meanings. In this semantic field, russaki build four clusters of meaning deriving from the empirical data analysis and presented in detail in Chapter 8: all Russian-speaking immigrants as russaki; solely ethnic German resettlers as russaki; russaki as a prototype of gopniki, a deviant, gang subculture; and cool russaki [крутые руссаки] as a youth sub-(club)culture. The additional methodological adjustment and analysis of the word russaki illustrated that this word highlights the ambiguity of collective identification and identity formations among Russian-speaking migrants on the ground. And as such Russaki offers one of the few opportunities to grasp empirically the complexity of Russian-speaking communities in Germany.

Data Documentation and Processing

Since I have already shown the difference in data modalities produced by different methods (audio/written, visual, and fragmented text) in connection with the interpretative approach, the data documentation requires further reflection. While accumulating and writing an extensive record in the form of field notes is considered a main way to document observations and experiences in ethnography (Murchison 2010, p. 67), other alternative ways of documentation are available. I engaged several ways for documenting the empirical data. To document my observations of the leisure cultural associations, I made field notes and recorded videos. When the members of the dancing group were accustomed to my presence, with their consent I could extensively film or take pictures in various situations. Iconographic evidence included videorecords and pictures building this way the core data about the activities of the hobby group. Notes served the purpose of keeping chronological and operational accounts of observed affairs, whereas video recordings enabled my renewed access to the selected situations outside of the fieldwork and later in the post-fieldwork period. I subjected fieldwork notes and video records to

coding procedures; relevant videos were transcribed, scripted, and arranged into illustrative sequences (Figure F-9 in Appendix F).

In the real time ethnography of businesses, my observations played a central role, as video recording was not feasible. However, I could occasionally capture images and maintain field notes. The initial observations in two selected stores served as guiding points for further investigation. Two shops of East European orientation were part of the Mix Markt supermarket chain, which, coincidentally, had a robust digital presence. Thus, the official Mix Markt webpage provided a wide range of information about the products, the trading partners, and the stores across Germany and Europe (Mixmarkt.eu 2020). Moreover, entrepreneurs associated with the Mix Markt network were expected, or even obliged to some extent, to maintain visibility and public presence. This often involved giving interviews to (online) or local newspapers, which celebrated and promoted small and medium businesses in the region (Vogt 2004; Matte 2008; Panorama 2009; Siemens 2015; Richter 2017, to name just a few). As noted above, I documented the fragmented and dispersed Mix Markt data using a dataset of Mix Markt businesses deriving from ethnography. The creation of the Mix Markt dataset gave me the advantage to accumulate and manage in a systematic and structured way a large amount of qualitative and quantitative data from about 249 stores. I classified the available fragmented data and arranged them according to the categories, depicted in Table E-5 in Appendix E. The subsequent section provides a detailed account of fieldwork access as well as reflects how fieldwork evolved (fieldwork phases).

6.3 Access and Phases of Fieldwork

The above-mentioned methods and sampling strategies enabled my access to different researched communities. Since I was new in Xcity, my search for interview participants began initially through a flyer distribution (Figure C-5 in Appendix C) in the local community centers and community events. At the same time, I inquired about contacts within my international network at the university. This search attracted either people who were interested in sharing their migratory experiences and willing to reflect on it, or those who were interested in this kind of study. To my surprise finding interview partners was an arduous effort. Besides, I received a fair share of rejections to participate in on-record interviews, at the same time people were willing to share their experiences informally. There were also several cases when people agreed to an interview but were not willing or not ready to open.

When initially assessing my prospects for fieldwork access chances, I made the somewhat naive assumption that I was an insider within the community. I had recently migrated from Ukraine, possessed fluency in Russian, and had a relatively strong command of the German language. Moreover, my family's migration experiences spanned three generations across the Eurasian continent, with relatives and networks extending across three former Soviet countries: Ukraine, Russia, and Moldova. However, I later came to the realization that possessing these characteristics did not automatically confer insider status upon me. Rather, they provided the potential for me to become an insider, a status

that would necessitate significant investments of time and effort. Establishing trust and acceptance within the community was the first hurdle I needed to overcome. It was during this time that I embarked on my research project titled *Ankommen und Einleben in Deutschland* [*Arrival and Settlement in Germany*]. I intentionally kept the title of my empirical study intentionally open-ended, providing a broad framework for my research interests without preemptively defining the tone of semi-structured interviews. Since I had few prior connections within the Russian-speaking communities in Xcity and had limited previous interactions with such communities elsewhere, I had to confront and challenge my preconceived notions about Russian-speaking individuals during my fieldwork. In Table 5, I have outlined five of these preconceptions:

Table 5: Pre- and Post-Fieldwork Understanding of Research Participants

My preconceived notions	My fieldwork discoveries and experiences
I *easily* connect to the Russian-speaking community relying on my cultural background and Russian language proficiency	Finding interview partners and gaining access to semi-private or private settings in Xcity was challenging for me as a community novice. Fieldwork access improved in Ycity after two years of research and preliminary results publication.
I was too focused on the Russian language as the lingua franca of people from the former Soviet Union. This fixation led to monolinguistic assumptions.	Multilingual practices of research participants contradicted my initial monolinguistic assumptions. Addressed in detail in Section 6.4 and methodological paper *Multilingualism and Translanguaging in Migration Studies* (Havlin 2022b).
I thought about these people primarily from the standpoint of their migration experiences as emigrants and immigrants	Methodological limitation as I initially approached the study group solely in terms of migration. Later I recognized the need to avoid narrow categorization and considered flexible ethnic boundary-making (Wimmer 2007) and multilingual flexibility for a more suitable approach to immigrant agency
I believed that doing research on Russian-speaking in Germany provides me with a distance from immigrants from Ukraine. As a Ukrainian national and a sociologist who conducted several empirical studies in Ukraine during my doctoral studies, I remained open to exploring new research fields. I felt ethically obliged to maintain a certain degree of cultural distance from my fellow countrymen.	Until 2008 (the Russian invasion of Georgia) and 2014 (the Crimea annexation by Russia), post-Soviet immigrants presented cohesive communities driven by familial, friendship, and business interests. The profiles of my interview partners illustrate this unity (refer to Table 4). However, there were smaller national, linguistic, or religious pockets, such as the Georgian, Armenian, Ukrainian, and Moldovan communities. In 2014, during my fieldwork, I observed the initial fractures in Russian-speaking communities, dividing those people who supported Ukraine's actions from those who justified Russia's actions. As mentioned earlier, the full-scale 2022 Russian invasion in Ukraine intensified this division, creating a significant rift within Russian-speaking communities.

Along with my struggle to gain access to the researched community, I discovered that some either were not willing to participate or not willing to be recognized as Russian-speaking. These troubles and struggles that I encountered at the beginning during the field access were well reflected upon by Olena Fedyuk and Violetta Zentai:

> "We argue that understanding the interview encounter as flexible, situational and dynamic should inform research design and data interpretation. It is difficult for the researcher to encourage collaboration, to discover what is at stake for the interviewees, and to bring forth their situational narratives in an interview setting. It is also challenging to move beyond these situational encounters in the analysis, and understand what generates situational narratives. Each encounter brings a new negotiation of roles, and requires continuous checks and accountability on the distribution of social positions assumed in an interview" (2018, p. 181).

With growing experiences in the interview conduct and extending my local networks in Xcity, gaining access to free time cultural associations was simple. Besides, cultural associations were welcoming, especially if an invitation came from an insider or a sponsor who was interested in bringing me in (for whatever reason) as happened to be in my case. The dancing group Scheherazade was searching for new members and larger outreach; yet, when I visited one of their rehearsals in 2012, I could not imagine that it would be the beginning of my two-year-long ethnographic study about this group. Nevertheless, the durability of my study opened different avenues for my research and allowed me to be selective with further steps to achieve theoretical saturation of emergent categories composting the theory of immigrant agency and finalizing the theoretical sample.

Reflecting on the fieldwork access related to cultural associations, another aspect becomes evident: As a female researcher, I had easier access to gendered cultural or hobby activities, as illustrated by the case of the female hobby dance group (Part Seven). On the contrary, my gender would hinder me from gaining access to the leisure preferences of male research participants, such as sports clubs for male soccer or boxing, weekend fishing, and similar activities. As a component of researcher positionality, my gender determined the areas where I could gain access during my fieldwork or where I had limited access. Additionally, the heteronormative gendered culture within immigrant communities in mid-sized cities influenced leisure activities or business arrangements, further impacting my fieldwork access. I address additional aspects of researcher positionality in detail later in this chapter.

The accessibility of cultural associations contrasted with the access to immigrant businesses, such as Mix Markt stores, the retail shops with the East European profile. On the one hand, these businesses are open and welcoming to customers and those who may be potential customers. Going deeper would mean asking questions about the organization, connections to other shops and providers, business sustainability, about family dynamics in the case of family businesses (a large share in the sample). These kinds of questions are also connected to the commercial success and secrecy of these

businesses. That makes it more difficult to access these commercial semi-private spaces as a research subject. Therefore, additionally to fieldwork observations, interviews, and field notes, I extensively used digital ethnography while investigating the Mix Markt supermarket chain.

Retrospectively I distinguish three fieldwork phases that overlapped with methodological adjustments. The first phase included twenty-two individual problem-centered semi-structured interviews (2012/13 in Xcity, 2014/15 in Ycity). As the analytical frame for theory building originated from the analysis of interviews, I focused on specific units of analysis (e.g., cultural associations) and concepts (identity formations, language use, social action) that surfaced during the analysis of the interview transcripts. These aspects required further theoretical sampling and exploration. The second phase relied on real time ethnography combined with an audio-/videorecording for studying immigrant cultural associations and two Mix Markt shops (2012/14 in the Xcity, 2015/17 in the Ycity). Later I provide a detailed account of my experiences with one such cultural association, as a hobby dancing group from Xcity (Part Seven). The latest, third phase (2019/20) complemented real time observations of selected Mix Markt shops utilizing digital ethnography to reflect on the extensive network of the Mix Markt retail businesses. For this purpose, I created an original dataset that included 249 shops. The data reflecting these businesses derived from the wide range of digital sources created and collected in the period between April 2014 and August 2020.

6.4 Multilingual Research

From the initial stages of my empirical study, language played an instrumental role. While researching post-Soviet immigrants in Germany, fluency in Russian was my implicit criterion during the interview sampling. A commonsense assumption that Russian as a lingua franca is useful for conducting interviews with post-Soviet immigrants in Germany proved to be insufficient. While conducting interviews, I offered a choice between Russian and German. From that moment on my implicit criterion was quickly overruled by those who preferred to have a conversation in German (as a rule, the interviewees of the one and a half generation) or by those who inclined to translanguaging between Russian and German (blending both languages in the process of conversation).

As I proceeded with my fieldwork, I realized that my initial approach to Russian-speaking communities had a methodological limitation. My use of the label Russian-speaking tended to overshadow the richly multilingual and multicultural experiences of the individuals I interviewed and observed. Moreover, while witnessing their endeavors and challenges in acquiring or preserving various languages, it proved ‘to be ineffective to think of this group from the monolingual perspective’ (Havlin 2022b, [13]). What started as Russian-speaking interviews promptly required me to include in the fieldwork my full linguistic repertoire of German, Ukrainian, English, and translanguaging. I have benefited from my linguistic competencies, yet, at the same time they restrained me. My linguistic repertoire predefined in which languages my interview partners might activate during our

conversation. Thus, reflecting on monolingual and multilingual (mostly bilingual) speakers, Uriel Weinreich stated:

> "In speaking to a unilingual, the bilingual often tends to limit interference and to eliminate even habitualized borrowings from his speech. He is subject to what has been called interlocutory constraint, which requires that he somehow make himself understood in his unilingual interlocutor's tongue. In those specific situations where a mere trace of another language is regarded as a social stigma, the speaker is, of course, constrained to much more than mere intelligibility. But when the other interlocutor is also bilingual, the requirements of intelligibility and status assertion are drastically reduced. Under such circumstances, there is hardly any limit to interference …; forms can be transferred freely from one language to the other and often used in unadapted shape. No wonder that American immigrant languages, for example – spoken mostly BY AND TO bilinguals – have been subject to such extensive interference" (Weinreich [1953] 1979, p. 81).

Translating Weinreich's observations in my research context would mean that my linguistic range as a researcher defined how research participants narrated their stories in terms of language: monolingually, multilingually, or inclining to language interference translanguaging. Shared bilingualism or multilingualism of an interviewer and interviewees are important factors in this respect (Resch and Enzenhofer 2017; Havlin 2022b). The following two examples illustrate that. In one case, I had an interview with Alex, a Ph.D. student at that time. His family was admitted into Germany in 1997 as Jewish refugees from Ukraine. Alex was fluent in German, Russian, Ukrainian, and English. Translanguaging between German and Russian emerged while talking about his migration experiences. Right away, Alex asked if I spoke Ukrainian. As my reply was positive, occasionally he used Ukrainian to reflect on his pre-migration or postmigration stories related to Ukraine. Without even asking if I were English fluent (assuming from my university position), Alex added some English expressions to refer to his research and academic mobility in Germany and internationally. An interview with Diana-Anoush presents language-wise a contrasting example: Diana-Anoush was admitted as a Nagorno-Karabakh refugee from Armenia in 1999 and daily used German, Russian, and Armenian. While Armenian interferences never occurred during our interview, the German-Russian translanguaging was actively employed to reflect on her migratory experiences. Since the Armenian language does not belong to my linguistic biography, Diana-Anoush refrained from using it.

The linguistic and cultural flexibility observed can be characterized as transcultural tricksterism, a concept employed by Madina Tlostanova (2012) to illustrate multilingual and multicultural experiences. This term refers to the ability to adopt to changing contextual expectations (idem, p. 139) .[55] On the one hand, this concept resonated with

[55] A comprehensive exploration of tricksterism is provided in the subsection *Postcolonial Agency* in Section 3.4.

the experiences and activities witnessed during my fieldwork when researched subjects adeptly navigated linguistic and cultural contexts. On the other hand, it demanded that I, too, act as a transcultural trickster to seamlessly integrate into fieldwork settings and mimic observed strategies.

In addition to transcultural tricksterism, Julia Kristeva's concept of the silence of polyglots sheds light on the experiences of immigrants as speech-denying strategists. Kristeva's description underscores the idea that, in the process of expressing oneself in various languages, one may eventually find themselves silenced, unable to convey their thoughts adequately:

> "… language of the past that withers without ever leaving you… You have a feeling that the new language is a resurrection: new skin, new sex... Thus, between two [or more] languages, your realm is silence. By dint of saying things in various ways, one just as trite as the other, just as approximate, one ends up no longer saying them. An internationally known scholar was ironical about his famous polyglotism, saying that he spoke Russian in fifteen languages. As for me I had the feeling that he rejected speech and his slack silence led him, at times, to sing and give rhythm to chanted poems, just in order to say something" (Kristeva 2002, p. 275).

Paraphrasing Kristeva: Between two or more languages, foreigners find themselves trapped in the realm of silence, the silence of polyglots while being disabled by multiple languages. The silence of polyglots is situated on the other side of the continuum where transcultural tricksterism contrasts it. Considering both transcultural tricksterism and the paradoxical silence of polyglots allows us, as researchers, to capture the intricate and often contradictory nature of immigrant expressive abilities or limitations within the multicultural and multilingual contexts of transnational social spaces. These concepts provide valuable insights into a range of sociolinguistic phenomena related to migration and settlement, including the practice or neglect of bi- and multilingualism, language interference, translanguaging, and the foreign accent effect. Together, these aspects highlight the complex role of language in shaping the immigrant experience and the multifaceted nature of linguistic biographies within immigrant communities.

Besides, changeability in language use made me tackle the question of multilingualism and reflect on language hierarchies in my research conduct (Havlin 2022b). These reflections inspired an idea of de-naturalizing language, that is delving into the social construction of language or languaging as a process of communication when how is something communicated emerges in the process (i.e., translanguaging as blending specific languages in a certain context). In most of the cases during my fieldwork, people were indeed fluent in Russian, yet it belongs to their mundane practices of language use to switch (even in the middle of the sentence) between Russian and German (or other languages in some cases), to incline to a varying degree of language interferences or to translanguaging in more familiar or informal contexts (idem, [29]). Understanding these peculiarities of multilingual and cross-cultural communication raised another question about translanguaging patterns (idem, [35]). Further, I attempted to assess to what extent

my linguistic biography enabled me to understand the multilingual daily experiences of the researched group. As a result of this heuristic process, I strove to advance a set of reflections on how to navigate multiple languages during research conduct, specifically during data gathering, processing, and interpretation.

In respect of multilingual research conduct, I came to the following conclusion: Embracing multilingualism in my fieldwork shaped the research outcomes of the project. Such a stance allowed me to approach Russian-speaking immigrants through the plurality of their cultural and linguistic experiences during free time and business activities. Whereas Russian may play the role of lingua franca across this vast immigrant population, German is significant in the communication with the larger country's population but also with the offspring. In turn, translanguaging of Russian and German belonged to informal or familiar contexts, in communication with other co-migrants or children. Hence, the simultaneity hypothesis that assumes compatibility of transnational and integration patterns (Faist 1998; Falicov 2005; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) has proven valuable while analyzing this group. In the realm of language use, this hypothesis reflects on the compatibility of multilingual orientations or deliberate everyday multilingualism. In the given case, it is striving for German proficiency, which is recognized as a sign of integration while preserving the use of Russian (or other relevant languages) as a feature of transnational practices. On the other hand, translanguaging creates a specific semantic field involving those who can decode the meaning constructed and generated in real time. As, for instance, it was while assessing the meaning of Russaki [Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany], Termin [an appointment-arranged daily routine], or Kirche [referring to the protestant church] in the flow of the Russian conversations.

Thus, the researcher's linguistic biography shapes multilingual research conduct and presents one of the essential elements while conducting an empirical study in the field of migration. Further relevant elements of researcher positionality belong to the last theme of methodological reflections, which I address in the next Section.

6.5 Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

Charmaz's insight into the relativity of the empirical world and its relationship with our analytical perspectives encourages us to adopt a reflexive stance during the research and writing process (2014, p. 241). Reflexivity does not necessitate a public disclosure of the researcher's entire biography but requires careful consideration of research-relevant details. While the founders of grounded theory, Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss, envisioned a distant expert sociologist and researcher conducting grounded theory research (Birks et al. 2019, p. 3), Kathy Charmaz emphasized the importance of methodological self-consciousness. This self-consciousness compels researchers to reflect on their own positionality and their role in the research process (Charmaz 2017, p. 36). Methodological self-consciousness entails turning a deeply reflexive gaze on ourselves, the research process, and the empirical world. Its primary objective is to scrutinize our positions, privileges, and priorities and evaluate how they influence our actions throughout the research process and our relationships with research participants

(idem, p. 35). Moreover, it involves detecting and dissecting our worldviews, language use, and meanings to reveal how they impact our research in ways we may not have previously recognized. This level of self-consciousness also entails examining ourselves in the research process, understanding the meanings we construct, and the actions we take at each step along the way (idem, p. 36).

Charmaz's work highlights the increasing importance of reflexivity and knowledge production in grounded theory, particularly in constructivist grounded theory. It emphasizes the critical awareness of researcher positionality, and the impact researchers have on knowledge production. Beyond grounded theory, it has become evident that researchers play a significant role in shaping research conduct and outcomes. They co-construct experiences and meanings with research subjects on multiple levels of meaning construction, as discussed earlier. Researcher positionality is addressed within the context of researcher accountability and a heightened focus on self-reflection. This is evident in feminist philosophy, where it is seen as a step toward greater self-reflection (Braidotti 2017, p. 191), and in sociology, where it represents a self-reflexive turn (Amelina and Faist 2012, p. 1709). Kyoko Shinozaki pointed out:

> "Attending to the intersection of positionalities at the level of individuals has shown that boundaries are constantly drawn and re-drawn through interactions between the researcher, the research participants and their employers. Being self-reflexive about multiple positionalities, not just of research participants, but also of the researcher and the researched in their relation, opens an avenue for critically and creatively assessing fieldwork relationships. Moreover, this endeavor helps us scrutinize the taken-for-granted importance assigned to the nation-state to understand migratory experiences" (2012, pp. 1822–1823).

The author referred to her empirical study involving Filipina domestic workers in Germany, where research participants "constantly drew and re-drew boundaries between themselves and other actors, including the author, by flexibly defining not only difference but also sameness along the intersecting multiple positionalities in their interaction" (idem, p. 1817). Shinozaki's insights shed light on the critical role of attending to the intersection of positionalities at the individual level. This perspective emphasizes the dynamic nature of boundaries that are continually shifting through interactions between the researcher, research participants, and their employers.

As such, self-reflection on one's positionality becomes a methodological and ethical imperative when conducting social research, especially when applying approaches like 'intensive lifeworld ethnography' (Reichertz 2016, p. 367) or conducting interviews, as was the case in my empirical study. In previous sections, I considered the role of my gender and education, and how they influenced, enabled, or restricted my sampling strategies and fieldwork access. Additionally, I briefly discussed the impact of my linguistic repertoire, fluently speaking Ukrainian, Russian, English, and German, on data collection and research outcomes earlier. In this section, I explore other pertinent aspects of my positionality and subjectivity as a researcher. I contemplate how I was perceived

by research participants during my fieldwork and how my positionality influenced my understanding and research on immigrants from the post-Soviet space in Germany.

First, to provide context, I see myself as a product of history, born in the 1980s during the late Soviet period, and shaped by the values and experiences of my parents and grandparents who spent a significant part of their lives in Soviet Ukraine and Russia. The 1990s marked the post-Soviet transition period, with the emergence of national consciousness in independent Ukraine and other post-Soviet states (Goldman et al. 1992, p. 8). During this decade, I completed my primary and secondary education in a small provincial town, Kodyma, in Southern Ukraine, this borderland town situated between two major Ukrainian regions, Odesa and Vinnytsia, and Transnistria, an unrecognized state on Moldavian territory (for further details, see in Roper 2001, p. 106).

In our daily interactions, both in casual exchanges and at home, we used Surzhyk,[56] a linguistic blend resulting from our Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism (Bernsand 2006, p. 77). However, we employed standard Ukrainian or standard Russian at school, with strangers, or when conversing with extended family members who primarily spoke Russian, particularly residents of Moldova or Russia. Those times were marked by scarcities of goods, financial constraints, frequent power outages, and my parents' persistent efforts to make ends meet. When I wrote a book review for *Russian Women and the End of Soviet Socialism. Everyday Experiences of Economic Change* by Judith McKinney (2020), I could personally relate to the challenges faced during the early post-Soviet years (Havlin 2021).

The 2000s brought relative stability after the turbulent transitional decade, and the irreversibility of the Soviet dissolution became increasingly apparent. Looking back, my family never dramatized the end of the Soviet era. In 2000, I commenced my sociology training at Odesa National University named after I.I. Mechnikov, where the predominant language of instruction was Russian, including my PhD studies and PhD thesis (Havlin 2009). The dominance of the Russian language in Odesa was a legacy of the Soviet past (Skvirskaja 2009), and we must also consider the lingering influence of the Russian Empire's colonialism that had a lasting impact on Southern Ukraine and, specifically, Odesa (Belge 2021).

My upbringing significantly influenced my positionality, how I was perceived outside of Ukraine, and how I presented myself during the fieldwork. As Antonio Gramsci wrote in his *Prison Notebooks*, researchers must recognize themselves 'as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory' (cited in Said [1978] 1979, p. 25). To use Gramsci's words, Edward W. Said reflected on his 'personal dimension' and individual investments during his influential study on Orientalism. Said emphasized that one of the researcher's tasks is to explore this inventory by being aware of their own historical circumstances and maintaining a critical consciousness while conducting research (idem, p. 26). In the

[56] Surzhyk is Ukrainian-Russian translanguaging resulting from the Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism (Bernsand 2001; Skvirskaja 2009; Del Gaudio 2015; Masenko 2019).

context of grounded theory, Kathy Charmaz later described the reflexivity of knowledge production in terms of methodological self-consciousness (Charmaz 2017, p. 36).

Second, my own migratory experiences and mobility across three generations within my extended family played a vital role. My family's migration spanned a 7,000-km axis within the Eurasian continent. 5,000 km stretched to the East, where my maternal grandfather, Wasyl, was deployed for a two-year military service in Novosibirsk and then remained there for professional reasons in the civil sector. Later, he married Tekla, my grandmother from his home village in Southern Ukraine, and brought his newly formed family (my mother was born in Ukraine) to Russian Siberia. In her twenties, my mother Olga returned to her village of origin and married my father Volodymyr. Accompanying my parents in their work, studies, and familial pursuits, I grew up along this Eurasian axis until the age of six when my grandparents realized their dream after 30 years and returned to their places of origin in Ukraine at the end of the 1980s. Eighteen years after their return, I moved 2,000 km westward for studying reasons to Germany, where I remained for professional reasons. Westward was the direction in which neither my parents nor grandparents ever traveled or were allowed to due to the strict Soviet border regimes.[57]

Third, classifications such as gender, nationality, class, education, language/s, and their intersections impacted how I was perceived, and which positionalities were attributed to or recognized in me as a researcher. Intersectional positionalities had positive and negative effects in different contexts of research conduct and the dissemination of findings: as a member of the minority group in Germany (i.e., Ukrainian), a researcher with an international family and migration background, later a naturalized German national,[58] a non-native German speaker, and an Eastern European woman. At various stages of research conduct, these attributions could, on the one hand, provoke 'institutionalized racism, sexism, and class elitism' (hooks 1994, p. 142) and reinforce these hierarchies in my positionality as I conduct or present my research and analyze the empirical data. On the other hand, recognizing my subjectivity, my positionalities, and the limits of my identity formations allows me to 'disrupt that objectification that is so necessary in a culture of domination' (idem, p. 139).

After these lengthy reflections on my researcher positionality, the following questions emerge: What relevance does it carry for my research conduct? What methodological implications arise from self-reflexivity and self-consciousness? Reflections upon my educational path in Odesa and in Southern Ukraine revealed several methodological advantages in accessing the fieldwork with Russian-speaking communities in Germany: I was Russified (language-wise, culture-wise) at the University in Odesa, but not to the extent that it erased Ukrainian elements from my identity and my positionality formed during my school years in the Odesa region. In the German context, this had a twofold effect on my encounters: I was perceived as fluent in Russian in contrast to Ukrainians

[57] I reflected earlier on the border regimes in relation to my research participants in Chapters 1 and 2.

[58] I must note that this status I quired sometime after conducting the semi-structured interviews or ethnographic study.

from Western Ukraine (who are often envisioned as 'nationalistic'); in the Ukrainian community, people were thrilled that I am fluent in Ukrainian (researcher as a transcultural trickster). Here I must stress the years of my fieldwork in the period between 2012-2020. After the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine, speaking Ukrainian in Ukraine and in the abroad communities (including those in Germany) became a strategy of Ukrainian resistance and fight in the lasting Russian-Ukrainian war. My personal and familiar migratory experiences had the following methodological advantages for me: (international) mobility was a constituent part of our transnational family life. Through my maternal grandparents, my mother, and my visits to Russian Siberia, I gained geographical and cultural knowledge useful in dealing with immigrants from Russia or Kazakhstan in Germany. I obtained insider knowledge and could connect more quickly during the introductory period with some of the research participants. As for intersectional positionalities: While it is incredibly difficult to pinpoint any disadvantages I experienced from racism, sexism, and class elitism during my research conduct, it is easier to reflect on the limits of my identity formations and positionalities. Thus, for instance, I had to continually check my bias informed by my place of origin and my places of educational and professional training.

My lengthy reflections emphasize the critical importance of methodological self-consciousness and self-reflectivity regarding researcher positionalities within the grounded theory study. As Melanie Birks and her colleagues aptly pointed out:

> "… it is not possible, nor indeed desirable, to separate our history and ourselves from the construction of a GT. Understanding and articulating our assumptions makes clear how our philosophical position only serves to enhance our work… Furthermore, Charmaz (2008), from her constructivist position, assumes that "the researcher and researched co-construct the data – data are a product of the research process, not simply observed objects of it" (p. 402). Charmaz's premise is that a theory does not "emerge" from the data through passivity, but rather the researcher proactively comes to the data with their background and knowledge and constructs the resultant theory" (2019, p. 4).

Following the principles of knowledge production in grounded theory, my efforts to construct the immigrant agency theory stem, among other factors, from my proactive role as a researcher in recognizing emerging phenomena, securing insider access to Russian-speaking communities, acquiring empirical data, comprehending language constellations, language use, identity formations, and social actions associated with business and leisure activities. As a sociologist with education and professional training in both Eastern and Western Europe, I would characterize myself as a (professional) transcultural trickster whose theoretical sensitivity guides and shapes the resulting theory, the immigrant agency theory. Additionally, my methodological self-consciousness helps me avoid the pitfalls of 'a taken-for-granted methodological individualism' inherent in Western and 'Anglo-North American worldviews' and qualitative inquiry (Charmaz 2017, pp. 34–35). Maintaining a continual focus on collective aspects, such as language use, identity

formations and frameworks, and entrepreneurial and leisure actions, along with the roles of family and community, represents my approach to countering methodological individualism in my research.

Finally, as an independent scholar engaged in empirical research, data analysis, and theory development, I have consistently sought professional guidance from experienced researchers or turned to colleagues for the review, questioning, and confirmation of my analysis. Melanie Birks and colleagues consider such an approach as 'a routine quality measure' (2019, p. 3) that grounded theorists must ensure. My extensive scientific activity within the thematic framework of my thesis, as detailed in *Appendix A: Record of Academic Contributions*, not only serves as 'a routine quality measure' but also function as a means to diminish methodological individualism and personal bias. This ensures the overall quality of my research and my accountability in the field of knowledge production within sociology and migration studies.

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Part Three, titled *Navigating Immigrant Agency – A Research Odyssey*, extensively covers the research design and methodology employed to delve into the multifaceted landscape of immigrant agency. It provides an overview of the methodological principles and the multimethod research design utilized for collecting and analyzing empirical data gathered during extensive fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2020, forming the foundational basis for the subsequent development of the Immigrant Agency Theory.

I outlined the combination of methodologies employed to address the complexity of immigrant agency as an analytical tool for understanding of immigrant experiences and ways of existence in the post-migratory context. The utilization of transnational and grounded theory methodologies, along with an interpretative approach, facilitated the creation of an open multimethod research design. This design enabled the accumulation and processing of a substantial volume of empirical data, contributing to an understanding of both individual and collective aspects of immigrant agency.

Further, I provided a detailed account of the conducted multimethod research. This included sampling strategies, individual methods and their integration, access to the field, and the development of fieldwork. Additionally, I offered reflections on the social aspects of methods and data collection. The chapter also delved into researcher positionality, addressing self-reflectivity and methodological self-consciousness. This comprehensive approach to researcher positionality took into account various factors relevant to empirical research conduct, such as education, gender, linguistic background, historical context, migratory experiences, and intersectional positionalities. It underscored the importance of acknowledging both the privileges and limitations associated with

researcher positionalities and subjectivities, which is deemed essential throughout all stages of reflective knowledge production.

The forthcoming four parts of this thesis will explore the extensive empirical findings meticulously collected through rigorous fieldwork and analysis. These findings are pivotal for uncovering the multifaceted dimensions of immigrant agency, encompassing identity formations and frameworks (Part Four), language use (Part Five) social actions (Parts Six and Seven). They will serve as the foundational underpinning for the comprehensive exploration of the Immigrant Agency Theory (IAT) in the ensuing chapters.

PART FOUR
The Unbearable Lightness of Identity – The Shifting Landscape of Immigrant Identities

> Chance and chance alone has a message for us. Everything that occurs out of necessity, everything expected, repeated day in and day out, is mute. Only chance can speak to us
>
> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*[59]

This Part explores the first pillar of the agency theory developed within this thesis, namely identity formations and identity frameworks as representative elements of migrant agency. In the realm of social thought, the term identity is nearly as problematic as the concept of agency. Although it gained prominence in the latter half of the previous century, the notion of identity has evolved into an elusive and ambivalent concept, a subject that Zygmunt Bauman (2004) aimed to explore in his work, *Identity*. Various theoretical perspectives contribute to shaping our comprehension of identity within the domain of social science, and some of these approaches are examined below.

In earlier applications, identity referred to individual changes that a person experiences in their teenage years or amid a mid-life crisis. These were the most commonly studied biographical occurrences that traditionally raised questions of identity (Erikson 1968). On that note, in their seminal work *Beyond 'Identity,'* Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) offered a thorough and critical analysis of the concept, framing modern existence as a journey of discovering identities and exploring them in the moments of distress or transformation. The title of Part Four underscores a point expressed by the authors in their paper: "Identity is something people (and groups) can have without being aware of it. In this perspective, identity is something to be discovered, and something about which one can be mistaken" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p. 10). The revelation of

[59] The title of this part is a homage to a 1984 novel *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí* (from Czech *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*) by Milan Kundera ([1984] 2006).

identity is accompanied by a sense of unbearable lightness, which may trigger contests or struggles during the course of this self-discovery.

In more recent interpretations, identities or their formations are viewed as constantly changing due to the dynamics of the world around us. Zygmunt Bauman (2004) elaborated on identity in terms of its constant transformations driven by uncertainty. He wrote: "'Identities' exist today solely in the process of continuous renegotiation. 'Identity formation', or more correctly its 're-formation', turns into a lifelong task, never complete; at no moment of life is the identity 'final'. There always remains an outstanding task of readjustment, since neither the conditions of life nor the sets of opportunities and the nature of threats ever stop changing. That in-built 'non-finality', the incurable inconclusiveness of the task of self-identification, causes a lot of tension and anxiety. For that anxiety, there is no easy remedy" (Bauman 2011, p. 431).

Meanwhile, the concept of identity can be understood in two distinct yet interconnected ways: firstly, on an individual level, it manifests as self-identification, hereafter referred to as identity formations. Secondly, on a collective level, it manifests as identity frameworks that either describe or are prescribed to a group. Scholars like Manuel Castells (2010 [2009]) and James M. Jasper (2014) have explored how expressions of collective identity emerge through social movements. Manuel Castells, for instance, delineated three distinct forms of collective identity – legitimizing identity, resistance identity, and project identity – each representing different ways in which groups or communities collectively define themselves and their objectives within various contexts (Castells 2010 [2009], p. 26). It is worth noting that these forms are not mutually exclusive and serve to elucidate how groups perceive themselves and engage with their surroundings.

In the realm of migration studies, scholars spanning various social science disciplines have endeavored to grasp the intricacies of identity formations and identity frameworks resulting from migratory events, experiences, and processes (Anthias 2002; Brettell 2003; Goulbourne 2010; Bauman 2004, 2011; Belford and Lahiri-Roy 2019). Within the context of migration, especially in diasporas and immigrant communities, questions pertaining to collective and individual identities take on significant importance. Here, the focus lies on identity as a process of discovery, a task that arises either out of necessity or personal choices (Bauman 2006, p. 31).

In the context of heightened international exchange and the increasing prevalence of both temporary and permanent mobility, questions surrounding identity formations or identity frameworks have gained prominence within the field of migration studies. What happens to one's identity when they become mobile or displaced? Exploring this inquiry requires a deep examination of immigrants and their representative behaviors as they navigate the complex realities of their lives. This examination encompasses a multitude of factors, including mobility, social, political, economic, or cultural transitions, as well as the process of settlement and integration. These dynamics give rise to transnational social spaces characterized by multiple affiliations and belonging to different places.

From immigrants, responding to this question can be challenging due to the inherent complexities of the immigrant experience. Drawing from a psychoanalytical perspective, Julia Kristeva eloquently depicted the immigrant experience as a complex amalgamation of emotions and feelings: a blend of scorched happiness, loss, challenge, suffering, ebullience, masking, aloofness, confidence, and melancholia (Kristeva 2002, pp. 266–271). This emotional complexity adds depth to the intricate journey of self-discovery and identity formation. Moreover, there are instances where addressing this question may not be an individual endeavor but a collective one undertaken by a group, whether it be a family, a community, or a network involved in the process of migration or settlement.

In this Part, instead of imposing predefined identity templates onto immigrants from the post-Soviet space, I explore a range of identity formations and frameworks that contribute to the representative element of immigrant agency of this immigrant population. These formations and frameworks encompass aspects of self-identification and how others within the community of co-migrants identify each other. In my effort to elucidate immigrant agency, I consider identities and their dynamic nature formations and frameworks, which are critical components, integrated into my theory building.

Identity formations serve as representations toward individuals who share similar experiences. In Part Four, I analyze identities of immigrants from the former Soviet Union as they already transform into German residents or citizens. During this transformation, some individuals intentionally maintain distinctions that set them apart from other German populations. While some distinctions are preserved by choice, others are challenging to eliminate, as will be demonstrated in the subsequent part, particularly in the context of language use. Furthermore, there are those among this group with migration background who may not speak any language or dialect other than standard German but still feel a strong affinity to a specific culture, which they have absorbed through the flavors of home-cooked food or the stories shared within their families (Stone et al. 2005, p. 387).

The following chapter delves into the emergence of identity formations, particularly through self-identification, as evidenced in the analysis of interview data. This exploration involves tracing overarching or contrasting themes across different cases. Methodologically, in conducting interviews, I followed the approach advocated by Floya Anthias (2002, p. 492), which encourages subjects to openly discuss themselves, their lives, and their experiences. This approach operates under the belief that identity naturally emerges through this narrative process.

Chapter 7: Balancing Acts – Emigrant and Immigrant Identities in Self-Identification

International migration creates transnational social spaces for diverse identity constructions, which can come into conflict with national identities of the country of origin or acquired national identity in the country of settlement or residence. Migration may bring to the forefront identifications that were less significant, hidden, or ignored

before migration. On an individual level, these identity projects may trigger the question "*Who am I?"* while revealing an absence of a prepared answer or a need for the renegotiation of one's self-understanding and self-representation. With the constantly increasing speed of identity turnover, a gap between a former and a present self widens as migratory experiences progress. The irreversibility of this process deepens the gap between these two parts of the self and may lead to excessive dependence on the community or tradition. The present self (as an immigrant) may be in latent or open confrontation with the former self (as an emigrant). Unstable and changing environments increase a personal need to reply with the flexibility of identity formations.

During the analysis of the interview data, several formations emerged to examine identity on the individual level: identity renegotiations, legitimizing identity, professional reinvention, a lifelong project of multiple belongings and difference, a mélange identity, or temporary escapism. These formations explain how individuals balance between themselves as emigrants and immigrants, highlighting an emigrant-immigrant dilemma. One solution to this dilemma may lie on the one side, through integration in the mainstream national identities, observed more often in the case of the-one-and-a-half and second generation. On the other side, the simultaneity hypothesis presents another solution to resolve this dilemma: a compatibility of integrational and transnational experiences while navigating different cultural and social contexts.

7.1 Identity Renegotiations in the Course of Migration

When considering identities in the context of migration, Steven Vertovec (2001, p. 578) stressed the importance of examining the circumstances that lead to identity shifts. These shifts can occur within the complex conditions that affect the renegotiation and reconstruction of identity in the multilocal life-world. As the interviews reveal, the individuals are often preoccupied with practical concerns such as documents, applications, visas, financial means, transportation, and new language acquisition before departure. There is often little thought given to what will happen to one's sense of self or personal identity. Even when all practical obstacles have been addressed, and the physical transfer has been completed, migration can still cause emotional distress (Lutz and White 1986, p. 414) and serve as 'an inner shock' (Isurin 2011, p. 56). In this regard Isurin posed an intriguing question: "… why in some instances differences tend to create a lingering effect of cultural shock and why in other instances they easily are embraced by immigrants" (ibid). Individual characteristics, such as tolerance for ambiguity, cognitive flexibility, aptitude and orientation in language acquisition, and stress resilience, play a role in problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies (Yakhnich and Ben-Zur 2008, pp. 153–154).

To further understand emotional complexities associated with immigration processes, the concept of emotional transnationalism becomes relevant (Falicov 2005). Emotional transnationalism refers to the intricate emotional experiences and connections that individuals and families maintain when their lives, relationships, and identities span across two or more countries or cultural contexts (idem, pp. 399–401). It delves into the

emotional intricacies of simultaneously belonging to and forming attachments to multiple places, languages, and cultures. This concept provides an additional framework for comprehending the emotional challenges and adaptations that individuals and families undergo during their experiencing of migration, often requiring a significant degree of renegotiation of their identities and emotional connections.

Renegotiating one's own identity in the multilocal life-world can become an instantaneous quest of self-definition, evolving into a lifelong project (Bauman 2011, p. 430). This type of renegotiation often involves continually grappling with the concept of 'living with a difference' and asserting the 'right to remain different' (ibid). Migration disrupts the comfort zone of national or regional identification and introduces multiple, often transnational, affiliations. In the context of migration, identity is not just something to be discovered metaphorically; it becomes a literal journey of self-discovery.

The instance from the interview with Katia illustrates my point.[60] Arriving in Germany during the early 1990s as part of the Jewish migration, she, along with her created family and family of origin, did not find Jewish traditions significant to their family life prior to migration. However, some memories of these traditions had been preserved through retrospective narration. With a university degree and fluency in English and, to some extent, German, Katia saw an opportunity in the admission program for FSU Jews and encouraged her family to seize it. What began as a pragmatic decision turned into an identity quest that spanned three generations within the same family.

Katia, concerned about her daughter, noted that the migration experience posed a challenge for her as she tried to find her own identity. For Katia personally, rediscovering her Jewish roots served as a door-opener to the new community and provided a means to understand and explain herself in this new context:

> "*only thanks to our religion we found* (.) *discovered* (…) *we have gained a lot of acquaintances* (.) *my daughter though has additional troubles now* (..) *it is much more difficult for her* (.) *difficult* (…) identität (.) *identity* (…)" When I asked what it meant to her, Katia responded: "*well (.) I started to feel here as a Jew* (…) *on the contrary* (.) *I gained myself here* (.) *altogether* (.) *for instance I realized* (.) *it was not by chance that I married my husband because he is half Jew* (.)"[61]

This citation reveals several key aspects of identity renegotiation: religion as a discovery, acquiring social connections, intergenerational challenges, personal growth, and reevaluation of marriage. The interviewee emphasized that religion played a crucial role in their journey of self-discovery. It implies that embracing their Jewish religious identity in the new country opened doors for them, both socially and personally. Through this discovery, they acquire social connections that suggest that religious affiliation can act as

[60] All interviewees and their detailed profiles are presented in Table 4.

[61] Unless otherwise specified, all interviews have been translated from Russian into English. Any words or parts that emerged in German within the flow of Russian speech have been preserved as such.

a bridge to a new community and social network for immigrants. Katia acknowledges that her daughter faced additional challenges related to identity. This indicates that the process of identity renegotiation can vary within a family, with different generations experiencing it differently. She also mentions that she 'gained herself here' and realized certain aspects of her identity, which might not have been apparent before. This implies that the process of renegotiating one's identity can lead to personal growth and self-discovery. At last, Katia's realization that her husband being half Jewish was not by chance. In the light of the new events, she reevaluates and sort of recreates her union with her husband. After so many years, Jewishness suddenly takes on a special meaning; it now plays a larger role than perhaps initially when they met 30 years ago. Katia's renegotiation is influenced by her current contexts, possibly their demands, and her individual desire to find equilibrium within them. This example illustrates not only how moving to another country can become an identity quest but also how admission laws can introduce adjustments or even contribute of individual self-perception.

7.2 Legitimizing Identity

In the context of migration, the legality of an individual's identity is determined by a receiving nation-state. Nation-states play a pivotal role in facilitating, controlling, and restricting migration, which, in turn, influences how identities are shaped, managed, and defined. These processes are governed by policies that regulate both the admission of migrants into the country and their integration into the society (Madsen and van Naerssen 2003, p. 72). It is important to recognize that these legal frameworks are far from static; instead, they are dynamic and subject to constant change. Legal and bureaucratic requirements frequently evolve, resulting in shifts that impact the conditions for social acceptance and the various criteria for recognition (Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2007, p. 97).

To illustrate this, we consider the case of (late) ethnic German resettlers. Notably, through policy changes in 1993, there emerged a sudden differentiation between ethnic German [Aussiedler] and late ethnic German resettlers [Spätaussiedler]. This differentiation had significant implications, leading to structural hierarchies within families, as observed in a study on Kazakh-German social space and symbolic social protection (Sienkiewicz et al. 2015, p. 271). Therefore, individual identifications and how they are conveyed to others often involve a delicate balancing act between the official identity as stipulated in legal documents like passports (Isurin 2011, p. 20) and one's self-understanding or self-perception, which is closely intertwined with their immediate surroundings and personal experiences. This interplay between legal definitions and personal perspectives adds layers of complexity to the formation and expression of individual identities in the context of migration.

The distinction between adhering to rules or seeking ways to circumvent them holds significant consequences for the life opportunities of individuals, often determining whether their status is perceived as legal or illegal. During my research, I encountered a majority of immigrants who had secured their legal statuses through various means. Some

had undergone naturalization processes long before our interactions, while others maintained their residence permissions by extending visas or abiding by residence permission restrictions.

Among these cases of secure or relatively secure legal statuses, one stood out as exceptional. This particular case underscored the profound influence of the legal frame on identification, self-identification, privileges associated with legal status in the host country, and the far-reaching impact on identity formations, personal well-being, and recognition. This exceptional case revolves around Diana, a 47-year-old woman who had been residing in Germany since 1999. Diana's story illustrates a unique degree of legal complexity in an individual's life. She had moved to Germany from Armenia due to critical health issues stemming from dysfunctional kidneys. The medical assistance available in her hometown, as she entered her early 30s, was inadequate. While searching for better medical care, her family explored various options, including changing medications and relocating to the country's capital. Eventually, they saw an opportunity in sending Diana to Western Europe, specifically Germany or France, known for their renowned healthcare systems. One of the legal pathways to accessing medical care in Germany was to claim refugee status from the Nagorno-Karabakh region. This avenue became viable in the aftermath of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which escalated into a full-scale war in the early 1990s. According to Diana, refugees from this conflict zone were eligible to seek asylum in Germany during the 1990s.

Seizing this legal opportunity, Diana's family acquired a birth certificate belonging to Anoush, a woman of similar age to Diana who had been born in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Diana embarked on a perilous journey: she entered Germany with an officially issued tourist visa in her Armenian passport. However, upon arrival, she had to conceal her passport, allowing her to assert her identity as Anoush, hailing from Nagorno-Karabakh, in her bid to claim asylum. German customs police encountered Diana/Anoush on a train, where her deteriorating health condition was evident. She was promptly transported to a medical facility, where she underwent emergency treatment for approximately six months. After her condition stabilized, her case underwent review, and she was subsequently relocated to a nearby refugee camp. As her health improved, Diana found herself legally trapped in another woman's identity, complete with her birthdate, biography, cultural background, and educational status as Anoush. Despite holding a university degree in teacher training, Diana could not utilize it due to embracing Anoush's identity, who never studied. Furthermore, from a legal perspective, she was entirely separated from her Armenian family, including her parents, husband, and two minor children. As a result, she had not seen them for more than a decade. In Germany, she essentially had to start her life from scratch: learning how to be someone else, becoming acquainted with people and culture, learning the German language, and gaining access to the labor market as an unqualified person.

For our interview location, she proposed a hospital where she received her routine weekly dialysis treatment. This was her only free time, amid her work and other obligations. At

that point, Anoush/Diana had been commemorating Anoush's birthdays for 14 years. That was also the period when she initiated a legal procedure – with the help of her lawyer – to reclaim her Armenian national identity, facing legal consequences and penalties for identity fraud. The following interview exempt between Anoush/Diana and me illustrates how complex the situation was:

> TH: *do you have a residence permit or have you undergone naturalization* (?)
>
> Anoush/Diana: *I have a residence permit* (.) *it's already* unbefristed [unlimited] *and* [I have] *niederlassungerlaubniss* [a settlement permit] (.) *but because I went to* kreisverwaltung [the district administration] *and told the truth* (.) *I received a penalty* (..) *I must pay a fine and I received* duldung [a toleration] *but it all depends on the boss of* kreisverwaltung [the district administration] (...)
>
> TH: *who advised you to do so* (?)
>
> Anoush/Diana: *no one* (.) *I was ready to take this step* (..) *all this time I was afraid* (…)
>
> TH: *does it mean that you lived with constant fear* (?)
>
> Anoush/Diana: *well* (.) *not that I had fear every day* (.) *no* (.) *but I was continuously tormented by thoughts* (..) *that* (…) *for instance people here congratulate me on November 1st as Anoush's birthday is on that day* (.) *my birthday is on December 9th* (…) *but they knew everything because I told them who I am from the beginning* (..) *that I am not Anoush* (..) *but they congratulate me on that day* [a birthday indicated in the id] *and I forget* (.) *they would say* [imitating other's people voices] *how could you forget your birthday* (?) (…) *I also got fed up* (.) *and I want to see my mom* (.) *my mom has become old* (..) *and if something happens to her I wouldn't be able to go* (..) *all these things have piled up* (..) *and it's time now and I want to do it* [to claim her identity given through birth].

Anoush/Diana's continuous torment and fear related to her dual identity drove her to make the decision to claim her Armenian identity as Diana. This sheds light on the psychological and emotional toll of living with a hidden identity and the constant fear of being discovered. Anoush/Diana mentions that she possesses favorable legal statuses in Germany, including an unlimited residence permit (unbefristed) and a settlement permit (Niederlassungerlaubniss). However, she voluntarily approached the district administration (Kreisverwaltung) and confessed the truth about her identity, resulting in a penalty and her current status of Duldung (toleration). This decision shows a significant risk she took by revealing her identity to the authorities, potentially jeopardizing her legal status.

Furthermore, Diana's health situation keeps her dependent on continuous medical treatment in Germany. Nevertheless, she pursued the path to reclaim her original identity,

even with associated risks, in order to have the opportunity to reconnect with her aging mother and grown-up children (her husband had remarried after her departure). Diana's story is a complex one, emerging from the legal and ethical gray area. Her case underscores the intricate interplay between individual identity and structural constraints. On the one hand, it highlights the privilege or disadvantage associated with one's place of birth and how it intersects with opportunities available from birth. On the other hand, the strategic use of available identity frameworks, whether considered legal or illegal, demonstrates agency in the struggle for survival and advancement.

7.3 Professional Reinvention

Professional reinvention was a recurring theme among interviewees who arrived to Germany as adults and as such had underwent professional training and gained work experience. During the interview, Matilda, in her late 40s, shared her experiences of initially moving to Germany due to her marriage to a German national and her challenges in coming to terms with her struggle to find employment. She stated:

> "*the only thing that was bad* (..) *literally from the very first day* (.) *when he* [her husband] *went to work* (..) *and I couldn't imagine myself staying at home* (…) *I mean* (.) *I still remember how I hear the neighbors getting into their cars* (.) *mostly men* (.) *and driving away* (…) *those car doors closing everyone leaving* (...) *and I stayed at home* (..) *you see* (…) *I had always worked before* (.) *and at that moment I'm not working* (..) *and this feeling of not working* (....) *I look at it differently now* (.) *if my financial situation allowed it now* (.) *I would gladly not work (..) but back then the idea of being without a job at the age of 31* (.) *it was some kind of horror* (…)" [translation from Russian]

This citation underscores the intricate relationship between identity, gender roles, and the emotional impact of employment status for immigrants, particularly within the context of adjusting to a new country and culture. Additionally, it highlights another crucial aspect of identity formation, professional identification, as immigrants (especially high-qualified) navigate the process of professional reinvention upon arriving and integrating into Germany. Various scenarios highlight how these professional reinventions may occur upon arrival and integration in Germany. Given the interview sample's composition, which included many individuals with university degrees, the theme of professional reinvention emerged prominently during the interviews.

I can draw parallels to another study conducted with Soviet emigrees in the late 1970s in the USA. Despite being from another geographical context and a decade earlier than my research subjects concern, however, it had variable implications for my understanding in the realm of professional identification and subsequent renegotiations in the light of migration. Edgar Goldstein (1979) noted the profound impact of status loss on individuals whose identity was closely tied to their profession, education, and social position. He observed that this form of identity, rooted in one's social status, held particular significance in the USSR. Those who had enjoyed such status clung to it tenaciously, as it provided a deep sense of self-worth and security. However, for some immigrants,

factors like age, previous training, experience, or language barriers made it impossible to continue their careers in the same way. Consequently, they struggled to accept this change in their status and desperately clung to their past identities, feeling profoundly threatened by the transformation (Goldstein 1979, p. 260).

This phenomenon of status loss due to immigration is not unique to Soviet refugees in the USA; similar challenges were observed among post-Soviet immigrants in Germany. A poignant example is a married couple of medical doctors from Kyrgyzstan who relocated to Germany in the 1990s, seeking better opportunities for their three adult children. However, their settlement in Germany led to an unplanned and premature retirement in their fifties, while their offspring, in their twenties and early thirties, struggled to find employment in their respective fields, despite holding university degrees obtained in Kyrgyzstan. Olga Pavlovna, former clinical psychotherapist, shared an insightful observation with me. She noted that the tendency for immigrants to face challenges in maintaining their professional identities might be linked to their educational backgrounds:

> "*perhaps* (.) *this relates to the fact that they studied humanities and* (..) *social sciences* [teacher training, linguistics, and literature]*, rather than engineering* (…) *I've noticed that people with engineering degrees tend to have better chances when they first arrive* (..) *only our youngest son who studied languages works in a role currently more closely aligned with his university degree* (.) *he is employed in airport security* (..)" (excerpt from my ethnographic notes).

Based on her observations, Olga Pavlovna is convinced that individuals with engineering degrees tend to have better job prospects upon arrival in Germany compared to professionals in other fields. However, the inability to achieve professional realization often results in overqualification, a challenge faced by several interview partners from my sample and acknowledged by a few, as in the case of Anna. After numerous job-seeking attempts, Anna ultimately gives up, stating, "*For them* [employers] *I was a young Russian woman with a strange diploma*." Entrepreneurial activity is one way to address overqualification or general unemployment, as seen in the experiences of those interviewees who engaged in the business activities to mitigate their unemployment and pursue their desired field of work (e.g., catering, event management).

If employment has previously served as a means of self-actualization and personal fulfilment in the country of origin, then a loss or temporary loss of professional status can have a detrimental impact on an individual's well-being and identity formation. This effect is particularly pronounced among first-generation immigrants who have already obtained qualifications and professional experience prior to their settlement. Additionally, proficiency in the German language plays a crucial role in improving one's situation and facilitating socially and professionally advancement, as exemplified in Taras's case. He decided to pursue another German university degree in electro-engineering in addition to his previous engineering studies from his home country. This time-consuming strategy ultimately had a positive effect on his professional and financial positioning.

7.4 Identity of Difference and Multiple Belongings

Identity formation in terms of difference is another aspect for understanding identities in the context of migration, where the experience of otherness often becomes an integral part of everyday life. This concept can also be viewed as a matter of authenticity, highlighting the gap between one's inner identity and one's behavior in relation to the surrounding society (Fukuyama 2007, pp. 2–3). For instance, previous national identities as being a Soviet citizen, Armenian, Russian, or Ukrainian are no longer supported by the pillars of a nation-state with its culture and traditions. Instead, there are expectations and demands to conform to the prevailing cultural norms of the novel settings. Ethnic German resettlers, especially, faced such demands upon their arrival. This is exemplified in an interview with Alex, who expressed his relief at not being classified as a late ethnic German. He reflected on his school experience when he arrived in Germany at the age of 15:

> "*back then I was Ukrainian* (.) *and it was fine for me not to talk German* (…) *for others* (.) *for locals it was acceptable* (.) *but for a girl with a name like Lena Mayer* (…) *what to do about her* (..) *if she doesn't speak German* (?) *she has a German passport* (.) *yes you can imagine people spätaussiedler* [late ethnic German resettlers] (.) *they know a little bit history* (.) *they returned to their homeland* (.) *that's truth* (.) *they have that right* (.) *but no one warned the locals that millions of people were coming back to their homeland* (..) *they were looking forward to it and want to feel at home* [pause] *there were some kids who were emotionally more developed* (…) *but kids* (.) *kids can be very cruel* (.) *well especially when they barely manage themselves* (…)"

This reflection by Alex sheds light on the challenges faced by immigrants, especially within the group identified as late ethnic German resettlers, and the intricate nature of identity in the destination country. It underscores the inherent tension between one's cultural identity and the expectations of assimilation in a different cultural context. Specifically, the experience of being a Spätaussiedler entails not only a return to a homeland but also the complex process of negotiating one's identity and sense of belonging in a society with distinct norms and expectations. While being admitted based on German ethnicity, their previous experiences often found 'little space in the public and official discourses' (Darieva 2006, p. 355).

Intentions to assimilate or acculturate into mainstream society can arise from a desire to minimize differences and fulfill immigrants' longing for security. Alternatively, some individuals may choose to consistently embrace and live with their differences while asserting their right to remain different (Bauman 2004). An interesting case in this context is Anna, a 41-year-old immigrant from Russia who arrived in Germany in 1995. In her early twenties, she moved to Germany to marry her boyfriend, a German national, she met in one of Russia's largest cities. The turbulent early years of Russian independence

left her feeling uncertain and unstable, and a marriage proposal seemed to offer more security. After grappling with doubts, she ultimately decided to follow her partner from her student years. With curiosity and an open mind, she gradually integrated into her German surroundings:

> "*in the beginning I had a strong interest in German life* (.) *well I didn't necessarily want for feel German myself* (..) *I was intrigued by the culture and way of life* (…) *I naturally became involved* (.) *mainly through my husband and later through connections made at the kindergarten* (.)"

Freedom of expression, European mobility, environmental awareness, political liberties, and consumerism were all new concepts to her and greatly fascinated her. As she became increasingly immersed in her new life, she grew distant from her home country and never returned. She embraced another world that appealed to her more, feeling somewhat embarrassed by elements that represented her past. German has now become dominant in her everyday life and communication with her children, friends, and acquaintances. From the integration standpoint, she has succeeded. Surprisingly, despite all this, she has retained a sense of difference that has grown stronger with each passing year, leading her to yearn for a return to the places she left 17 years ago. Perhaps our interview also triggered her nostalgic feelings and contributed to her continued sense of being different. At some point, she shared:

> *"I realized that* (…) *I don't know about other foreigners* (.) *but I'm proficient in German and I'm open to and invite all people regardless of who they are* (..) *however* (.) *there won't be friendships as deep* [as with your fellow countrypeople] *(..) you're a foreigner and that's how you'll always be* (.)*"*

The sense of being different has become an integral part of Anna's self-perception, deeply ingrained in her inner world, and reinforced by emotionally charged or critical situations. Our extensive interview, lasting eight hours over two sessions, falls into this category of critical situations. It forced Anna to retrospectively assess her family and migratory experiences, prompting her to reflect on personal transformations as an emigrant and immigrant. I was surprised by Anna's willingness to share her narrative of difference, which undoubtedly stems from her experiences in Germany, including her 17-year marriage to a German national, her long-term residence in the predominantly monocultural neighborhood, and her role as a mother to two children who are fully disconnected from her pre-migratory life due in part to the choices and decisions she made. Anna's journey embodies what Zygmunt Bauman (2011, p. 430) described as living a life with difference and asserting the right to remain different.

Another way of experiencing a sense of difference is through a mélange identity formation that embraces multiple affiliations, multilingual practices, and active engagement in transnational social spaces. Simultaneously, the mélange identity formation may offer the possibility of temporary escapism, as illustrated in the following section.

7.5 Mélange Identity and Temporary Escapism

Identity formation in culturally mixed environments can be understood in terms of hybrid or multilayered identities, with hybridity linked to the concept of migration mélange (Pieterse 2003, p. 73). Hybridity or mélange encompasses a range of mixed elements, the blending of various cultures and cultural symbols, and the interplay of languages as translanguaging and linguistic interferences. This opens possibilities for the fusion of lifestyles and life variations, illustrated in the examples of language use (Part Five), entrepreneurial (Part Six) or leisure (Part Seven) actions.

Hybrid identities can become a common scenario, particularly for first-generation immigrants, echoing the Braidottian notion of '*I am rooted, but I flow*' (Braidotti 2011, p. 137). Certain parallels can be drawn between patchwork identities and mélange identities. Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2004, pp. 102–103) described the identities of individuals within mainstream society as a patchwork of different elements and layers. Consequently, she suggested not perceiving the identities of immigrants with connections to multiple cultures or origins as unstable or threatening to the mainstream.

Expressions of mélange identities can manifest differently and are observable in the different interviews. Martha and Vlad serve as illustrations of this diversity. When I encountered them, they were undergraduate students who had immigrated to Germany from Kazakhstan as children alongside their parents, having been admitted as late ethnic German resettlers. Vlad, hailing from one of the German settlements in Kazakhstan, arrived in Germany in 1994, while Martha arrived with her family four years later. Independently from each other, they settled with their respective families and extended network of relatives within the same small city in Western Germany. It was there that they crossed paths while attending school and eventually became a couple.

Martha initially reached out to me after discovering my research flyer[62] at the university, where I was seeking Russian-speaking interview partners. She later persuaded Vlad to participate in an interview a few days afterward. Vlad, who converses in Russian with his parents and relatives, preferred to conduct the interview in Russian. In contrast, Martha communicates in both Russian and German with her family of origin, using Russian with her father and German with her mother and younger brother. Consequently, she chose to conduct the interview in German.

In our conversation about leisure activities, Martha aimed to elucidate their preference for Russian discos as this exempt from our interview illustrates:

> TH: *with your circle of friends* (.) *how do you usually spend your free time* (?)
> Martha: *it's mostly quite boring* (.) *we stand outside and talk* (.) *the guys have some beer* (..) *and that's about it* (.) *sometimes we have birthday parties* (..) *occasionally we go to a disco-club but mostly Russian clubs* ['russische Disko'] (.) *we don't go to German clubs* ['deutsche Disko'] *that often* (…)

[62] Figure C-5 in Appendix C provides an overview of the research flyer.

Me: *where is the Russian club* [disko] (?)
Martha: *in Hcity for example there's one called Unique* (.) *it's near the R- river* (.) *then there's one near Scity* (.) *there's another one in Lcity called Russian Glamor* (.) *but I haven't been there* (..) *there used to be one in Gcity but they closed it* (.) *there's one in Ncity called Kolosseum* (.) *there used to be one in Tcity called Kolosseum but they closed it too* (..) *in Pcity* [her home city] *we have a Russian night* (.) *occasionally there's a Russian disco* (...)
TH: *why do you mainly go to Russian discos* (?)
Martha: *because of the music and the people* (.) *I guess* # 00:37:55 # [translation from German]

Martha enthusiastically provided a list of Russian discos[63] located within a 200-kilometer radius of her current residence. These leisure preferences are rooted in their appreciation of the music and the social ambience found in these so-called Russian discos. The phenomenon of this discos, much like the Eastern European retail shops, offers an intriguing context for the examination of symbolism, consumption, and leisure cultures among post-Soviet and Russian-speaking youth in Germany. Russian discos gained recognition in popular culture in Germany and beyond, particularly through Wladimir Kaminer's fiction novel (2002). It appears that Russian discos hold significant importance as elements of identity formation element for the younger generation. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, there have been no comprehensive studies on this topic.

The phrase 'Germans during the daytime, and Russians at the Russian disco,' paraphrasing Jan Nederveen Pieterse's description of the second generation of Muslim immigrants (Pieterse 2003, p. 73), underscores the need to exhibit a blend of cultural traits, encompassing elements of both the home culture and an outdoor culture. Pieterse's notion highlighted the phenomenon of hybridity as a result of migration mélange. It commonly occurs in second-generation immigrants, where they exhibit a complex blend of cultural traits. This entails a separation between their home culture and language, typically matching culture of origin their parents, and an external culture aligning with their culture of education, vocation and, at time, residence.

Initially, I considered Russian discos as venues for temporary escapism. However, I later identified a suitable representation of Vlad's and Martha's identities, coincidentally branded as a mélange identity in a commercial for МОЙ by one of the German top model (Figure D-3 in Appendix D).

The advertisement was accompanied with the following message:

Translation	Original
"*The name МОЙ* [moj] *means 'my' in Russian, symbolizing a renewed focus on one's own 'I' again. … Моѝ … represents*	*„Der Name МОЙ bedeutet im Russischen ‚mein' und spiegelt somit die Konzentration auf das eigene ‚Ich' wider.*

[63] Two comparable examples from her list are depicted in Figures F-6 – F-8, in Appendix F.

Stefanie Giesinger's knowledge and her experience, which is for the first time exclusively available in dm as a beauty-brand" (DM 2020)	*… Мой … steht dafür, dass Stefanie Giesinger ihr Wissen und ihre Erfahrung zum ersten Mal in einer exklusiv bei dm erhältlichen Beauty-Marke erlebbar macht"* (DM 2020)

The МОЙ/MON branding serves as a fascinating example of German-Russian linguistic interference and cultural fusion, showcasing a form of semantic play within the advertising domain. While it provides a Russian translation, viewers may be puzzled as to why a Russian word is suddenly used in the marketing campaign of the German top model. The connection becomes clearer when considering the model's background as a child of late ethnic German resettlers from Eastern Europe, which adds depth to her multicultural biography, even linguistically. Unlike the mundane German equivalent 'mein,' МОЙ [mój], with some explanations, combines the familiar (MO) and the exotic (Й), potentially serving as an identity framework for those who recognize its authentic meaning as 'my' or derive various interpretations from this unique branding move, such as the French 'MON' for 'my.' Here we can discuss a dual strategy: one of familiarity, catering to those who can recognize and decode the authentic meaning, and another of self-exoticism embodied in the letter Й, absent from the German alphabet. The strategy of self-exoticism is also examined in the example of the Scheherazade Dancing Group later.

It is important to note that the type of identity mélange described here represents one of the potential scenarios experienced by the children of post-Soviet, Russian-German immigrants. It falls into an intermediate category. On the one side of the spectrum, it involves fully immersing oneself and predominantly operating within Russian-speaking circles, a possibility facilitated by the extensive Russian-speaking infrastructure in Germany. On the other side of the spectrum, there is an opposing scenario that I have observed numerous times. This scenario entails the deliberate erasure of any direct affiliations or connections with the Eastern European background, at least in public. These cases are often explained by parents' concerns that speaking Russian to their children could hinder their integration into German society and their prospects for success in the country. Families, once they have migrated, may not see a practical need to maintain explicit ties to another cultural heritage or other languages.

What struck me, though, were the subtle, observable traces of these cultural affiliations that persist. These traces manifest in various ways, such as choosing to marry within the same ethnic-cultural group, celebrating traditional holidays, practicing certain healing methods, and adhering to specific culinary and shopping habits. Identity formations and cultural affiliation can endure in these indirect traces within a family's history for an extended period (Stone et al. 2005).

Chapter 8: Co-Migrant Identity Frameworks – Semantic Complexities and Perceptions

This chapter explores into the distinctive identity markers that differentiate FSU co-migrants from the broader population. It scrutinizes the frequently recurring label russaki, employed to categorize these groups. Russaki operates as a linguistic hybrid, utilized at times as a we-description (akin to ethnic German resettlers), and at other times with a general connotation (Russian-speaking) or in a derogatory they-description (referring to post-Soviet immigrants with perceived bad manners). As the fieldwork progressed, the intricate nature of this linguistic hybrid became increasingly apparent, enriching my comprehension of the identity frameworks within the researched group. In addition to the interview material and fieldwork observations, gaining an understanding of the nuances associated with russaki required further data collection through digital ethnography. This encompassed comparing the meanings emerging from interviews with those found in various sources where the notion of russaki appeared, including online forum discussions, blog contributions, captions in Russian community (online) newspapers, and club advertisements. Through this comprehensive analysis, this chapter delineates four distinct semantic types of russaki, presented later.

As we explore identity formations revealed through individual interviews, it becomes relevant to investigate the identity frameworks through which FSU immigrants perceive their fellow co-migrants and whether they utilize these identifications to define themselves. Various markers have surfaced in the interviews, encompassing ethno-national elements, policy-related terminology, shared cultural heritage, geographical origins, and generational reference. Notably, some of these identity frameworks have also emerged in other fieldwork contexts. Drawing from the fieldwork, Table 6 presents several identity frameworks employed by research subjects to identify their co-migrants:

Table 6: Identity Frameworks for Identifying FSU Co-Migrants

Identity Frameworks	Markers	Context of Use
Ethno-national Mosaic	Armenians, Jews, Russians, Russia Germans, (Russlanddeutsche), Kazakh Germans (Deutsche aus Kasachstan), Ukrainians	Official, statistical, academic research, everyday contexts
Legal and Mobility Status	Resettlers, returnees (переселенцы), ethnic German resettlers (Aussiedler, Spätaussiedler) refugees	Official, mundane, academic research

Ethnic Slur	khokhol (хохол) for Ukrainians, moskal (москаль/ muscovite) for Russians;[64] russaki	Mundane
Shared Cultural Background	Russian-speaking (русскоязычные), post-Soviet migrants; Russian or Slavic brides (русския, словянская невесты), Russian or Slavic wives (русския, словянская жены); russaki	Mundane; academic research
Geographical Origin	Fellow countryman (земляки)	Mundane
Generational Reference	First, second, or third generations	Mundane, academic research, statistical

Identity frameworks outlined in Table 6 serve as common markers for identifying distinct groups or communities from the former Soviet Union. In addition to mundane (fieldwork) occurrences, the right column indicates other contexts in which I encountered these identity markers. Unlike nuanced individual identity formations, collective identification often relies on easily recognizable patterns and general terms, occasionally influenced by stereotypes or prejudice (as, for instance, ethnic slur). The majority of participants in this study underwent naturalization and, from a legal standpoint, could identify themselves or others as German nationals. Citizenship holds considerable importance for their everyday well-being, particularly in comparison to a few cases where a legal status was not permanent. However, it is notable that these new nationals seldom referred to themselves or their co-migrants in terms of newly acquired nationality. Utilizing both empirical data evaluation and a review of the literature, I can consider several potential explanations:

(1) In the context of the study, which focused on migration and settlement (often interpreted by participants as a study on integration), it may have been more crucial for them to emphasize their experiences as emigrants and later as immigrants.

(2) Some interviews did touch on the naturalization process without delving into the specifics of being a German citizen. Once the naturalization hurdle was overcome, this aspect of identification may have been pushed into the background or remained undiscovered.

[64] In late 2015, I engaged in a discussion on this matter. While conversing with the hostess (originating from Russia) at a party, she inquired about why it is offensive for Ukrainians to be called khokhol. I responded by drawing a parallel to the situation when Russians are referred to as moskal/muscovite. She understood my point, and we agreed that it is fair not to use such derogatory labels. Both khokhol and moskal are historically formed ethnic slurs with negative connotations. It is worth noting that after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the commencement of the war in Eastern Ukraine, this ethnic slur started to be used as hate speech on social media and beyond (Allan 2017).

(3) Some individuals managed to maintain dual nationality and openly discussed it. Further noteworthy observations on the naturalization processes of ethnic German resettlers and their identification can be found in Darieva 2006.

(4) Current identification may encompass the myriad experiences of migrants, which were the primary focus of the study and the interviews. Moreover, nationality presents only one of the multiple facets of identity. The study in the German context indicate that regional identification often plays a more significant role than nationality, with nationality itself being more important than European identity (Bergem 2005, p. 54).

(5) It is possible that since I, as the researcher, was a recognized as an immigrant, interviewees felt no need or interest in putting on an act regarding what it means to be a German national. This was particularly evident among those who had learned to discern nuances in the German language, as illustrated in the following example from an interview with Martha. At one point during the interview, while discussing in German her interaction with Russian-speaking individuals, Martha remarked:

> "*Russian people are different* (.) *and they are behaving differently*". When I asked her to clarify what she meant by 'different,' she chuckled and said: "*well, like you are* (…) *lively and with an accent that's quite noticeable* (..) *I've actually had positive experiences with people from Russia*"

Martha's comment underscores the acknowledgment of cultural and behavioral differences among individuals from various backgrounds, especially those commonly categorized as 'Russians,' a category that encompasses Russian speakers, including myself as a researcher. Her observation regarding the distinct accent highlights the significance of language and pronunciation in signaling an individual's cultural heritage. This interaction emphasizes the intricate nature of identity and how it can be influenced by linguistic and cultural cues.

The recognizable accent serves as one of the markers used to identify someone as Eastern European or simply as Russian-speaking. In other interviews, for outlining Russian-speaking communities, some interviewees used the term russaki. The following section delves into the concept of russaki as an identity framework. This term carries semantic ambiguity, as it can serve as a means of self-identification, denote group identification, or represent distinct identity projects within the German context. However, it is crucial to note that at times, russaki is used as an offensive ethnic slur, as illustrated later.

8.1 A Niche and A Semantic Field of Russaki

My findings reveal that the semantic field of the word russaki is intricate and multifaceted, encompassing contradictory meanings, elements of irony, and even offense in its application. I am not proposing to label all Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany as russaki. Instead, I aim to emphasize that such an identity framework already exists, irrespective of admission or integration policies, and despite the varying opinions and dismissals of this word within certain Russian-speaking communities. Certainly, the term

russaki encapsulates the complexity of collective identification and identity frameworks among Russian-speaking migrants on the ground. Earlier, I offered some relevant methodological reflections on why and under which circumstances I added the word russaki [руссаки] as an emerging identity framework to the theoretical sampling of my study on Russian-speaking communities in Germany. Russaki likely represents one of the few opportunities to empirically capture the multifaceted nature of Russian-speaking communities in Germany. The word russaki reflects various dimensions of immigrants' experiences originating from the post-Soviet space, ranging from mélange identities to a derogatory term that has evolved within German Russian-speaking communities (as illustrated in Figure D-1 in Appendix D).

How is the term russaki used, and what insights does it provide into the research subjects? The word russaki naturally emerges in the course of conversation. In the moment of its usage, it appears evident that the speaker is referring to fellow co-migrants, either identifying them as a collective entity (as russaki denotes plurality) or alluding to shared experiences such as Russian language proficiency, migratory backgrounds, or behavioral patterns. For instance, a young woman named Mila, a Ukrainian national married to Bernd, whose parents arrived from Russia under the resettler policy when he was just five years old, shared a personal experience. She mentioned, "*Russaki from upstairs picked up our post while we were away*." This simple statement reflects Mila's trust in her Russian-speaking neighbors, indicating their reliability in handling their home affairs, such as collecting mail in their absence. In contrast, an elderly resident named Galina Ivanovna, who had lived in Ycity for an extended period after being admitted as an ethnic German resettler, had a different perspective. She expressed her concerns, saying, "*I know russaki did it* (!)" In this context, Galina Ivanovna distrusted individuals she considered russaki for not adhering to recycling rules, assuming they had discarded foil candy wrappers with Cyrillic writing in the wrong container. In both conversations, the use of the word russaki was accompanied by an implicit understanding of its meaning and the specific individuals it referred to. Although the connotations of russaki differed in these instances, it was unmistakable what the term signified within each context. Mila's usage conveyed a sense of trust and shared responsibility, while Galina Ivanovna's usage was tinged with suspicion and mistrust.

Similar patterns of the ambiguous yet clearly understood use of russaki emerged in my interviews. Matilda, for example, shared her initial shock upon hearing the use of this word: *"First time when I heard russaki applied to **US** and not only to ethnic German resettlers* (.) *I was shocked."* With the emphasized 'us' she referred to 'ethnic Russians' since Matilda, who was married to a German national for ten years, identified herself as such. This indicates how the term russaki holds different meanings and associations depending on the context and the individuals using it.

The contextual clarity surrounding the term russaki becomes less certain when we examine its various meanings in interviews compared to its usage in other fieldwork contexts, such as social media, online forums, or the blogosphere. In addition to its casual usage, as described above, russaki has triggered intense debates within Russian-speaking

circles, particularly concerning whether it is an appropriate term for describing ethnic, national, or cultural identities. Indeed, the findings reveal that russaki often pertains to cultural identity or framework and serves as a means of identification. While immigrants use it to identify other immigrants (and less frequently to refer to themselves), russaki signifies a specific cultural affiliation based on the Russian language, symbolic Russianness, as well as Slavic, post-Soviet, all tied to East European culture, customs, traditions, and routines in Germany. Simultaneously, the term russaki carries with it stereotypes and prejudices, as exemplified in Galina Ivanovna's recycling inquiry, Matilda's bewilderment, or some images found in online forums. Essentially, the multiplicity of meanings associated with russaki underscores a fundamental characteristic of semantic constructs: they encompass multiple interpretations and are open to a plurality of meanings. To the best of my knowledge, there are no comparable empirical studies that have examined the use of russaki, either in Germany or in other regions with a high concentration of Russian-speaking communities, such as the USA or Israel.

The diversity of meanings projected into russaki in Germany can be attributed to the substantial influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, each with their unique cultural traits and behavioral patterns. This heterogeneity has resulted in the absence of a unifying image of this migration wave, whether from within the immigrant communities or from external perspectives. Additionally, attempts to apply terms like post-Soviet or Russian diaspora (Isurin 2011) have not achieved consensus, as explored in more detail in Chapter 4. There is no agreement as to what russaki signifies: Is it a collective image of Russian-speaking community? Does it specifically refer to Russian-speaking German resettlers from the post-Soviet region? Or is it associated with a youth subculture that embraces and capitalizes on imagery from the Soviet era's grandeur? Through analysis, I have identified four distinct clusters of signified meanings within the semantic battlefield russaki. These clusters include: (1) all Russian-speaking immigrants as russaki; (2) exclusively ethnic German resettlers as russaki; (3) russaki as a prototype of gopniki [гопники], representing a deviant gang subculture; and (4) cool russaki [крутые руссаки] as a youth sub(club)culture. The following sections will delve into these clusters of attributions and meanings, shedding light on the complex dynamics within transnational social spaces.

8.2 Russian-Speaking Immigrants as Russaki

This interpretation of russaki as referring to Russian-speaking immigrants includes individuals who use the Russian language in public and private settings. This perspective is broad and all-encompassing, as demonstrated by the following examples. One interviewee reflects on her initial employment experience in Germany:

> "*there was one interesting moment* (.) *I think for you* (..) *as a sociologist it will be interesting* (.) *there were only* ***russaki*** *employed as workers* (.) *well as carpenters or as craftsmen* (.) *they* [the owners] *were Germans and all the* ***russaki*** *were working there* (.) *they* [the owners] *liked it so much* (.) *so they decided to pay closer attention to the applications of Russian-speaking*

office assistants (..) *and they liked me so they offered me a job* (.) *they liked that Russian-speaking individuals were responsible* (.) *work hard and don't ask for high salaries* (.)"

In this context, russaki refers to Russian-speaking residents in Germany who are distinct from other population groups in Germany. The employers, local Germans, held positive stereotypes about employees considered as Russian-speaking. They believed that Russian-speaking workers were responsible, hardworking, and not demanding in terms of compensation. These positive stereotypes might have influenced their decision to hire a Russian-speaking office assistant. This citation also suggests that Russian-speaking immigrants, referred to as russaki, were primarily employed in specific blue-collar jobs such as carpentry and craftsmanship. This indicates a form of occupational clustering where these immigrants were concentrated in certain professions.

In another instance, a more generalized and somewhat problematic connotation in total of the term russaki emerged during an interview with Diana. Reflecting on her earlier experiences in a refugee dormitory, she recalled receiving advice from other refugees from the FSU:

"*They told me to keep away from Germans* (.) *they are not good* (..) *you are going to have troubles* (..) *better stay in touch with russaki* (.)"

Essentially, Diana was advised to place more trust in fellow co-migrants, particularly those of Russian-speaking backgrounds, as opposed to local Germans. However, as she gained more experience, her attitude toward russaki became more skeptical. She even emphasized that if she were to enter any new relationships after her divorce, they would be with Germans rather than russaki. This shift in her perspective may be attributed to her experiences with other co-migrants that made her more cautious and, at times, distrustful. Another possible explanation for Diana's change in attitude is that she associates *russak* (singular masculine form) with a certain type of masculinity, possibly a conservative one, from which she prefers to distance herself:

"*if I were to date someone* (.) *I don't want russak* (.) *an Armenian or anyone from the Soviet Union* (.) *they can* (…) *I prefer to be with a German* [man]." Further she elaborated on her preference to German men: "*this attitude to a woman* (.) *I felt that I am persona* [in sense of treating her as a personality] *that I can have my own opinions and express them* (.) *in Armenia such a thing doesn't exist* (.) *there* (.) *there are a mother-in-law and a husband* (.) *I didn't have a say* (…) *they could decide for me whether I could graduate from university or not* (.) *what I could wear or not* (.)"

In these statements, Diana expresses a preference for dating a German man over individuals from the former Soviet Union, including russaki and Armenians. She highlights her desire for a more open and equal relationship, contrasting it with the traditional gender roles she experienced in Armenia, her home country. Diana's choice reflects her personal experiences and values, emphasizing her desire for independence and the opportunity to express her opinions freely in a relationship.

In addition to its everyday use, the term russaki as a designation for the Russian-speaking in-group is occasionally employed for marketing purposes, as exemplified by an advertisement in the *Aussiedlerbote* (2016, p. 29). This advertisement, presented in a biographical style, narrates the story of a male immigrant from the FSU who faced men's health issues after relocating to Germany. Struggling with this problem, he tried various remedies without success. Disheartened, he went on vacation to Turkey, where he encountered another man, 'a russak, also from Germany,' who recommended a specific treatment (presumably an advertised medicine). Surprisingly, the treatment worked for him. The underlying message is that no one can provide more effective help than someone from the same in-group, the russaki, whether through advice or by offering a suitable product, as intended by this advertisement.

In this interpretation, russaki may also encompass former residents of a country that no longer exists but is preserved in memories, narratives, and myths. As a result, it acquires an internationalist dimension in the German context. This internationalist identity project is based on a shared language, collective memories, childhood and youth experiences, shared values like 'friendship, unity, collectivity' (Isurin 2011, p. 97), and possibly a common reality marked by solidarity in addressing similar challenges as emigrant/immigrant or a naturalized Germans. This definition of russaki minimizes differences, celebrates commonalities, and unites individuals under a collective identity. This collective identity framework serves as a fertile ground for a broad business network, both within and beyond German borders, as will be demonstrated later in Part Six dedicated to the entrepreneurial actions. It is plausible to assume that the underlying concept of this network revolves around the idea of shared identification and in-group status among Russian-speaking migrants in Germany.

With all range of connotations between positive or negative, this multifaceted interpretation of russaki appears to serve as both an inclusive term to refer to Russian-speaking immigrants from the post-Soviet space and, simultaneously, as a differentiating concept used to distinguish oneself from them or set them apart from the rest of the population. This variant of russaki encompasses individuals like an ethnic German resettler from Karaganda in Kazakhstan, a marriage migrant from Saint Petersburg in Russia, or a Jewish refugee from Kiev in Ukraine, regardless of whether they are willing to be identified this way or associated with each other within a single group. This reflects the aspect of collective identification driven by everyday logic: all individuals who speak Russian, despite of their personal backgrounds or preferences.

8.3 Ethnic German Resettlers as Russaki

The next interpretation of russaki is used by or to refer to ethnic German resettlers, primarily from Kazakhstan and Russia.[65] First russaki resurfaced in the interview with

[65] Including an extended blog post in Russian titled *Rusaki: To the Issue of Self-Designation of Russian Germans in Germany* by Wladymyr Golubchikov (2012), among others.

Liza, an ethnic German resettler from Kazakhstan. She enthusiastically described how skillful and well-organized russaki in her parents' neighborhood were, including their ability to build and maintain various amenities:

> "[my parents] *built a house just near the lake* (.) […] *there are some multistory buildings but also some family houses* (..) *they* [referring to neighbors] *are singing there* (.) *they are having fun there* (.) *they are celebrating* (..) *they even made a volleyball beach* (..) *those russaki borrowed money from the city and constructed a lot of things there* (.) *cleanliness* (!) *order* (!) *they are all taking care* (..) *anyway they sing there* (.) *they quarrel they kiss each other and they fight* […] *of course they are great* (!)"

In this context, Liza described the vibrant neighborhood where her parents live. Her description aligns with Worbs and colleagues' observations (2013) about state funding and house management among ethnic German resettlers, as mentioned earlier. The lively atmosphere Liza conveyed with warmth in her voice and emotional connection contrasts with how she described her current upper-class neighborhood, where she moved in after marrying her late husband. In this case, russaki serves as a collective reference for ethnic German resettlers, emphasizing their ability to speak Russian and their affinity with what is understood as Russian culture in the German context.

In another instance, Liza used a variation of russaki as self-reference. Her case is particularly interesting in terms of her identification and language use. She is fluent in German and had exposure to the language while communicating with her grandparents while growing up in Kazakhstan. Russian is the language of her childhood and youth; it is the language she uses to communicate with her parents and siblings. However, language pattern differs when it comes to her children. She mainly speaks Russian with her older daughter from her first marriage, who was born in Kazakhstan. With her younger daughter, born in Germany, she primarily speaks German, or sometimes she employs translanguaging with both daughters.[66] Liza was willing to conduct the interview in both German and Russian. During our conversation, she initially switched back and forth between German and Russian before settling on Russian with milder German interference. This language flexibility is not unique to Liza and can be observed in various contexts, such as communication among members of the Scheherazade dance group, particularly when non-Russian-speaking members are present (discussed in Part Seven).

In yet another case, Liza humorously recounted a story about how her future husband, a highly ranked local doctor, introduced her to his friends:

> "[…] *for God's sake who did he bring* (.) *was their reactions as they told me later* (..) *I was small red-headed and additionally russachka* [laughingly]."

[66] More on translanguaging and its context in Chapter 10.

Here, russachka [руссачка] is the feminine singular form of russaki, which Liza used to playfully emphasize her migration background as an ethnic German from Kazakhstan. Besides the humorous application, this term implies two important divides based on culture and class. It is possible that Liza's appearance or background made her stand out among her husband's friends, who might have had different cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds. The term russachka highlights her connection to Russian culture and, by extension, her distinctiveness from the group she was introduced to.

Connecting russaki to the Russian language and culture reveals a historical context deeply influenced by Soviet cultural policies. These policies promoted a sense of familiarity with Russianness among many individuals, as discussed earlier. Soviet internationalism emphasized the unity of brotherly nations within a single union, discouraging nationalistic ambitions. This historical backdrop helps us understand the multifaceted role of russaki in contemporary identity framework. It is noteworthy that even those who cannot identify themselves as Russians, such as ethnic German resettlers from Kazakhstan or Russian-speaking Ukrainians, may still use the term russaki to underline their connection to the Russian language and culture. For them, russaki serves to emphasize their cultural affinity, despite not being recognized as Russians. Conversely, those who identify themselves as Russians, whether through birth or nationality, often use this identity to distinguish themselves from other Russian speakers, especially those who are not identified as Russians. This highlights the intricate interplay between language, culture, and identity. Considering the extensive family histories that span the Eurasian landscape, from the Odesa region in Ukraine to Karaganda in Kazakhstan or Novosibirsk in Russia, many ethnic Germans willingly or were coerced into undergoing processes of Sovietization or Russification. This experience was shared with other groups and minorities within the former Soviet Union. Additionally, cross-cultural marriages and families have played a significant role in preserving cultural Russianness among these diverse communities.

One notable illustration of this cultural interaction can be observed in the *Resettlers' Messenger* (Aussiedlerbote), a bilingual monthly publication available both online and in print. This publication seamlessly incorporates articles in both Russian and German, celebrating cultural figures like Alexander Pushkin alongside narratives about famous Soviet Germans and stories from both the Soviet past and contemporary German life. The cover page of the Resettlers' Messenger symbolically underscores the connections between German and Russian cultures by featuring the national tricolors of both countries. In contrast to this Messenger, many other German newspapers published in Russian tend to avoid translanguaging between German and Russian or adhere to a strict editorial policy that maintains clear boundaries between standard languages. One such example is the *Rhenish Newspaper* (Рейнская газета / Rheinische Zeitung), a German daily newspaper published in Russian. These cultural patters serve as a reflection of the complex interplay between language, culture, and historical legacies within diverse immigrant communities in Germany. These dynamics play a significant role in shaping the various identity frameworks at play in this context.

The types of cultural and linguistic fusions as in the case of *Resettlers' Messenger* reveal the closeness to German-Russian cultural contexts and can be also observed, for instance, in the spoken language of ethnic German resettlers (and not only). These fusions take forms of translanguaging (mixture) of Russian and German, a declination of German words according to the Russian grammar or construction of Russian sentences with German syntax (Chapter 10). This hybrid cultural experience of FSU Germans distinguishes them from native Germans but also from other ethnicized groups from the FSU, oriented on preserving purity of their national language (also Russian amongst others) and the authenticity of their ethno-cultural belonging. For these groups, preserving cultural (Russian or any other) authenticity, being called russaki is an offence, an ethnic slur. Some discussions in the online forums are especially vocal about it.

In this interpretation, employing the term russaki for group identification or self-reference is viewed as discouraging or demeaning, as argued by one of the forum participants:

> "*Rusak is definitely an offensive word. It is on par with derogatory terms as 'Nemchura' or 'Fascists' for Germans. 'Japs' for Japanese. 'Yankee' for Americans. Macaroni for Italians. Niggers for blacks. Note that all these are conventional expressions. All these words are offensive, accented with prejudice.* […] *For these words people can be killed* […]" (de-online.ru 2013).

The underlying message of this post underscores what Celine-Marie Pascale refers to as the 'weaponization of language' (2019, p. 899), wherein ethnic-based hostilities are conveyed through linguistic hybrids. Additionally, Irina Perianova encouraged a critical examination of linguistic hybrids (2019, pp. 217–259) and highlighted that language can be potent tool for deception (idem, p. 5). Such ready-made linguistic formulas or hybrids can easily become guidelines for thought and action (Perianova 2019, p. 126; for further insights, see Havlin 2020). Thus, it is important to recognize that the word russaki has the potential to be weaponized, leading to significant consequences. Another possible interpretation of the abovementioned post is that the author advocates for greater political correctness, as russaki can carry stereotypes, promote shaming, and impact self-esteem negatively. The following section delves into the subcultural connotations of this linguistic hybrid.

8.4 Russaki as a Representation of Different Subcultures

Within the third interpretation of russaki, the term is associated with specific subcultures, encompassing two distinct connotations: one as a deviant subculture and the other as a clubbing subculture.

Russaki as a Deviant Subculture

In this connotation, russaki is employed to designate individuals associated with criminal activities and behaviors akin to the gopniki subculture. It is crucial to highlight that this

particular usage of russaki markedly differs from its previous interpretations. The term gopniki refers to a criminal subculture that originated in the 1920s within the newly formed Soviet Union and purportedly resurfaced in the 1990s within the post-Soviet territories (Gavrilyuk and Latysheva 2009). During transitional periods marked by political, economic, and social upheaval, this marginalized group adopted a distinct worldview characterized by the rejection of cultural values such as education, tolerance, labor, and self-improvement. Stereotypically, these individuals are depicted as poorly educated, engaging in petty criminal activities, and displaying anti-social behavior. This particular interpretation often carries negative connotations and serves to stigmatize and marginalize a specific segment within the Russian-speaking immigrant community.

Efforts to link russaki with the prototype of gopniki are driven by a desire to shame and downgrade certain segments of the studied migration. In the blogosphere, a satirical image has emerged portraying russaki as gopniki, accompanied by messages like:

> "… *But this is the emigration that calls themselves rusaki. They listen to Seryoga* [a Belarusian rapper]*, speak Russian badly, and look a bit like this* [Figure D-1 in Appendix D]. *A bad image of a Russian gopniki. I haven't been in Germany that long but was surprised that this exists. They even created a name for themselves – rusaki*" (hip-hop.ru).

The author openly acknowledges a short period of residence in Germany, signifying a limited exposure to the various contexts in which the term is applied. Additionally, interviews have uncovered another prevalent narrative: newcomers often perceive themselves as better-educated and more refined compared to previous groups from the FSU. This perception may stem from a desire to counteract some negative stereotypes that may have influenced Germans' impressions of East European immigrants in the past. It exemplifies a distinct cluster, potentially shaped by individuals seeking to establish their credibility within the German surroundings.

Figure 14: 'You-Tube High-Rider Ost Boys'



Source: A screenshot on 21.01.2020 (Lux 2019)

In contrast to the previous meanings of russaki, which encompassed both self-identification and external categorization, the current use of the term is an externally imposed label heavily reliant on stereotypes and prejudices. Russaki are often depicted as inadequately educated and ignorant young men, marked by their criminal history or present involvement in criminal

activities, and seemingly devoid of opportunities for reintegration into mainstream society. This group is marginalized, criminalized, and stigmatized, occupying the lowest rung of the post-Soviet immigrant hierarchy in Germany.

It is worth noting that the russaki, when associated with gopniki, exhibit a style somewhat reminiscent of the You-Tube show *Ost-Boys* from Berlin-Marzahn (Lux 2019). Figure 14 presents the main characters of the show, Slavik and Wadik, the children of late ethnic German resettlers, born in Germany and holding German citizenship. Slavik appears to display his German passport, while Wadik is pictured with a packet with the label Семечки [sunflower seeds],[67] sitting in the so-called Russian crouch posture (Uslar 2018). It is not coincidental that they are photographed in front of one of the Mix Markt stores in Berlin (for more details see Chapter 11). The upper part of the image displays a branding logo and the distinctive blue and yellow colors associated with these stores, where they presumably purchased the sunflower seeds. Additionally, some episodes of the series were sponsored by Mix Markt.[68]

The connection to their mixed cultural background is humorously expressed through the subjects they tackle in the *Ost-Boys* show, such as life in the Plattenbau (pre-fabricated tower blocks) of Berlin Marzan, family dynamics from the generation aspect, and comparisons between East-Europeans and Germans, referred to as pazan [пацан] и aleman [алеман]. The language used in this web series combines German youth slang with Russian interference, particularly using catchy words like davaj [давай] meaning let's go, and pazan [пацан] standing for lad, youngster, as well as some (mild) swear words, as seen on a striped waistcoat bearing the phrase BLYATBERRY ESTABLISHED BY ОСТ БОЙЗ (

Figure 15). These five words exemplify language fusion and social class-related irony: BLYATBERRY satirizes the British retail Burberry Brand, with blyat meaning damn it in Russian. ESTABLISHED denotes branding and design, while ОСТ БОЙЗ, written in the Cyrillic alphabet as Ost boys, combines the German Ost (East) and the English boys (for more examples refer to Figure D-2 in Appendix D).

However, the You-Tube show *Ost-Boys* represents a grassroots business project that offers fictional,

Figure 15: West Blyatberry Established by Ост Бойз



Source: A screenshot on Ost Boys Web accessed on 21.01.2020

[67] This snack is a well-established, and often presented as such, favorite in the Eastern Europe. Sunflower seeds, considered a finger food, are linked to rural charm, casual conversations, and informal gatherings. As reported in Richter's publication (2017, p. 8), which is based on interviews with Mix Markt CEOs, sunflower seeds rank among the top five bestsellers within the Mix Markt supermarket chain in Germany.

[68] For more details on the Mix Markt phenomenon, refer to Part Six and Appendix E.

sarcastic, and socially critical media content, primarily portraying the second generation of post-Soviet migration. In terms of imagery, *Ost-Boys* can be situated between the earlier mentioned russaki, akin gopniki, and cool russaki, thus representing the next cluster of meaning associated with russaki.

Cool Russaki as a Clubbing Subculture

The cool russaki subculture is distinct youth movement firmly entrenched in the club scene as Figure 16 illustrates. This interpretation emphasizes the social and recreational aspects of the subculture, distinguishing it from the criminal subculture connotation. defining features include discotheques featuring Russian-styled popular music and a glamorous aesthetic. They constitute the primary audience for events like *Russaki in Germany* [Russaki w Germanii] and *One Night in Mother Russia* (Figures F-6 and F-8 in Appendix F). On the social media front, various attempts with different degree of success have been made to consolidate this group on platforms like Vkontakte and Facebook. This subculture predominantly comprises teenagers and young adults, likely the children of Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany. Shared interests and like-mindedness take precedence in this subculture over social backgrounds or generational ties. As one popular song boldly proclaims: "*We are playing the guitar/ Till the morning. We are Russaki! / Germans will not understand us / Why we don't sleep at night*" (Dillema).

Figure 16: Visualization of Cool Russaki from the Online Forums



While they may not have firsthand experience of the USSR, some within this subculture romanticize the Soviet past, intertwining it with an imagined sense of Russian greatness. This romanticization finds expression in pop songs like 'Coole-Russen – Russen sind Überall' [Много нас, много нас – руссаки везде] (Coole-Russen 2008). However, the extent to which this romanticization is a widespread belief within the subculture remains contested. Visually, this subculture, or at least a fraction of it, appears to embrace a form of masculinity influenced by stereotypical East European imagery. This masculinity is characterized by exaggerated expressions of power, strength, and potency, with materialistic values playing a prominent role. Expensive cars serve as status symbols, and

guns are used to symbolize danger and potency. On the other hand, femininity within this subculture is often highly sexualized and objectified.

These two connotations within the subculture interpretation of russaki illustrate the multifaceted nature of the term and how it can be used to describe vastly different social groups and behaviors within the Russian-speaking immigrant community in Germany. Despite varying assessments, russaki delineates a collective identity framework for immigrants from the post-Soviet space. It can denote an in-group asserting belonging, serve as a means of differentiation, or function as a way to establish boundaries. Andreas Wimmer's flexible ethnic boundary-making approach encompasses both categorical and social dimensions, including social classification and collective representation, as well as the everyday networks resulting from individual acts of connecting and distancing (Wimmer 2008b, p. 975). From this perspective, the concept of russaki offers only a partial view of collective and individual identification or belonging, highly contingent on the sociocultural context of its application.

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Part *The Unbearable Lightness of Identity – The Shifting Landscape of Immigrant Identities* underscored the critical role of migration narratives as dynamic arenas, often serving as battlegrounds, for the construction and reconstruction of identity formations and frameworks. These identity formations and frameworks entail binary or even multiple points of reference, encompassing considerations such as one's home country and a host country, languages and translanguaging, and participation in transnational social and cultural spaces. They emerge from continuous negotiations, incorporations, and reconciliations within the emigrant immigrant dilemma, contributing to the intricate process of resolving identity debates among post-Soviet immigrants in Germany.

I highlighted the significance of questioning and approaching identity as a representative element of agency within the migration context. In doing so, I emphasized the distinction between identity formations and identity frameworks that helps to explore the dynamics of both individual and collective identifications within the diverse groups under examination. On an individual level, I delved into nuanced and profound identity formations, encompassing various aspects such as identity of difference, mélange identity, professional reinvention, and adherence to legal structures. These individual identities reflected the complexity of self-understanding and self-reflection in the postmigratory context.

On a collective level, identity patterns often incorporate markers related to ethnicity, nationality, or cultural experiences, such as language proficiency or affinity to Russianness developed in the German context. These collective identity frameworks are more generalized and recognizable. The term russaki is presented as a prevalent identity framework among the Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany. The diverse applications of the term illustrate different dimensions of emigrant/immigrant

experiences and provide insights into how project identities are socially constructed, accepted, or assigned. This identity framework is shaped by a mixture of experiences, cultures, generational perspectives, and multiple belongings. The meaning of russaki can vary depending on the context and the individuals using the term. It embodies the complexity of identity and cultural belonging among Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany.

The subsequent parts of the study delve further into how this blending manifests in language use (Part Five), actions related to entrepreneurship (Mix Markt supermarket chain, Part Six) and leisure activities (the Scheherazade dance group, Part Seven). These explorations contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted experiences and agency of post-Soviet immigrants in Germany.

PART FIVE
The Silence of Polyglots – Language Use through the Prism of Migration

> … between two languages, your realm is silence. By dint of saying things in various ways, one just as trite as the other, just as approximate, one ends up no longer saying them… Yet when the foreigner – the speech-denying strategist – does not utter his conflict, he in turn takes root in his own world of a rejected person whom no one is supposed to hear
> (Kristeva 2002, p. 275; p. 277).

The selection of language or dialect is linked to the broader community or society in which they are applied. Language use, including phonetic tones and vocabulary, can reveal social class (Bernstein 2003 [1971]), cultural, regional and educational backgrounds (Leopold 2015 [1959]; Spiekermann et al. 2016; Dirim and Auer 2004). It raises questions such as whether one employs a vernacular or standard language, speaks with an accent, exhibits traces of a dialect, regiolect, or ethnolect, or falls into the contested categories of native or foreign speakers. The answers to these questions and approaches to these nuances can either build bridges or erect barriers between individuals, communities, and societies, similarly to what flexible ethnic boundary-making approach (Wimmer 2007) prescribes to the category ethnicity as a distinction marker.

Language, as a structural element, can be perceived as a code that trespasses time (Young 1990). It is posited that language operates on a macro-level beyond individual experiences (Coulter 1996, pp. 339–340). Language functions as a mechanism for translating personal impressions into public expressions, echoing the insights of Paul Ricœur (1976, p. 19), who noted that language transforms private experiences into the public domain. However, individuals and groups adapt language to suit their specific contextual needs, seamlessly integrating it into their everyday lives, and in turn, language influences and is influenced by their activities (Giddens 1984, p. xvi). Moreover, the dynamic and contextual nature of language is encapsulated in the concept of languaging (Mazak and Herbas-Donoso 2014, p. 700), which underscores the ever-changing quality of language shaped and modified by its users. Through these interactions, people create and employ distinct languages depending on the situational context, the individuals involved, and the institutional framework of that context.

The ability to express oneself individually or collectively and the interconnection between language and action require a broader vocabulary, encompassing languaging as a process. I referred earlier to Habermas' theory of communicative action that posits the emancipatory potential of communicative acts and actions expressed through communication among two or more participants to make sense of a situation. This approach has an application in daily arrangements of research subjects as well as in the arrangement research conduct. Furthermore, categories such as voice or coming to voice are related to language and also involve elements of agency from within. bell hooks' concept of voice combines individual and collective agency to express, oppose, insist, and assert (1994, p. 1). Coming to voice transcends the mere act of sharing one's experiences verbally; it entails strategically using one's voice to speak freely about subjects of significance (ibid). This concept resonates with the interview process, where interviewees discover their voice and reconstruct their experiences and perspectives, often reflecting their migration, transnational, and integration experiences, as reflected in the section dedicated to in-depth interviews.

Considering both structural and non-structural approaches to language, my theory building on immigrant agency focuses on the concept of languaging (Mazak and Herbas-Donoso 2014, p. 700) as a dynamic process embedded in both time and space. This process is continually molded and influenced by its users, particularly the speakers. Within the context of transnational social spaces, individuals partake in what Martin-Jones and his colleagues have termed 'multiple discursive practices' as multilingual speakers, while engaging language interference (Weinreich [1953] 1979) and translanguaging (Mazak and Herbas-Donoso 2014). In doing so, they effectively draw upon the resources within their communicative repertoires (Martin-Jones et al. 2012, p. 10). Fieldwork observations have highlighted the intricate relationship between immigrants and languages, emphasizing the complexity inherent in this connection. Various behaviors related to language use underscore this complexity, including:

1. Facing the challenges of acquiring a new language.
2. Preserving of certain languages while neglecting others.
3. Concealing language proficiencies.
4. Choosing deliberately between everyday multilingualism and monolingualism.
5. Preferencing for standard language use or translanguaging, which involves blending languages.
6. Communicating specific languages depending on the context.
7. Possessing full language command, encompassing comprehension, speech, writing, and reading.[69]

[69] Further reflections on multilingual research conduct in Section 6.4

It is evident that language use and language-related behaviors play a significant role in constructing a theory of immigrant agency. In this context, language use, or languaging, represents an essential facet of agency as an expressive element, forming the second pillar of the theory of immigrant agency. Specifically, Part Five delves into a critical aspect of language use in the transnational social spaces, focusing on languaging and translanguaging with its practical applications. In the context of settlement-oriented migration, particular attention is given to FSU immigrants who maintain the use of the Russian language in specific spheres of their daily lives for intimate, familial, and communal purposes.

Examining these language practices, which simultaneously preserve distinctions and blend them (Chapter 7), enables us to explore an expressive element deeply rooted in cross-cultural, transnational, and multilingual contexts. The theme of language, including its acquisition, proficiency, preservation, and multilingualism, resurfaces prominently in the conducted interviews and other fieldwork activities, particularly concerning the language proficiency of the interview partners. Part Five seeks to provide insights into the following core inquiries: What are the individual and collective behavioral traits observed within multilingual and transnational environments? How do these behaviors reflect immigrant agency, particularly in the context of the groups under investigation? These questions will be explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 9: Language Use – An Individual and Group Perspective

In the exploration of immigrant agency, I take a dual approach to understanding language use. On the one hand, I delve into the individual and collective dimensions of language use within the context of migration, aiming at engaging sociolinguistic applications. On the other hand, I explore how immigrants' use of language serves as an expressive element for both individual and collective agency. This examination sheds light on the sociolinguistic and cultural facets of communication among immigrants from the FSU, as well as occasional interactions between the subjects of study and other population groups. While my fieldwork primarily centered on immigrants, it is important to recognize the significance of language use as a tool for conveying discursive elements. These discourses as external structures of meaning and signification, are intricately intertwined with expressive element of human agency and often transcend linguistic boundaries, echoing the ideas of philosopher Paul Ricœur:

> "An act of discourse is not merely transitory and vanishing... It may be identified and reidentified as the same so that we may say it again or in other words. We may even say it in another language or translate it from one language into another" (1976, p. 9).

As later exemplified in my exploration of discourses trespassing from German into Russian, we see that discourse and language use as languaging are intricately intertwined with the temporal context. In contrast, language operates as a system with a certain degree of independence from time, as discussed by Ricœur (1976, p. 11). When we examine

language interference (translanguaging) resulting from the blending of two or more languages, it becomes apparent how the temporal discursive context is expressed and replicated by immigrants in their linguistic repertoire.

9.1 Individual Traits: Aptitude, Age, and Foreign Language Acquisition

When examining the connection between individuals and language in the context of migration, several critical aspects come into play. These include cognitive processes and decision-making when using a foreign language, individual capabilities, and age-related factors in the process of language acquisition. We will explore these nuances one by one, shedding light on individual behaviors within the context of migration. Language serves a dual purpose as both a conduit for thought and a tool for navigating the external world. In his work titled *Decontextualised Meanings,* Jeff Coulter, explored the concept of language as a vehicle of thought, emphasizing that:

> "Language itself can never distort or restrict, can never be true or false, but can only be either meaningful or meaningless in the sense of conveying intelligible or unintelligible usages in contexts. Language, and the concepts articulated therein, is the medium or vehicle of thought" (1971, p. 309).

However, the distinction between thinking in a foreign language and one's primary tongue introduces a compelling dimension with potential implications for decision-making and individual expression. Research conducted by Boaz Keysar and colleagues (2012) suggested that using a foreign language can mitigate decision-making biases and enhance one's propensity to risk-taking.

The intricacies of decision-making and individual cognitive processes in the context of multiple languages are closely intertwined with several factors. These include one's ability to switch between languages, their outward expression through verbal communication, and the influence of variables like exposure to multicultural environments, educational background, personal resilience, and innate flexibility and adaptability. This interplay becomes most apparent in an individual's seamless navigation of multilingual contexts, whether for oral communication or written expression.

Individual capacity for language acquisition is closely linked to one's social background and the broader societal context. The commitment to learning (foreign) languages and the time invested in this endeavor are significantly shaped by various elements in one's social environment. These factors encompass family background, attitudes toward education, experiences within the school system, and the accessibility of linguistic sources, among others. In essence, this amalgamation of influences constitutes what Pierre Bourdieu (1983) would term cultural capital. For example, consider the case of Katia, who shares her experiences with multiple languages before migrating to Germany:

> *"I began learning English in the second grade* (…) *that was a specialized English school* (.) *well* (.) *it was my hobby English and as I say I always had an inclination to communicate with people in different languages* (..)

for this reason I was not afraid that I have to learn German (...) I had private [German] *classes* (.) *so I knew some German basics* [prior arriving in Germany]."

Katia's orientation toward foreign language acquisition was significantly influenced by her parents, who took the proactive step of enrolling her in a specialized school. Growing up accustomed to learning and communicating in various foreign languages, she faced no substantial barriers when she took a decision to relocate to Germany in her 30s. This sharply contrasts with the experiences of immigrants who had to depend on their own resources to learn German upon arrival and during their incorporation into German society. In such cases, individuals often depend on state-provided language courses or must rely on their own efforts to acquire the language through everyday interactions in their new environment.

An individual's age at the time of acquiring a new language plays a pivotal role in determining whether markers of foreignness, such as accents, mistakes, or linguistic borrowings (translanguaging), are evident or recognizable in their speech and interactions. Foreign accents, as well as phonetic idiosyncrasies kinked to dialects or regiolects, hold the potential to simultaneously signify both otherness and belonging, whether for native speakers or immigrants. Accents, in particular, can introduce a layer of phonetic interference that carries social implications, bestowing advantages or disadvantages based on cultural perceptions. For instance, Uriel Weinreich ([1953] 1979, p. 78) noted how a French accent can be favored in the United States, possibly increasing employment opportunities in certain scenarios.

Conversely, having an English accent, whether it be American or British, can be advantageous when seeking assistance or support in a European context. In Europe, English enjoys the status of being the most widely spoken foreign language, as the Eurostat (2023) d

emonstrated. This dominance surpasses languages with larger populations of 'native speakers' within the European Union. However, it is crucial to recognize that the advantages and disadvantages associated with accents are highly dependent on situational and contextual factors, where we explored public attitudes toward Russian- or East-European-sounding accents.

On a different note, humor often finds its source in the realm of broken language and pronounced foreign accents, along with the use of dialects. This theme is a favorite in Germany and elsewhere, with numerous examples related by immigrants from the post-Soviet space. For instance, the German-Russian comedian Liza Kos, known for works like *Integration with Balalaika* (Kos 2016), and the YouTube show *OstBoys* (2016), offer instances where linguistic diversity and its humorous exploration take center stage.

Furthermore, a person's age at the time of migration and their level of language proficiency can significantly influence their ability to adapt and integrate into the host society, as highlighted by the US-based sociolinguist Ludmila Isurin: "… depending on the age at which the person comes into a new country his adaptation may take different

routes" (2011, p. 63). In essence, the age at which an individual acquires new languages and motivation have a profound impact on both their acculturation and their overall incorporation into their new country of residence. Language, in this context, plays a crucial role in the process of discovering and connecting with the host culture and its traditions. As Isurin suggests, "a better knowledge of the host language allows a better understanding and appreciation of a new culture" (ibid). This assertion holds particular relevance when considering the distinctions between the first generation and subsequent generations, such as the second and third generations. While abovementioned elements or language use patterns in the context of migration are not solely individual, it is an individual that takes center stage when examining language use from the vantage point of cognitive processes, personal capabilities, and the age of language acquisition. Next, I shift my focus to explore group aspects of language use, examining its sphere of application and its implications for social advancement.

9.2 Group Aspects of Language Use: Sphere of Application and Social Advancement

When examining the connection between language and migration from a collective standpoint, several key aspects come to the forefront. These encompass the social functions of language, language choices, emotions and interpersonal relationships, integration and social mobility, the societal status of a language and its speakers, and language loyalty. In this section, we will explore these components in greater detail.

Languages serve distinct social functions and carry varying degrees of intimacy in interpersonal communication. They function as communicative frames that facilitate or hinder interaction, fostering connections or disconnections based on factors like cultural affiliations, regional ties, and socioeconomic backgrounds. These factors manifest in linguistic variations such as dialects, regiolects, and sociolects (Leopold 2015 [1959]; Bernstein 2003 [1971]).

From a group perspective within a multilingual context, language takes on diverse social roles, adapting to different contexts of use. These range from familial and intimate settings to informal or formal exchanges, and even inter-group and between-group communication (Weinreich [1953] 1979, p. 87). Julia Kristeva further emphasized language's functions as an expression of meaning in communicable sentences among speakers and as a vehicle for conveying social identity (Kristeva 2002, p. 100). These concepts resonate with the ideas discussed by Habermas earlier.

The choice of language underscores the level of intimacy or distance within a group or between various groups during interactions. These linguistic choices, signaling closeness or distance, can range from the use of standard languages, dialects, slang, to translanguaging. The moments of interaction and the linguistic choices made during those moments are deeply intertwined with affective influences, emotions, and feelings. Language use, in essence, is highly emotionally charged. This emotional aspect exists both at the individual and collective levels, particularly in how people perceive native and foreign languages. This brings us back to the profound dilemma articulated by Kristeva concerning

the tension between ‘a language of the past’ and ‘a new language’ (2002, p. 275). For immigrants, the preservation of their first language and its transmission to the next generation can carry significant cultural and personal importance (Isurin 2011, p. 20). It raises questions about what to do with one’s familiar linguistic and cultural heritage in a new context. The availability of a community with whom these experiences can be shared heavily influences the attitudes and sociolinguistic strategies of immigrants.

The casual use of terms like native language, native speaker, or a mother tongue give rise to numerous questions. The concept of a native speaker has faced critical scrutiny, with Adrian Holliday (Holliday 2015) challenging its validity and impact. He considered this term as perpetuating a ‘widespread cultural disbelief’ that contributes to the ideology of native-speakerism. This, in turn, can project a ‘neo-racist meaning’ by reinforcing stereotypes and biases based on linguistic background and plays into a divisive ‘native-non-native speaker division’ (Holliday 2015, p. 12).

While I have used the terms native language or native speaker on several occasions, I personally prefer using the term primary language. This preference leads to intriguing questions about situations where individuals may acquire their primary language(s), both father’s and a mother’s tongue learned simultaneously during childhood. The expectation that there should be one native language, as opposed to two or more, underscores the profound emotional impact a mother tongue has on individuals. This emotional connection results in what Gadamer described as ‘indelible distinctions’ within dialects (Gadamer 2000b, p. 53).[70]

Furthermore, the mother tongue as a primary language not only imparts linguistic knowledge but also provides a blueprint for orienting oneself in the world. It offers a framework for navigating life and adapting to various circumstances. In the words of Gadamer (2000a, p. 7), language provides ‘a kind of draft for dealing with life,’ and in our primary (mother) tongue, as in the languages of other cultures, a world orientation is prefigured, always offering the possibility of connection (ibid). This intricate connection between language and emotions may shed light on the concept of language loyalty and its affective components, which can manifest unexpectedly in diverse contexts.

When considering the interplay of structure and agency, Anthony Giddens offered insights into the significance of one’s primary language and the impact of personal circumstances:

> “No one ‘chooses’ his or her native language, although learning to speak it involves definite elements of compliance. Since any language constrains thought (and action) in the sense that it presumes a range of framed, rule-governed properties, the process of language learning sets certain limits to cognition and activity. But, by the very same token, the learning of a

[70] „Die tiefe Prägung, die die eigene Muttersprache jedem Menschen verleiht, läßt ja bis in die Dialektfarben hinein unauslöschliche Unterschiede sich vererben“ (Gadamer 2000b, p. 53).

> language greatly expands the cognitive and practical capacities of the individual" (1984, p. 170).

In this citation, it is asserted that individuals do not consciously choose their primary language, but they do conform to its rules while learning it. Language, as a system, imposes constraints on both thought and action by establishing specific structured properties. However, the process of acquiring language simultaneously sets boundaries on cognition and activity while significantly enhancing an individual's cognitive and practical capabilities.

Integration and social mobility hinge significantly on language proficiency, raising questions about whether a particular language skill can enhance one's social standing. The language of the host country is often seen as a crucial tool that can increase opportunities for success and acceptance:

> "The mastery of a language becomes important for an individual not merely as a medium of communication, but as a means to social advancement… Sometimes the conditions of social advancement may even require the ostensible ignorance of another language – which may be a person's mother-tongue" (Weinreich [1953] 1979, p. 78).

This pursuit of social acceptance and advancement can sometimes lead individuals to hide the fact that a language was learned as a second language. This concealment strategy is particularly relevant for the one-and-a-half or second generations who manage to learn the new language in (relatively) young age without exhibiting markers of foreignness. Such strategies were especially prevalent during the Cold War era when concealing one's Russian language proficiency was common. The second generation of immigrants to Germany from a century ago serves as an example of this phenomenon. Similarly, Italian immigrants in the US during World War II were hesitant to pass on the Italian language to their children, given the mistreatment of Japanese Americans, who were interned in camps.

Empirical evidence highlights various motives for concealing Russian language proficiency among my studying subjects. In some cases, Russian was exclusively used for intimate family communication, while German served as the language of broader societal interaction. In other instances, maintaining proficiency in the Russian language was viewed as an obstacle to successful integration into German society. Such behavioral patterns are not uncommon and find parallels among Spanish-speaking immigrants in the US, where some individuals 'will even deny that they know Spanish' in their efforts to improve relations with English-speaking individuals (ibid).

The most recent Special Eurobarometer on language use in the EU (European Commission 2012) revealed a notable trend regarding the Russian language. While the popularity of Russian as a foreign language was declining in 2012, the number of individuals identifying it as their primary language ('mother tongue') was on the rise, particularly compared to the situation in 2005 (European Commission 2005, p. 4). In the age group between 15-34, those in the EU who declare Russian as their mother tongue

ranked as follows: Germany held the third position at 9%, after Latvia (approximately 32%) and Estonia (19%), surpassing Lithuania (6%). This presence in Germany is attributed to historical ties with the former the Soviet Union, including ideological and political connections with the DDR. Migration patterns likely contributed to this trend as well, a subject explored in this thesis. However, other age groups in Germany reported lower proficiency in Russian as a primary language: the 35-54 age group, with slightly more than 3%, and the 55+ age group, with nearly 2% (languageknowledge.eu 2012). Among all EU countries where Russian was spoken in 2012 as both a native and foreign language, Germany, at approximately 8%, lagged behind Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Bulgaria, and was on par with Slovakia and the Czech Republic (Figure D-4 in Appendix D). It is worth highlighting that all these countries, including the former East Germany and excluding West Germany (BRD), were part of the Socialist Bloc, sharing cultural, political, and social ties to the Soviet Union. Additionally, these statistics were collected in Special Eurobarometer 386 in 2012, and recent figures that are not available may vary.

Chapter 10: Language as a Norm and as a Deviation

Language, as a distinct entity existing independently of individuals and groups, serves as a repository of deeply ingrained structural components. Pierre Bourdieu (2003, pp. 43–50) aptly described it in terms of the linguistic market, encompassing culture, tradition, state, status, and temporal and spatial contexts. Nevertheless, as previously demonstrated, individual and interpersonal influences can manifest in language use and its applications, revealing elements that signify a structure-agency link.

10.1 Standard Language: Hochdeutsch and Standard Russian

In this study, we examine not only the standardized German language but also standardized Russian, along with various deviations that elicit both positive and negative reactions. Before delving into the analysis of how language is employed by research subjects (by Russian-speaking immigrants), it is essential to understand the role of a standard language. Pierre Bourdieu, in his work *Language and Symbolic Power*, contended that a standard language emerges as a normalized amalgamation of 'the regional dialects and, as the dialecticians' maps show' (idem, p. 46). However, there is more to it than meets the eye.

Standard German and dialects

High German [Hochdeutsch] occupy a central position in German integration policies (Worbs et al. 2013, pp. 140–141; Dietz 2000, pp. 635–639). It is also a prominent theme in the narratives of immigrants, as they discussed their arrival and settlement in Germany. The language that holds paramount importance for the state, integration authorities, newcomers, and long-term immigrants alike is the standard language, Hochdeutsch (High German). This standardized form of speech enjoys elevated social prestige (Leopold 2015 [1959], p. 130). Hochdeutsch primarily serves as the language of communication with the state and its institutions, education, and culture. In essence, it is the official language 'bound up with the state, both in its genesis and in its social uses' (Bourdieu 2003, p. 45).

The rise of Hochdeutsch in popularity during the latter half of the 20th century can be attributed to several factors. One key reason is the decline of local dialects and the emergence of regiolects (Spiekermann et al. 2016). Additionally, the accessibility of mass television broadcasts, which often relied on the use of standard language, played a significant role in promoting its adoption. Werner F. Leopold's research (2015 [1959]) also demonstrated how the influx of German-(dialect)-speaking refugees from Eastern Europe following World War II had a transformative effect, leading to the decline of local dialects in Western Germany. It is evident that factors such as increased internal work-related mobility and changing family structures have reshaped linguistic practices and amplified the role of standardized language.

In the context of a unified linguistic market, educated groups are expected to possess the knowledge, understanding, and ability use standard language for daily communication,

regardless of their regional or cultural backgrounds. The forces of both internal and external migration, coupled with the development of modern transportation and mass communication, have further emphasized the importance of standard language, or at very least, its colloquial version. Conversely, regional dialects, slangs, broken German, pronounced regional or foreign accents, as well as various forms of language interference and translanguaging, are often seen as deviations from the standard language. These linguistic variations serve as markers of social, cultural, economic, regional, and geographical backgrounds. Deviations from standard language usage can trigger various social mechanisms, leading to either inclusion or exclusion, acceptance or stereotyping (Campbell-Kibler 2010; Moyer 2013).

This hierarchy that places standard German language above regional dialects, assigning lower social value to dialects, is something that immigrants often become aware of Anna, for example, reflected on her experience upon arriving in Rhineland-Palatinate, a Western German federal state, saying,

> "*when I arrived here* (.) *there was this dialect* (.) *I realized that I knew NOTHING* [meaning in the German language]." She later elaborated on her difficulties during professional technical training, explaining that "*he* [a teacher] *ignored my problems* [of understanding] (..) *he was also talking with such horrible accent* (.) *a dialect*."

However, dialects do not only come into play in relation to the German autochthonous population; they can also highlight a generational gap among ethnic German resettlers. This gap is often observed between the younger generation, which has learned Hochdeutsch in German schools, and the elderly (usually grandparents) who maintain the old dialects in German enclaves in countries like Kazakhstan or Russia. Igor reflected on language use in his family, while saying in Russian,

> "*yes* (.) *from my grandmother's side* (..) *there is more German* (.) *but there is such an accent you know* (..) *worse than in Bavaria* (…) *such old old ancient* (..) *they used to talk it 500 years ago* (.) *once said* (.) *you won't find it in any dictionary* (.) *yes grandmother* (..) *she speaks more German but my father and my uncle* (..) *it is easy for them in Russian* (.)"

The importance of Hochdeutsch in German integration policies and immigrant narratives is underscored, as it serves as the official language for communication with the state, education, and culture. The rise of Hochdeutsch's popularity in the latter half of the 20th century is attributed to factors such as the decline of local dialects, mass media's use of standard language, and the influence of German-speaking refugees from Eastern Europe. In this unified linguistic market, the ability to use standard language is expected, while deviations like regional dialects, accents, and language interference can lead to social inclusion or exclusion. Additionally, generational gaps among ethnic German resettlers can arise, with younger generations often learning Hochdeutsch in German schools, while older generations maintain older dialects.

Standard Russian

The concept of standard language also applies to discussions surrounding Russian immigrants often grapple with whether it is appropriate to mix Russian with German and if German words like Termin [appointment] or Kirche [church] can be used in Russian conversation. The word Termin does not just refer to scheduling a meeting but also denotes pre-arranged everyday routines or planning a year ahead using an appointment book [Terminkalender]. This applies to official appointments with government authorities, integration counselors, medical appointments, plumbing services, or even casual coffee dates with friends. Such pre-arrangements reduce spontaneity and manage risks, contrasting with less pre-planned ways of managing daily life. Similarly, Kirche does not just refer to a church building or a religious institution but also carries an association with a specific religious denomination, in this case, the Protestant church. An Orthodox Russian-speaking immigrant would not call the church they attend for Sunday mass a Kirche. This interplay between the signifier and the signified will be further explored in the following discussions.

The criticism of mixing Russian with German can be contemplated through the concept of language loyalty, which shares similarities with nationalism. This parallel is eloquently expressed by Weinreich as follows:

> "A language, like a nationality, may be thought of as a set of behavior norms; language loyalty, like nationalism, would designate the state of mind in which the language (like the nationality), as an intact entity, and in contrast to other languages, assumes a high position in a scale of values, a position in need of being 'defended'… preserving the threatened language…; as a reaction to interference, it makes the standardized version of the language a symbol and a cause" ([1953] 1979, p. 99).

This citation brings to the forefront the striking resemblance between language loyalty and nationalism, a similarity I have observed particularly in the context of the Russian language. It vividly portrays how language loyalty involves a profound sense of attachment and a fierce protective instinct toward one's language. This perspective positions the language as not just a mere tool of communication but as a vital and distinctive entity, standing apart from all others, and holding a paramount place on the scale of cultural significance.

In the face of perceived interference or threats, individuals and entire communities unite in a collective effort to shield and preserve their language. This defense extends beyond language itself; it transforms the standardized version of the language into a potent symbol and a noble cause that commands passionate commitment and fervent defense. Weinreich's citation underscores the profound emotional and cultural bonds that individuals share with their language. Immigration can magnify these sentiments, further strengthening these ties to one's linguistic heritage. It sheds light on the fervent commitment to maintaining linguistic purity and resisting any form of interference or contamination. Throughout countless face-to-face and online discussions, I have observed a vehement defense of 'pure' language use within the research groups.

Individuals passionately advocate for the preservation of their language's integrity and purity. This deep-seated language loyalty mirrors the fervor often associated with nationalism, emphasizing the intricate interplay between language and identity (Part Four).

Standard Russian and the contexts in which it is used can elicit both positive and negative perceptions regarding deviations from linguistic norms. These perceptions can sometimes lead to generational tensions within families, as illustrated by the example from Katia's family:

> "… *our daughter is so stubborn* (.) *as she grew up she started to correct us so we don't put German words in Russian* [sentences] *which is common among German resettlers* (.) *let's go einkaufen* [shopping] *... firstly she didn't want these mischung* [mixture] *this mixed nonsense* (.) *secondly* (…) *she wanted to hear Russian equivalents and that we spoke correctly* (…) *yes purity* (.) *when people put these German words* (..) *it sounds weird* (..) *I am grateful to her* (.) *my husband is still annoyed by it (.) well fathers and children* (.)"

The use of 'fathers and children' [отцы и дети] carries a specific meaning, referring the renowned Russian novel of the 19th century, *Fathers and Sons* by Ivan Turgenev, which revolves around a generational conflict. In this context, meticulous adherence to the Russian language can be seen as a protective measure employed by bilingual individuals, as it demonstrates a 'high negative correlation with all types of interference' (Weinreich [1953] 1979, p. 78).

Furthermore, this differentiation highlights the linguistic practices of ethnic German resettlers who are frequently translanguaging between Russian and German. Studies have indicated instances of language interference among ethnic Germans in Russia (Seržanova 2010; Baykova 2017). Importantly, it is not exclusive to ethnic German resettlers; many individuals, whether they speak German or Russian, exhibit a difference between the standard language (used in education, literature, and political discourse) and the practical state of languages (languaging). This practical state reflects a diversity of linguistic habitus (Bourdieu 2003, p. 46) and varying modes of language use and communication. In contrast to the use of standard languages, language interference and translanguaging becomes a characteristic feature of immigrant language use or language use in the transnational social spaces, as we will explore in the following section on the example of the studied subjects.

10.2 Translanguaging or Immigrant Language Use

Translanguaging and language use by immigrants, much akin to the disruptive nature of desire and language described by bell hooks (1994, p. 167), transcend established boundaries and steadfastly elude containment. They manifest themselves in ways that permeate and, at times, intrude upon the most private realms of both the mind and the body, underscoring their formidable and inherently uncontrollable influences over

individuals' linguistic experiences and identities. An illustrative instance of translanguaging can be found in an excerpt from the interview with Igor, a 28-year-old who emigrated from Kazakhstan. His family relocated to Germany when he was merely 10 years old, benefiting from the late ethnic German resettlers policy.

During the interview, Igor was immersed in professional training as an industrial technician, a transition triggered by workforce reductions at the industrial plant, where he was the youngest worker without familial obligations. While contemplating his parents' divorce in the wake of their migration, Igor shared his reflections:

Russian to English Translation Preserving the Translanguaging Effect	Initial Transcript with German-Russian Translanguaging
"*I knew mittlerweile* [meanwhile] (.) *was in der Gesellschaft vor sich geht* [what is happening in the society] *they show it on TV*."	"*Я знал mittlerweile* (.) *was in der gesellschaft vor sich geht там по телику показывают* (.)"

Like Igor's case, all the interviews in Table 4 exhibited varying degrees of translanguaging between Russian and German, both in terms of influence from Russian into German and vice versa. In most of the interviews (16 out of 22), the primary language of communication was Russian, but there were instances of minor to significant interference occurring between German and Russian. This specific phenomenon will be the focal point of my subsequent analysis.

In this thesis, I employ two key terms to illuminate the intricacies of language use in the context of migration. The first term is language interference, a concept coined by the Polish-American linguist Uriel Weinreich ([1953] 1979, pp. 80–82), whose scholarship delved into the study of language across various European contexts and beyond (Weinreich and Labov 2011). Distinguishing itself from comparable concepts like code-mixing and code-switching (Auer 2003; Cindark 2013), language interference places a spotlight on the diverse types of language interventions occurring within specific contexts. These interventions encompass phonetic, lexical, and grammatical aspects, whether they manifest consciously or subconsciously. Weinreich's seminal work, *Languages in Contact,* initially published in 1953 and subsequently revised in nine editions by 1979, holds particular significance for this thesis, especially Chapter 3, *The Bilingual Individual*, with its nuanced sociolinguistic analysis (Weinreich [1953] 1979, pp. 71–83). This approach proves particularly apt when examining the language proficiencies of my interviewees (Table 4, the Column LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY L1), who find themselves in the position of bilingual or, at times, multilingual individuals due to migration and settlement.

The second term I employ in the context of international migration and language use is translanguaging. Multilingualism, inherent in transnational social spaces, thrusts the concept of translanguaging into the spotlight. Translanguaging encompasses the diverse array of discursive practices engaged in by multilingual speakers, drawing upon the resources within their communicative repertoires. This perspective on multilingual communication acknowledges that translanguaging includes phenomena like language interference, code-switching, and crossing while simultaneously transcending them. It extends beyond conventional notions of 'language use in multilingual settings' (Martin-Jones et al. 2012, pp. 10–11). Rather than fixating on language as discrete entities, translanguaging underscores the absence of clear-cut boundaries between languages when people communicate with each other. As Marilyn Martin-Jones et al. aptly stated, 'if 'languages' are inventions, we must observe closely communication in action' (ibid).

In alignment with these concepts, Igor's aforementioned sentence serves as an illustrative example of language usage within the context of migration, contrasting with the standard language use, as discussed earlier. Language interference and translanguaging illuminate the strategies of linguistic adjustments within the migration context, revealing that immigrants' language use is more susceptible to interference than the indigenous one. The influence of newcomers and settlers on the local population and its languages, as highlighted by Werner F. Leopold (2015 [1959]) in his analysis of ten million East European refugees settling in Western Germany (as previously mentioned), demonstrates that linguistic practices are subject to interference not only during the migration process but also in the case of settled populations. Taking a historical perspective, we must also consider imperial and colonial land conquests and the impact of imperial languages on indigenous populations, including Latin, Spanish, English, Russian, and Turkish.

In considering the impact of standard English in the USA, bell hooks urged us to recognize and remain mindful of 'the link between languages and domination' (1994, p. 168). She asserted that standard English should not be seen as a language of exile but rather as a tool of conquest and domination, concealing the loss of numerous diverse local tongues, including the Gullah and Yiddish, among others. hooks emphasized that the issue lies not with the English language itself but with how oppressors wield it as a tool to shame, humiliate, and colonize (ibid). Furthermore, she highlighted the historical reluctance of white Americans to acknowledge the diverse languages of Native Americans, underscoring the association of standard English with the sounds 'slaughter and conquest' (hooks 1994, p. 169). Considering the role and dissemination of the Russian language in the Soviet Union, we can observe clear applications of hooks' idea about the link between language and domination. By the same token, there is very little recognition in Russia of the impact that spreading of standard Russian had on indigenous or local languages in the former Soviet republics. Evidently, in the context of standard languages, coercion and persuasion often worked in tandem.

Furthermore, building upon hooks' argument regarding African Americans and language use, we can apply this dynamic to the research group. As hooks articulated, even while needing to use the oppressor's language for communication, they reimagined and

reshaped it to transcend the confines of conquest and domination. Enslaved black individuals took fragmented elements of English and crafted a counter-language that compelled the colonizers to reconsider the English language's meaning and usage. This unconventional manipulation of words and their arrangement carried a spirit of rebellion, asserting language as a platform for resistance – a dynamic process known as languaging. By employing English in ways that disrupted conventional usage and comprehension, black speech transformed English into more than just the oppressor's language (hooks 1994, p. 170). This transformation created an intimate speech within a culture of resistance that conveyed much more than what was deemed permissible within the boundaries of standard English (idem, p. 171). From this perspective, translanguaging and language interference in the context of migration and settlement may emerge as strategies of resistance, navigating between different standard languages.

In a similar vein, the investigated research groups' linguistic practices, influenced by their migration experiences and the need to navigate a new linguistic landscape, reflect a parallel process of transforming the dominant language. They reshape it to serve as a means of communication, expression, and resistance in the context of their migration and settlement experiences. Just as enslaved black individuals reclaimed English as a tool of resistance, members of the research group harness language interference and translanguaging to communicate their own narratives and experiences, often transcending the boundaries of standard language use. This process underscores the dynamic and transformative nature of language, even in the face of domination and linguistic power imbalances.

Regarding the argument about the susceptibility of immigrants' languages to interference from the mainstream language/s of the receiving society, several potential explanations can shed light on this phenomenon:

First, the novelty of immigrant's environment creates a need for them to acquire vocabulary (Weinreich [1953] 1979, p. 91). That is especially when interacting with state institutions or discussing culture-specific topics that I demonstrate later.

Second, the social and cultural disorientation experienced by immigrants can weaken their resistance to borrowing from the host language (ibid). This is particularly evident in the interviews, where those with higher proficiency in German often exhibited more control or consciously resisted language interference.

Third, the incorporation of German words in Russian conversations may introduce a certain level of detachment from the subject matter being at hand. For instance, the German word putzen translates to clean in English. Although not inherently culture-specific, in Russian-speaking conversations, the use of putzen or putz-ала [I was cleaning] in a German-Russian interference assumes a specific job description This was observed among women who, due to dequalification, found themselves compelled to take jobs out of necessity, such as working as cleaning personnel in private households.[71] Putz-

[71] More on identity formation and professional reinvention in Section 7.3.

ала impacts a sense of externalization compared to using the Russian equivalent for a cleaner [уборщица]. However, it also shifts the focus from what one is to what one does or is currently engaged in.

Phonetic, grammatical, and lexical interferences are prevalent forms of translanguaging in multilingual contexts, reflecting both individual and group-level language use characteristics, encompassing structural and non-structural aspects (Weinreich [1953] 1979, pp. 64–65). While capturing phonetic interferences (such as an accent) and grammatical interferences (sentence composition) presents methodological challenges, my analysis predominantly focuses on lexical borrowing, delving into its social implications and semantic nuances. It is essential to acknowledge that my background as a sociologist has influenced the direction of this analysis, given that sociology has historically maintained uneven relationship with studies of signification, with language studies not flourishing within sociological departments or professional associations (Pascale 2019, p. 911). Nevertheless, significant empirical, theoretical, and methodological contributions within sociology have shaped the framework of this analysis. These insights draw from the works of scholars such as Natalia Kozlova and Irina Sandomirskaia (1996), focusing on social background and language use, Pierre Bourdieu (2003), emphasizing language and power relations, and Karin Schittenhelm (2017), highlighting the methodological importance of reflecting on language use during research.

Based on empirical evidence, instances of lexical interference exhibit varying degrees of intensity, spanning from minimal to substantial. An illustrative example of minimal language interference would be:

Russian to English Translation Preserving the Translanguaging Effect	Initial Transcript with German-Russian Translanguaging
[…] "*well they gave us sprachi* (.) *yes* (.) *we arrived in May* (.) *May 10* (.) *it was already 20 years* (…) *we arrived and at the end of August we already went to these sprachi* (.) *quite fine sprach course* (.) *it lasted eight months* (...)*intensive courses from morning till night* (.)"	[…] "*ну нам sprachi же дали* (.) *да* (.) *мы в мае приехали* (.) *10 мая* (.) *у нас было 20 лет* (.) *мы приехали и в конце августа мы уже пошли на эти самые* (.) *на sprach-и* (.) *довольно таки нормальные sprach курсы* (.) *восемь месяцев у нас это было* (...) *интенсивные курсы с утра до вечера* (.)"

In this interview excerpt, Katia shares her experience upon arriving in Germany and enrolling in language classes, which she refers to using the German word Sprache [language]. To avoid further explanation, she employs the hybrid word Sprach-и, where the Russian ending и [-i] builds a plural form. When comparing similar cases in other interviews, the term Sprachi [Sprach-и] carries an additional layer of meaning, referring to state-funded German language courses specifically provided to (late) ethnic German resettlers and later Jewish immigrants as a part of the integration policy.

By using Sprachi in this context, Katia is aware that she can be equally understood in both German and Russian. This highlights a communication circle created between the interviewee and the researcher, both of whom are bilingual, with the researcher significantly influencing the linguistic, thematic, and affective aspects of the interview situation.[72] In this configuration, there is limited potential to capture group elements in language use. Selected transcripts of video-recorded meetings from the ethnographic study prove more useful in reflecting on language use and group dynamics. In these cases, a communication circle is formed by participants, where the researcher becomes an additional element. These transcriptions serve as snapshots documenting language use in various settings: Russian-speaking, German-Russian settings, or flexible linguistic settings. Translation from Russian into German in the presence of monolingual speakers is just one of the examples of the multiple linguistic constellations.

An example of intensive language interference can be observed in the following passage:

Russian to English Translation Preserving Translanguaging	Initial Transcript with Translanguaging
[…] *"meistens* [mostly] *we have* (..) *well not with all* (..) *meistens* [mostly] *German of course* (..) *because if we are in der öffentlichkeit* [in public] *then* (.) *dann schon auf Deutsch* [then certainly German] (.) *ansonsten* [otherwise] (…) *in Russian* (.) *in German* (.) *sometimes a little bit rein Russisch* [merely Russian] (..) *and topics* (.) *unterschiedlich* [different] (.) *alltag* [everyday life] (.) *keine ahnung* [I don't know] (..) *was einem gefällt was einem nicht gefällt* [what one likes what one doesn't like] (.) *sorgen* (.) *vorstellungen* (.) *erwartungen* (.) *das was jeder mensch hat (.) so übliche themen* [worries (.) beliefs (.) expectations (.) everything what everyone has (.) usual topics]"	[…] "*meistens это у нас* (..) *ну не со всеми* (..) *а meistens по-немецки конечно* (..) *потому что мы in der offentlichkeit если* (.) *то dann schon auf Deutsch* (.) *ansonsten* (…) *по-русски* (.) *по-немецки* (.) *иногда чуть-чуть rein Russisch* (..) *а темы* (.) *unterschiedlich* (.) *alltag* (.) *keine ahnung* (..) *was einem gefällt was einem nicht gefällt* (.) *sorgen* (.) *vorstellungen* (.) *erwartungen* (.) *das was jeder mensch hat* (.) *so übliche themen*." # 00:18:23 #

[72] More on researcher positionality and reflexivity in Section 6.5.

This passage presents Igor's response to my question about what determines his choice of language in his daily routine. Based on the provided example, the interviewee inclines to translanguaging, particularly between Russian and German. He mentions that in most cases, German dominates, especially in public settings, and he also uses German when interacting with others in the public sphere. However, Igor acknowledges that sometimes he uses a bit of 'rein Russisch' or purely Russian. This suggests that his language use is influenced by both languages, and he tends to translanguaging between them depending on the context and the people he is communicating with. The interference appears to be more intense in his case, as he frequently alternates between Russian and German, even within the same conversation.

Throughout the interview with Igor, there was a casual blending of Russian and German, at times making it unclear which language was influencing the other, whether it was German to Russian or vice versa. However, this translanguaging serves as a glimpse into the personal verbal expression of someone seeking understanding, illustrating how translanguaging can also function as a vehicle for conveying thoughts and as an example steaming from the certain linguistic setting. Given Igor's individual story, as exemplified by the earlier mentioned example and the citation in the previous section regarding his family's use of a German dialect and Russian, this type of language interference is not surprising. In the semi-private setting of the interview, such translanguaging was deemed acceptable, in contrast to public spaces [in der Öffentlichkeit], where standard German was expected. Our initial encounter occurred while I was filming the Scheherazade dance group at a semi-public event (in Part Seven). Igor was assisting the organizers with technical support. I took the opportunity to invite him to participate in my study, an invitation he graciously accepted. Consequently, there was a certain level of familiarity and a connection to the local Russian-speaking community that made our later interview meeting less formal.

As demonstrated by other observations, the selection choice of language use (standard German or Russian, various degree of language interference, and translanguaging) can be substantially influenced by several factors, including the context in which communication occurs, the linguistic backgrounds of the individuals involved (whether they are monolingual or multilingual), and the specific topics under discussion. This brings us to another essential methodological considerations: the role of multilingualism in shaping the contexts of interviews or observations and influencing language use. Multilingual individuals are more likely to engage in lexical borrowing or language interference (Weinreich [1953] 1979, p. 71).

In the context of this study, all interviewees or participants had the flexibility to select the language of their interviews or other forms of communication, primarily choosing between German and Russian. Their awareness of being proficient in both languages could lead to translanguaging. This phenomenon might occur when they encountered difficulty expressing something in one language or could happen unintentionally. For instance, during the fieldwork with the hobby dancing group (Part Seven), German was

frequently used, especially during public performances when some participants did not speak Russian. Additionally, German-Russian simultaneous translation was employed, particularly during rehearsals involving German-speaking members of the group.

Since the sample predominantly consisted of first-generation immigrants, instances of language interference and translanguaging between German and Russian are more frequent compared to the reverse direction. This tendency is also influenced by the language choice during the interviews (Table 4, the column L2 THE PREVAILING LANGUAGE OF THE INTERVIEW). Given this context, it becomes compelling to analyze the recurring patterns of German lexical interference within the flow of Russian interviews, which is a pervasive feature across the interviews. These lexical interference can be considered as signifiers in Barthes' terms (2001), carrying additional meaning beyond their literal implications. Based on my empirical findings, these patterns can be categorized into five themes: (1) governance and state institutions, (2) the educational system, (3) the labor market and employment, (4) nonequivalent culture-bound concepts or idiomatic expressions, and (5) the identification of specific social groups.

(1) One of the recurring themes pertains to state or municipal institutions that immigrants must engage with upon their arrival, and for some, these institutions become the primary source of communication in German. These include the employment office [Arbeitsamt; Jobbörse] for addressing employment-related issues or social benefits in the event of unemployment, the city hall, and district administration [Rathaus; Kreisverwaltung] that play a specific role in facilitating the settlement and integration of citizens and immigrants. For instance, Alex reflects on his experience with the employment office while still in school: "*well then* (.) *I went to my beloved* [ironically] *arbeitsamt* (.) *in the department* (.) *where Sasha worked* (.) *German Sasha* [laughing]…" Alex expressed excitement at meeting someone with the familiar name Sasha[73] in a state institution since Sascha is a common name in Ukraine, where Alex originated from.

In relation to these institutions, German words connected to social benefits and references to *officials* responsible for managing or assigning those benefits find their way into Russian conversations. As explained by Oleg in the context of his experience with unemployment, job searching, and applying for social benefits: "*sozial* [social benefits] *is received there* (.) *also lebensunterhaltungsgeld* [means of subsistence] *and for a flat meaning wohngeld*." In the excerpt, *Wohngeld,* referring to housing allowance, denotes a social security benefit available to individuals with low income who are entitled to apply for a rent allowance (BfJ 2003, 2013). In this case, there is a straightforward enumeration of social benefits that Oleg had to deal with or was aware of their availability in times of need. In other cases, a reference to the borrowed German word is emotional significance as an exempt from the interview with Eva illustrates:

[73] Based on my fieldwork observations, it appears that the full name 'Sascha' was more commonly given to individuals who were part of the earlier wave of migration during the Yugoslavian war in the 1990s. In Ukrainian or Russian-speaking contexts, Sascha [Саша] typically derives from the full name Aleksander or Oleksander.

Russian to English Translation Preserving the Translanguaging Effect	Initial Transcript with German-Russian Translanguaging
"*that downgraded state* (.) *because it is always when a person lacks confidence* (.) *especially in that* heim *loosely speaking if we tried* (…) *we went to* berater-ам [an integration counselor] *then we were bowing* [imitating a very polite voice] *but please* (.) *well goodbye* (!)"	"*вот какое-то приниженное состояние* (.) *потому что всегда когда человек не уверен* (.) *особенно в том же* heim-е (.) *грубо говоря* (.) *если мы пытались* (…) *шли к* berater-ам *то мы вот там вот все расшеркивались* [imitating a very polite voice] *ну пожалуйста* (.) *ну досвидание* (!)"

In this example, Eva reflected on her difficult emotional condition during her residence in the temporary dormitory [that she called as Heim], provided to newcomers whose arrival is supported and sponsored by German state programs. This is one of the reappearing themes among (late) German resettlers and Jewish refugees, as in Eva's case. This statement conveys an emotional vulnerability and reveals distress when dealing with official matters upon arrival. Borrowing German words in the Russian sentence can create a certain emotional distance from an institution [Heim] or its employees [Berater-ам].

To this theme, we can also add activities, procedures, and documents related to interactions with German official institutions. Once again, the prearranged protocol in communication between the state and citizens plays a significant role (though this protocol may be unknown or significantly different from their previous experiences). These require a set of skills, not to mention the need for a relatively high level of proficiency in German that immigrants must acquire as soon as possible. Unfortunately, for many, these interactions may represent their most intense contacts with the state, involving bureaucratic German language and officials. At times, these experiences can be reminiscent of Kafkaesque situations.

(2) Another significant category of lexical borrowing pertains to state-mediated educational institutions. This type of borrowing sheds light on various themes within the German educational system, encompassing topics such as different levels of education, types of schools, and academic degrees. It is more prevalent in the narratives of individuals who have experienced or are currently experiencing the German education system. For instance, Vlad mentioned, "*I went to the* berufliches gymnasium (.) *a technological secondary school.*" Vlad's borrowing of the term 'Berufliches Gymnasium' to describe his educational background is notable. It reflects his familiarity with the German educational system and the specific type of school he attended. Berufliches Gymnasium translates to vocational high school in English, and it indicates that Vlad pursued a more specialized and vocational track within the German education system. This borrowing serves to provide precise information about his educational path that

might not be easily conveyed using only Russian words. It also signifies his engagement with the German education system and his ability to navigate and understand its nuances.

Additionally, individuals who have children in or formerly attended the German schooling system also tend to borrow vocabulary[74] related to education. For example, Anna expressed her concerns about the differentiation in the educational paths for children after primary school:

Russian to English Translation Preserving the Translanguaging Effect	Initial Transcript with German-Russian Translanguaging
[…] "*kids who are in school* (…) *let's assume* (.) *mine* [daughter] *is average now* [in terms of academic performance] *and kids* (.) *who perform poorly* (.) *they won't be able to catch up* (..) *with the others* (.) *for me* (.) *as they say this German phenomenon* schubladen (.) *generally speaking* (.) *you know it* (.) *this way* gymnas-мы (.) *this way* realschule (.) *and that way* hauptschule (.) *they are already teaching them* [to differentiate]."	[…] "*дети которые в школе* (…) *допустим* (.) *моя* [дочь] *средняя сейчас* (.) [в плане успеваемости] *а дети* (.) *которые плохо учатся* (.) *они же вообще не успеют* (..) *за остальными* (.) *мне* (.) *как говорится этот немецкий феномен* schubladen (.) *как говорится* (.) *знаешь это* (.) *сюда* gymnas-мы (.) *сюда* realschule (.) *а туда* hauptschule (.) *вот они их уже и учат* [to differentiate]"

The last borrowing involving the German word Schubladen [Drawers] in the Russian sentence is related to the idiomatic expression in Schubladen denken, which means to think in stereotypes or pigeon-hole thinking in German. Anna uses this borrowing to emphasize the narrow-minded thinking associated with categorizing children's academic performance in the German educational system. The speaker refers to the categorizing that divides students into different type of schools (Gymnasium, Realschule, Hauptschule) based on their grades. This borrowing serves to convey a nuanced meaning that might not be easily expressed using only Russian words. It highlights the complexity of the German educational system and reflects Anna's critical attitude toward the preselection of students based on their school performances. It also reveals several layers

[74] Certainly, in Germany, a federal state, there is a significant difference between nationally managed (Bund) and regionally managed (Land) affairs. Education falls under regional management. This distinction can be challenging for those coming from centralized state-managed systems to understand. However, for the purposes of this discussion, 'Bund' and 'Land' are collectively referred to as 'the state' to simplify matters to some extent.

of meaning, such as the differentiation between gymnasium, realschule, and hauptschule, which are different types of schools in the German educational hierarchy. The expression 'this German phenomenon Schubladen' underscores Anna's discontent with the hierarchal system as something she considers typical primarily in Germany.

(3) The realm of employment represents the third thematic domain that prominently involves linguistic borrowing. Within this sphere, we encounter a multitude of linguistic borrowings encompassing labor market institutions, terminology associated with employment processes, and professional jargon.

When we delve into labor market institutions, we encounter terms like chamber of crafts [Handwerkskammer] and 'service agency' [Leihfirma]. For instance, a participant might say, "*I went to the leihfirma* (.) *and they paid very little.*" The recurrent appearance of terms such as 'service agency' or 'temporary work agencies' in the professional narratives and employment trajectories of these immigrants demands further analysis.

The process of gaining employment is another facet within this theme, covering aspects like job applications, interviews, trial periods, and terminations. To illustrate, consider Eva's rationale for her husband's reluctance to change his job, despite it being characterized as low-paying and low-status:

Russian to English Translation Preserving the Translanguaging Effect	Initial Transcript with German-Russian Translanguaging
"[he] *is a person who basically doesn't speak* [German] *sent under the pressure of the vorstellungsgespräch-ов* [job interviews] *now and so on* (.) *that he has to find himself in the new settings* (.)"	"*то есть из человека практически не говорящего сейчас отправить под каток вот этих самых vorstellungsgespräch-ов и всего остального* (.) *то что он должен найти себя в новой среде* (.)"

In this example, Eva characterizes her husband as someone who initially lacked proficiency in German and was hesitant to face the daunting prospect of job interviews, denoted by the German expression Vorstellungsgespräch-ов with Russian declination. Instead, he accepted a low-status job with poor payment due to his apprehension about the challenges that might come with a new job and its environment. The inclusion of the German term within the Russian sentence emphasizes the particular context and pressure related to job interviews and the individual's need to adapt to a new setting.

Further Anna told me about her attempts to find a job, which is another example of borrowing in the domain of employment.

Russian to English Translation Preserving the Translanguaging Effect	Initial Transcript with German-Russian Translanguaging
"(…) *and he offered me* (.) *go and try* (!) *they are looking for a draftsperson* bauzeichnen *and* bauingenieur *as well* (.)"	"(…) *и он мне предложил* (:) *вот давай* (!) *они ищут там чертежник* bauzeichnen *и* bauingenieur *еще* (.)"

In this example, the speaker employs the German words Bauzeichnen and Bauingenieur within the Russian sentence. These words translate to draftsperson and structural engineer in English. Anna is discussing a job offer or opportunity related to these professions, and her use of these German terms adds specificity to the discussion. It indicates that these job positions or titles are relevant to the German professional experiences being discussed.

Unable to secure a job in her field of qualification as an engineer, Anna decided to pursue her hobby that she had developed while in Germany. She underwent training to become an alternative practitioner [Heilpraktiker] alongside her German friend.

Russian to English Translation Preserving the Translanguaging Effect	Initial Transcript with German-Russian Translanguaging
"*she also graduated from the same school of* heilpraktiker [alternative practitioner] (.) *she is* physiotherapeut [physiotherapist] *and she graduated* [as] heilpraktiker"	"[…] она тоже закончила эту школу Heilpraktiker (.) она Phisiotherapeut и она закончила Heilpraktiker […]"

This borrowing involves the use of the German words Heilpraktiker (alternative practitioner) and Physiotherapeut (physiotherapist) within the Russian sentence. Anna is discussing the professional development of her friend who graduated from the same school as an alternative practitioner and became a physiotherapist. The use of these German terms adds specificity to the discussion of the friend's qualifications and profession, highlighting the dual roles they hold. This borrowing serves to convey a nuanced meaning that might not be easily expressed using only Russian words.

In addition to the instances of specific lexical borrowing, these connected examples also bring attention to the noteworthy issues: overqualification,[75] and a transition from a predominantly male field like civil engineering to a traditionally female domain such as alternative medicine.

(4) The fourth block encompasses idiomatic expressions and instances of culture-bound concepts in German that lack direct equivalents in Russian. We have already discussed pigeon-hole thinking [in Schubladen denken] earlier, and dilemma [Zwickmühle] is another example, referring to navigating ambiguous situations: '*and as Germans say zwickmühle* (.) *well you went back and forth*.' Another example of context-specific usage arises in Katia's description of gender role dynamics in her family after arriving and settling in Germany. This instance also illustrates a form of professional lexical interference:

Russian to English Translation Preserving the Translanguaging Effect	Initial Transcript with German-Russian Translanguaging
"*and Viktor stayed at home* (.) *he completely took on* [the role of a] *hausmann-a* [house husband] (.) *he was taking care of all household chores because I wrote three bewerbung-a* [applications] *in Germany and in the third* [case] *they invited me to the vorstellungsgespräch* [job interviews] (.) *they hired me*."	"*и Виктор сидел дома* (.) *он уже полностью перенял hausmann-a* (.) *он перенял все домашнее хозяйство* (..) *потому что я написала три bewerbung-a в Германии и на третье меня вызвали на vorstellungsgespräch* (.) *меня взяли на работу*."

In the last example, there are several instances of lexical borrowings from German into the Russian sentence. These borrowings serve to provide specificity and capture the nuances of the situation being described. For example, Hausmann is borrowed to convey the concept of a house husband, which refers to a man who takes on domestic responsibilities typically associated with women. There is no direct equivalent word for the German term hausmann in Russian. The literal translation муж домохозяин means a husband who is skillful and handy at home. To convey the precise meaning of hausmann, it would be necessary to use a descriptive phrase like stay-at-home husband.

[75] The challenge of finding a job matching one's university degree, discussed further in Section 7.3.

Additionally, two more borrowings are present related to employment: Bewerbungen is borrowed to refer to applications, specifically in the context of job applications, and Vorstellungsgespräch is borrowed to refer to job interviews, highlighting the formal nature of the interview process. These borrowings enhance the precision and richness of the narrative by incorporating German terms that are directly related to the experiences and challenges faced by Katia in a German-speaking context. They also reflect the bilingual and transnational nature of the speaker's life and experiences.

(5) Finally, references to specific social groups form another recurring theme in the interviews, encompassing words such as unemployed [Arbeitslose], receivers of social benefits [Sozialhilfeempfänger], guest workers [Gastarbeiter], late ethnic German resettlers [Spätaussiedler], foreigners [Ausländer], academics [Akademiker]. These descriptions, emerging in diverse interview contexts, collectively illuminate three prominent public discourses in Germany: the welfare state and social benefits, the migration and integration debate, and the educational discourse. The latter encompasses considerations of both educational attainment and family background, making distinctions between families of academics [Akademikerfamilie] and families of workers [Arbeiterfamilie]. These discourses are translated from the German contexts into Russian conversations through the borrowing of missing vocabulary.

In addition to the regular occurrence of German-Russian language interference in the Russian-speaking interviews and the themes it helps construct, there is another noteworthy feature to consider: which part of language is borrowed. Nouns used for naming and describing are borrowed more frequently than words denoting actions (verbs) or relational attitudes (adjectives). Interestingly, abstract concepts or emotions rarely require lexical borrowings from German.

Several reasons for language interference have been discussed at the beginning of this section. Additionally, it is worth noting that, firstly, rapid borrowing can maintain the conversational flow instead of wasting time searching for an equivalent word, bypassing standard language norms. Secondly, it can be convenient for conveying precise meanings while preserving nuanced descriptions. Thirdly, interference can connect a speaker, at the very least, with two different linguistic systems, with translanguaging serving as an immediate expression of multiple identities. Fourthly, interference can demonstrate a high level of language proficiency and control over different linguistic contexts.

Language is a shared medium, and bilingualism or multilingualism is a shared experience that occurs simultaneously. While standard national languages may delineate national boundaries (and regiolects may define regional borders), language interference or translanguaging, as a fusion of different linguistic systems, can serve as an indicator of cultural fusion, illustrating cultural pluralism and hybridity in the coexistence of various cultural signifiers merged to express individual and collective agency. As Alex succinctly puts it: "*In the end* (.) *we just express our thoughts* (.) *basically we have similar thoughts* (.) *we just use different translators.*" With language interference or translanguaging, speakers establish a space for intimate and authentic expression. When standard German

or Russian fail to provide this space, individuals create a distinct form of language use in the context of migration and settlement, characterized by its raw and unpolished nature. This language use becomes a powerful tool for conveying ideas that go beyond conforming to the dominant societal norms. By adopting languages to their needs, immigrants harness the power of languaging to assert their identities and resist dominant forces (hooks 1994, p. 174). In a way, it is a form of counter-hegemonic speech that empowers them and allows for liberation through languages via languaging and translanguaging.

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This Part *The Silence of Polyglots – Language Use through the Prism of Migration* challenged traditional perspectives on language, emphasizing its dynamic nature as it unfolds in the context of migration, including languaging, translanguaging, and language interference. This approach created inclusive spaces for diverse voices and expressions, reshaping our understanding of language's impact on knowledge and perception.

The examination of language as an expressive element of immigrant agency involved two key approaches. On the one hand, it delved into individual and collective language use within the immigration context, considering the crossing of linguistic, discursive, and cultural boundaries. This perspective explores factors like age and language acquisition, foreign language exposure, and cognitive abilities. On the other hand, it addressed group-level aspects of language, including language interference and translanguaging in transnational social spaces, the relationship between social backgrounds and language acquisition, the diverse functions and intimacy levels of language use, the role of emotions and belonging, and the influence of language on social mobility.

Furthermore, I examined the contrast between standard language use, representing power dynamics and linguistic loyalty, and deviations like accent, dialect, regiolect, broken language, and borrowing, particularly in cross-cultural settings. The discussion also highlighted the five most common themes of language interference among FSU immigrants, exploring the reasons and meanings behind lexical borrowing from German into Russian. These interferences served as signifiers, shedding light on borrowing areas and the nuanced semantics of the signified.

Looking ahead, next Part will shift its focus to the operational element of immigrant agency, delving into social actions. Specifically, this section will concentrate on entrepreneurial actions, integrating the identity formations and frameworks discussed earlier and capitalizing on multilingual contexts within the mundane transnational social spaces of ordinary cities.

PART SIX

Entrepreneurial Endeavors

From Small Ventures to Transnational Networks

> … production, exchange, marketing, and consumption of food have generated new identities — for foods and eaters alike
>
> (Gabaccia 2000, p. 5)

The following Part Six and upcoming Part Seven, titled *Unveiling Cultural Auto-Exoticism and Dynamic Transformations: A Study of Serious Leisure,* provide insights into FSU immigrants from the perspective of social actions, an operational element of immigrant agency. In essence, autonomous and collective action stands as a fundamental feature of human agency (Calhoun 2002, p. 7). Action can be conceptualized as actio, representing an ongoing acting-in-progress process, or as actum, signifying a completed and achieved action (Schuetz 1945a, p. 539). The terms actio and 'actum' emphasize the temporal nature of human actions, encompassing the past, present, and future dimensions. Besides the temporality, social action is not necessarily a linear progression, but rather it adapts and changes in response to the prevailing conditions and circumstances that individuals encounter (Corbin and Strauss 1990, p. 421).

In the context of my study, I employ the term action to denote individual, or collective deliberate behavior that is intentional and unintentional, goal-oriented and adjusted throughout the process of migration and settlement. Reflexivity, as exemplified by Schuetzian's reflective attitude or Archer's reflexive imperative,[76] is another crucial facet that distinguishes action from other forms of activities, such as routines or habits. Margaret S. Archer (2016, p. 19) considered the concept of the 'reflexive imperative' as intrinsic to the process of adaptation when migrants transfer ideas, knowledge, and actions, synthesizing them in the new field of application, especially when previous routines are no longer adequate. Mobility may disrupt established routines, as I observed in my fieldwork, thereby emphasizing the need for reflexivity in actions.

[76] The concept of the 'reflexive imperative' belongs to Archer's theory of morphogenesis (see Section 3.2). It pertains to the societal demand for individuals to engage in continuous self-reflection, self-examination, and self-monitoring. In societies marked by rapid social change and transformation, during the process of migration, individuals are compelled or expected to regularly evaluate and adapt their actions, identities, and life trajectories in response to these transformations (Archer 2010, p. 284).

In Part Six, my primary focus revolves around social actions within the realm of entrepreneurship, seamlessly integrated into the mundane transnational social spaces. Specifically, I delve into the entrepreneurial ventures undertaken by immigrants from the former Soviet Union who established small businesses upon migrating to Germany. I then scrutinize how these grassroots businesses from the late 1990s evolved into the foundation of the Mix Markt supermarket chain that had its roots in the post-Soviet communities. Operating primarily in mid-sized German cities, this supermarket chain has gradually expanded its presence to other EU member states. Additionally, it has established production and export ties with several Central and Eastern European countries as Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Baltic states, as well as Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, creating a transnational business network on a Eurasian scale.

In Chapter 11, *Migrant Businesses and Post-Soviet Migration*, I commence by analyzing the links between entrepreneurship and migration, exploring the explanatory frameworks of significance (i.e., collective agency compared to social capital approach) and the distinctive features that defined the studied group in the context of business. I outline the phenomenon of Mix Markt and its main features that both appeal to and reflect post-Soviet migration. The historical perspective allows me to trace the stages of the Mix Markt's evolution. Further in this Chapter, I investigate the complex web of family ties and co-immigrant connections, illustrating how these interwoven relationships contribute to the dynamic enterprise.

Transitioning to Chapter 12, *Nourishing Community and Culinary Memories in Consumption*, I focus on social actions from two angles. First, I explore how the power of memory and cuisine preferences is leveraged in the realm of consumption. The purposeful marketing strategy of East European culinary fusion uncovers the deep-rooted connections between cultural heritage, culinary experiences, and consumerist behavior. Second, I direct the discussion into the realm of collective agency, shedding light on the collaborative efforts that drive business activities within this post-migratory context. Valid for the case of Mix Markt, entrepreneurial actions include fostering socioeconomic cohesion, facilitating socioeconomic involvement, promoting professionalization, and effectively navigating mundane transnational social spaces. These actions encompass the journey from a small enterprise (like a corner shop) to a transnational network, from catering to a migrant market to transitioning into mixed and mainstream markets, as will be illustrated later.

Chapter 11: Migrant Businesses and Post-Soviet Migration

Businesses in the context of migration and settlement are analyzed in terms of differences between migrant and ethnic shops. The former refers to first-generation immigrants, while the latter signifies businesses with 'a set of connections and regular patterns of interaction among people sharing a common national background or migratory experiences' (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990, p. 112). I use the term migrant shop to refer to the first-generation entrepreneurs who own or manage the largest share of the stores from the sample. Since migrant or ethnic businesses oftentimes serve the needs of certain

immigrant communities, they are located in geographical proximity to this population. Terms like ethnic enclaves, ethnic entrepreneurship, or immigrant enterprises reflect this cultural and spatial proximity in research (Portes 1995; Volery 2007; Leicht and Werner 2013). Closeness emphasizes the concentration (enclaves) and relative exclusiveness (niche) of entrepreneurs operating within migrant consumer markets. As a result, research underscores the significance of cultural and social capital for migrant entrepreneurs who strive to survive and make headway (Sommer and Gamper 2015).

Entrepreneurial pursuits are frequently interpreted in the literature as a calculated strategy by migrants to evade unemployment or surmount formidable barriers in the mainstream labor market (Sommer 2011; Grünheid 2012). Jan Nederveen Pieterse, a scholar of global political economy, underscored that a driving force compelling individuals with foreign backgrounds to engage in entrepreneurial activities in Western Europe is the 'hierarchical integration in the form of segmented labor markets to the disadvantage of migrants' (Pieterse 2003, p. 37). Conversely, Saskia Sassen (1995) conceptualized immigrants' entrepreneurial endeavors by taking into account local labor markets and accentuating employment opportunities within localized labor markets, rather than singularly focusing on the broader labor market of the country. From the previously mentioned urban scalar perspective, it is evident that the local labor market in small and mid-sized cities significantly deviates from the opportunities present in larger cities, metropoles, or strategic urban centers at the national or international level. These disparities are also discernible within the context of interviews, where interviewees navigate their precarious labor conditions and experience challenges when transitioning between professional fields. This disparity becomes apparent when comparing the interviewees' educational levels (the EDUCATION column) with their employment situations, particularly noticing the few who secured permanent contracts during the interview period (Table 4, the column OCCUPATION IN THE TIME OF INTERVIEW).

In the 1990s, retail shops and other businesses of East European orientation in Germany illustrated both relative closeness and high reliance on the post-Soviet communities. Elena Sommer (2011) depicted Russian-speaking entrepreneurs as 'inconspicuous' and explored business dependence on co-migrants as social capital, examining their ties with their places of origin. In her book *Social Capital as a Resource for Migrant Entrepreneurship: Self-employed Migrants from the Former Soviet Union in Germany* (2020), the scholar analyzed the peculiarities of business activities from the point of social capital and self-employment strategies in the transnational context. She covered interesting and relevant aspects: The positioning of immigrant business in the market continuum is divided into the migrant market for co-immigrants, the mixed market for migrant and indigenous populations, and the mainstream market orienting at all the population (Sommer 2020, p. 176). This classification illustrates the importance of access to migrant communities and the large population that contributes to building social capital, which, in turn, is vital for businesses to not only survive but also thrive.

The capital approach plays a significant role in explaining how migrants integrate into labor markets and engage in entrepreneurial activities, making it a prominent explanatory

framework in migration studies (Faist 1998; Kyle 1999; Nohl et al. 2006; Pieterse 2010; Sommer and Gamper 2015). The accumulation of economic capital to start a business is a crucial factor, often achieved by migrant entrepreneurs through their savings, loans from relatives, or support within their migrant community. This process often requires enduring long working hours, modest living conditions, and multiple jobs for several years to gather the required funds (Volery 2007, p. 38). Migrant entrepreneurs leverage the social and cultural capital of co-migrants to mitigate risks and ensure the success of their ventures. They embrace self-employment as entrepreneurs offering services within communities they are closely aligned with, thereby sharing language and culture.

While Bourdieu's theory of capital (1983) remains relevant as an explanatory framework within migration studies, particularly concerning integration and entrepreneurship, the agency approach, which aligns with my current argument on immigrant agency, offers another plausible lens for understanding the experiences of migrants' embedding (Chapter 2), including entrepreneurship (earlier efforts in this field were undertaken by Brettell and Alstatt 2007). The social capital approach, outlined earlier, underscores the importance of co-migrant or co-ethnic networks in reducing transaction costs, accumulating wealth, and cultivating both in-group and intergroup social and cultural capital (Pieterse 2003, p. 35). In this context, social capital plays a cumulative and advantageous role for migrant or ethnic enterprises. Conversely, collective agency accentuates reciprocal, active, and interactive connections between communities, migrant shops, and entrepreneurs. It centers on elements of identity formation and culture (cultural pluralism, multilingualism, customs, cuisine), as well as familial and social dynamics that empower migrant businesses within their respective contexts. While the social capital approach primarily considers individuals through the lens of possession as having sources, connections, and contacts (Seukwa 2005, p. 221), my emphasis on social action as an operational element of agency centers on processes, interactions, exchanges, cohesion, and engagement (Havlin 2024). This perspective will be illustrated through the phenomenon of the Mix Markt supermarket chain.

11.1 A Mix Markt Phenomenon

"Usually when people say Mix Markt, they mean a Russian shop. This collocation immediately triggers a set of associations: condensed milk, Eskimo chocolate-coated [ice cream], a Potato pastry… Nowadays, to buy these favorite childhood products, there is no need to go to Russia; it is enough to visit the shop in Rastatt" (Siemens 2020, p. 10). These lines open one of the interviews with a Mix Markt entrepreneur in *Aussiedlerbote*. Featured as interviews, these ads appear in the rubric *Mix Markt – Наш русский магазин* [Our Russian Shop]. To comprehend the phenomenon of Mix Markt, it is imperative to delve into its composition and the series of developments that culminated in its establishment. This retrospect lens necessitates an exploration of the collective agency exhibited by immigrants from the former Soviet Union who arrived in Germany during the 1990s. Examining the circumstances that led to the emergence of the Mix Markt chain in Germany helps us to understand the grassroots nature of the Mix Markt phenomenon.

What do the Mix Markt stores stand for, and how do they represent post-Soviet entrepreneurs and communities in Germany? With a total of 179 stores in Germany and an additional 161 in other EU countries, the Mix Markt supermarket chain signifies a pioneering advancement in the realm of entrepreneurial endeavors pursued by post-Soviet immigrants, not only in Germany but also in other regions. In my analysis, I rely on a multimethod empirical study.[77] Through the utilization of both real time and digital ethnography techniques, my objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the operational dynamics of Mix Markt businesses and their associated entrepreneurs within the context of the mundane transnational social spaces. This process involves a meticulous examination of the collective agency, including entrepreneurial actions, of post-Soviet Russian-speaking immigrants. They leverage familial and communal relationships to establish linkages between stores and entrepreneurs across Germany and beyond. Moreover, the analysis of the statistical and geographical distributions has enabled me to discern and reflect upon the spread of the Mix Markt business across Germany and Europe. This investigation sheds light on how the Mix Markt networks, as well as Russian-speaking businesses and communities, navigate and function within the expansive Eurasian context, bridging points of origin with those of destination and settlement.

Three distinct features set the Mix Markt chain apart from comparable supermarkets. Firstly, Mix Markt capitalizes on an East European framework to promote an array of diverse cultural elements by creating a marketing strategy of East European culinary fusion. In this context, Eastern Europe spans from Poland and Romania through Ukraine and Russia to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – encompassing the expansive scope of Eurasia. Sporadically, branding of the East European products is tested in the mainstream supermarket retailers such as Lidl, Aldi, Real, and alike. Yet, besides the product marketing, the Mix Markt creates the cultural, symbolic, and transnational space for its respective community on the ground linking to other comparable communities.

Secondly, the strategic placement of the stores mirrors the geographical and demographic distribution of former Soviet Union immigrants in both Germany and Western Europe. The prevalence of post-Soviet migration within Germany in the 1990s served as fertile ground for the emergence of this chain in the country. An interconnected pattern emerges between the distribution of Mix Markt outlets and the settlement dynamics of East-West migration of the fourth wave (Worbs et al. 2013, p. 101). Specifically, a clear correlation becomes evident when comparing the distributions of (late) ethnic resettlers from the FSU and other East European countries and the Mix Markt stores distribution in Germany. For those who are willing to join the network by opening a Mix Markt shop, it is necessary to choose a location with a late resettlers quota of approximately 8-11 percent in the area, as advertised on Mix Markt's official webpage (Mix Markt n.d.). This pattern extends to other EU countries with a high proportion of East-West European migration. Notably, the

[77] Part Three provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology employed, the methods used, field access, and sampling strategies that were utilized in conducting research on the entrepreneurial actions of the studied group, illustrated through the case of the Mix Markt supermarket chain.

largest concentration of Mix Markt stores beyond Germany is observed in Italy, Portugal, and Spain, owing to the substantial Ukrainian and Romanian communities present in Western Europe (Khanenko-Friesen 2017; Cvajner 2019; Eurostat 2011, p. 18).

Thirdly, while initially catering to the demands of the migrant market in the 1990s, the Mix Markt chain subsequently transitioned into the mixed market during the 2000s intending to enter the mainstream market from the 2010s onward. As of 2019, the Mix Markt supermarket, operated by the Monolith Group, holds the 26th position in the German food retail trade based on annual revenues (Lebensmittelzeitung 2019). For comparison, EDEKA, REWE Group, Schwarz Group (Lidl and Kaufland), and Aldi are positioned at the top of the rating with a combined 62% of the market share in Germany (Business Insider 2019).

Notably, the quality of Mix Markt shops and their marketing strategies exhibit significant variation on the ground, as do their connections to their respective communities – ranging from primarily appealing to FSU migrants or reaching out to other immigrants and gaining popularity among the autochthonous population. Data illustrates that a shop's attractiveness strongly depends on the owners' positioning and management. The history, as well as the structural organization of the Mix Markt chain (i.e., an integration of separated shops into a business network of support and supply), resembles established, well-known German chains like EDEKA and REWE originating from the first half of the last century. It is debatable whether they served as models, yet some of the Mix Markt owners claimed former ties to these retail businesses.

The extensive migration flow from the FSU of the 1990s resulted in numerous migrant businesses, some of which the FOUNDATION Column of Table 7 exemplifies. Some entrepreneurs started their retail businesses for the first time upon migration; others brought entrepreneurial experience with them since the transition from Soviet socialism to capitalism propelled many people into businesses in the post-Soviet space (Ageev et al. 1995).[78] Many of these businesspeople became entrepreneurs by necessity. In the late 1990s, a share of these businesses joined the Prima-Markt chain (CONSOLIDATION column) before being incorporated into the Mix Markt chain in the late 2000s (EXPANSION column). Listing all FSU immigrant-initiated businesses in Germany, especially the failed ones, is a nearly impossible task. Nevertheless, by examining the Mix Markt development, we gain an overview of mainly successful entrepreneurial activities. To illustrate the bottom-up nature of the Mix Markt project, it is worthwhile to reflect on the individual profiles of a few stores.

[78] Section 2.3, *From Planned to Market Economies*, provided an overview of the entrepreneurial landscape in the Soviet Union.

Table 7: Immigrant Entrepreneurs – From Corner Shops to a Supermarket Chain

FOUNDATION	CONSOLIDATION	EXPANSION
The 1990s – early 2000s	**1997 – 2004**	**2005 – ongoing**
Corner shops	**National supermarket chain**	**Transnational supermarket chain**
Kalinka, Rheinfelden Ozean, Idar Ivushka/ Viktoria, Aalen Moskva, Siegen OstKostMarkt, Rheine Wiwa, Friedrichshafen Continent, Düsseldorf Globus, Günzburg Swetlana, Wunsiedel Rusmarkt, Dresden AdamMarkt, Lüdenscheid Maxi-Kauf, Tauberbischofsheim Markt-Kant, Freiburg	1997 – Inauguration of the initial Mix Markt store prototype in Oerlinghausen In the late 1990: - Formation of the Monolith Group - Development of in-house production capabilities and establishment of wholesale and retail trade networks - Advancement of the Prima Markt supermarket chain	- Consolidated branding of store formats: Mix Markt and Mini Mix Markt - Comprehensive marketing concept of the East European culinary fusion - Expansion across Europe: Total of 295 stores in Germany and Europe (2020) - European domain: mixmarkt.**eu** - Prima Markt outlets: 22 in numbers - Undisclosed account of unsuccessful Mix Markt stores

Source: Own timetable based on the created dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU* (Table E-5 in Appendix E).

In the early 1990s, a family from Kazakhstan founded a retail shop named *Leningrad* in one of the mid-sized cities of North Rhine-Westphalia. As the name suggests, the shop positioned itself with an East European orientation. Despite being admitted under the policy for ethnic German resettlers, the family was composed of various cultural origins. Over time, the shop relied on the labor of the extensive familial network of three generations (field notes). From this perspective, the legal possibility that Aussiedler enjoyed, migrating with extended families to Germany, was noticeably an advantage. During the same period, another retail shop specializing in East European products, *Salut* was founded by a family from the Former Soviet Union 600 km to the south of the *Leningrad* shop, in a city in the state of Baden-Württemberg. At the time of the publication, eight out of nine shop employees belonged to the family (Siemens 2018a, p. 10). As in the case of *Leningrad*, family support involving different generations played a paramount role in the shop's development. These two unrelated shops underwent the first rebranding into the *Prima Markt* and, finally, in the 2010s the owners joined the Mix Markt chain. The *Salut* received a registration number with three digits suggesting that the chain had already incorporated over one hundred comparable shops across Germany.

The story of the prototype Prima and later Mix Markt shop also began in the 1990s and was initiated by FSU ethnic German resettlers. In the small town of Oerlinghausen in North Rhine-Westphalia,[79] approximately 600 km to the north of the Mix Markt *Salut* and 300 km from the Mix Markt *Leningrad*, a similar retail shop was established. The current owner reflected in an advertising interview:

> "*Initially, it was a small shop with retail space around 400 m². Back then, there were few regular staff. Time passed by, and its retail space increased to 1,000 m², with the regular staff also doubling*" (Siemens 2018b, p. 16).

Many shops from the sample have undergone similar growth patterns. When compared, parallels emerge among the owners' places of origin: These are businesspeople from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, or Ukraine admitted under the policy as ethnic German resettlers, statistically the largest group of East-West migration of the fourth wave (Figure E-1 in Appendix E). Nevertheless, other groups have been involved in the Mix Markt chain: people admitted as Jewish quota refugees (Kontingentflüchtlinge) or labor migrants.

Not only do the shop profiles resemble those of *Salut* or *Leningrad,* but their developments also follow a similar pattern: in the 2000s, they were integrated into the Mix Markt corporate structures under the Monolith group. Considering the incorporation processes, we must point out the crucial role of grassroots business networks of FSU entrepreneurs in Germany that served as a platform for a large enterprise such as the Monolith Group to emerge. In this business process, mixed forms of incorporation and ownership appeared; yet ownership still belongs to the initial entrepreneurs if they or their

[79] In 2018, Oerlinghausen had 17,286 residents, as reported by Destatis (2018b). The analysis shown that 11 percent of the Mix Markt stores in Germany are situated in cities with population ranging from 5,000 and 19,999 inhabitants (refer to Figure 21).

offspring managed to succeed. Initially, the Monolith Group offered a franchising model under the label Prima-Markt in 1997 (Table 7). The data suggests that the company has undergone corporate restructuring. Although in the 2015 advertisement, the Mix Markt chain was still presented as a franchise (Siemens 2015, p. 10), the data from the created dataset suggested the corporate transformation that includes different legal entities and companies. Some of them are in direct ownership, while others are in general partnership (*Beteiligungsmodell*, OHG), company with limited liability (GmbH, *Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung*), or registered merchandiser (e.K., Eingetragener Kaufmann).

In addition to incorporating dispersed shops, the Monolith Group owes its success to the establishment of factories that produce goods for wholesale trade in Germany. The company distributes these products to mainstream retailers or shops with East European orientation, while also expanding its retail presence within the Mix Markt network. Several store brands distinguish the merchandise in this chain. One of these factories, Pasta-Meat Products (Fleisch-Teigwaren), is owned by the Monolith Group and produces 'sausages and other meat-based products as pelmeni or varenyky according to East European recipes' (Monolith Group 2020). The Monolith official webpage claims to supply its products to an additional 1,200 independent stores across Germany. This number highlights the significant growth potential of the Mix Markt network.

With its own production in Germany, the Monolith business model can withstand the changing geopolitical climate in Eastern Europe, especially considering sanctions and trade embargos between the EU and Russia since 2014. In 2017, a top manager from Monolith discussed this subject in a newspaper interview titled *Baltika instead of Beck's* in the southwest German regional newspaper Schwäbische Zeitung: "Currently, the chain benefits from the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine. Approximately half of all products from the FSU are imported from Ukraine, which served as a granary even during the Soviet period" (Richter 2017, p. 8). On the other hand, Mix Markt stores commit to selling up to 60 percent of the goods produced or distributed by Monolith as a contractual condition of cooperation. To gain access to and deliver goods to the dispersed multiple East European shops across Germany, as shown above, the Monolith Group integrated some of them as Prima Markt and later rebranded them as Mix Markt (Table 7, the columns CONSOLIDATION and EXPANSION). A list of the existing Mix Markt shops is available on the official webpage (Mixmarkt.eu 2020) and can be tracked in the Official Company Register (Unternehmensregister 2020). The register of companies is a database composed of publicly available data about companies. In 2020, the official website listed 305 Mix Markt stores in Europe, including 179 in Germany (Mixmarkt.eu 2020). For the German sample, I was able to collect a detailed account of 165 Mix Markt stores.

The data available in the Official Company Register shed some light on a few unsuccessful Mix Markt stores, which are undisclosed on the official internet pages. Sometimes it was a matter of ownership transition, or a shop was closed, as, for instance, in the case of the Mix Markt store no. 173 in Mainz, opened in 2019 and shut down half a year later. In the unintentional sample of failed Mix Markt stores, I discovered 18 that were closed, transferred to another label, or changed official ownership. Indeed, a high

failure rate characterizes migrant and ethnic businesses. However, the Mix Markt development contradicts the assumption that ethnic markets are limited in growth since 'the obstacle to growth is the ethnic market itself,' or that 'the ethnic population is often too impoverished to generate buying power sufficient to fuel growth' (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990, pp. 115–116).

Besides, the export of the Mix Markt business model across the EU diversified the chain positioning in Europe. Whereas business (import) ties with the Baltic states, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Ukraine connect Mix Markt stores with places of origins of entrepreneurs and communities, creating transnational social spaces in ordinary cities. This export-import network across Europe and Asia highlights the global and transnational scale of the Mix Markt chain (Figure 25). Positioning on this scale became possible thanks to the collective agency of entrepreneurs, their families, and co-immigrants as employees, which the subject of the next section covers.

11.2 Family Ties and Co-immigrant Connections

When examining the Mix Markt chain at both the individual store and network levels, Andreas Wimmer's flexible ethnic boundary-making approach gains validity: "group formation on the ground … may well follow different principles than those of ethnic community-building" (Wimmer 2007, p. 28). Therefore, "the observers should beware of interpreting village or family networks as evidence of ethnic homophily" (idem, p. 31). As argued earlier, Wimmer's approach proves to be useful in understanding the diverse cultural backgrounds of FSU immigrants admitted under various ethnic policies in Germany.

The entrepreneurial efforts of Mix Markt businesspeople unify the diverse FSU population in Germany by addressing their identity formations and language pluralism,[80] specific needs related to food memories and culinary fusion in consumption, as well as their migration experiences and (post-)Soviet backgrounds. Instead of viewing them solely through the ethnic lens imposed by German admission policies, it becomes evident that co-migrant ties have played a significant role in their business ventures. Some entrepreneurs decided to join the Mix Markt chain based on invitations or examples set by other co-migrants, who were sometimes referred to as 'countrymen' [земляки]. Cultural affinity, shared multilingualism, a common past, comparable experiences, and efforts to succeed professionally in the German context have solidified the building of immigrant business communities, as exemplified by the Mix Markt.

In addition to relying on co-migrant ties, an in-depth examination of Mix Markt stores illustrates extensive family engagement in business making. The cases of the *Salut* and the *Leningrad* shops reflect the high levels of engagement from family members and co-migrants who work as employees. Family businesses often give rise to intricate family

[80] I reflect on language pluralism in the article *Multilingualism and Translanguaging in Migration Studies: Some Methodological Reflections* (Havlin 2022b).

dynamics, laden with potential conflicts. Furthermore, these dynamics can be influenced by factors such as who initiated migration to Germany, who can prove German origins for admission, and who is included or excluded from the decision-making process (Rosenthal 2005, p. 315). These conclusions were also evident in the specific case of the family dynamics within the Mix Markt store of Ycity. In the context of migration and family business, decision-making discrepancies, as described by Rosenthal, often overlapped with the blurred boundaries between family and business making.

Despite the complex family dynamics, some families consolidate ownership of multiple stores, often as GmbH entities, leading to the clustering of Mix Markt establishments. This clustering points to the emergence of a prosperous entrepreneurial class capable of accumulating resources and knowledge within a single family across generations. Howard E. Aldrich and Roger D. Waldinger emphasized the importance of family and co-migrant labor for many small migrant businesses:

> "Such labor is largely unpaid, and kin and co-ethnics work long hours in the service of their employers. Ethnic entrepreneurs manipulate family and co-ethnic perseverance and loyalty to their own advantage, but they also incur obligations in doing so" (1990, p. 130).

These family-business relations are characterized by a high degree of reciprocity and mutual responsibility. However, it is worth noting that the authors primarily described the reality in the United States. When considering the German business landscape in general, it is often family-owned. Authors of the book *Family Businesses – Obsolete Model or Success Type? Familienunternehmen – Auslaufmodell oder Erfolgstyp?* (Wimmer et al. 2018) highlight that family businesses continue to be the dominant form of enterprise in the economic system, reflecting the specific entrepreneurial culture in Germany.

In addition to being employers in the local labor markets and hiring a higher percentage of individuals with foreign or international family backgrounds (as family members or co-migrants), local Mix Markt entrepreneurs are encouraged to participate in or support social initiatives aimed at benefiting the community, such as sports associations and cultural events. One of the examples of such a connection between popular culture and Mix Markt's involvement is their partial sponsorship of the YouTube series *The Ost Boys*. Beyond meeting the consumption needs and promoting East European culinary fusion, Mix Markt entrepreneurs offer a wide range of other official and informal services. These include shopping delivery, travel agency services, bakeries, bistros, restaurants, butchers, the retail of cultural, jewelry, and textile goods, construction firms, service providers in catering, elderly care, and cleaning, as well as party services (based on the created dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU*). Apart from offering these services, what actions and strategies enable the Mix Markt supermarket chain to appeal to its customers and thrive in the highly competitive food sector in Germany?

Chapter 12: Nourishing Community and Culinary Memories through Consumption

On the Monolith Group's production factory webpage, the first lines that greet visitors state, "In Germany, more than 12 million residents originate from Eastern Europe and the

CIS countries, making them a significant target group" (Monolith Group 2020). As indicated, Mix Markt's primary target group consists of immigrants from Eastern Europe and successor states of the USSR. This assertion aligns with my fieldwork observations and interviews conducted with owners, as reported in the *Resettler's Messenger* (Zeitung Aussiedlerbote 2014-2020). A standardized farewell message in the stores' bids, *Thank you for your purchase!* in five languages: German, Russian, Polish, Romanian, and Turkish (Figure E-3 in Appendix E). These languages are presumably reflective of the Mix Markt's linguistic target groups. However, an interview with one of the Monolith CEOs reveals that the top five bestsellers of the Mix Markt chain in Germany are sunflower seeds, Moscow chocolate, black tea, buckwheat, and vodka (Richter 2017, p. 8). These preferences provide insight into the consumer inclinations of Mix Markt clientele, suggesting that the supermarket chain primarily targets Russian-speaking immigrants. This assumption correlates with the conclusions drawn by René Leicht and Lena Werner who found that FSU immigrant businesses in Mannheim rely more on co-migrant consumers (up to 40 percent) and benefit more from the place of origin compared to Turkish, Italian, and Polish immigrant businesses (2013, p. 226).

While studying Russian-speaking communities in Germany, the USA, and Israel, Ludmila Isurin identified several features that contribute to the cohesion of Russian speakers as a group: shared memories, a common cultural background, including the Russian language, the 'need to pass culture and language on to the children,' shared mentality, and a generational factor (middle-aged and older) (Isurin 2011, p. 97). Association with this community can also be triggered by the need to create a comfort zone, a feeling of home, which is reproduced through people communicating in similar languages and sharing daily experiences (Havlin 2022b, [17]).

Interesting parallels can be drawn between Russian-speaking communities of German descent in Germany and those in Russia. Concha Höfler's contribution reveals that individuals in Russia who speak the German language and follow seemingly German cultural practices or culinary traditions build a profile of Germanness before immigrating to Germany from the post-Soviet space (Höfler 2024). In turn, upon migrating to Germany, some admitted as ethnic German resettlers embrace their cultural diversity while navigating Russian-speaking networks and consuming East European cultural fusion, as exemplified by Mix Markt. These parallels in pre- and post-migratory experiences illustrate the fluidity of cultural identities and attempts to fill gaps based on contextual necessity. The establishment of specialized shops is one way to consolidate a community by focusing on their tastes and needs. Furthermore, it can be assumed that Mix Markt stores do not create but rather connect the East European or Russian-speaking communities serving as a meeting point and a cultural reference. Simultaneously, the East European fusion appeals to other clientele who are accustomed to a cuisine heavily based on meat, fish, vegetables, and cereals. Therefore, we need to examine the Mix Markt culinary concept, which the chain exploits to win customers.

12.1 The East European Culinary Fusion

Within Mix Markt's product range, approximately 5,000 variants are produced in Germany, while others are imported from Eastern Europe and other former Soviet Union (FSU) countries. Through these products and marketing strategies, Mix Markt stores craft an East European culinary fusion. Three features characterize this fusion: First, it encompasses *culinary diversity,* a concept initially promoted through the camaraderie among nations in the Soviet era (as one of the brands aptly suggests, *The USSR Cuisine,* Figure 18). Mix Markt offers recipe suggestions, video tutorials, and cookbooks for various culinary tastes, including Georgian, Jewish, Polish, Russian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, and more (Mix Markt 2020).[81]

The second distinguishing aspect of Mix Markt's culinary mashup is its connection to food memory and childhood. One related advertisement vividly illustrates how this childhood differs from the well-off childhood. In this ad, a child is portrayed in a simple setting: a wooden window frame, a brick wall, and a warm brown blanket draped over the shoulders (Mix Markt 2018). This depiction evokes a sense of nostalgia, reminiscent of a childhood marked not by prosperity, but by necessity, which naturally appeals more to the older generation as in Figure 17. As one of the articles dedicated to Mix Markt aptly contrasts: "The childhood of the former Soviet Union does not taste of Milka, but rather of Alënka"[82] (Richter 2017, p. 8). Some Soviet-era products, once elusive, are now readily available on Mix Markt shelves. Whether this provides a sense of social advancement from an individual perspective remains a matter of speculation.

Third, Mix Markt's flexible culinary mashup intertwines with Soviet or retro nostalgia by offering goods such as Kiev cake, Plombir [Пломбир] ice cream, Sgushënka [сгущенка] condensed milk, Alënca [Алёнка] chocolate, Zhigulevskoe [Жигулевское] beer, and Sovetskoe [Советское] champagne. These products bear witness to the Soviet period and replicate its visual aesthetics. However, products branded as USSR Cuisine [Кухня СССР] or Soviet Standard [Советский стандарт], available in Germany, merely mimic the Soviet imaginary. This type of consumerist nostalgia is not an isolated example: Ostalgie in Eastern Germany or Yugo-nostalgia in Southern Europe are comparable phenomena (Banchelli 2008; Lindstrom 2005). In this respect, Anna Maria Tomczak pointed out that ethnic food or a culinary mashup "is often treated as the very epitome of cultural memory, with its material, symbolic, and functional aspects co-existing to create a memory site" (Tomczak 2017, p. 229).

[81] Figure E-4 in Appendix E provides further examples.

[82] Original: „*Die Kindheit in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion schmeckt eben nicht nach Milka, sondern nach Alënka*" *Alënka* is an iconic chocolate bar from the Soviet era.

Figure 17: A Culinary Memory – Steinhauer's Advertisement of Ring-Shaped Cracknels and Biscuits



Source: Mix Markt 2018, p. 11

The image serves as an advertisement for Russian prjaniki (Russian-style cookies) and sushki (ring-shaped cracknels), emblematic for the East European image. These treats are traditionally enjoyed with tea, evident in the depiction of a samovar, symbolizing the traditional tea ceremony, on the packaging. The tea-drinking tradition bears a resemblance to the German custom of Kaffee und Kuchen (coffee and cake). Notably, these advertised products are manufactured by Streinhauer, a German-based firm associated with one of the founders of the Monolith Group, which oversees the Mix Markt supermarket chain.

This pluralistic culinary fusion or mashup[83] appeals to consumers on various levels. On an individual level, food can function as a channel for socialization through certain taste palates and cuisine, reconnecting individuals with their past, traditions, childhood memories, and a sense of social belonging (Alibhai-Brown 2008). On a collective level, food and related rituals can be seen as expressions of cultural group identity or social identity, as noted by Julia Kristeva (2002, p. 100). Through food, social identity can convey a unique history, lifestyle, values, and beliefs. Simultaneously, interethnic mingling and borrowing serve as a practical manifestation of lived (culinary) cultural pluralism (Gabaccia 2000, p. 161).

In this respect, an awareness of cultural culinary affinity serves as an advantage for immigrant entrepreneurs: "Servicing these special ethnic consumer needs involves a direct connection with the immigrants' homeland and knowledge of tastes and buying preferences – qualities unlikely to be shared by larger, native-owned competitors" (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990, p. 115). For comparison, in Section 13.2, I will present the practical applications of cultural pluralism in the field of leisure and cultural consumption.

Are there any further attempts to secure a clientele from outside of the co-migrant communities? To answer this question, I would like to share some students' observations based on their fieldwork in selected Mix Markt stores.[84] One student from Germany initially expressed surprise, stating, "*It is a supermarket chain. One can compare it to other famous chains like Aldi or Lidl*" (from the field observations 2016). Another visiting student from Pakistan noted after interviewing one of the Mix Markt owners in 2018, "*I realized that this is not just a Markt for Russians but for Central Asians, Pakistanis, Afghani, and Africans as well."* Furthermore, a German student who conducted an interview alongside the previous student mentioned, "[The owner] *stresses that he wants to address a broad group of people, for example, Muslims by choosing a halal meat range*."

Another visiting student from Nigeria pointed out: "*They also have specific products for Africans like Cassava, which also attracts Africans, making the shop multicultural."* However, only one visiting student from Russia shared her sentimental thoughts after her fieldwork at Mix Markt: "*It brought me a lot of nostalgic feelings, seeing sweets and pastries, encouraging me to bake pancakes later and eat them with Sgushënka* [condensed milk]." The last observation illustrates how the memory of food can trigger actions, such as baking pancakes and enjoying them with a specific topping. The mosaic of observations from students with different cultural and geographical backgrounds illustrates the flexibility of Mix Markt's marketing concept in appealing to and attracting a diverse range of groups. However, it primarily targets a specific population with East European and post-Soviet migrant backgrounds (Figure 18). These features contribute to the transnational range, sociocultural and economic appeal of the Mix Markt supermarket chain, which will be discussed next in the context of collective agency and entrepreneurial actions of the studied group.

[83] More on culinary mashups and cultural fusions in Irina Perianova's *Book A Mashup World: Hybrids, Crossovers and Post-Reality* (2019, pp. 18–22).

[84] Regarding the students' contribution to this section, refer to the footnote 27 in Part Three.

Figure 18: Selections from the Mix Markt Assortment – Retro or Soviet Nostalgia?

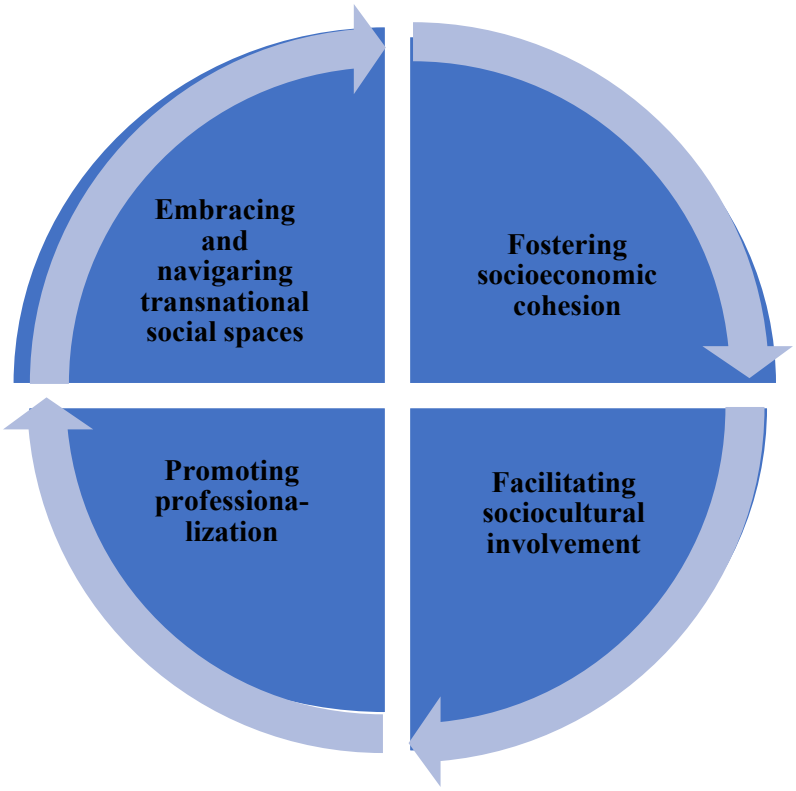


Source: Author's analysis of the Mix Markt product variety (Mixmarkt.eu 2020).

12.2 Entrepreneurial Actions

The final query to address in this Part pertains to how the Mix Markt phenomenon arises from the collective agency of FSU immigrants from the perspective of social actions. To explore this question, I delve into the economic, sociocultural, professional, and transnational actions undertaken by entrepreneurs in their respective locations and communities as Figure 19 depicts.

Figure 19: Purpose-Driven Entrepreneurial Actions

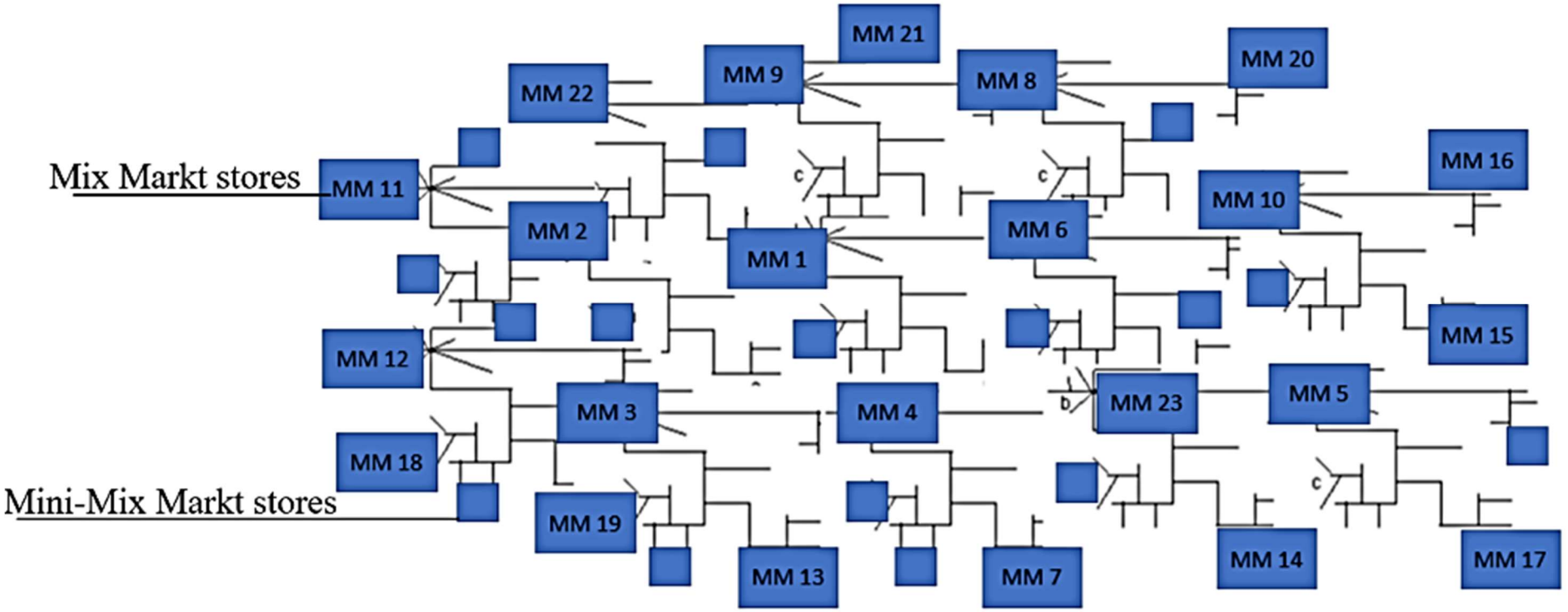


Source: Own depiction based on the data analysis

Fostering Socioeconomic Cohesion

In economic terms, the consolidation of individual small retail stores with an East European orientation across Germany has resulted in the creation of a robust support network, exemplified by the Mix Markt supermarket chain, as discussed earlier. Such an alliance of retail businesses has offered clear advantages for both the founders of the Mix Markt chain and the entrepreneurs who have joined and managed to thrive within the network. Actor-Network-Theory allows for the depiction of ties and connections within the Mix Markt network as Figure 20 illustrates. On the one hand, such networks 'can reduce the economic risks related to the creation of a new business, thus rendering the decision to become self-employed more attractive from a risk diversification perspective' (Volery 2007, p. 38). On the other hand, the relatively low barriers of entry into markets where migrant entrepreneurs operate play a significant role. These barriers involve factors such as required capital, educational qualifications, small-scale production, high labor intensity, low added value and intense competition (idem, p. 31).

Figure 20: Unveiling the Mix Markt Store Network Segment

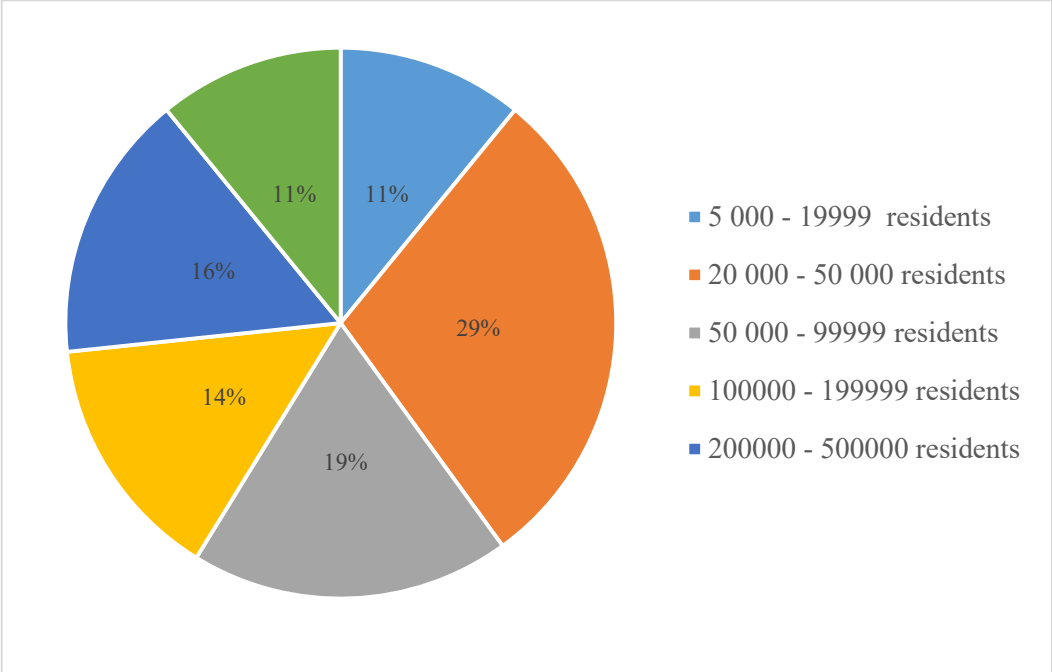


Source: Own diagram.

Note: Figure 20 presents a partial hypothetical estimate derived from the theoretical principles of ANT and the created Dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU* (Table E-5 in Appendix E). It depicts a fragment, not the entire set of 165 stores in the German sample.

Mix Markt as a support network with established production, logistics, branding, and expertise allowed small retail businesses to survive and thrive in small and mid-sized cities. Nearly half of the Mix Markt stores (48 percent) are in cities with 20,000 to 99,999 residents, whereas 74 percent of the shops are in small towns, and small and mid-sized cities (Figure 21).

Figure 21: The Mix Markt Urban Distribution in Germany, 2020 (N=165)

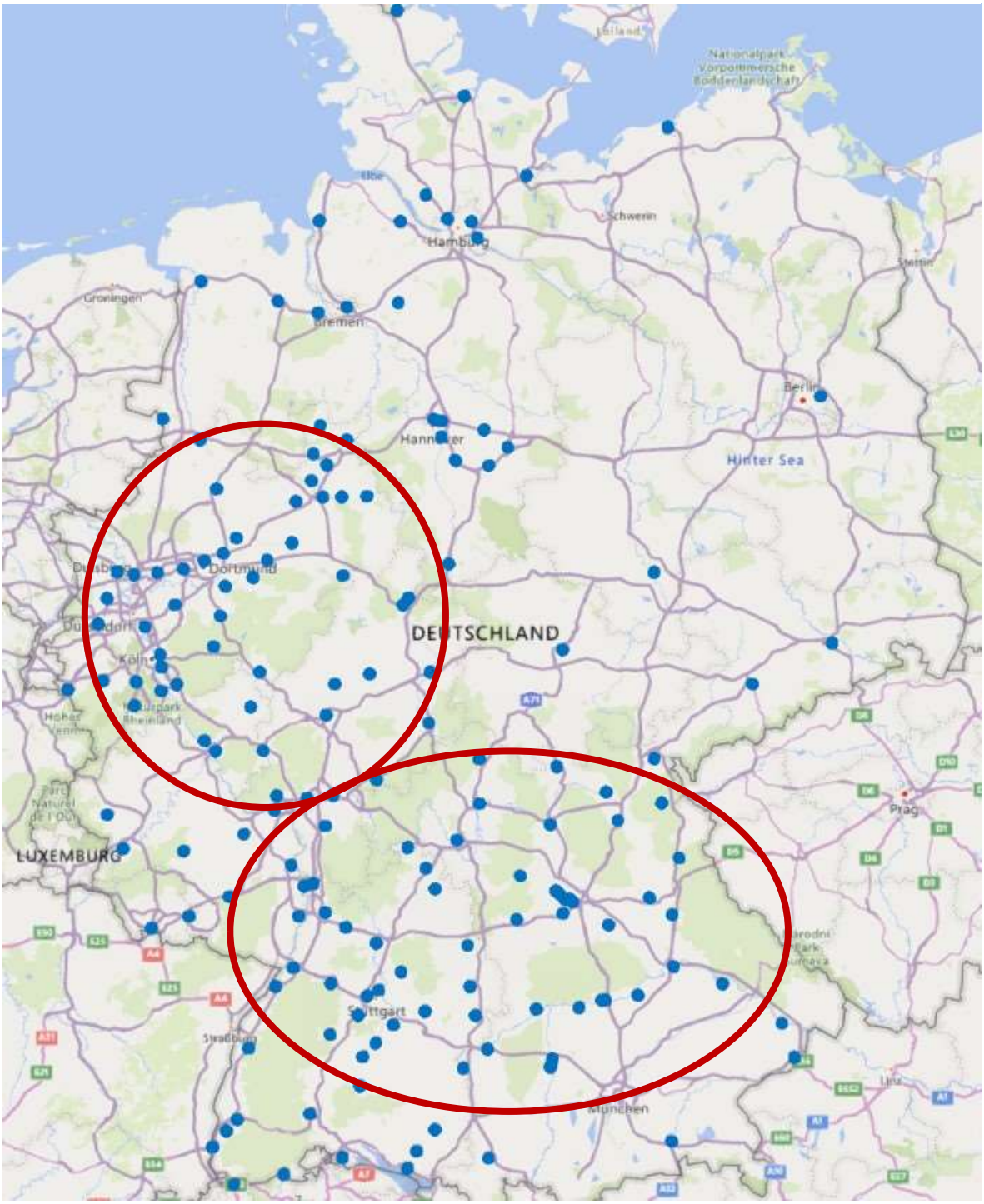


Source: Own calculations using the Dataset and data from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, which includes information on Germany's population and urbanization degree (Destatis 2011c, 2018b).

To some extent, following the Mix Markt network provides an X-ray of migrant businesses and FSU communities in these city types. Specifically, the Mix Markt owners from these cities acknowledged the difficulties of running businesses with solely their efforts (from interviews in Zeitung Aussiedlerbote 2014-2020). Perhaps, failed individual efforts explain the Mix Markt stores' median age of seven years, whereas a store life span ranges between 0.5 to 23 years (Figure 23). How can we explain such a median age? First, ownership transition requires a new entry in the company registry as in cases of bankruptcy or inheritance. Second, access to the immigrant entrepreneurial pool increases the network revival capacity to continue with Mix Markt businesses with assistance in marketing, legal counseling, and accounting from the Monolith Group, an umbrella organization. Besides, prompt access to the co-migrant pool fosters the hiring of co-migrants. Thus, Mix Markt stores may provide employment opportunities to those who have problems entering the local labor market due to language problems, formal qualifications, or a struggle to overcome high entry barriers (valid also for family members running retail businesses). This is especially important in the cities in this study. Finally, the advantages of having an established production facility in Germany have been

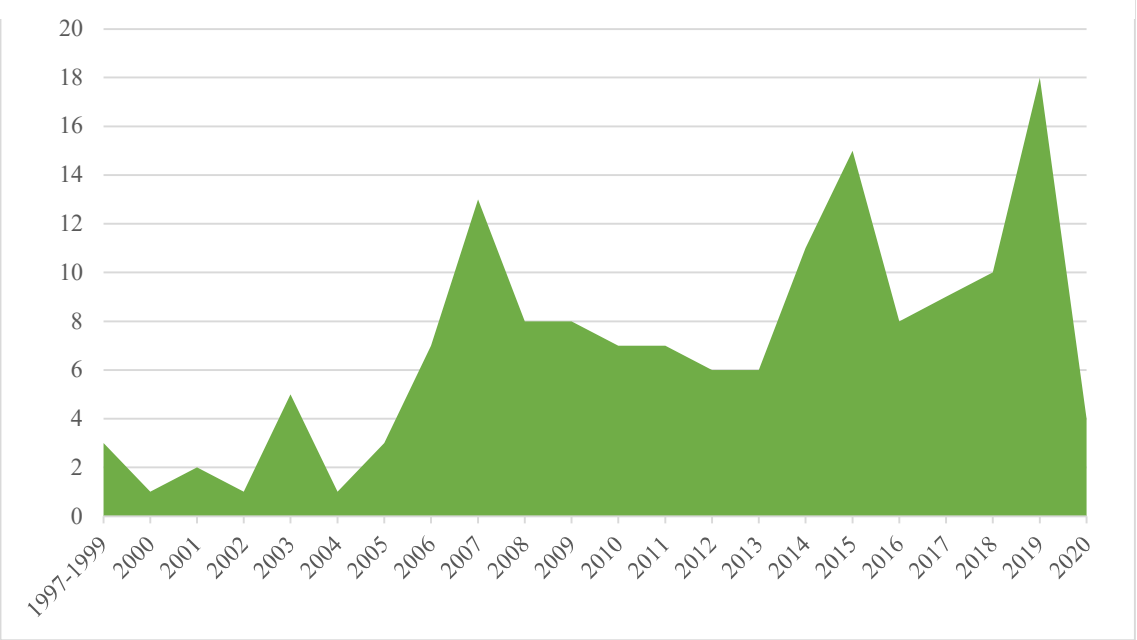
described earlier. Additionally, there are trade agreements with other countries related to immigrants' backgrounds from where specific goods are imported and distributed further.

Figure 22: The Mix Markt Regional Distribution in Germany, 2020 (N=165)



Source: Diagram created from the Dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU.*

Figure 23: Mix Markt Openings and Reopenings in Germany by Year (N=153)



Source: Own calculations based on the Dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU*

Facilitating Sociocultural Involvement

Facilitating sociocultural involvement comprises a series of actions that reflect the underlying reasons for the establishment of the East European supermarket chain. The development of Mix Markt highlights the importance and potential of promoting East European culinary fusion that appeals to a broad audience, including those with migrant or foreign backgrounds. As the company estimates there are approximately 12 million German residents who could be potential customers.

Mix Markt's marketing strategies emphasize the role of multilingualism, flexible representations, and knowledge of cultural contexts in positioning stores in different localized markets. Cultural and linguistic pluralism allows Mix Markt stores to serve the consumer needs of diversified local communities, yet Russian-speaking communities build the core of the entrepreneurial pool and clients. For instance, Mix Markt job advertisements, usually published in German, often specify an additional requirement for language proficiency in Russian, Polish, or Romanian. Apart from serving consumer needs, migrant entrepreneurs appeal to their respective communities via the engagement and support of social, athletic, cultural, or other local associations.

Established primarily by FSU immigrants from the 1990 wave, the Mix Markt evokes childhood and youth memories, aesthetics, products, and cuisine that resonates with different generations, as depicted in Figure 18. While the first generation finds Mix Markt more relevant, the active involvement of the second generation highlights intergenerational connections, as some inherit family businesses, and others become customers themselves. This intergenerational continuity is exemplified by the Ost Boys,

who represent the second generation and embrace Mix Markt. Some representatives of the second generation who receive professional training in Germany decide to start a Mix Markt business, as an example of the following businessman demonstrated in his 2009 German and his 2020 Russian interviews (Panorama 2009; Siemens 2020). In this specific case, the way to his business was through an internship at Monolith during his studies, writing the thesis *Business Plan to Open a Branch of the Supermarket in Salzgitter*, further employment in one of the chain stores, and later taking over the Mix Markt store No. 10 in Rastatt. This start-up required family support: the owner reported that in total seven family members worked in the shop. The second generation appears more professionalized and better equipped for business-making in the competitive German and European retail environment, redirecting to the promotion of professionalization addressed next.

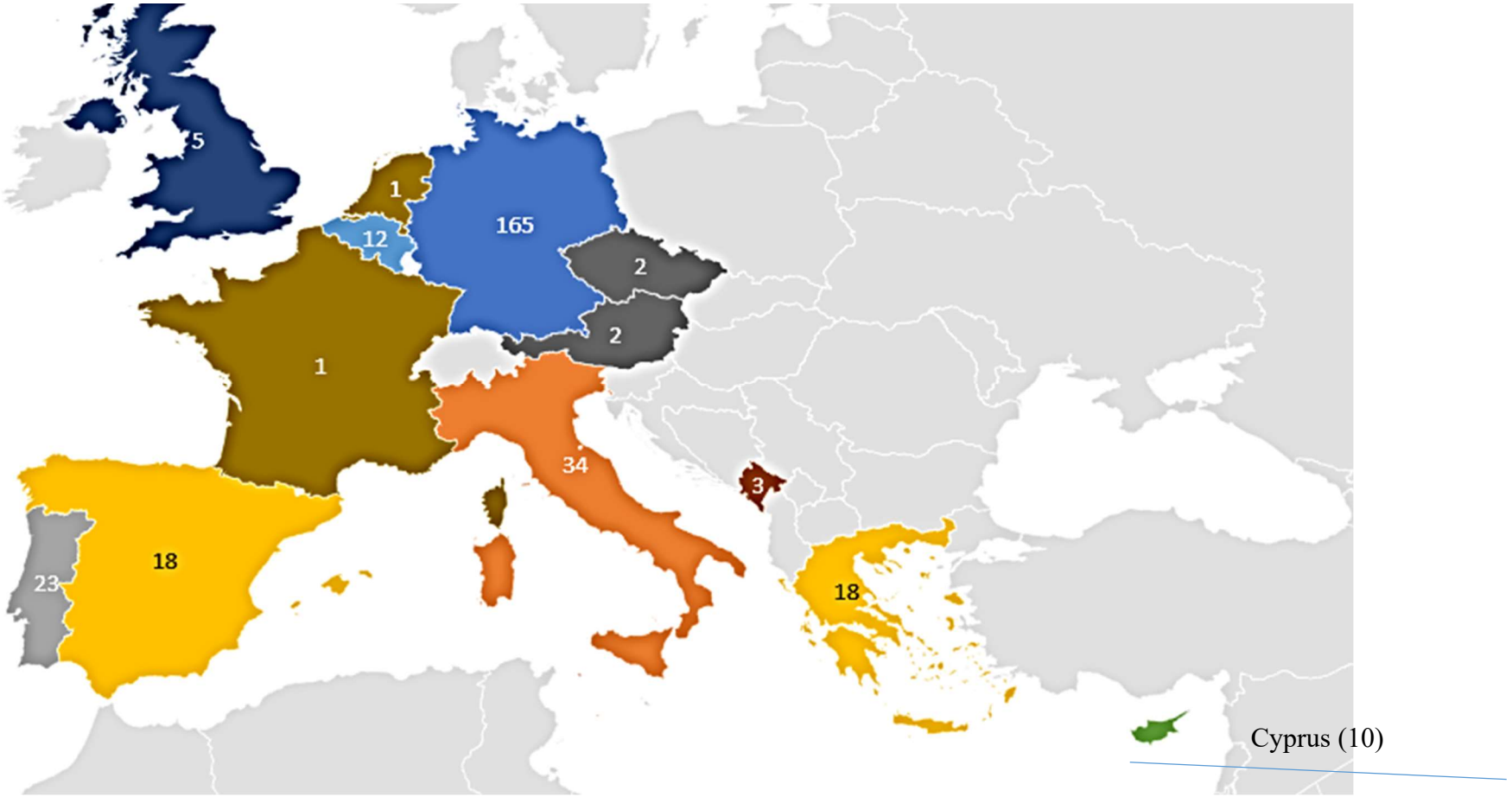
Promoting Professionalization

The Mix Markt supermarket chain undergoes professionalization as it expands (Table 7: *Immigrant Entrepreneurs – From Corner Shops to a Supermarket Chain*). As an umbrella organization, the Monolith Group positions itself as a provider of necessary services and expertise to local entrepreneurs in the fields of marketing, accounting, legal, technical, and other support. Late supermarket developments strongly rely on analytics for the Mix Markt expansions using statistical analysis, prognosis, and following immigrants' networks with comparable tastes and culinary inclinations across Europe. The Mix Markt chain drifts from a grassroots business initiative as they were in the 1990s, into professionalized retailers by strategic market expansion.

Professionalization is enhanced from the outside by the Mix Markt appeal to professionals who have insights into the German entrepreneurial landscape. The Mix Markt network also attracts those immigrants who have been employed in the mainstream labor market and then decided to start their businesses with the chain. Some of these businesspeople were previously employed for a long period in large retail companies, others report quitting their (apparently) successful careers elsewhere to start their own business in the Mix Markt retail world. The mainstream businesses (especially in retail) have high entry barriers. Markets occupied by migrant entrepreneurs in turn, 'are typically characterized by lower barriers of entry in terms of required capital and educational qualifications, small-scale production, high labor-intensity and low added value, while cutthroat competition reigns' (Volery 2007, p. 31) This may result in 'the emergence of a large number of start-ups and, in turn, a high rate of failure' (ibid). As noted earlier, the failure rate is undisclosed; there are indirect indicators outlining the problem. Yet, as discussed before, an extensive co-migrant entrepreneurial pool and involvement of the second generation of migrants secure the resilience and durability of the chain.

Expertise in expansion, application of analytics for market expansion, attracting professionals, and adjusting entry barriers for co-migrant entrepreneurs characterize the promotion of professionalization of Mix Markt.

Figure 24: The Mix Markt Regional Distribution in Europe, 2020 (N=294)



Source: Diagram created from the Dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU.*

Embracing and Navigating Mundane Transnational Social Spaces

A transnational element is evident in the concentration of a significant number of businesses that have expanded the Mix Markt network and diversified its services and product offerings. Furthermore, due to its positive reception within communities, this business model has been exported to other similar socioeconomic contexts, as demonstrated by the presence of Mix Markt stores in Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, and more, as shown in Figure 24. A preliminary analysis of Mix Markt entrepreneurs in Italy, Portugal, and Belgium reveals a similar pattern to that observed in Germany: shops with East European profile have transformed into or joined the Mix Markt supermarket chain, with owners originating from or culturally affiliated with Eastern Europe.

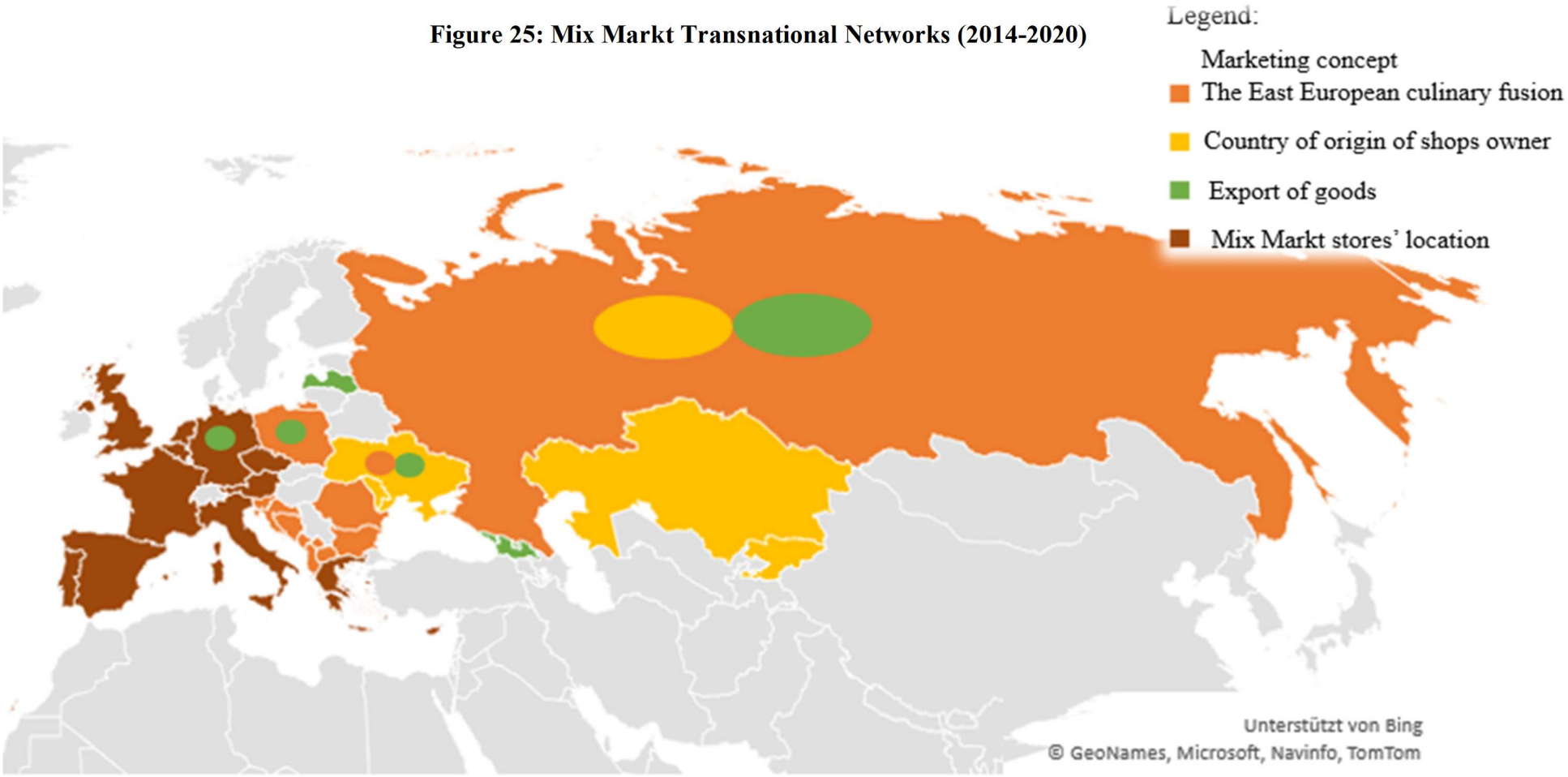
Tracking Mix Markt networks allows us to chart extensive transnational social spaces that connect diverse geographic locations and urban areas. These spaces encompass regions of origin in Eastern Europe and Asia, regions of settlement in Germany and other EU countries, export regions, and a branded culinary fusion as in Figure 25. These transnational social spaces belong to the everyday routine, involving shopping for specific products, meal preparation, and meal rituals, thereby connecting local entrepreneurs with their communities through consumer practices and cultural affiliations.

Small ethnic/ immigrant shops specializing in East European cuisine are not a new concept. The East-West migration of the 1990s and the early 2000s led to an increase in the number of individuals representing various, including immigrants and naturalized citizens with East European affiliations arriving from the post-Soviet area. This critical mass played a crucial role in the emergence of the Mix Markt business model that has proven to be sustainable not only in Germany but also exportable across Europe.

The regional distribution of Mix Markt stores in Germany reveals two distinct clusters: the Mid-West and the South-West (refer to *Figure 22: The Mix Markt Regional Distribution in Germany, 2020* (N=165). As previously noted, this distribution correlates with the residual locations of people admitted under the policy of ethnic German resettlers (Figure 4, Chapter 1). Furthermore, another Mix Markt cluster is situated along borders, catering to the needs of cross-border communities. This cluster extends along Germany's northwestern borders and even reaches internationally along the Italian French border, considering Mix Markt's international presence.

The Mix Markt supermarket chain serves as an example of an emerging phenomenon where consolidated immigrant-owned businesses, often family-based, evolve into a transnational and competitive business network. This network is characterized by a resilient business model and the promotion of an East European culinary fusion that can be exported across borders. Tracking Mix Markt networks enables the mapping of extensive transnational social spaces that connect regions of origin, settlement, and export, fostering cultural connections through consumer practices and affiliations.

Figure 25: Mix Markt Transnational Networks (2014-2020)



Source: Diagram created from the Dataset *Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU.*

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This Part *Entrepreneurial Endeavors – From Small Ventures to Transnational Networks* provided a comprehensive understanding of the Mix Markt phenomenon, showcasing its deep integration into Russian-speaking and East European immigrant communities, family dynamics, and cultural memories. It demonstrated how (Russian-speaking) immigrants and naturalized Germans from the post-Soviet space have established extensive business networks spanning across Germany and the EU. These networks extend their entrepreneurial, social, and cultural ties across Europe and Asia through a well-developed import-export network. The Mix-Market phenomenon capitalizes on the culinary diversity and cultural pluralism within East European, post-Soviet, and Russian-speaking communities in Germany and Western Europe.

By employing a transnational methodology and the flexible ethnic boundary-making approach, I moved beyond methodological nationalism and denaturalize ethnicity (and, by the same token, nationality) as the primary drivers of community building within nation-states. Within the Mix Markt context, these categories emerged prominently in the form of East European culinary fusion, multilingualism, and flexible cultural marketing strategies that resonate with post-Soviet, Russian-speaking, and East European immigrants. Given this broad spectrum of cultural identities and affiliations, we may refer to Russian-speaking or East European communities that the Mix Markt supermarket chain caters to and, to some extent, unifies.

The Mix Markt chain embodies a remarkable success story within the context of migration and settlement for the studied group. It represents the culmination of grassroots businesses uniting to form a cohesive East European supermarket. Furthermore, the Mix Markt phenomenon serves as an exceptional illustration of the simultaneity hypothesis, exemplifying an integration-oriented and transnationally situated entity. Amidst its trials and triumphs, this narrative underscores collective agency driven by social actions that foster socioeconomic cohesion, facilitate sociocultural involvement spanning generations, promote professionalization and growth, and adeptly navigate transnational social spaces. This story chronicles the transformation of scattered community-based migrant shops into a robust transnational business network spanning Eurasia. The East-West migration to Germany since the 1990s has been a driving force behind this entrepreneurial endeavor, and the collective agency of FSU immigrants serves as a testament to the multifaceted actions that are essential for establishing and sustaining the Mix Markt.

The upcoming Part is dedicated to exploring leisure and free time activities, particularly artistic leisure pursuits, that engage Russian-speaking immigrants. The immigrant agency in the realm of leisure and free time demonstrates a unique connection with the local community and contributes to its cultural enrichment distinctly compared to the impact of immigrant businesses.

PART SEVEN
Unveiling Cultural Auto-Exoticism and Dynamic Transformations: A Study of Serious Leisure

> "… it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history - subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement - that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking… the affective experience of social marginality … transforms our critical strategies. It forces us to confront the concept of culture outside objects d'art or beyond the canonization of the 'idea' of aesthetics, to engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival. Culture reaches out to create a symbolic textuality, to give the alienating everyday an aura of selfhood, a promise of pleasure"
> (Bhabha 2007 [1994], pp. 246–247).

"*Flamboyant: The performance of Kazakh belly dancer L. Bardo on Saturday…*" "*The dance ensemble Scheherazade from Uzbekistan showcasing its Spanish-oriental dances...*" "*The dance troupe Scheheresada made a dazzling entrance in their flamboyant costumes…*" "*Is it possible to have some borscht? Liza Bardo presents Russian-German cuisine at the conference...*"[85] These are some captions from local newspapers reporting on community appearances of the Scheherazade dance group between 2009 and 2014. They were described as being from Kazakhstan on one occasion, from Uzbekistan another time, and once they presented Russian-German cuisine at an event organized by ethnic German resettlers.

[85] In the original titles in their original languages and as printed: „Farbenprächtig: der Auftritt der kasachischen Bauchtänzerin Liza Bardo am Samstag…" (Kruse 2009); „Die Tanzgruppe Scheherazade aus Usbekistan mit ihren spanisch-orientalischen Tänzen…" (krh 2012); „Die Tanzgruppe Scheheresada trat in farbenprächtigen Kostümen…" ([N/A] 2014); „Darf's etwas Borschtsch sein? Liza Bardo [anonimized] serviert bei der Tagung russland-deutsche Speisen…" (Sudermann 2014). These extracts are depicted in Appendix F, Figures F-20 – F-23).

This ensemble, known for their captivating performances of Spanish-oriental and belly dances, appears to be skilled in the art of cultural transformation and disguise. Adding an extra layer of intrigue, the cultural association Scheherazade is comprised of German citizens, each with diverse backgrounds and cultural affinities. The name *Scheherazade* is drawn from the renowned collection of Middle Eastern and Indian folk tales known as *One Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Nights* (Alf laylah wa Laylah), which gained popularity in the European context during the 18th century. Scheherazade, a female character celebrated for her intelligence and wisdom, is known for her efforts to save lives by recounting tales to the ruler Shahryār tales for 1001 nights (Britannica 2020). Her weapon was her unparalleled storytelling abilities, which transported listeners into 'a myriad of worlds' (Shaykh 2011, pp. 10–11).

In Part Seven, we delve into the world of the Scheherazade dance group, founded by long-standing German citizens of FSU immigrant backgrounds. One of the central inquiries here revolves around the question: How do Scheherazade's performances transport the audience into a 'myriad of cultural worlds' through their social actions? Building on the extensive exploration of social action in entrepreneurship in Part Six, I examine the concept's role in shaping leisure culture-related activities in the context of immigrant agency. I emphasize the dynamic nature of social action, its adaptability in response to evolving cultural contexts, and the indispensable role of reflexivity in the decision-making processes of migrants navigating the intricate challenges of migration and settlement.

The opening Chapter traces the group's developmental journey, offers insights into methodological adaptations, and conducts an in-depth analysis of dance as a practice deeply embedded within the sociocultural fabric. Chapter 14 closely examines the actions that bolster the group's cohesion and facilitate the integration of its members into the broader community. Chapter 15 delves into Scheherazade's active involvement in their local community and explores their interactions with support networks. Throughout this part, I consistently refer to the members' identity formations and strategies of cultural pluralism. Insights from earlier sections, such as language use and identity frameworks, are applied to enhance an understanding of the group's dynamics in the context they navigate. Individual interviews with select members further enrich our analysis. This multifaceted approach that combines social actions, identity formation/frameworks, and language use ultimately sheds light on the collective agency of immigrant leisure time – an essential aspect of their agency outside work and family life, as highlighted by Erving Goffman (2009 [1967], p. 194).

Chapter 13: Scheherazade, an Immigrant Dancing Group

Scheherazade, an immigrant dance group based in Xcity, was founded by two women, Lisa and Diara, who originally immigrated to Germany from Kazakhstan during the 1990s. Lisa, along with her extensive extended family, was admitted as an ethnic German resettler, while Diara, who identifies with Russian ethnicity, relocated with her husband and his extended family, all of whom were admitted under the resettler policy. The group

also included three other women who were regular participants and an additional seven women who participated sporadically, representing diverse ethnic backgrounds, including native-born Germans, Ghanaians, and Moldavians. From a German perspective, cultural associations like Scheherazade are not uncommon, as there are approximately 6,000 registered cultural associations in Germany dedicated to music, dance, and theater, comprising 36 percent of the total (DAKU 2020).

Many groups, whether they consist of autochthonous or migrant populations, or diverse communities, form such associations (registered or not) to organize their leisure time. Registered associations, known as eingetragener Verein or e.V., are a well-researched phenomenon in the German-speaking context (BDVV; Rauer 2004). People come together in these groups based on their worldviews, interests, educational backgrounds, or shared hobbies to collectively pursue their political, social, artistic, and sporting interests (Priemer et al. 2017). Indeed, these types of organizations are an expected feature within the civil society of any democratic country. Despite a certain decline, the formation of associations has been a longstanding tradition in Germany (Nipperdey 1976). Some representatives of minority and immigrant groups adopt the organizational patterns of the indigenous population and establish registered associations. By doing so, they become visible public participants in the dialogue between citizens, minority groups, and the state. They initiate projects, secure funding, and contribute to peaceful coexistence, as discussed elsewhere (Havlin 2019b). It is more challenging to document those associations or interest groups that are not registered but actively involved in their respective communities, as is the case with the Scheherazade dance group.

Belly Dance in the German Context:

When the future members of Scheherazade migrated in the 1990s, there was still a significant interest in belly dancing among the German public. This interest had its roots in the aftermath of the 1970s feminist movement (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, pp. 11–16). It manifested through various courses and training programs offered by community centers, as well as numerous dance formations and their performances. Rediscovered during the second wave of feminism and later embraced by the body-positive movement, belly dance became associated with body positivity, spirituality, and sexual liberation. Advocates popularized this folkloric dance style through their courses and publications (Karkutli 1983, 1989; Buonaventura 1998).[86]

The establishment of the Scheherazade dance group, with its focus on belly dance, can be seen as a legacy of *the Oriental fascination* of the early 2010s. This occurred within the local context of Xcity, where other similar Orient-focused groups had already existed. In

[86] The book *Bauchtanz. Die Schlange und die Sphinx* [Belly Dance. The Snake and the Sphinx] by Wendy Buonaventura (1998) was a gift from Liza Bardo. Liza not only introduced me to the group but also ensured that I felt warmly welcomed during my fieldwork. Her generosity and kindness extended far beyond this gesture, and I am deeply grateful for the knowledge, understanding, and connections I gained through her support.

the case of Scheherazade, the Oriental fascination represented a blend of German (West European) and post-Soviet influences. The Soviet version of orientalism was transmitted by Diara, who had received training in choreography at the state artistic college in Karaganda. Her studies included folkloric dance, which encompassed belly dance as an ethnic tradition of North African and Asian peoples. These traditions were part of the multiethnic Soviet Union, spanning eleven Eurasian time zones, or friendly nations.

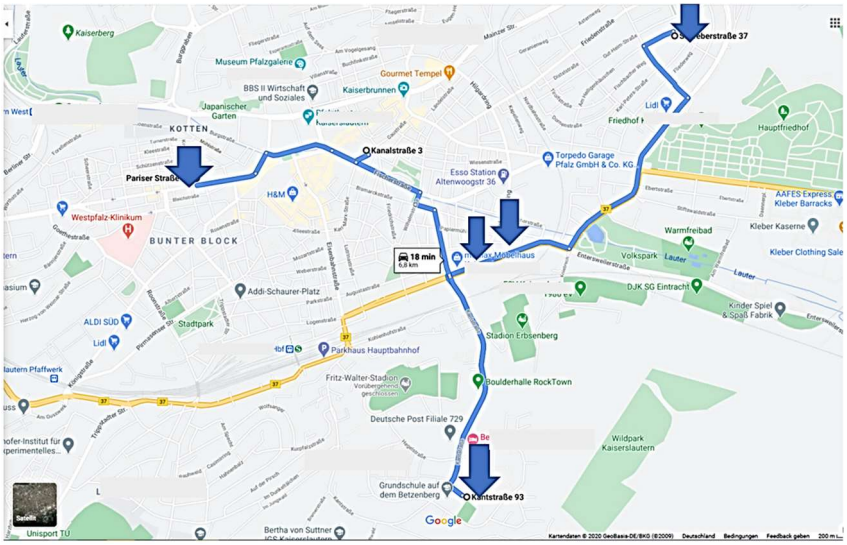
Coming together:

Scheherazade, as a hobby dance group, is comprised of semi-professional and amateur dancers who engage in this activity during their leisure time, after work, and apart from their family commitments. In the essay collection *Belly Dance. Orientalism, Transnationalism, and Harem Fantasy* edited by Shay and Sellers-Young, various aspects of belly dance are explored. Among these aspects is the idea that belly dance was promoted as a form of self-expression for women of 'all ages, shapes, and vocational backgrounds' who sought to embrace this exotic dance (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, p. 16). It also aimed to empower women by encouraging them to be active, rather than passive, in their self-expression, challenging restrictive notions of physical expression and fostering a liberating attitude of sexual self-acceptance, as seen in the free movement of the pelvis (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, p. 15). Furthermore, the body positivity movement highlights the significance of belly dance in achieving a balance between physicality, self-expression, spirituality, mental and physical well-being, stress relief, relaxation, and addressing inner fears (Kieft 2014). These elements, which are discussed in the context of belly dance, are also relevant to the Scheherazade dance group and serve as motivations for their engagement in this activity.

Remarkably, engaging in such a hobby involves a multitude of organizational tasks to ensure its continued existence. These tasks encompass securing rehearsal spaces (see Figure 26) and carving out free time amid work and family commitments, cultivating expertise in the arts of dance, choreography, and music, crafting dance costumes and acquiring necessary equipment, coordinating logistics for reaching rehearsal or event venues, bolstering public relations through participation in community-oriented events to garner visibility and support, and establishing and nurturing local networks, including institutional connections like the adult educational center VHS (Folk high school) or conventional schools with their facilities (including Russian schools). Understanding these organizational intricacies is vital for grasping the group's development and network connections (see Section 15).

Looking at this extensive to-do list, it becomes clear that Scheherazade is not primarily focused on recreation and casual socializing but rather functions as an actively engaged community through artistic expressions of serious leisure. Serious leisure is characterized as 'recreational activities that demand deep and committed engagement over an extended period, typically with the goal of developing specific skill sets' (Moe 2012, p. 202). Furthermore, this type of leisure entails 'continual participation and networking within defined communities, allowing the acquisition of necessary knowledge, equipment, and proficiency' (ibid).

Figure 26: Scheherazade Rehearsing Locations (2012-2014)



Source: Author's representation using Google Maps.

Note: The dispersion of members' residences from the city center underscores the pivotal role of logistics in sustaining this hobby-dancing project.

13.1 Methodological Adjustments

The foundational methodological considerations of this thesis were previously discussed in Part Three and remain applicable to this part. The research process was situated within the framework of grounded theory and transnational methodology, while an interpretative approach was employed for data analysis (Chapter 5). The research method is elaborated upon in the Subsection *Ethnography of Cultural Associations* of Chapter 6. However, it is essential to address certain methodological nuances that are particularly pertinent when studying the Scheherazade dance group. These adaptations primarily concern the use of ethnography for investigating cultural associations. Its application has had significant implications for the overall research design.

The researcher positionality in the field and the role of distancing are fundamental aspects of ethnography as a research practice. Given its immersive nature, ethnography presupposes shifts in socialization that enable researchers to integrate into the field and subsequently readjust upon concluding the fieldwork. Active participation in the everyday activities of the people under study 'inevitably entails some degree of resocialization' (Emerson et al. 2011, p. 2). From the inception of the research, through the stages of joining and eventually leaving the group, up to the current phase of writing, I have undergone various transformations and several episodes of resocialization: from being researcher 1.0 to becoming a dancing mate, transitioning to the role of 'paparazzi,' and ultimately evolving into researcher 2.0.

As researcher 1.0, my initial contact with a group member came about through an interview aimed at testing a hypothesis related to the bottom-up-integration of Russian-

speaking immigrants, drawing from Esser's integration model (Esser 2001, 2009). Accepting an invitation to join the activities of the Scheherazade group marked a pivotal moment in my research approach. It signaled a shift away from a problem-centered, semi-structured interview approach toward a more immersive ethnographic inquiry. This modification facilitated the adoption of an open research design that embraced flexibility, aligning with the approach advocated by Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 419), which emphasizes incorporating change within the methodology as part of the process. Throughout this transformation, I revised Esser's integration model, ultimately opting to engage the simultaneity hypothesis. This alternative framework proved invaluable in elucidating the interplay between transnational and integration practices within the daily lives of the individuals I observed.

As a dancing mate, I was able to build trust and gain access to the group's routines. This firsthand experience provided me with insights into the physical complexity of the dance and pushed me to explore my boundaries. Despite its outward appearance, belly dance is an intricate and challenging art form, especially for someone without prior experience. Engaging in dance form as part of my fieldwork held additional significance. When questioned by colleagues or friends about my involvement with the dance group, I often felt a sense of unease in admitting that I was actively participating in belly dance. My discomfort stemmed from the prevalent 'over-sexualized perception' (Moe 2012, p. 201) of belly dance, often associated with notions of seduction and harem fantasies in the Western European context. I, too, had internalized some of those stereotypes when I initially began my fieldwork with the group. However, by immersing myself in belly dance, despite my initial lack of experience and limited interest in this art form, I was able to form genuine personal connections with the group's founding members, gatekeepers, and regular members. Over time, these relationships extended beyond the confines of the rehearsal room, evolving into exchanges of everyday kindness and favors, such as providing rides or purchasing dance equipment.

As 'paparazzi' role allowed me to remain closely connected to the group without having to perform publicly alongside them. In this role, I operated behind the camera, documenting their activities and performances. Being the 'paparazzi' meant that my presence was not only welcomed but also deemed significant enough to warrant documentation (the applications of the term 'paparazzi' explained in Section 6.2, Subsection *Ethnography of Cultural Associations*). However, it also came with a unique dynamic. While the group valued having their activities captured on film, my presence with the camera naturally influenced their behavior. Occasionally, dancers would inquire of the camera was recording or would jest about capturing all sorts of playful moments. Interestingly, I was never asked to turn the camera off. This level of acceptance and endorsement from the founding members granted me access to contexts and events that I would have otherwise struggled to enter.

As I transitioned into the role of researcher 2.0, characterized by deliberate social and spatial distancing, I found myself once again in a phase of re-socialization. It was essential to keep in mind the initial purpose of my documentation efforts. During this phase, the

empathic connection and rapport I had established through deep emersion with the group began to weaken, or rather, transform into a comprehensive understanding of the processes related to the life of the group and their relationship with the community. This process of distancing can be likened to the decompression required after deep-sea diving – a social decompression necessary after intense fieldwork. It involves elements of time, physical distance, and ongoing reflection. This distancing process, in turn, creates a fertile ground for in-depth analysis.

Figure 27: Scheherazade Performance, Intercultural Week, Xcity 2014



Source: Fieldwork. Note: *Dance style*: Belly dance fusion with feather boas. *Music*: يالله حبيبي / *Yallah Habibi*[87] (2008) by Feruza Jumaniyozova (Uzbekistan)

What insights did my access to the Scheherazade dance group provide regarding the intersection of leisure and collective immigrant agency within the context of social actions? Additionally, what does it reveal about the sociocultural context within which the group operated?

13.2 Dance in the Sociocultural Context

The Scheherazade dance group embodies an Eastern Oriental dream, showcasing a profound fascination with the belly dance tradition and its contemporary fusions that incorporate diverse dancing vocabularies. Through their dance performances, music, choreography, costumes, and visual transformations, Scheherazade's members actively experiment with this art form. In doing so, they exhibit cultural adaptability and a rich folkloric imagination that embraces change and the exploration of personal boundaries. Figure 27 provides a glimpse of one of their public performances during the Intercultural Week, with additional supporting illustrations featured in Figure F-19: *Auto-Exoticism – Cultural Flexibility, Folkloric Imaginary, and Metamorphosis* (Appendix F).

[87] Despite its Arabic title, the song is based on Uzbek lyrics.

Dance and its Vocabulary

When exploring the history of belly dance, we discover that it was initially a term used by natives and non-natives to encompass all solo dance forms from across regions from Morocco to Uzbekistan. These dance forms incorporate movements of the hips, torso, arms, and hands, involving undulations, shimmies, circles, and spirals (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, p. 1). Belly dance, from the historical perspective, is not 'a single dance but a complex of movement practices or vocabularies' (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, pp. 1–2).

Distinct belly dance schools have developed over time, such as the Egyptian, the Turkish, the Lebanese, and others, each associated with specific indigenous regions. These styles have not only drawn inspiration from their cultural roots but have also been influenced by American tribal dance,[88] Hollywood, and Bollywood variations. Across these styles, a shared dance vocabulary is characterized by pelvic movements, shoulder and hip shimmies, and the isolation of various body parts. Dancers may incorporate level shifts that involve bending forward or backward. The Scheherazade dance group skillfully integrates these classic and modern belly dance fusions into their performances. In their public shows, choreography takes center stage, with rigorous training and rehearsals spanning several months before each event. While solo performances or improvisations are infrequent within the group, the focus lies on honing techniques, perfecting choreography, and achieving synchrony in their dance routines. Even members like Diara, who have received professional training, or self-taught and highly skilled dancers like Liza, prefer to perform as part of the ensemble.

For the group members of the group, belly dance, accompanied by music and adorned with distinctive costumes, serves as a multifaceted art form. It provides them with a platform to acquaint themselves with diverse dance styles, experiment with contemporary variations of the dance, and explore the rich tapestry of Eastern folkloric traditions. Additionally, it offers a unique lens through which to examine how these traditions have been perceived and interpreted in the Western world and how Eastern and Western elements have been skillfully fused. An excellent historical example of this East-West fusion is the ballet *Scheherazade,* composed by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov in 1888 and on-wards. This ballet, along with numerous cultural adaptations of the tales from *1001 Nights,* showcases the interplay between Eastern and Western influences and artistic expressions (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, pp. 8–9).

Cultural Pluralism

Within the diverse range of belly dance styles and vocabularies, Scheherazade's approach tends toward a fusion of Turkish and Lebanese traditions, incorporating elements of

[88] American tribal belly dance, born as a product of the social revolutions of the 1960s, is a blended form of belly dance styles that gained popularity in the USA (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, p. 16).

Indian, American tribal, and Spanish oriental styles. Additionally, they have integrated Romany-styled elements into their dance. Throughout my fieldwork, the group's repertoire encompassed a wide variety of folkloric dances presented in modern arrangements. This included Spanish oriental dance and flamenco-styled Malagueñas, an Uzbek dance, two Romany dances, an Alps polka, along with belly dance fusions like a dance with Chinese fan veils, an Isis-Wings dance, an Egyptian Saidi-styled dance with a cane,[89] a dance with a feather boa, and Indian tribal dance. Detailed visual representations of these diverse dance elements can be found in Appendix F (Figures F-19.1 – F-19.10).

Figure 28: Romany Dance Premiere at Harmonika Talent Show 2013



Source: Author's representation

Figure 28 depicts the performance of a Romany folk dance during the talent-show Harmonika. The choreography is accompanied by the song Share potria [Щарэ потря] (2002) performed by the Russian band Diligence [Дилижанс]. This Romany-styled chanson song features lyrics in both Russian and one of the Romany dialects. The song, along with choreography created by Diara, represents the Russian perception of Romany style, encompassing elements of fascination, romanticization, and certain stereotypes about Romany folk traditions. The dancers' attire includes earthy and colorful Romany-style dresses, complemented by belts typical of belly dance.

Appendix F, Figure F-19 provides a detailed exploration of additional cultural diversity, highlighting nine distinct public performances primarily drawn from the group's public shows. These selections underscore the group's cultural pluralism and are substantiated by an array of musical choices, dance equipment, and costumes, which draw from various geographic regions across the world. These public performances narrate captivating

[89] Belly dance with a stick, known as Raks Assaya, is an Egyptian folkloric style (Shay 2005, p. 52). It features acrobatic stick handling and manipulation, typically accompanied by a costume that includes a beledi dress with a hip belt and a headscarf.

stories to their audience, leading them into a multitude of interconnected and fused intercultural worlds (Shaykh 2011, 10; 11).

In this regard, Scheherazade dance group's activities resemble the strategies employed by Scheherazade with her tales from *One Thousand and One Nights*, stories that have captivated the European continent for centuries. It's no surprise that local newspapers have struggled to pinpoint the group's precise geographic, ethnic, or cultural identity, as previously noted in the introduction to this Part. These are the challenges that academic research similarly faces when studying individuals from the postnational project, which was the (former) Soviet Union's hallmark (Part Two).

In addition to its artistic, cultural, and ethnic significance, belly dance touches upon various other dimensions, including gender, age, the body, and non-verbal expression (Thomas 1995, p. 6). These aspects warrant special attention and can be approached through lenses such as intersectionality, postcoloniality, or nomadism. As previously discussed in the methodology part, the video method is ideally suited for capturing and reflecting on non-verbal body language. This topic is inherently engaging for discussion, particularly when contrasted with verbal language, although it will be left for the next debate.[90]

In light of these additional parameters, the upcoming chapter will predominantly center on social actions contributing to the consolidation, cohesion, and engagement of the immigrant dance group and their respective community. This chapter takes on the character of an archeological expedition, with the objective of empirically comprehending collective action in its purposeful, routine, and micro-situational aspects. On the one hand, this micro-empiricism traverses the domains of ethnomethodology and resonates with Giddens' comprehensive analysis of routine's role in daily well-being, thereby emphasizing the interplay between structure and agency. On the other hand, it aligns with Ulrich Oevermann's conceptualization of genetic structuralism, which delves into the emergence of the new (1991), whether it the form of new routines or new practices. Oevermann highlighted that novelty is inherently motivated, setting it past from the known and the routine (idem, p. 304). Given that immigration signifies a significant disruption to daily routines and a nearly jarring exposure to the new, the following exploration seeks to fathom how the new routine of serious leisure is established by combining pre-migration and post-migration experiences.

[90] I have previously delved into this aspect in my presentations. For instance, I discussed *How Cultural Immigrants' Groups Contribute to the Solution of an Intersectional Trap*? at the 6th ESA Midterm Conference in 2016 at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom. Additionally, I addressed the topic of *Die „unauffällige" Macht der Heteronormativität* during the lecture series *Macht und Gewalt* in 2015 at the University of Siegen.

Chapter 14: Fostering Group Unity and Integration

Numerous questions arise when attempting to comprehend the cohesion within the group: How do these women, who share migration experiences but have taken different paths after arriving in Germany, organize their leisure activities? What actions foster unity and integration within the group? What drives them to invest their time, resources, and dedication for the betterment of the group? Initially, we will delve into individual motivations before scrutinizing the purposeful, routine, and micro-situative actions that bolster contributing to the group's cohesion.

Motivation for dancing varies vigorously on an individual level, just as their journeys into dancing differ considerably. Liza and Diara's examples, the group's leading team, prove the point. Both have had a deep passion for dancing throughout their lives. Diara, at the age of 43, began taking dance classes and performing at the tender age of three. By the time she turned 21, she had graduated from an art college in Karaganda in 1991, specializing in choreography. When I inquired about how many of her fellow students from the art college were still actively involved in professional dancing, she responded that none, except for her and one classmate who had emigrated to Canada. She remarked: "*you know back in the 1990s* (.) *when we graduated from the dance studies* (.) *no one cared about culture.*" This sentiment aligns with the discussions about the economic and societal changes mentioned in Chapter 2 *Personal Transformations Amidst Shifting Societal Landscapes*.

Upon her arrival in Germany, Diara did not find opportunities for professional dancing. Instead, she had to take on various jobs, often referred to as necessity jobs, such as cleaning, caregiving, or a range of part-time positions (mini jobs) provided by the state job agencies, including work in cafeterias or on assembly lines. Occasionally, she was able to pursue her childhood passion by participating in event management and performing at semi-public gatherings. The financial challenges her family faced and her experiences with precarious employment were central to her self-presentation within her close-knit circle. For her, that was an existential struggle, and she openly discussed it. Even in their small family apartment, which housed a couple and two teenage children, Diara managed to set aside a space with a large mirror (an essential element for dance practice) where she continued to hone her dance skills.

Liza, at the age of 57, embarked on her dance journey as an adult. She graduated from the university in Karaganda with a degree in physical training and subsequently worked at a research institute. Later, she held a high-ranking managerial position at a school. Upon her arrival in Germany, she pursued a career change and became a physiotherapist. For an extended period, she was self-employed in this field. Liza occasionally emphasized the demanding nature of her work as a self-employed, divorced, single mother of two young children working eight-hour shifts, providing massages without breaks, and weekends off. This rigorous schedule eventually took a toll on her health.

One significant turning point occurred when she sought medical attention for her health issues, which led to an unexpected change in her life. She married the doctor who treated her and moved into his city villa. This change brought new challenges as she navigated

the world of the local upper class while striving for financial independence to support herself and her two daughters from previous marriages. Liza also engaged in community work and took on the responsibility of founding and nurturing the dance group Scheherazade. While she cherished her current life, she never forgot the hardships she had faced in the past (Figure F-14 in Appendix F). Her life was far from a 'happily ever after' scenario. In addition to her multifaceted roles, Liza taught aerobics at the adult education center (VHS), practiced dancing with Ursel's belly dance group, and occasionally performed in public with her older daughter before the establishment of Scheherazade (Figure F-20 in Appendix F).

Diara and Liza first crossed paths during a community-based event, and it was their shared passion for dancing that eventually led them to establish the group in 2010. In this endeavor, Diara brought her artistic expertise, while Liza contributed her strong managerial skills and her adeptness at navigating various social contexts. Consequently, their collaboration in dance held diverse meanings for each of them. For Liza, dancing represented a means of breaking free from the social constraints imposed by her marriage to a professional with a highly regulated upper-class lifestyle. Her charismatic personality naturally drew her toward the limelight, and she often assumed the role of spokesperson during public performances (as depicted in Figures F-21 – F-23 in Appendix F). On the other hand, for Diara, who grappled with a perpetually precarious situation, this hobby of dancing held a profound significance as a source of professional fulfillment.

The same holds for other regular members. For Mila, who is in her early 50s, dancing serves to alleviate stress and maintain her body fitness. This is particularly essential in her role as a hospital nurse with irregular working hours. Alia (41), employed as a cleaning lady out of necessity, uses dancing to reignite the passion she held since her youth. Tania, a self-employed single mother caring for a handicapped teenager son, sees dancing as a temporary escape from the daily challenges of her entrepreneurial endeavors as an event manager, and so forth. Dancing together not only enables them to forge connections with each other but also provides a platform to convey their artistic message to their community. It offers a channel to express their cultural imagination, demonstrate their mastery of belly dance, and maintain both their physical and mental well-being. Moreover, it represents a way to assert control over their lives.

From an intersectional perspective, it is crucial to consider the interplay of factors such as gender, age, migration background, and body type (ranging from able/disabled, aging, overweight/fit). The age range within the group varied from 41 to 60 years old during the fieldwork. This group of women, especially when considering their socioeconomic and migration status, often remains overlooked in the public sphere, and there is limited scholarly attention paid to them as well (Shinozaki 2012). Alternatively, it is plausible that belly dance serves as a lived fantasy, allowing them to momentarily disconnect from the harsh realities of life and immerse themselves in the alluring dream of the Orient (Adra 2005, p. 42).

Motivation stems from past experiences and is closely tied to an individual's unique situation. It varies, contradicts, and complements, but what truly brings together unrelated

or loosely connected individuals into a group as a community player and as a network maker are the actions they collectively undertake.

14.1 Purposeful Actions: The Perspective of Development

The social world is arranged in a way that individuals are inherently oriented toward action, with an innate ability and often a desire to continuously challenge themselves. Scheherazade, through its public performances and community engagements, collectively exposes its members to a continuous stream of challenges, all undertaken voluntarily during their free time. As Goffman (2009 [1967], pp. 229–230) noted, while some individuals shy away from action, others embrace risks and act with purpose, setting goals and seizing opportunities that open up new perspectives for development that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

Certainly, one such risk and source of opportunity is the purposeful action of organizing, maintaining, and promoting a voluntary and free time dance group. Although the leadership of Scheherazade rests primarily on the shoulders of Diara and Liza, other core members such as Mila, Alia, and Tania actively contribute to the group's sustainability. They participate in decision-making processes related to costumes, choreography adjustments, purchasing dance equipment, logistics arrangements, and carving out precious free time for the group amidst their busy lives. Additionally, they often perform together at various community events, further cementing their commitment to Scheherazade's shared purpose.

Having a clear vision of development is instrumental in setting a purpose and has played a pivotal role in the group's progress. This purpose is closely intertwined with goal setting, which occurs on various levels, ranging from small, day-to-day tasks to more substantial and enduring endeavors. To illustrate this, I would like to delve into the process of costume making, which can be seen as a long-term project rooted in goal setting and subsequent actions. Figure 29 showcases the nine-step chronological sequence involved in the costume-making process. This reconstruction sheds light on the intricate work undertaken by the group to craft the Romany-styled costumes they collectively decided to create.



Figure 29: Costume Making Process – Chronological Reconstruction

Sequence 1. October 2013 – A rehearsal at the school: Initiating a discussion about new costumes while practicing during the break a cane rotation for a Saidi dance.[91]

Sequence 2. In November 2013, Liza's private residence: A casual lunch extended into the evening, during which the collectively reviewed catalogs from a professional online shop specializing in dance costumes and equipment. They reached a consensus on the models for the upcoming Romany dance costumes.

Sequence 3. In January 2014, they engaged in a discussion about the types of fabric, patterns, and colors suitable for the costumes. They also made plans for an upcoming weekend trip to a fabric store in another region to explore the variety and quality of fabrics.

Sequence 4. In February 2014, at Diara's private residence: Five dancers gathered over tea to try on some costumes, confirm the clothing models, and select fabrics for the costumes. They estimated that each costume would require approximately 8 meters of fabric. Detailed discussions took place about the fabric colors and their symbolism, aligning them with the horoscope signs of individual members.

Sequence 5. In March 2014, they visited a tailor's shop to design and sew the costumes. The shop's co-owner, who was a relative of Diara, guided the sewing process. Given the number of costumes (5), this was an extremely time-consuming endeavor. This sequence depicts only a small portion of the overall process.

To be continued

[91] A Saidi dance, originating from Egypt, has its roots in a traditional male dance form that incorporates martial arts movements while accompanied by music. This dance style involves a stick-fighting routine typically performed by two individuals.



Sequence 6. Mid-March 2014, Russian school 2: Delays in the tailoring process led to discussions about the next steps and associated costs. Given Diara's temporary unemployment, she becomes more involved in assisting the tailor with the costumes. This adjustment clarifies the timeline and the role of Diara during this phase of costume preparation.

Sequence 7. Late March 2014, Russian school 2: Diara brought the completed costumes for Marina and Alia, sparking a moment of great joy and happiness. They eagerly try on the costumes and perform some dance movements. This episode is characterized by the presence of positive emotions and actions during this stage of costume preparation.

Sequence 8. Mid-April 2014 rehearsal at the Russian school 2: finalizing details for additional costumes. Mila, one of the five members who joined later, has ordered her costume. This sequence illustrates how she and Diara are adjusting some prepared elements made by the tailor, which Mila is supposed to further refine at home.

Sequence 9. In late April 2014 in a private setting: a photoshoot session was held in Liza's garden where they posed in their new Romany-styled costumes, which were a combination of tailor-made and self-made elements. This sequence captures the culmination of their costume-making project, where they proudly displayed the results of their collective efforts through a photoshoot session in a picturesque garden.

This chronological reconstruction sheds light on the meticulous planning, collaboration, and effort invested in creating the Romany-styled costumes for Scheherazade's performance. It serves as a testament to the group's dedication to their craft and their ability to set and achieve collective goals. This costume-making process encompassed various stages, including the initiation of discussion (sequence 1), exploring costume

options and models (s2), refining fabric choices and dress models (s3), coordinating fabric selection, and making online orders (s4), securing support at the tailor's shop, aiding the tailor, and completing sewing tasks (s5), addressing challenges and negotiating prices (s6), conducting fitting sessions (s7), fine-tuning additional details (s8), participating in a photoshoot with the new costumes (s9), and, ultimately, presenting them in a public performance (Figure F-22 in Appendix F). The chronological reconstruction of these sequences spans seven months of discussions, decisions, fabric matching, selections, purchases, sewing, assembly, exchanges, and additions.

Actions like the costume-making process or mastering a new choreography are characterized as long-term, purposeful actions. These actions entail a significant duration in terms of both time and space. In contrast, they stand in juxtaposition to temporary, short-term actions, which encompass every day, routine activities such as informal conversations during practice breaks or regular rehearsals. The former necessitates extensive planning, strategic goal setting, systematic adaptation, and negotiation (Figure 29, sequences 2 or 4), while the latter are relatively brief, occurring within the confines of rehearsal durations and even spanning mere minutes or seconds. These routine actions are explored in-depth in the next Section, while micro-situative actions are examined in Section 14.3.

14.2 Routine Actions: Rehearsals versus Performances

Frequently repeated social actions gradually evolve into routine actions, instilling a sense of security and predictability in activities. As Anthony Giddens elucidated, "Carried primarily in practical consciousness, routine drives a wedge between the potentially explosive content of the unconscious and the reflexive monitoring of action with agents display" (1984, p. xxiii). Destruction of daily routine is caused by occurrences of major structural transformation as discussed in Chapter 2, but also by war, migration, job loss, or a divorce. Many members of Scheherazade have experienced several of these life-altering events in a relatively short span. Consequently, their pursuit of re-establishing routine is quite comprehensible (Giddens 1984, p. 41). This notion holds when examining the life stories of interviewees or the experiences of Mix Markt entrepreneurs with supportive families.

In the context of Scheherazade, routine activities manifest in the form of weekly rehearsals, conducted habitually and eventually becoming ritualized. These practice sessions stand in stark contrast to their sporadic public and semi-public performances, intermittent interviews with local newspapers, and participation in talent shows or collaborative projects. As previously mentioned, I attended approximately 35 rehearsal practices during the fieldwork, which generally followed a similar structure (*Table 8: Rehearsal Flow – A Routine Action*). Rehearsals were meticulously organized, marked by repetition, and undeniably constituted a cornerstone of the regular members' weekly routine. Typically, rehearsal practices occurred twice a week, spanning 2-3 hours each session, commencing at 5-6 in the evening and concluding around 8 or 9 o'clock at night.

Table 8: Rehearsal Flow – A Routine Action

Activity	Duration	Content
Arrival at the Location	Between 20-40 minutes	Carpooling was a common practice among the members, as not everyone possessed a driver's license or a readily available vehicle. Throughout the fieldwork, I heavily relied on these shared rides. The commute, averaging 20 minutes one way, presented a valuable opportunity for us to forge deeper connections. Rehearsals and practice sessions rarely allowed for extended personal conversations, making these car rides a valuable chance to bond with individual members. While logistics might appear secondary, it necessitated ongoing coordination and consensus due to the dispersed residences and practice venues across the city.
Metamorphosis	Between 10-15 minutes	Rehearsals began with members changing into dance attire, complete with vibrant, comfortable, and stylish costumes. This time also facilitated discussions, showcasing new dance-related purchases, or sharing health and beauty tips.
Warming-Up	Approx. 10 minutes	Diara led comprehensive warm-up exercises and practice sessions, focusing on specific belly dance movements, music, and order. The warm-up included exercises for various body parts or the entire body, setting the stage for the rehearsal.
Rehearsing Practice	Approx. 60 minutes total divided into 2-5 minutes sequences	The core segment is dedicated to learning, mastering, repeating, and synchronizing choreography. This involved practicing both new and familiar routines, with dry rehearsals for technique refinement and music-infused rehearsals for synchronization. During a typical practice, the group would focus on 3-4 different dances: a new one, in mid-progress, advanced. New or relatively new choreography primarily included dry rehearsals with fragmented and repetitious learning. These rehearsals often included discussions related to techniques, movements, and corrections. In contrast, music rehearsals were characterized by the absence of interactions, focusing solely on synchronization.
Breaks	Between 1-5 minutes	Occasional pauses allowed for quick recovery, hydration, snacks, equipment adjustments, and rest. During longer breaks, members engaged in casual conversations, reviewed pictures or videos of their performances, and offered feedback.
Closing Part and Departure	10 minutes	The rehearsal concluded with members changing back into regular clothing. Some, with late shifts or family responsibilities, departed early. The remaining members confirmed future appointments before parting ways.

Table 8 outlines the structured flow of a rehearsal session, showcasing the routine actions and phases followed by Scheherazade members. Each phase contributes to the group's cohesiveness and their pursuit of dance excellence. While public performances are primarily focused on engaging with the audience, establishing community contacts, building, and sustaining networks, and strengthening connections, rehearsals take an inward approach, prioritizing the well-being of the group itself. In contrast to public performances, which are aimed at achieving publicity, visibility, and audience connection, rehearsals serve as a means for group members to become better acquainted through shared activities and a structured routine. This involves continuous practice and repetition of choreography and dance techniques. Engaging in these routine activities, particularly during dry rehearsals, can be physically and mentally demanding. It requires a genuine passion for dance, as well as dedication. Not all newcomers or irregular members may be able to cope with the rigorous demands of these sessions or fully appreciate their significance.

The group's rehearsal routine, along with its emerging rituals, goal setting, and prospects for development, holds apparent significance for the overall well-being of the group. However, the importance of micro-actions in more casual settings, particularly during pauses and breaks, is not as readily evident. The rehearsal routine is strictly sequential and adheres to a specific task, including arrival, changing, warming-up, alternating between practice and rest, and a closing part. Within this framework, a predefined time frame exists, with micro-actions occurring in short or brief periods, typically lasting from one to five minutes. This frequency aligns with the approach I adopted when utilizing the video-method in my interactions with the group.

In the subsequent discussion, I will focus on micro-actions that take place during breaks or dry rehearsals when music does not impede verbal and non-verbal exchanges.

14.3 Micro-Situative Actions: The Casualty of Presence

Based on the rhythm of rehearsal, I define *a micro-situative action* (MSA) as a brief interaction focused on specific spoken or unspoken matters that are relevant to the group in the moment. These matters may relate to questions, dancing movements, emotions, reactions, events, and more. It is important to note that while a single micro-situative action may not significantly change the course of events, the cumulative effect of a series of these actions, or 'a series of micro-events,' can have a greater impact (Collins 1981a, p. 91). These actions are termed situative to emphasize their context-specific nature. They are rarely planned and often arise unpredictably, unintentionally, or casually. Metaphorically, these actions resemble notes on the margins. Thematically, a MSA can indicate role division, problem-solving (often in a step-by-step manner), knowledge exchange (sharing opinions, memories, experiences), emotional connection, rule establishment, and acceptance of leadership. As mentioned earlier, the concept of studying 'micro-events' and routinized actions is deeply rooted in and supported by ethnomethodology, which views macro-theoretical concepts as interpretations of a series of micro-events (Collins 1981a, p. 91).

Building on the GT coding procedures, ten micro-situative actions were identified. These actions play a crucial role in shaping the intricate intergroup dynamics that contribute to the cohesion and solidarity of the Scheherazade dance group. These micro-actions are of outmost importance for the collective agency of the group and serve to nurture a sense of unity and shared purpose. Consequently, when viewed from an external perspective or during public performances, the group appears as a harmonious and cohesive entity, conveying a unified cultural and artistic message.

Micro-Situative Action (MSA) 1 – Leadership, Following, and Autonomy. The Scheherazade dance group has a well-defined leadership structure, with Diara and Liza sharing distinct responsibilities. Liza manages logistical aspects like securing rehearsal space and handling registrations for public performances. She also serves as the group's spokesperson during German-speaking events. Diara, on the other hand, takes on the role of a dance instructor, focusing on choreography, music, and the rehearsal routine. An example of this is shown in Figure 30, which illustrates the process of learning a new Romany-styled dance with the babushka.[92] Five sequences demonstrate how Diara consults her choreography notes to guide the group's progress.

As the founders of the group, Diara's and Liza's roles are neither discussed nor questioned. However, amateur dancers are encouraged to build their confidence through the rehearsal routine and regular practice at home. This preparation enables them to perform autonomously and in sync with the group during public appearances. Another sequence presented in Figure F-9 (Appendix F) provides a step-by-step learning exercise that took place without music (dry rehearsal) and in slow motion. Once again, it highlights leadership dynamics, with Diara instructing in a challenging dance movement (360-degree axial rotation with the veil), while Liza observes the performance and offers encouragement. Mila's gradual frustration and vocal expressions of her difficulties underscore the skill gap between semi-professional and hobby dancers. However, the focus on supporting less experienced dancers in gaining autonomy shapes the direction of rehearsals.

[92] 'Babushka' [бабушка] is a cherished traditional headscarf from Eastern Europe. In the selected sequences chosen, only Diara and Alia wear these headscarves adorned with green and red patterns. The remaining members of the group opt for temporary substitutes, such as silk veils borrowed from another choreography.

Figure 30: Leading and Following in a New Choreography: Micro-Situative Leadership



Sequence 1: Learning New Choreography without Music – A Romany Dance
In this sequence, Diara stands at the front, studying her choreography notes, trying to determine the next movement. The rest of the group waits in silence. The following dialogue is primarily in Russian.

Sequence 2: Explanation of Dance Movements
"*tram pam pam* (.) *tram pam pam*" Diara says, imitating the music while demonstrating a dancing movement. "W*e are doing it correctly* (.)" Diara then reads aloud from her notes: "*Rotate a babushka before bending one leg* (…..) [thoughtful] *girls* (!) *pardon me* (..) *damn it* (.) *this movement*" she shows the movement, "*there were four movements in total*".

Sequence 3: Alia Demonstrates a Previously Learned Movement
Alia (wearing the red babushka in the center) demonstrates a previously learned movement: "*we had this movement*". Diara, while gazing at Alia's reflection in the mirror, responds: "*this one* (.) *yes* (.) *its name is ziehen* [DE pulling] (.) *we haven't reached it yet* (.)" [with a hint of disappointment].

Sequence 4: Retrieving a Forgotten Movement
While reviewing her notes, Diara reads aloud: "*the line* [of dancers] *moves forward* (.) *hands are open* (..) *there is even a drawing* [she points to her notes] *damn it* (!) *I got it* (..) *this movement*". She then successfully demonstrates a movement she was initially struggling to recall.

Sequence 5: End of Rehearsal and Time Concerns
The rehearsal is almost over; Diara's ride has arrived, and she is running out of time. As the girls begin changing back into their regular clothes, Diara checks her notes and concludes with concern: "*we are so short of time*".

Micro-Situative Action 2 – The Decision-making Circle. Questions related to routine matters as agreements, meetings, costumes, logistics, and other pertinent topics or upcoming events are briefly discussed and decided upon regularly when participants stand in a circle between practice sessions. This pattern of interaction involves standing in a circle, facing each other while making short-term decisions. Here, all symbolic boundaries disappear, leaving only a working situation and a face-to-face confrontational modality. Various matters fall within the purview of this decision-making circle: agreeing to perform at a certain event, initiating work on new costumes, planning a trip to a fabric store, or discussing a visit to the wellness center. Although presence and participation may seem casual at first glance, regularity and consistency play a paramount role in having a say, in agreeing or disagreeing with decisions.

MSA 3 – Circle of Appreciation. Gradually, some celebratory rituals have been established: mutual birthday celebrations, exchanging small presents during the Christmas period, celebrating victories at talent shows, or successful performances. These celebration rituals create a circle of appreciation and celebration. The depicted circle was dedicated to Diara's birthday, with brief congratulation before the rehearsal. Its purpose is to boost the group's spirit and express gratitude to a specific member. Joint lunches or grill events in private settings fall into the same category, strengthening the group's spirit and inviting each other into the private lives of individual members (Figure 29, sequences 2, 4, 9).

MSA 4 – Feedback and Improvements. Spending time together, and analyzing videos and images of their performances is a shared practice among group members. Its purpose is to evaluate their publicly performed gigs, think about advancements, discuss mistakes, and provide each other with feedback. These discussions are often accompanied by a light sense of humor, mockery, and playfulness. After assessing errors, a corrective process begins to master the choreography; agreed-upon improvements are put into practice. Additionally, more experienced members share their suggestions and offer strategies for coping with difficult situations that may arise during a performance, such as incorrect placement, nervousness, or stage fright.

MSA 5 – The Close-Knit Circle. This micro-situative action pertains to more intimate interactions primarily involving core members of the group (five out of twelve). Topics within this close-knit circle are highly personal and encompass issues such as job situations, family struggles, child-rearing, motherhood, and losses (Figure F-10 in Appendix F). All five core members have two children each, spanning different age groups from 6 years old to 35 years old. Two of them are already grandmothers. Another common subject of discussion is the comparison of their experiences with motherhood in their home countries and Germany. Given the personal nature of these themes, a trusting atmosphere, emotional support, outreach, and empathetic connections are especially necessary. Some members find it easier to demonstrate trust and vulnerability and are more open about their issues, while others may find it more challenging and choose to wait for the right moment. It became evident to me that trust is not something to be taken for granted when conducting research with immigrants or when observing and studying

relationships among fellow migrants (in the context of this investigation). It is worth noting that there can be a pathological distrust and initial suspicion that needs to be overcome. This distrust may have originated from the Soviet experience when individuals had to be extremely cautious about what they said and to whom they said it.

MSA 6 – Moving Wall. Cohesion processes within the group significantly influence members' readiness and capacity to confront risks together. This includes overcoming feelings of despair, fear of failure, or a lack of confidence in public, addressing errors made in public, facing audience judgments, and dealing with occasional threats (Figure F- 11 in Appendix F). A notable incident involving a 'moving wall' took place during a rehearsal in response to an external threat. This event prompted explicit communication of a new rule: the last person to arrive at a rehearsal is responsible for securing the entrance door to prevent unauthorized access.

MSA 7 – Reciprocal Acts of Kindness. This micro-situative action revolves around helping and reciprocity among group members when needed. Dancing together involves an exchange of skills: Diara shares her professional expertise as a dance instructor, working on bodily flexibility or boosting confidence; Liza, a sports trainer and physiotherapist, shares her skills in rehabilitation and physical well-being (Figures F-12 and F-16 in Appendix F). Mila provides transportation to rehearsals; Tania, as a self-employed individual in the catering business, gladly organizes grill gatherings at her country house; Alia (before she began performing in public) assisted other girls before performances. This mutual support is built on reciprocity when promises are made and kept. I was also engaged in this symbolic exchange. As I spent more time with the group, I gradually became part of their inner circle. I was asked for assistance with private matters related to job applications or CV drafting, help with correspondence with governmental agencies, or to act as a photographer during photoshoot sessions.

MSA 8 – The 'Pioneer's Salute.' In the context of dancing, such a salute demonstrates how learning something new often references a shared part experience or knowledge (Figure F-13 in Appendix F). In the case of the 'Pioneer's Salute,' this knowledge appears to have lost its relevance in the current context. Nonetheless, the memory of this past gesture and bodily posture is associated with the period of their school or university years, reconnecting them with memories of childhood and youth. The 'Pioneer's Salute' is a form of greeting used by the Soviet pioneers, a youth organization for ideological education established by the Communist Party of the USSR. In some forms, pioneer organizations still exist in Russia and Belarus.

Here, we can draw a parallel to the earlier discussion of the role of food and memory in community building in Chapter 12. While practicing body rotations with the lifted right hand holding a veil in front of the forehead, similar to the Pioneer's Salute they learned some 30 or 40 years ago, memories resurface. This process also serves as a means of gradually learning about each other. As they come together and engage in shared activities, they gradually discover each other's life stories. For instance, during one lunch meeting, Liza was completely surprised to learn, after many months of dancing together,

that Mila (who had been more reserved in her approach) was also from Kazakhstan, from the same city, and even from a similar neighborhood.

MSA 9 – 'I was There.' In contrast to the previous MSA, which reflects on experiences from their home countries, this one connects the participants' experiences upon their arrival in Germany (Figure F-14 in Appendix F). Depending on their specific personal situations, economic hardship is an experience that everyone can relate to, either because they experienced it firsthand or because they are still struggling to make a living or find a reliable job. Financial difficulties are not the only commonly shared experience upon arrival. Settling down in the admission dormitories, dealing with fears and uncertainty, and facing communication problems with state institutions are some other examples. Section 10.2 discusses the semantics of lexical borrowing from German to Russian, providing a clear reference to the institutional component.

MSA 10 – Focus and Situative Adjustment. This MSA depicts a few aspects. On the one hand, it points to a possible clash of roles as a dancing mate and as a mother who must bring a child to a rehearsal for two hours (Figure F-15 in Appendix F). It happened rarely but when it occurred, it highlighted to me something taken for granted: mothers of small children must negotiate and arrange their evening time, so they are free to pursue their dancing interests. On the other hand, it showcases the patience and understanding of the other group members in tolerating the noisy distractions of an active six-year-old child, constantly moving around, and rolling balls around the dance floor. Perhaps, the fact that all women of the core group have two children each makes them more resilient in these situations, bringing more acceptance and adjustment to the situation.

These ten micro-situative actions are not exclusive; they may emerge in other contexts, include different players, or address different issues. Aside from the enjoyment of dancing and maintaining a positive mindset, Scheherazade is also about pushing individual boundaries, mastering skills, and gaining confidence through collective actions. It involves joining forces, teaching, and learning from each other, helping one another, relating to each other, and getting to know each other. Evidently, not all micro-situative actions contribute to group well-being and cohesion; some may have destructive potential, causing destabilization or even disintegration. Structural differences, such as living in a rented apartment versus home ownership, holding a precarious job versus a tenured position, as well as age or generational gap, character differences, individual ambitions, and conflicts of interest, lead occasionally to clashes. During the fieldwork, I sensed some friction in this respect. On the one hand, individual members sometimes comment on their dancing mates in face-to-face settings (such as in the car on the way to rehearsal), perhaps trying to gauge my reaction or maybe seeking my favor. On the other hand, open confrontations were avoided in front of me. This seemed to be a form of self-censorship that the group members had imposed on themselves, likely because they were aware of my presence and my camera. At that moment, presenting a united image appeared to be more important for them than expressing discontent. From an ethical standpoint, it required effort on my part to maintain an impartial stance, avoiding taking sides or passing judgment on certain situations.

It total, these micro-situative actions shed light on Scheherazade's inward-oriented interactions, leadership style, decision-making processes, and cohesion practices, such as getting acquainted and intimate, helping one another, and working though challenges. These micro-situative actions demonstrate how relationships were established within the group and which aspects had a bonding effect in overcoming obstacles or dealing with difficulties. In short, they illustrate a collective agency on a basic level of interaction. While the migration backgrounds of the members certainly influenced the dynamics of this creative group, the focus of this thesis was further narrowed to specifically capture immigrant agency. The next Chapter will finally reflect on Scheherazade's place in the larger context, within the context of their local community.

Chapter 15: Community Engagement and Networks

My first encounter with the group took place during their public performance at the *Market of Encounters* [Markt der Begegnung] in 2012. At this event, Scheherazade performed a Spanish oriental dance as a part of the annual celebration of the multicultural community of Xcity.[93] These performances provide an opportunity for the dance group to establish its presence within the community – the community they have been a part of for decades. The group positions itself in the public context as open and welcoming to new female members, regardless of their cultural background, skill level, ability, age, and body shape.

As an amateur dance group, Scheherazade has continuously strived to secure public performances, consistently applying for events and celebrating every new article in the local newspaper dedicated to or mentioning them. The group is characterized by their presence, activity, and visibility in their community. While their performances may appear captivating and easy-going, the behind-the-scenes efforts to sustain the group are far from simple. Like many non-commercial, unregistered, and voluntary initiatives in the field of art or sports, they must overcome numerous obstacles to ensure the regularity of their rehearsals, creatively assemble costly dance costumes, engage with the community to gain public support and integrate themselves into the adult educational structures of their city. The group's continued existence relies heavily on its connections within the local community and the support it provides. This support is built on a safety net of reciprocity within their German- and Russian-speaking or mixed networks. Given their limited financial resources, the group must rely strongly on their individual and collective resourcefulness to achieve their goals, including volunteering [Ehrenamt] and exchanging favors. Reciprocity of favors is widespread within immigrant communities, serving as a form of 'interchange currency.' This practice can be paralleled with the 'barter system,' an informal and cash-free exchange of services and goods that was prevalent in the post-Soviet space in the 1990s, both in individual and business contexts (Seabright 2000).

To trace the connections with different players involved, I have recreated a network map, as presented in Figure 31. This figure is intended to visually represent the group's relationships and involvement in their local community. These *connections* are based on various matters or involve specific activities, including:

1. Rehearsal locations and institutional affiliations.
2. Performances at public events organized by communal institutions.
3. Performances in private or semi-private contexts.
4. Participation in talent-show contests.
5. Acquisition of dance equipment and costume making.

[93] Figures F-2 and F-21 in Appendix F.

6. Joint projects with comparable artistic organizations or other associations.
7. Organizational and recreational gatherings in private settings.

The network connections in Figure 31 represent a range of activities and affairs involving different actors. The recreation of this network helps illustrate the group's embeddedness in their community and their resourcefulness in achieving their goals, reaching out to others, or adapting to changing circumstances. These various actors demonstrate the group's interdependence and relationships with a wide spectrum of local players, including regular or adult schools and their facilities, Russian weekend schools and their rented facilities, and city hall initiatives aimed at facilitating cross-cultural spaces of interaction.

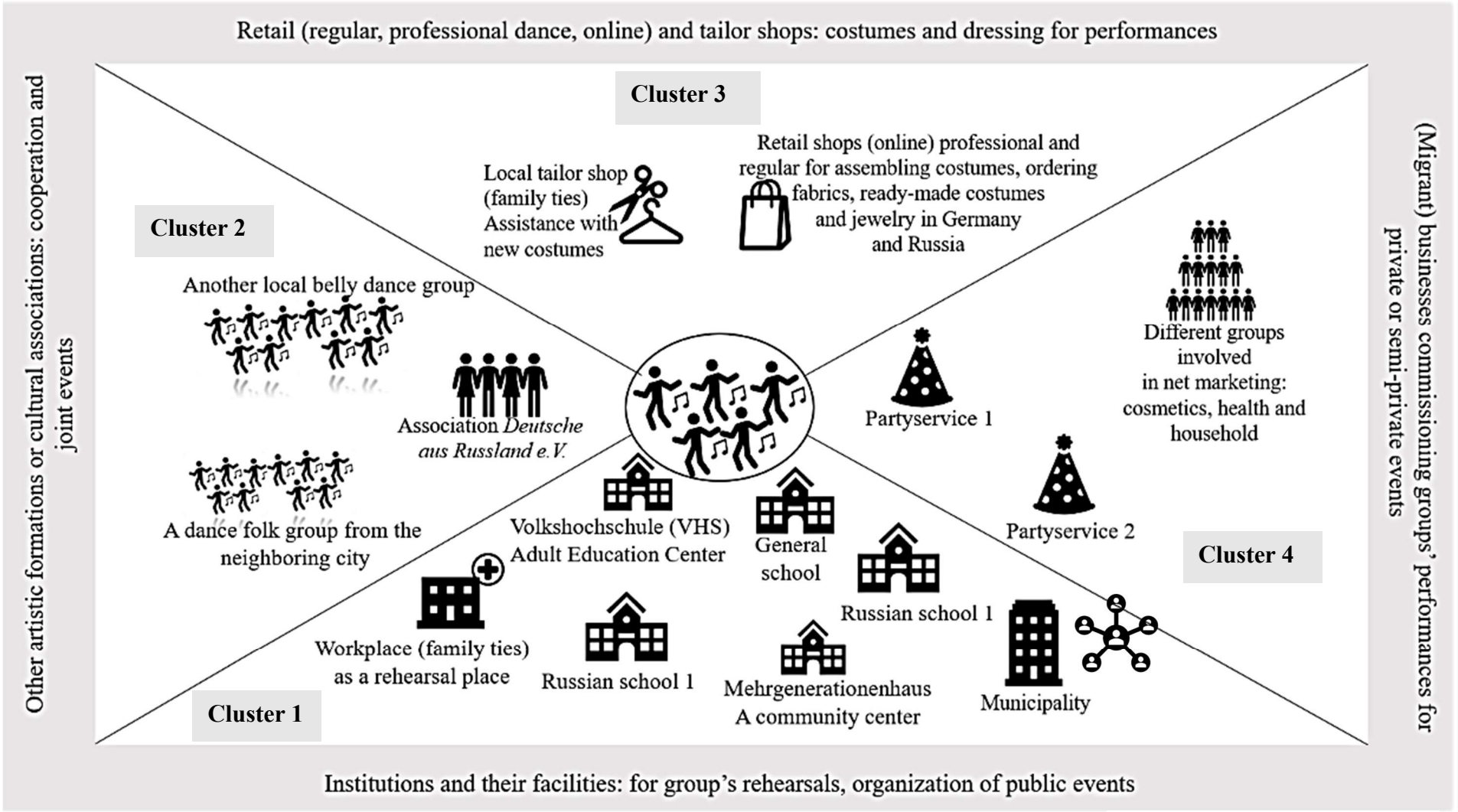
Unlike the visualization of the Mix Markt network, the arrangement of the Scheherazade network involves grouping players. It is important to note that this differentiation is a theoretical depiction and does not aim to reproduce how a network interacts in terms of horizontal and vertical connections or the strength of ties. Instead, it provides a visual representation of the network's composition. In what follows, I differentiate five groups within the Scheherazade network, highlighting their interconnections at various levels and through different activities, intensities, and frequencies of connecting nodes.

Educational and Municipal Collaborators, Cluster One

This group consists of educational institutions and municipal organizations that provide facilities for rehearsals and play a pivotal role in organizing public events. These institutions not only offer rehearsal spaces but also play a crucial role in enhancing the group's visibility, promoting their activities, and opening doors to various resources. Rehearsal spaces have been generously provided by several organizations, including the Adult Education Center (VHS), one local regular school, and a Russian school that initially rented space from the local Protestant church before relocating to a more central facility.

Furthermore, municipal entities such as the city hall, the *Network Migration-Integration*, and the community center *Multigenerational House* [Mehrgenerationenhaus] have taken charge of hosting public events where Scheherazade eagerly sought opportunities to perform. These events include the annual *Intercultural Week* and *Russian Days* that have been instrumental in showcasing the group's talents and cultural contributions to the community. It is worth noting that some group members have been actively engaged with the Network Migration-Integration, a municipal organization acting as a bridge between the local government and the immigrant communities. This connection with communal politics underscores Scheherazade's role in contributing to the community's cultural diversity and pluralism.

Figure 31: Network Analysis of Scheherazade Dance Group



Source: Own visualization

Artistic and Cultural Collaborators, Cluster Two

The next group comprises various artistic organizations and cultural associations, most of which are registered entities, with whom Scheherazade cooperates for mutual benefit. These collaborations involve knowledge sharing, experience exchange, and the planning of joint events. The shared areas of expertise encompass dancing techniques, costume-making, choreography, and organizational know-how. This group is characterized by its pluralistic cultural composition, emphasizing inclusivity and the absence of isolation based on ethnicity.

Notable collaborations within this group include interactions with other German-speaking belly dance groups, such as the Ursel's group led by a woman originating from Xcity. This cross-cultural exchange enriches Scheherazade's repertoire and enhances its understanding of diverse dance forms. Additionally, Scheherazade has established connections with *Sudarushki*, a Russian-speaking dance group from a neighboring region.[94] During the fieldwork, the two groups began planning a joint concert, showcasing the power of art to transcend cultural and regional boundaries.

Liza, a key member of Scheherazade, actively participates in the local branch of the registered association *Germans from Russia* (LMDR 1955). Her involvement occasionally extends to other group members, leading to participation in events such as the *250 Years Migration of Germans to Russia* conference held in Xcity and a similar conference in Augsburg. This social engagement with the association of ethnic German resettlers provides opportunities for involvement in cultural events at the local, national, and even transnational levels (including occasional visits to Russia or Kazakhstan).[95]

Shortly after this conference, Liza co-organized the Harmonica festival, where she took on responsibilities ranging from concert moderation in German to performing with Scheherazade in the 'dance' category (Figures F-19.3 in Appendix F). The bilingual festival, which popularizes the harmonica as a musical instrument, is an annual event held at different locations across Germany. It aligns with the LDMR network and features a bilingual presentation in German and Russian. Alongside the harmonica section, the festival includes categories such as 'dancing,' 'solo singing,' and 'choral singing.' This event not only provided Scheherazade with a platform to showcase their talent by winning third place in the 'dance' nomination but also expanded their network, allowing them to

[94] Sudarushki, derived from the Russian word 'сударушка,' is a plural form used to address women respectfully, akin to 'sudarushka' for an individual woman. 'Sudarushki' is a common name for various cultural entities, including musical ensembles, choirs, and dance groups, both in Russia and among the Russian diaspora abroad. This name choice underscores the group's deep affiliation with Russian cultural traditions and heritage.

[95] Once I accompanied Liza Bardo to a notable LmDR event in Augsburg, comparable in scale to the *250 Years Migration of Germans to Russia* conference. This event showcased German-speaking participants on stage, with a substantial Russian-speaking presence behind the scenes (Figure F-24 in Appendix F). It drew the attendance of cultural, political, and social figures who identified with or had affiliations to ethnic German resettlers. Many of them had connections to the post-Soviet space.

establish connections with Sudarushki and other comparable artistic groups across Germany.

Costume Crafting and Equipment Procurement, Cluster Three

This group encompasses retail and tailoring shops dedicated to the assembly and creation of costumes as well as the acquisition of dancing equipment. These shops serve as crucial channels for obtaining the necessary attire and gear. Scheherazade explored various avenues, including professional dance shops, both physical and online, to source their costumes and equipment. Professional belly dancing costumes are known to be quite costly, with prices ranging from 100 to 150 Euros and more. Considering the individual socioeconomic situations, family arrangements, and other financial commitments of the group members, this expense posed a considerable burden. Additionally, since each dance routine required a new costume, they often had to resort to customizing their outfits.

To create their costumes, Scheherazade employed a mix-and-match approach, carefully assembling pieces from different sources. This ranged from acquiring items from professional shops to more budget-friendly options like KIK or TEDY, the supermarkets specializing in textiles and decoration. On one occasion, the group decided to commission Romany-styled costumes for a new dance from a tailor shop, leveraging Diara's family connections within Russian-speaking networks. Despite the commission, group members were actively involved in the process, which included collaborative decisions on dress design, fabric selection, fabric checking at larger M-city shops, online fabric ordering, and sewing various decorative components. This entire process spanned a lengthy seven months (see Figure 29).

Costumes and accessories played a significant role as an additional form of artistic expression for Scheherazade. They were meticulously tailored to match the dance style, choreography, and the age and body complexion of the performers. These outfits encompassed a wide array of elements, including jewelry, wigs, makeup, shoes, and various dancing accessories such as babushkas, veils, belly dance belts, cloth belts, iso-wings, canes, regular fans, or Chinese-styled silk fans. Preparing these costumes and accessories demanded a substantial investment of time, individual efforts, skills, and creativity. Additionally, it required financial resources to cover expenses related to fabric and tailoring. At times, the group resorted to ordering accessories and costumes from Russia or Ukraine through familial and friendship connections. This practice was more widespread among creative groups observed in Ycity, which emphasized Russian symbols like kokoshniks (headdresses) or sarafans (costumes). However, for Scheherazade, whose dances had no reference to Russian folkloric traditions, these symbols were irrelevant. In contrast, when assembling costumes for the Alps polka dance as an homage to the local tradition, they had to procure items from a wide range of sources.

Community and Business Partnerships, Cluster Four

This group encompasses local small businesses, primarily those operated by Russian-speaking migrants alike Mix Markt retail stores (discussed earlier in Section 11.2). These businesses often revolve around party planning and catering services, specializing in events like *Russian Night*, *Autumn Ball*, *April Fun*, which are particularly popular within the Russian-speaking migrant community.[96] Notably, these events tend to attract individuals in their 40s, 50s, and older from the former Soviet Union, marking a generational divide compared to the more glamorous 'Russian discos,' which primarily cater to the 1.5 or 2nd generations of migrants.[97] The contrast between these leisure preferences, as seen in the Russian disco versus the Russian ball, presents an intriguing area for further research.

Unlike events like *Russian Days*, these parties are commercial endeavors, typically charging entrance fees that vary depending on the services offered. Consequently, members of Scheherazade would anticipate compensation for their performances, albeit often more symbolically, considering the effort involved. These events typically feature a Russian-speaking concert program, with 2-3 dance intermissions performed by Scheherazade and further disco-style dance slots. Scheherazade's performances at these semi-public gatherings, as well as public events, are highly interactive, with enthusiastic support from the attendees. The audience often claps, sings along, encourages the dancers, and ululates. Many guests take multiple photographs or record video clips during the performances, and some rush to take more pictures at the end, often posing with the colorful dancers. These photos frequently find their way onto social media platforms such as Odnoklassniki, Vkontakte, and occasionally Facebook.

The group has also collaborated with representatives from various multilevel marketing firms specializing in cosmetics, household goods, and health products. On one occasion, Scheherazade was commissioned to perform at the corporate event of an American-based firm with a local branch in Xcity. In other instances, Scheherazade assisted in organizing marketing events for similar companies, helping attract audiences as potential clients and providing event spaces.

Family and Friend Support, Cluster Five

The final group represents the valuable network of family resources and close friendships, which every member brings to Scheherazade. This group would be strategically positioned at the center of the network map (Figure 31), underscoring the centrality of family support within the group's dynamics. The support offered within this network ranges from the ability to carve out precious free time outside of the demanding work and family spheres (a luxury not always afforded to those with young children) to assistance with both minor and major favors. An essential aspect of this support is the acceptance and tolerance of the individual's choice to spend their time on belly dancing, a hobby

[96] Figures F-3 and F-4 in Appendix F offer some illustration of these events.

[97] See Figures F-5 – F-8 in Appendix F.

that, as studies have shown, can be gendered and stigmatized due to its potential sexualization (Moe 2012, p. 201). Supporting this hobby requires open-mindedness and trust from spouses or other family members.

For some dancers, the lack of spousal approval or overwhelming family responsibilities, including childcare and household tasks, led to their decision to quit belly dancing. Conversely, support for the hobby choice entails both verbal encouragement and practical assistance. Examples include moral support, such as Diara's husband appreciating the grace of their dance movements or Liza's husband celebrating their appearance in the newspaper. Once, Diara pointed out: "*my husband is far away from the dancing world* (.) *but he likes a lot how we twirl our skirts,*" referring to the Romany-styled attires. Liza proudly noticed: "*my husband said to me yesterday* (:) *look* (.) *you are in the newspaper again with your dance group.*" Practical support can manifest in various forms, such as providing access to backup rehearsal spaces (in the case of medical facilities of Liza's husband), driving dancers to rehearsals or performances, creating free time by looking after children, and assisting in the creation of new costumes.

The five groups that have been revised provide valuable insights into Scheherazade, shedding light on the group's dynamics, resilience, and role within the community. Collectively, these groups paint a picture of Scheherazade as a community-oriented dance group. They demonstrate Scheherazade's commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity, artistic exchange, resourcefulness in pursuing their passion, and the crucial role of family and friends in supporting its members. Overall, these groups reveal Scheherazade's multifaceted engagement within its local community, showcasing its positive impact and collaborative spirit.

Scheherazade's engagement with and recognition by the community have strengthened the sense of belonging among group members, fostering a strong sense of camaraderie that underscores the importance of collective agency. The group's outreach efforts, openness to new members, and the diversity of their network connections — both weak and strong — highlight the rich social and cultural tapestry within the group. As Bruno Latour aptly noted, "Strength does not come from concentration, purity and unity, but from dissemination, heterogeneity and the careful plaiting of weak ties" (Latour 1996a, p. 370). Additionally, the community-like spirit of Scheherazade generates strength from its cross-cultural ties, enabling the group to achieve remarkable outcomes with limited resources.

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This Part *Unveiling Cultural Auto-Exoticism and Dynamic Transformations: A Study of Serious Leisure* provided a comprehensive examination of immigrant agency in the context of free time, with the Scheherazade dance group serving as a case study. It delved into the social and cultural dynamics, actions, strategies, and symbols employed by the group for both short-term and long-term planning, as well as growth and development.

The group's internal cohesion and inward-oriented actions were juxtaposed with their public engagements and performances.

It is worth noting that group dynamics are not static, and changes can occur over time. As of the writing of this conclusion, the group continues to exist, albeit with a new name and a refreshed lineup of core members. My analysis has primarily focused on the group development during a phase when the group members emphasized an exotic persona, epitomized by the name Scheherazade, reflecting a form of auto-exoticism. The group's new name now signifies a stronger connection to the German cultural context. Nevertheless, their choices in dance styles, music, and costumes remain as diverse as ever.

In addition to the insights presented here, a thorough examination of Scheherazade's network connections, their interactions with various community groups, and their resourcefulness in obtaining costumes and equipment have further illuminated the multifaceted nature of their immigrant agency. These elements underscore the complexity of their engagement within their local community and their ability to navigate the challenges of pursuing their artistic passion.

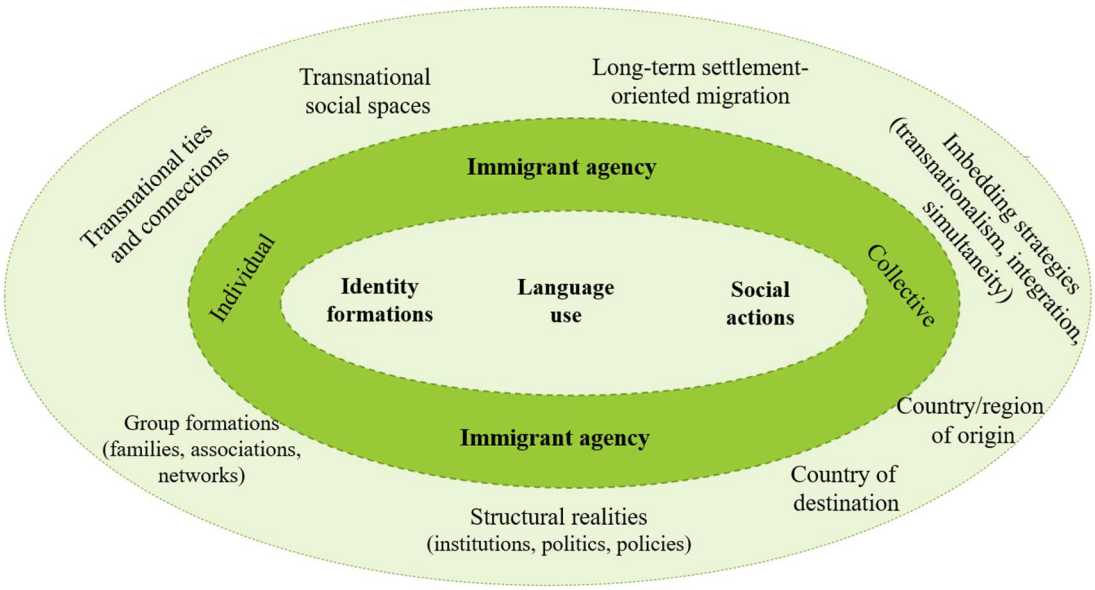
CONCLUSIONS

Positioning the Immigrant Agency Theory

"Das Neue ist immer motiviert"
(Oevermann 1991, p. 304)

This research delved into the dynamic transformation of human agency within the complex milieu of migration and settlement. The central focus of this study is agency, examined from interdisciplinary, structural, and non-structural angles, considering individual and collective experiences throughout the migration and settlement processes. This inquiry employs a transnational lens and an interpretive approach, grounded in the rigorous methodology of Grounded Theory. Immigrant agency, derived from the empirical study, is conceptualized as a multifaceted analytical tool encompassing representational aspects (identity formations and frameworks), expressive dimensions (language use, the acquisition of voice, and multilingual practices), and operational facets (social actions). Using a versatile multimethod open research design, the research culminates in the development of an empirically grounded Immigrant Agency Theory (Figure 32). Through the migration and settlement lens, this theory engages the simultaneity hypothesis, bridging the realms of integration and transnationalism.

Figure 32: The Dynamics of Immigrant Agency



Source: Author's Own Diagram

The Immigrant Agency Theory takes shape through an in-depth case study of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who migrated to Germany in the 1990s and early 2000s. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within these immigrant communities, I employed both transition and postcolonial frameworks to elucidate the prevalence of the Russian language and the consequences of cultural Sovietization/Russification within a diverse range of immigrant groups admitted under various policies in Germany, including ethnic German resettlers, Jewish refugees, family reunification, labor migrants, or students. The research explored the establishment, unification, and differentiation of Russian-speaking communities among immigrants from the former Soviet Union, with particular emphasis on their identities, language practices, and a wide spectrum of activities spanning from business to leisure. Instead of constituting a homogeneous diaspora, these Russian-speaking communities evolve into networks of dispersed groups and communication pockets, shaped within a multicultural and multilingual context. This transformation results in a unique cultural blend and pluralism, which is evident in phenomena such as the 'russaki' identity framework, the fusion of the East European culinary traditions, and the practice of Russian-German translanguaging.

Through the empirical research, I conducted systematic analyses of identity, language use, and social actions across various spheres of daily life of the immigrant communities under investigation, allowing to introduce novel insights in this thesis:

1. By differentiating between identity formations and identity frameworks, the study highlights the ambiguity and differences between self-identification and identification of co-immigrants (Part Four). The distinction is exemplified through various identity formations, such as identity renegotiations, legitimizing identity, professional reinvention, identity of difference and multiple belonging, mélange identity, and temporary escapism. On the other hand, a semantic assessment of russaki presents an in-depth examination of an identity framework that have been developed in some Russian-speaking communities in Germany. While the concept of identity formations depicts the nuanced character of self-identification, identity frameworks highlight the generalized (and, at times, stereotypical) perception of related other.

2. Furthermore, the thesis provides a thorough examination of language use in the multilingual settings. This involves focusing on the processual nature of language use as languaging and translanguaging within the context of Russian-speaking communities in Germany. In doing so, I contemplated clusters and reasons for language interferences (especially lexical ones) between German and Russian (Part Five). The multilingual and translanguaging practices of Russian-speaking communities involve other languages besides German and Russian. These practices exemplify the contextuality of language use, highlight language hierarchies and coloniality of language use in the everyday settings. Besides other language hierarchies became apparent as standard versus vernacular, majority versus minority languages.

While language use and identity formations or frameworks encompass various aspects of the lives of research subjects, the subsequent practices under study are associated with social actions rooted in specific spheres of communal life, such as business and leisure. Therefore, the thesis provides an in-depth examination of social actions within these spheres:

3. I contributed to an understanding of entrepreneurial actions of post-Soviet immigrants that led to the establishment of a transnational supermarket chain operating in the EU-context and on a Eurasian scale from small and mid-sized cities in Germany. This section explored the emergence of the Mix Markt transnational supermarket chain generated from the family-based entrepreneurial activities of the Russian-speaking immigrants (Part Six). This phenomenon also outlines the establishment of and demand for the East European cross-cultural culinary fusion as a marketing concept that was created in Germany and exported to the wider EU context (Part Six).
4. An in-depth examination of leisure activities was exemplified by investigation of cultural associations founded by the research subjects, which highlights community engagement, tendencies to self-exoticism, and inclinations to cultural pluralism. I delved into activities of the Scheherazade hobby dance group, a cultural association established by the immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Part Seven). Such cultural associations belong to a wide range of creative and recreational free time activities that characterize research subjects in their pursuit of active leisure activities.

These findings illuminate the interplay of language use, identity formations, and social actions in shaping immigrant agency. In the context of migration and settlement, I delved into how such agency influences strategies of individual and collective transition, engagement, boundary-making, and the maintenance of difference through auto-exoticism and cultural pluralism, as exemplified through the studied immigrant groups.

Besides the practical implications, this study makes a significant contribution to multiple areas or research, enhancing our understanding of human agency, migration studies, and reflexive knowledge production.

Contribution to an Understanding of Human Agency

The study explored theoretical and methodological approaches to overcome structural determinism. By employing agency as an analytical tool, this research challenges conventional explanations that rely on structural determinism to understand human actions in the context of long-term migration. It emphasizes the significance of recognizing structural realities while avoiding the oversimplification of immigrants' behaviors as mere outcomes of external forces like migration and border regimes, admission policies, historical events, or geopolitical transformations. Instead, it delves into the complexity of networks and horizontal connections that emerge within immigrant communities.

The study enriches individual perspectives by acknowledging that migration broadens immigrants' social horizons, leading to multifaceted identities and positionalities. It delves into identity renegotiation, professional reinvention, multiple belonging, social closeness/distance, and other aspects of identity formation and frameworks. Furthermore, it underscores the multidimensional nature of identities and positionalities, considering factors such as ethnicity, gender, nationality, and class, recognizing their role in shaping social positionalities within the research context. The research also highlights the interconnectedness of individual and collective agencies. In addition, human agency involves individuals navigating transformations, transiting between societal entities in their places of origin and places of destination that may differ in terms of political arrangements, economic conditions, and ideological setups. Through such transformations, human agency has to grapple not only with different opportunities but also with challenges to adjust.

Contribution to Migration Studies

By adopting a comprehensive perspective, the research provided a holistic view on post-Soviet East-West European migratory processes during the 1990s and early 2000s. Instead of isolating individual factors, it considered the broader context of personal transformations within evolving societal landscapes. This approach acknowledged migration as a transition from closed to open borders, from a totalitarian state to liberal democracy, from planned to market economies, and from communist internationalism to the ethnic pluralism of nation-states. The study encompassed the entire migration journey, examining decision-making processes at the places of origin, experiences throughout the migration process, settlement, and the establishment of transnational networks. It emphasized the significance of contextualization and historical awareness in migration research. Moreover, it recognized the dynamic influence of evolving geopolitical settings on migration, offering an open and flexible framework for study of migration.

This study examines the connections and networks established by immigrants from the former Soviet Union within the nation-state, transnational spaces, and urban settings, employing both structural and non-structural perspectives. It delves into the influence of structural factors like admission policies and labor-market conditions alongside non-structural aspects, as horizontal ties and connections that form local and transnational networks. This multidimensional analysis contributes to an in-depth understanding of migration at various sociospatial spaces, from local to supranational, distancing from macro, meso, and micro understanding of social interactions.

Contribution to Reflexive Knowledge Production

Based on multimethod and multilingual open research design, this study utilizes a multimodal ethnography approach, encompassing both real time and digital data collection and documentation. It acknowledges the benefits and limitations of employing interviews within this framework. These various methods led to diverse empirical data

modalities, including textual, audio-visual, and fragmented data, which inform the interpretative approach. Moreover, it adopts a reflexive knowledge production framework that involves a critical examination of the researcher positionality and undertakes comparative analyses of studies conducted on the researched subjects in various multilingual academic contexts over the past 30 years. This comprehensive approach not only enhances the understanding of FSU immigrants but also underscores the evolving nature of the discourse within migration studies and the significance of reflexivity in research.

In overview, this study provides a versatile framework that contributes significantly to the fields of human agency, migration studies, and reflexive knowledge production. It encourages a more holistic and nuanced understanding of migration processes in an ever-changing world, addressing the complexities of immigrant experiences and the intricate relationships between individual and collective agencies.

The study limitations are contained of five following aspects: First, this study primarily focuses on the experiences of first-generation immigrants, with minor implications for the second generation. Second, the research is delimited to a specific chronological wave of East-West European migration, which is linked to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It also focuses on individuals' and collective experiences within a range of 7 to 30 years after migration. Third, the study's primary focus is on individual and collective immigrant experiences, with a reduced analysis of international and state agencies, institutions, and policy-making processes in the context of migration and settlement. Fourth, the research primarily centers on individuals who affiliate themselves to some extent with the Russian language and Russian-speaking communities in Germany. Finally, it is important to note that the empirical study took place before the commencement of the full-scale Russian war in Ukraine in 2022. This dramatic event causing an unprecedented wave of war refugees from Ukraine but also from Russia has had a profound impact on the dynamics within the studied subjects on the ground, surpassing the impact of earlier events such as the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the protracted hybrid proxy war waged by Russia in Ukraine. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and may influence the generalizability of the results to broader immigrant populations and different migration contexts. However, it is crucial to note that these limitations were significance in documenting and understanding a specific historical period, namely the post-Soviet transition, which had an immense impact on the further development of Ear-West European migration.

Based on the findings and limitations of the current research, the future research can potentially be developed in several directions:

Second-Generation Immigrant Agency: While this study primarily focuses on first-generation immigrants, future research could delve into the evolving immigrant agency patterns and experiences among second-generation immigrants. Exploring how the children

of immigrants negotiate their identities, language practices, and social actions in a transnational and postmigratory context would be insightful.

Comparative Cross-Country Analysis: Extending the scope of research to encompass multiple destination countries beyond Germany can offer valuable insights into the variations in immigrant agency within diverse socio-political and cultural contexts. A comparative study of the experiences of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in various European countries, North America, or Israel, for instance, could reveal nuanced agency dynamics influenced by distinct geographical settings.

Transnational Entrepreneurship and Immigrant Businesses: While the current study briefly touches on entrepreneurial activities, particularly the Mix Markt transnational supermarket chain, future research could conduct a more in-depth examination of the development and sustainability of such immigrant family-driven businesses. This research could explore the economic, social, and cultural factors contributing to their success or challenges and investigate their broader community impact.

Investigating the Impact of the Russian-Ukrainian War and the Rising Number of Ukrainian Refugees on Russian-Speaking Communities in Germany: Future research should aim to explore the profound consequences of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war and the increasing influx of Ukrainian refugees into Germany. This study should analyze the multifaceted impact of this significant event. The research can shed light on how this war has transformed or impacted the dynamics within the Russian-speaking communities in Germany, focusing on the implications for identity formations, language practices, and social actions among both Russian-speaking immigrants and Ukrainian refugees in Germany. This investigation will contribute to understanding the evolving landscape of immigrant agency within the transforming geopolitical climate in the post-Soviet space and in the face of forced migration as a result of these transformations. These research areas and extensions can build upon the foundations laid by this study, further enriching the field of migration studies and contributing to a comprehensive understanding of immigrant agency in an evolving European context.

The presented findings offer practical insights into the complex dynamics of immigrant communities, which can inform policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at enhancing social cohesion and integration, fostering multilingualism and effective language acquisition, entrepreneurship, and cultural diversity within the transnational social spaces. The practical implications of these findings and the immigrant agency theory are as follows:

The research highlighted the ambiguity of identity formations and frameworks among Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany, both in terms of self-identification and how they are identified by their co-immigrants. This insight can be valuable for policymakers and organizations working with immigrant communities. Understanding the complexity of identity can lead to more tailored and effective integration and support programs that respect the diverse ways immigrants identify themselves and are identified by others.

Practical Implications

The study emphasized the significance of multilingual and translanguaging practices among Russian-speaking immigrants, which involve both German and Russian languages as well as other languages. Recognizing the contextuality of language use, language hierarchies, and the processual nature of language as languaging can inform language education and integration strategies. Educational institutions and language programs can take these findings into account to promote effective language acquisition and cultural maintenance. Understanding the role of language practices and cultural pluralism among immigrants can lead to language policies that promote multilingualism. These policies can facilitate communication and social inclusion among immigrants. They can also promote the preservation of languages and cultures, enriching the cultural diversity of the host country.

Policymakers can use insights from the Immigrant Agency Theory to inform educational strategies. Recognizing the multidimensional subjectivities and positionalities of immigrants can lead to inclusive educational programs that address diverse needs. For example, strategies that support identity renegotiation, professional reinvention, and multiple belonging can be integrated into education and vocational training programs.

The emergence of the Mix Markt transnational supermarket chain, driven by family-based entrepreneurial activities of Russian-speaking immigrants, has implications for the business and culinary landscape. It showcases the demand for East European culinary concepts in Germany and the EU. Entrepreneurs and policymakers can explore opportunities to support and integrate such ventures, potentially enhancing cultural diversity and economic growth.

The study highlights the importance of everyday cultural pluralism and auto-exoticism within immigrant communities, as exemplified by leisure activities and cultural associations. Understanding and appreciating the cultural diversity and creativity within immigrant communities can promote social cohesion and cultural exchange. Local governments, cultural organizations, and community centers can use these insights to foster cultural pluralism and facilitate cross-cultural exchange.

At last, as the immigrant agency theory emphasizes the transnational character of immigrant agency, policies can be developed with a transnational perspective. This may involve collaboration with countries or regions of origin and acknowledging the interconnectedness of immigrant communities across borders.

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Overall, the significance of this study lies in the development of a comprehensive theory of immigrant agency that encompasses both individual and collective components, thoughtfully navigating structural and non-structural factors in the transnational urban and social spaces. The Immigrant Agency Theory challenges structural determinism in

the study of immigration. By emphasizing the agency of immigrants, it moves beyond traditional explanations that treat migration as a derivative of objective factors. This shift allows for a more nuanced understanding of how immigrants shape their own experiences and networks, breaking free from deterministic frameworks. The theory provides a multidimensional perspective on immigrant agency. It takes into account individual and collective agency, as well as the interplay between them. This comprehensive view recognizes that immigration is a complex and interdependent process influenced by a variety of factors, from individual identities to societal structures. The Immigrant Agency Theory encourages researchers to consider the entire migratory journey, from decision-making at the place of origin to experiences throughout the migration process. This approach recognizes migration as an ongoing and evolving process, embedded in a specific historical and geopolitical context. It highlights the importance of contextualization and historical awareness in the study of migration, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of immigrant experiences. Additionally, this research significantly contributes to the field of East-West European migration studies and adopts a transition perspective to comprehensively grasp the experiences of individuals undergoing migration amid the complex backdrop of social, political, and economic transformations.

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Appendix A: Record of Academic Contributions

Table A-1: Contributions at the Scientific Workshops, 2011-2023

No.	Title of Contribution	Workshop	Date
1.	Coding Procedures with Grounded Theory	Prof. Dr. Schittenhelm's Research Workshop, University of Siegen	17.01.2023
2.	Entrepreneurial Networks of Russian-Speaking Germans across the Eurasian Space (Renewed discussion after the revision)	Prof. Dr. Schittenhelm's Research Workshop	12.12.2022
3.	Research Design and Data Analysis (Part Three from the Habilitation)	Prof. Dr. Schittenhelm's Research Workshop	21.01.2022
4.	Entrepreneurial Networks of Russian-Speaking Germans across the Eurasian Space: From a Corner Store to a Transnational Supermarket Chain (Part Six)	Prof. Dr. Schittenhelm's Research Workshop	29.10.2021
5.	The Ethnography of Auto-Exoticism (Part Seven),	Prof. Dr. Schittenhelm's Research Workshop	02.07.2021
6.	Methodological Reflections on Dealing in the Multilingual Context of Migration Studies	Prof. Dr. Schittenhelm's Research Workshop	15.01.2021
7.	Immigrant Agency: The Study of Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Germany	Prof. Dr. Schittenhelm's Research Workshop	17.07.2020
8.	From the Ethnic Family Store Moskva to the Supermarket Chain Mix Markt: Collective Agency,	Prof. Dr. Kutzner's Colloquium, University of Siegen	9.07.2020
9.	Immigrant Agency and Language	Prof. Dr. Schittenhelm's Research Workshop	31.01.2020
10.	Immigrants on the Crossroad of Agency and Structure: Identities and Embedding Strategies in the Transnational Contexts	The postdoc research workshop with Prof. Dr. Kumar Rajaram and Dr. Olena Fedyuk, Central European University USA/Hungary	04.07.2019
11.	Geschlechtsspezifische Handlungsstrategien von Zuwanderern aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion in Deutschland	SOWiS Lecture Series organized by Prof. Wolfgang Bergem, University of Siegen	16.01.2019

12.	Migrantenfamilien und Entwicklung der Geschlechterverhältnisse	Prof. Beck-Gernsheim's Seminar on Family Research in Transition, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main	08.07.2016
13.	In the Harmony with my 'Former Self:' Transnational Identities	Prof. Beck-Gernsheim's Seminar on Migration Research in Transition, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main	21.04.2016
14.	Geschlechtsspezifische Handlungsstrategien von Zuwanderern aus den ehemaligen Sowjetstaaten in Deutschland	Prof. Dr. Kutzner's Colloquium, University of Siegen	15.04.2016
15.	Identität Transformationen aus der Sicht von Migration (Auswertung)	Prof. Spellerberg's Colloquium, Technical University of Kaiserslautern	26.07.2013
16.	Die Bottom-up-Integration in Deutschland: Am Beispiel den Migranten aus Russland und Tschechien (Zwischenbericht)	Prof. Spellerberg's Colloquium, Technical University of Kaiserslautern	11.09.2012
17.	Die Bottom-up-Integration in Deutschland: Am Beispiel den Migranten aus Russland, der Ukraine und Tschechien (Habilitationsskizze)	Prof. Spellerberg's Colloquium, Technical University of Kaiserslautern	16.12.2011

Table A-2: Contributions at the International Scientific Conferences, 2012-2023

No.	Title of Contribution	Conference	Date
18.	Multilingual Dilemma: Why Should We Denaturalize Language in Migration Research?	Workshop Vocabularies of Migration Reflexive Perspectives on Interdisciplinarity, Translation and Language in Migration Research, Justus Liebig University Giessen	08.02.2023
19.	Multilingualism and Translanguaging in Migration Studies	Auftaktveranstaltung zu PhD workshop series "Methodological and Research-Related Challenges and Strategies in Multilingual Research in Multicultural Settings," Institut für Bildungswissenschaft, Universität Wien	04.04.2022
20.	Entrepreneurial Networks of Russian Germans across the Eurasian Space	Conference Russian Germans on Four Continents: Global History and Present, University of Osnabrück	11.11.2021
21.	Immigrant Agency: The Case of Russian-Speaking Immigrants and Citizens in Germany	15th ESA Conference, Barcelona	1.09.2021
22.	Mundane Transnational Social Spaces of Ordinary Cities: From an Immigrant Shop to a Transnational Supermarket Chain	18th IMISCOE Annual Conference, University of Luxembourg	09.07.2021
23.	Intergenerational Differences in the Family – The Example of Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Germany	Colloque international Famille sans frontières Famille émancipée/ Family Without Borders – Family Unbound, Université de Tours	02.04.2021
24.	Lost in Languages – Lost in Translation? Some Methodological Reflections on Dealing in the Multilingual Context of Migration Studies	Midterm Conference ESA RN 35 "Sociology of Migration" Towards Reflexivity in Migration Studies Knowledge Production in Times of Contested Politics and Post-Colonial Dynamics, Online Event	22.01.2021
25.	Ethnic Cultural Associations and Identity Formation of Immigrants: The Case Study of Russian and Italian Associations in Germany	14th ESA Conference, Manchester, UK	22.08.2019
26.	Slavic Families in the German Context	International conference "Family in Crisis? Crossing Borders, Crossing Narratives", Palma, Illes Balears, Spain	11.03.2018

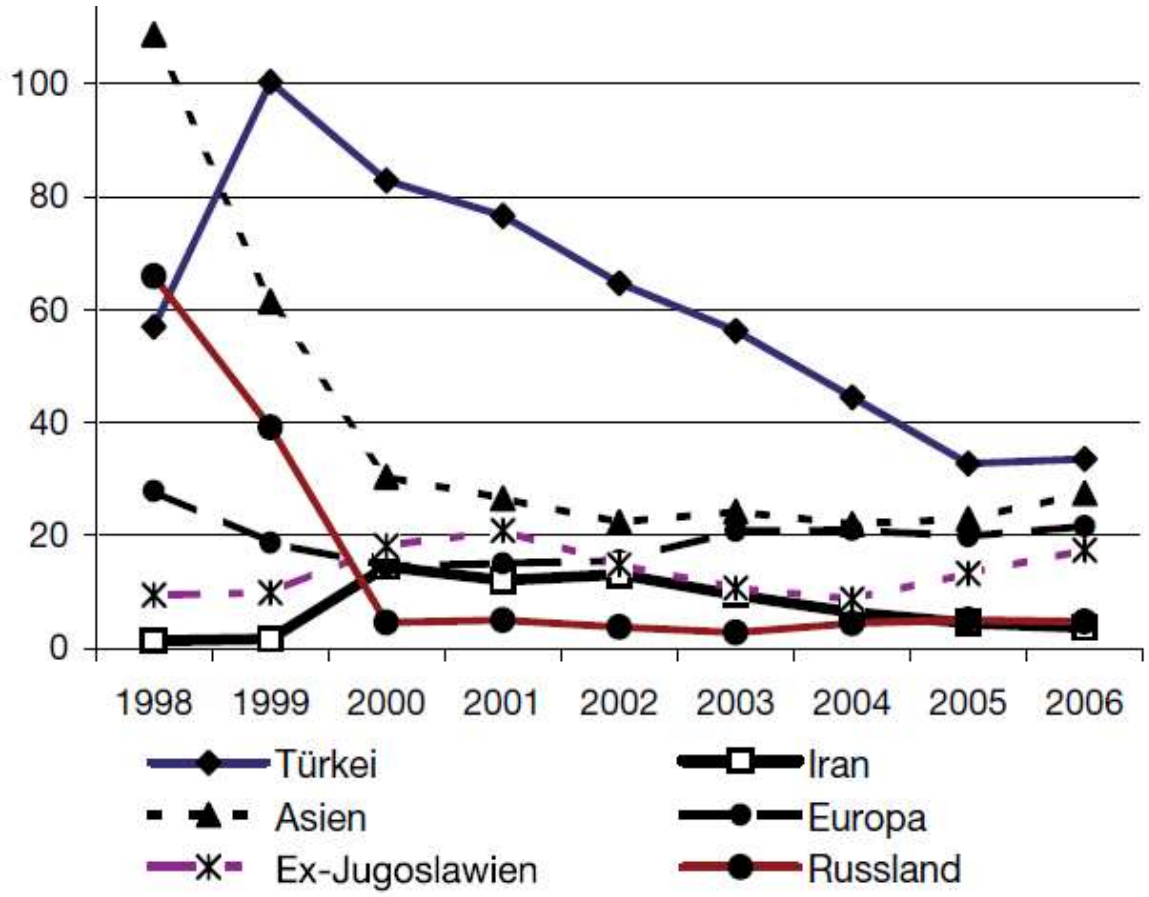
27.	Germany's Post-Soviet Heritage: Immigrants as Agents of Social Change	International Conference "Transformations in the Central and Eastern Europe", Odesa National University	28.06.2017
28.	Family Through the Prism of EU Migration Policies	Family Matters: Transnational Perspectives", German-Italian Centre for European Excellence, Menaggio, Italy	15.02.2017
29.	How Cultural Immigrants' Groups Contribute to the Solution of an Intersectional Trap	6th ESA midterm Conference RN7 Sociology of Culture, University of Exeter, United Kingdom	16.11.2016
30.	"Little Russia": Ethnic Neighborhoods in German Mid-sized Cities	ESA Midterm conference "Moving Cities," Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland	29.05.2016
31.	Die „unauffällige" Macht der Heteronormativität	Veranstaltungsreihe „Macht und Gewalt", Universität Siegen	13.06.2016; 03.12.2015
32.	From Class Struggle to Struggling with Class with Giacomo Bottos	FEPS Young Academics Annual Conference, Brussels	26.06.2015
33.	Ordinary Cities and EXTRA-ordinary Immigrants: Liquid Identities in the Urban Settings	Euroacademia Conference "Identity and Identifications," Lucca, Italy	19.06.2015
34.	Migration Challenges and Policy Responses in the European Union	The International Conference on the Interdisciplinary Research, A.I. Cuza University of Iasi, Romania	11.06.2015
35.	'Russaki:' Identity on the Margins	2015 Annual Conference of the Irish Association for Russian, Central and East European Studies, Dublin, Ireland	10.05.2015
36.	Shift in Social Orders – Shift in Gender Roles? Migration Experience and Gender Roles	The 10th International Conference "Woman in Culture", Gdansk, Poland	07.03.2015
37.	In the Harmony with My Former Self? Identity Transformation and Migration	The 6th Global Conference of Inter-Disciplinary.Net, Prague, Czech Republic	03.11.2014
38.	Transformation of Gender Roles under the Impact of Immigration Experience	Interdisciplinary Conference "Global Discourses in Gender Studies", Tennessee State University, USA	06.04.2013
39.	Migration and Integration at the Macro-, Meso- and Micro-Levels: German Context	International Conference on Migration and Integration, St. Petersburg, Russia	17.11.2012

Table A-3: Teaching Activities Related to the Thesis

No.	Seminar Title	Semester	University
1.	Introduction to research	WiSe 2021/22	University of Maryland Global Campus Europe
2.	Transnationalism: Identity, Culture and Mobility	WiSe 2018/19	Universität Siegen
3.	Society on the Move: Sociology of Migration	SoSe 2017	Universität Siegen
4.	CityLab: Social Structures and the City	WiSe 2016/17	Universität Siegen
5.	Society on the Move: Sociology of Migration	SoSe 2016	Universität Siegen
6.	Intersektionalle Identitäten: Zwischen Geschlecht, Schicht, Nationalität und Ethnizität	SoSe 2017	Universität Siegen
7.	Gender – Power – Society	WiSe 2016/17	Universität Siegen
8.	Intersektionalität, Sommerakademie	SoSe 2016	Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf
9.	Intersektionalität: Auf der Straßenkreuzung der sozialen Ungleichheiten	WiSe 2015/16	Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Österreich
10.	Social Movements for Social Changes	SoSe 2015	Universität Siegen
11.	On the Threshold of the European Union: Migration and Migration Policies	SoSe 2015	Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza Iași, Rumänien
12.	Theorien sozialer Ungleichheit	SoSe 2015	Universität Siegen
13.	Diversity Management	SoSe 2015	Universidad de La Coruña, Spanien
14.	Society on the Move: International Migration in the Global and European Contexts Erasmus Lehrmobilität 2013	SoSe 2013	Universidad de La Coruña, Spanien

Appendix B: A Study of the FSU Immigrants in Germany

Figure B-1: Evolving Trends in Naturalization in Germany among of Immigrants from Russia and Other Regions, 1998–2006, in 1,000



Source: Steinhardt 2007, S. 546.

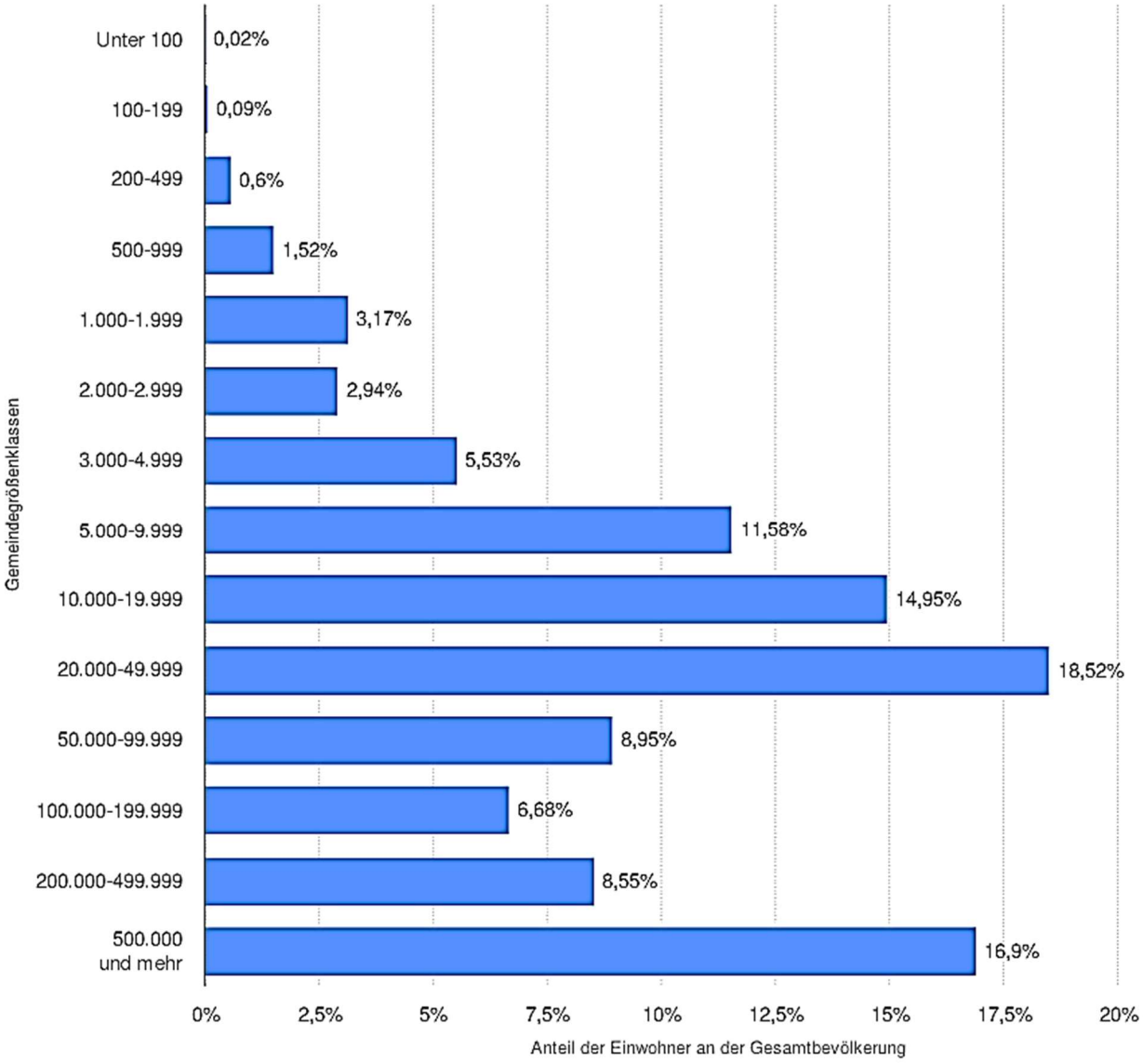
Table B-2: Inflow of (late) German Resettlers According to the Area of Origin, 1990-2003ä

Herkunfts-gebiet	1990	1991[3]	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Polen	133.872	40.129	17.742	5.431	2.440	1.677	1.175	687	488	428	484	623	553	444
ehem. Sowjetunion	147.950	147.320	195.576	207.347	213.214	209.409	172.181	131.895	101.550	103.599	94.558	97.434	90.587	72.289
davon aus:														
Estland	-	-	-	283	366	363	337	136	69	116	80	77	79	69
Lettland	-	-	-	266	267	360	248	124	147	183	182	115	44	45
Litauen	-	-	-	166	243	230	302	176	163	161	193	97	178	123
Kasachstan	-	-	-	113.288	121.517	117.148	92.125	73.967	51.132	49.391	45.657	46.178	38.653	26.391
Kirgisistan	-	-	-	12.373	10.847	8.858	7.467	4.010	3.253	2.742	2.317	2.020	2.047	2.040
Moldawien	-	-	-	1.139	965	748	447	243	369	413	361	186	449	281
Russische Föd.	-	-	-	67.365	68.397	71.685	63.311	47.055	41.054	45.951	41.478	43.885	44.493	39.404
Ukraine	-	-	-	2.711	3.139	3.650	3.460	3.153	2.983	2.762	2.773	3.176	3.179	2.711
Usbekistan	-	-	-	3.882	3.757	3.468	2.797	1.885	1.528	1.193	920	990	844	714
Weißrussland	-	-	-	176	136	227	186	168	161	172	189	331	313	273
Jugoslawien[1]	961	450	199	120	182	178	77	34	14	19	0	17	4	8
Rumänien	111.150	32.178	16.146	5.811	6.615	6.519	4.284	1.777	1.005	855	547	380	256	137
(ehem.) ČSSR	1.708	927	460	134	97	62	14	8	16	11	18	22	13	2
Ungarn	1.336	952	354	37	40	43	14	18	4	4	2	2	3	5
sonstige Länder[2]	96	39	88	8	3	10	6	0	3	0	6	6	0	0
insgesamt	**397.073**	**221.995**	**230.565**	**218.888**	**222.591**	**217.898**	**177.751**	**134.419**	**103.080**	**104.916**	**95.615**	**98.484**	**91.416**	**72.885**

Source: Süssmuth 2004, S. 29

Appendix C: A Research Design Overview

Figure C-1: German Population Distribution by Community Size Type as of December 31, 2019



Source: Statista 2019.

Table C-2: Guidelines for Semi-Structured Interviews

Thematic Blocks	Subthemes	*Possible Questions*
Prehistory of migration; transition and emigration	Family background and migration in the family history; family narratives; historical context; decision-making process; economic factors; cultural and social influences; institutional involvement; immigration policies; process of leaving, actors involved	- How has migration been interwoven into your family's history? - What significant events or decisions led to your migration to Germany? - In the process of leaving, what actors or individuals have played pivotal roles in shaping these migration experiences for your family? - What challenges or opportunities have arisen due to migration within your family, and how has the role of different family members in these decisions evolved?
Immigration, Arrival	Travel conditions; arrival destination; initial experiences; settlement and adaptation; cultural and generational shifts; interaction with local population, institutional assistance	- How did you perceive your first few months in Germany? - What does it mean to you to settle in Germany or to be integrated into German society?
Cultural and Language Competence	Bilingualism and multilingualism; German language; language maintenance; language shift; cultural and media consumption (TV, theater); cultural preservation; cultural exchange; generational differences; heritage language education; cultural celebrations and rituals; leisure and recreation	- Where did you learn the German language? - How would you rate your proficiency in German? - Do you attend religious services or cultural events held in your city?
Daily Life	Daily routines; financial management; consumption; household and family structure; food and cuisine; healthcare and well-being	- Please describe a typical day in your life. - Who handles dealings with insurance companies and banks in your home?
Family Matters	Generational dynamics; intra-family relationships; family reunification; parenting styles and children (care and education); transnational family ties; cultural transmission; conflict resolution; social support; interactions with extended family; mental health and well-being	- Describe your family. - How have relationships within your family changed after migration?

Continued from the previous page

Education and Work	Educational transition and aspirations; vocational training; labor market integration; employment; occupational shifts; professional and occupational challenges; entrepreneurship and business ventures; unemployment and job loo; dual-career couples; retraining and skill development; occupational mobility	- Could you briefly describe your professional path in Germany? - What challenges did you face in integrating into the labor market in Germany?
Housing and the Feeling of Home	Housing conditions and accommodation; residential environment; housing accessibility and housing policies; homeownership and financial stability; neighborhood and community integration; sense of belonging and home	- Describe your living environment (apartment or house). - What motivated you to live there? - How did you find your accommodation? What does 'home' mean to you?
Social Ties	Community involvement; social support networks; friendships and peer networks; cross-cultural friendships; transnational social ties; religious and cultural communities; online social networks; social isolation and loneliness; interaction with local institutions; co-migrant and diaspora communities	- Are you a member of any group, organization, or association? - How do you spend your free time and with whom? - Can you name three trusted individuals you would contact for assistance in case of an emergency?
Political Participation and Engagement	Voting and electoral participation; political activism; local governance involvement; transnational political engagement; political parties and representation; citizenship and naturalization; migrant advocacy and lobbying; volunteering	- How do you participate in the electoral process in both your host country and home country? - To what extent are you involved in local governance, including participation in community organizations or local political processes? - How does the process of naturalization impact your political engagement and sense of belonging?
Contacts with the Home Country	Transnational communication; family / friends; socio-political participation; cultural consumption; remittances and financial ties; return visits and repatriation; community and religious ties	- How often do you visit your place of origin? - What do you most frequently bring with you from your home country?
Future Perspectives	Desired country 10-year perspective	- If you were given the chance to establish a new state, which characteristics and institutions would you draw from both Germany and your home country? Where do you envision yourself in the next 10 years?

Figure C-3: Interview Consent

Forschungsprojekt:
Ankommen und Einleben in Deutschland
Leitung:
Tetiana Havlin
Institution:
Lehrgebiet Stadtsoziologie, Fachbereich Raum- und Umweltplanung, TU Kaiserslautern

Einwilligungserklärung

Ich, _____, bin über das Vorgehen bei der Auswertung der persönlichen, „freien" Interviews mit einem Handzettel informiert worden, u.a.

- Abschrift gelangt nicht an die Öffentlichkeit,
- Anonymisierung bei der Abschrift,
- Löschung der Aufnahme bzw. Aushändigung,
- Löschung von Namen und Telefonnummer,
- Aufbewahrung der Einwilligungserklärung nur im Zusammenhang mit dem Nachweis des Datenschutzes und nicht zusammenführbar mit dem Interview.

Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass einzelne Sätze, die aus dem Zusammenhang genommen werden und damit nicht mit meiner Person in Verbindung gebracht werden können, als Material für wissenschaftliche Zwecke und die Weiterentwicklung der Forschung genutzt werden können.

Unter diesen Bedingungen erkläre ich mich bereit, das Interview zu geben und bin damit einverstanden, dass es mit dem Aufnahmegerät aufgenommen, abgetippt, anonymisiert und ausgewertet wird.

_____
(Unterschrift)

_____ _____
(Ort) (Datum)

Figure C-4: Questionnaire for Accompanying Interviews

Arrival and Settlement in Germany:
Migrants from the former Soviet Union

a) **Gender** Female / Male / Other

b) **Age** _____

c) Year of arrival in Germany _____

d) Residance duration in Germany
1-5 years
6-10 years
11-15 years
over 16 years

e) Reason of admission in Germany
(Late) Ethnic German resettler
Jewish refugee
Family-related (marriage)
Labor
Study

f) Legal status in Germany
Temporary residence (Aufenthaltserlaubnis)
Permanent residence (Niederlassungserlaubnis)
German citizenship since _____

g) **Place of origin** _____

h) Family of origin from _____

i) **Education** _____

j) **Occupation** _____

k) **Family status**
Single Married ___ years In a relationships ___years Divorced

l) **Information about a life partner or a spouse:**
Nationality _____
Declared ethnicity _____
Education _____
Occupation _____

m) Children
No Yes. How many? _____

n) Language of the interview _____

o) **Language proficiency** _____

Figure C-5: Interview Flyer

Kommen Sie ursprünglich aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion?

Welche Erfahrungen haben Sie Ihrer Ankunft in Deutschland gesammelt?

Wie ist Ihr Deutschkenntnisstand? Sprechen Sie die Sprache fließend?

Wie erleben Sie die Interaktion mit der lokalen Bevölkerung?

Betrachten Sie Deutschland bereits als Ihre zweite Heimat, oder ziehen Sie eine Rückkehr in Betracht?

TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT KAISERSLAUTERN

In Deutschland leben mehr als 19 Millionen Zuwanderer, die sich täglich mit diesen Fragen auseinandersetzen. Darüber hinaus gibt es eine intensive öffentliche Debatte über Migration und Integration. Es ist jedoch wichtig zu beachten, dass jede individuelle Erfahrung einzigartig ist, und jeder Mensch wählt seine eigenen Wege und Strategien, um sich in einem neuen Land einzuleben.

Welche Ratschläge würden Sie anderen Zuwanderern geben, um sich besser in Deutschland einzuleben und Herausforderungen zu bewältigen?



Lehrgebiet
Stadtsoziologie
Prof. Dr. Annette Spellerberg

Die Studie *„Ankommen und Einleben in Deutschland“* am Lehrgebiet Stadtsoziologie an der Technischen Universität Kaiserslautern widmet sich diesen Fragestellungen.

Um mehr darüber zu erfahren, sind wir auf der Suche nach Personen mit Migrationshintergrund aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion.

Wir würden uns außerordentlich über Ihre Unterstützung freuen und möchten Sie herzlich dazu einladen, an einem persönlichen Gespräch teilzunehmen!

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Die Durchführung der Studie erfolgt anonym, und die erhobenen Daten dienen ausschließlich wissenschaftlichen Zwecken.

Table C-6: Transcription Symbols

The following notations were used during the interview transcripts undertaken by the author:

[text]	Text of the interview, usually presented as translation from Russian to English
[[text]]	TH's comments or clarifications that arose during transcription or translation
# 00:02:54 #	Indicates the time point in the interview
(.) or (..) or (…)	Denotes pauses and their respective durations
[[☺]]	Represents emoticons signifying emotional reactions, such as laughter.
(?) or (!)	Indicates guessed punctuation. In oral speech, full stops and commas are often replaced with pauses (.) or (..) or (…) or emoticons.
|	Signifies the end of a sentence.
TH	Refers to the author and interviewer
[Igor] or other names	Represents interviewee pseudonyms. The actual names, as well as the current locations of the interviewees, are anonymized for privacy.

Please note that these notations were employed to aid in transcribing and understanding the interview content.

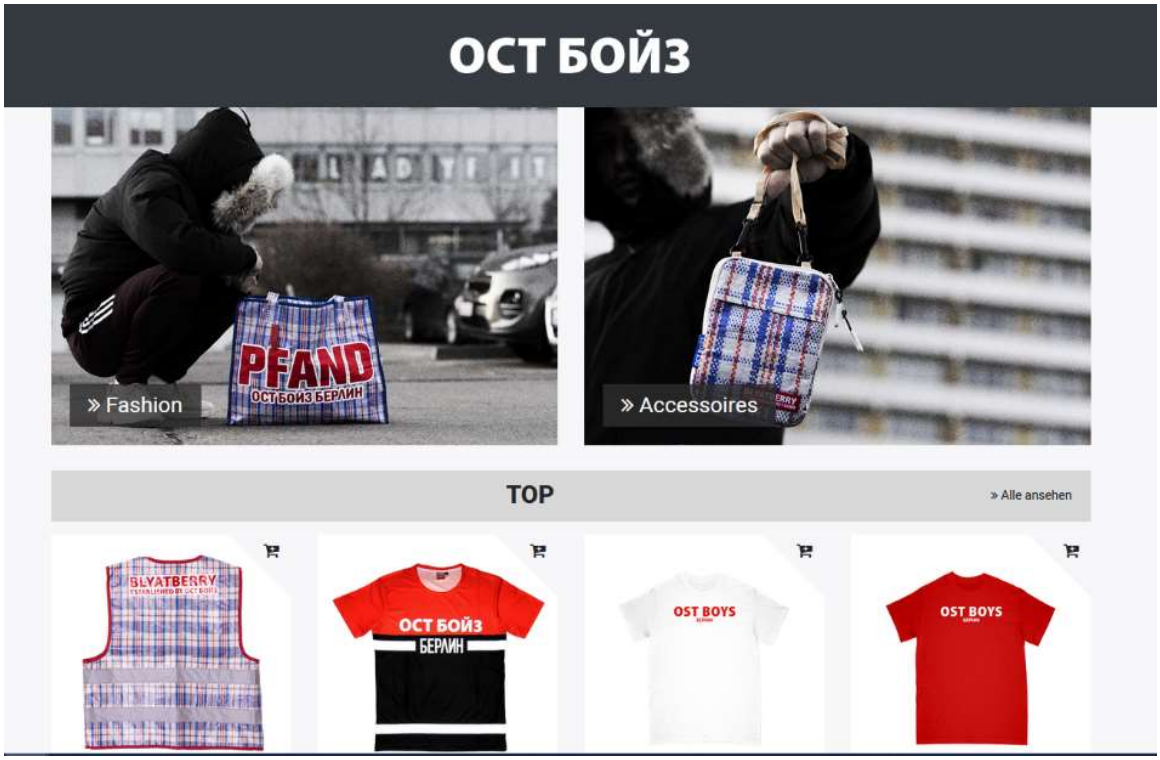
Appendix D: Identity Formations and Language Use

Figure D-1: A Mockery of Gopniki-Type of 'Russaki'
Source: hip-hop.ru.



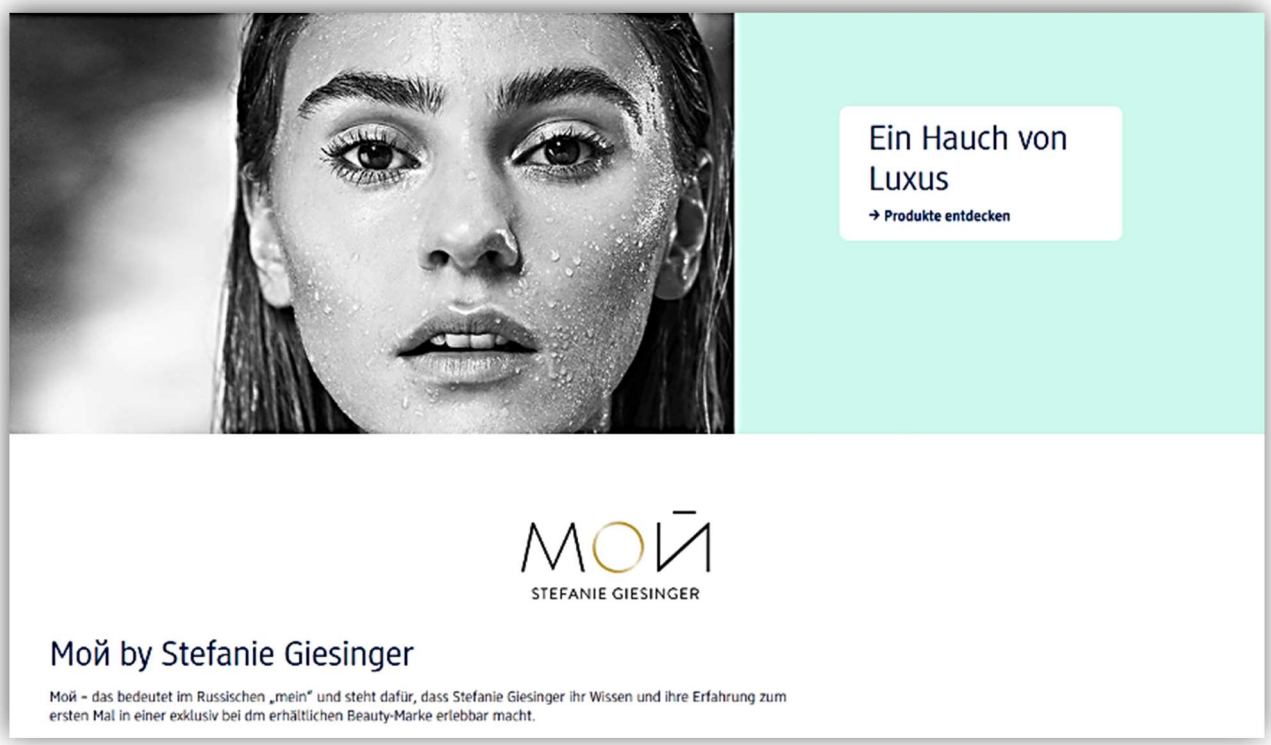
Note: As this depiction was discovered on social media, it raises doubts about its true authorship being attributed to the Russian Embassy in Berlin, as suggested in the lower right-hand corner. The portrayal of the term 'russak(i)' here clearly carries derogatory and condescending connotations, highlighting deviant behavior and marginalized cultural and social backgrounds.

Figure D-2: Ost Boys' Accessories



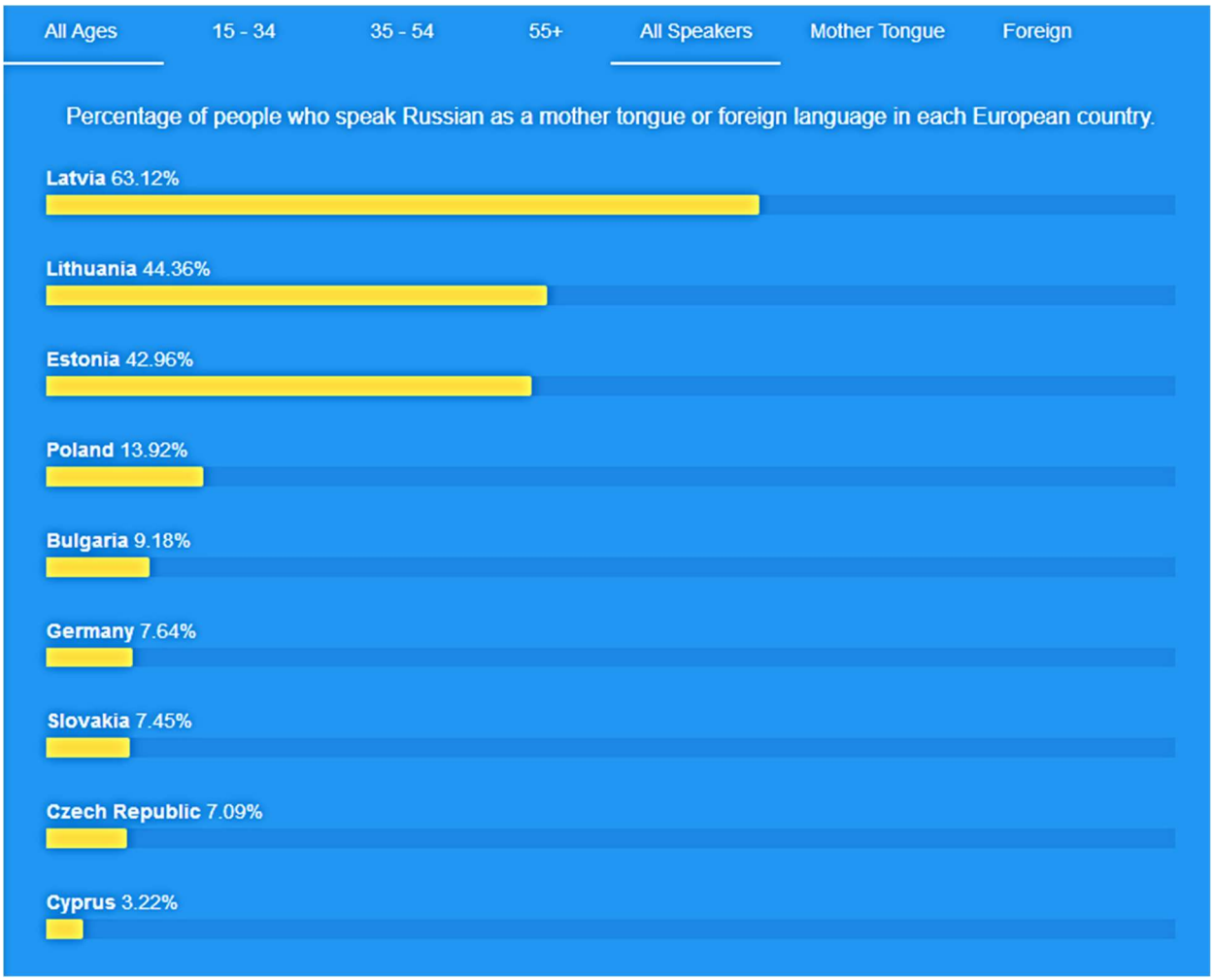
Source: Ost Boys / Ост Бойз, a screenshot, accessed on 11.09.2020

Figure D-3: 'Мой' (aka 'Mon') DM Beauty-Brand Advertisement



Source: A screenshot of the webpage https://www.dm.de/marken/mon-69066 accessed on 23.08.2020

Figure D-4: Russian Language Knowledge: All Speakers (Native/Foreign) in the EU (2012)



Source: A Screenshot from languageknowledge.eu 2012.

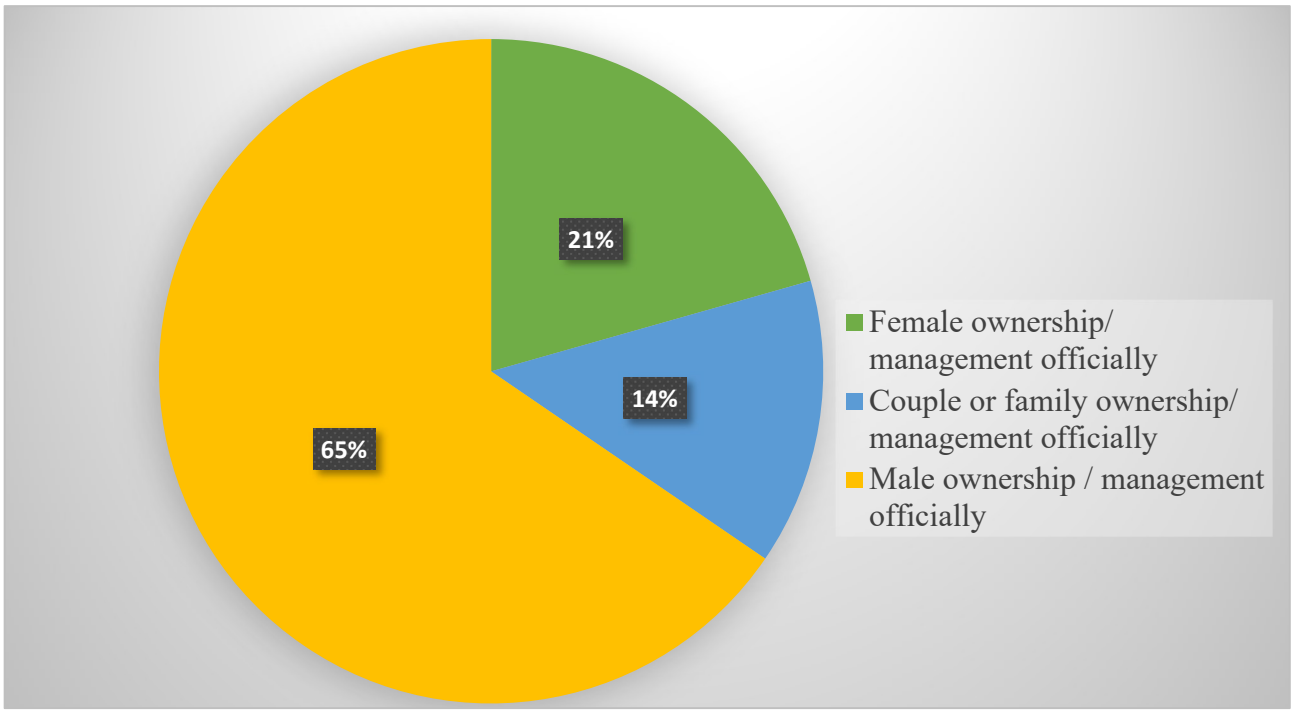
Appendix E: Mix Markt Supermarket Chain – From Small Ventures to Transnational Networks

Figure E-1: Countries of Origin of Mix Markt Owners in Germany (N=45)



Source: Own diagram based on the Dataset 'Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU'

Figure E-2: Mix Markt Gender Distribution Among Immigrant Entrepreneurs, 2019-2020 (N=165)



Source: Own calculations based on the Dataset (Table 6)

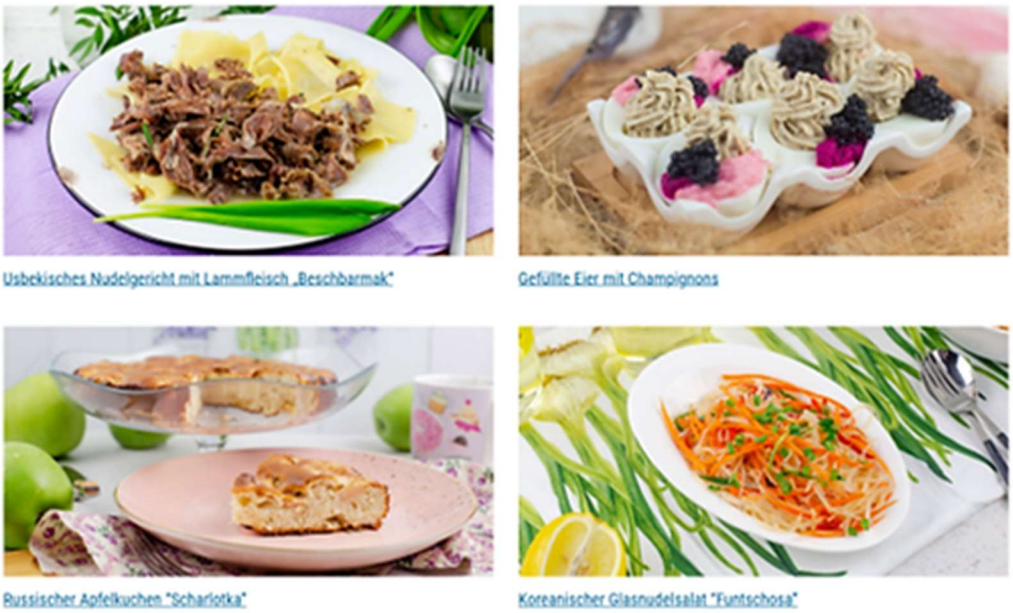
Figure E-3: Farewell Message of the Mix Markt Store Exit Area, 2019



Source: Fieldwork

A standardized farewell message, 'Thank you for your purchase!' is displayed in five languages: German, Russian, Polish, Romanian, and Turkish (presumably targeting the linguistic groups associated with the ethno-food concept).

Figure E-4: Promotion of The East European Culinary Fusion through Cooking Tutorials on the Mix Markt Webpage



Source: Own selection, screenshots from (Mixmarkt.eu 2020).

Above, you will find recipes from Uzbek, Russian, and Korean cuisines, as well as Polish, Ukrainian, and Romanian recipes, all available and promoted. Another aspect of the culinary fusion marketing strategy includes the recent release of a recipe book for East European cuisine, available in both German and Russian (Mix Markt 2020).

Table E-5: Classification Categories and Data Sources for the Created Dataset 'Mix Markt Stores in Germany and the EU'

General characteristics	*Urban scale*	*Entrepreneurs, management*	*Social ties*	*Business ties*
Address, official store number type of legal ownership (MMP)	Location – city type (Destatis)	**Name** (MMP, AB, LN)	No. of family members working in business (FW, AB, LN)	Other businesses through ownership (FW, HR, AB, MMP)
Opening or reopening year (HR, FW)	Residents: Number (Destatis)	Country of origin/ year of migration (AB, LN)	Customers (AB, LN, FW): Native German, co-migrant or co-ethnic	Monolith group [1] (ND, MMP)
Store age (FWiss, HR)	**Country where a Mix Markt located** (MMP)	**Gender** (MMP) according to the gendered form of owner/manager	Employees: from migrant pool or natives (FW, AB, LN)	Region of origin: Export (MMP, AB, LN)
Store size (AB, LN)		Education (AB, LN)	Local community engagement	
No. of employees (AB, LN, FWiss)		Professional/ business experience (AB, LN)	Links to social projects, civil sector, political organizations (FW, AB, LN)	
Contact (MMP)		Transition to Mix Markt business (AB, LN)	Social media presence (SM)	

Sources: FW / Own fieldwork, Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis 2011a, 2011b), MMP/ Mix Markt Web-Page (Mixmarkt.eu 2020), HR / Handelsregister (Unternehmensregister 2020), FWiss (firmenwissen.de), LN / Local newspapers, AB / Aussiedlerbote (Zeitung Aussiedlerbote 2014-2020), ND/ (Northdata), CH / (CompanyHouse), SM / social media (esp. Facebook, Vkontakte, YouTube).

Thematically the dataset included five core categories as depicted in Table 6: (1) Mix Markt store's general characteristics included such subcategories as an address, an official store number, a year of opening or reopening, a store age, a store size, No of employees; (2) Urban scale combined a store's location, a type of city, city's population, a country of location; (3) A category entrepreneurs, management compiled information on business management or ownership as a name, country of origin, year of migration, gender, education, professional/business experiences, transition to the Mix Markt business; (4) A category social ties depicted a number of family members working in a Mix Markt store, information about customers and shop employees, local community engagement and social media presence, links to local social projects, civil sector, political organizations; (5) A

[1] Since1998, the Monolith Group focuses on the wholesale and retail trade of the Eastern European products or branded like Eastern European products (Monolith 2020).

category business ties included connections to the Monolith group, an umbrella organization of the Mix Markt chain, connections to other businesses through ownership, ties to foreign businesses, especially in terms of export-import. The official Mix Markt webpage provides limited information about the functioning stores together with their addresses, the country of their location, their official store number, a type of legal ownership, sometimes owners' or managers' names, and their contact details. Official store numbers are significant as they provide insight into the sequence of store openings. For instance, it is highly likely that Mix Markt store No. 5 was registered during the initial wave of Mix Markt consolidation, in contrast to Mix Markt store No. 145.

Table E-5 depicts these categories of data as well as indicates the data sources. The subcategories highlighted **in bold** were accessible on the official Mix Markt webpage. This background information served as a scaffolding, further information on a specific shop was checked, accumulated, and added from other dozen sources. All this information was collected from publicly available sources, in the period between January – August 2020.

Appendix F: The Scheherazade Dance Group

Based on the findings gathered during the 2012-2014 fieldwork



Figure F-1: Chronology of Video-Recorded Fieldwork Activities, 2013-2014



Source: Own depiction. The red triangles indicate dates of video-recorded activities, spanning a diverse range of events. These activities encompassed rehearsals (20), public and semi-public performances (9), and organizational meetings in private settings (10), among other. Collectively, the fieldwork yielded approximately 50 hours of the video-recorded material.

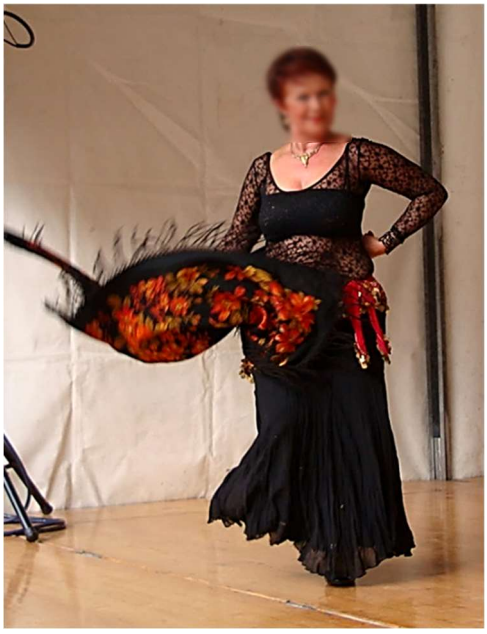


Figure F-2: Scheherazade: A Solo Performance at the Intercultural Week, 2012. Source: Photographed by the author at the event.



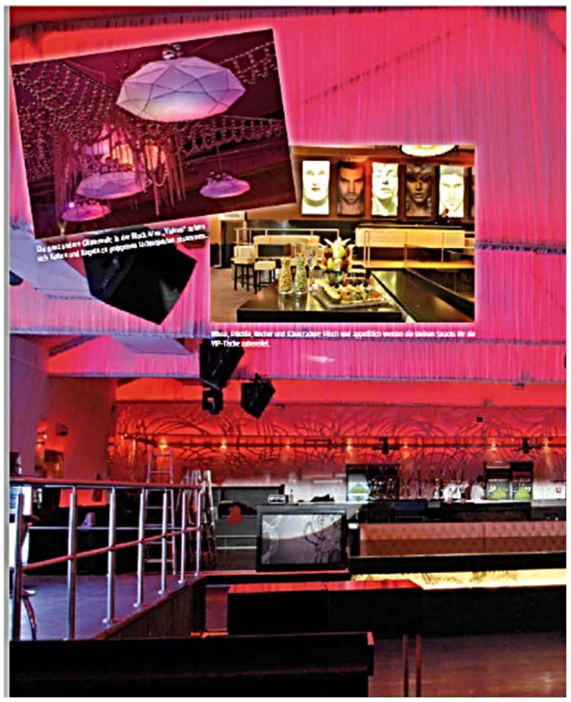
Figure F-3: Advertisement for Russian Night with Live Music and Catering, 2012 Source: Event poster



Figure F-4: Russian Day Flyer in Xcity, 2012
These events, which offer free entry, typically feature Russian cuisine, music, and performances organized by the community center by and for Russian-speaking immigrants. Source: Event poster.

Note: All images or video screen captures, unless otherwise credited, were captured by me during my fieldwork using both a video and a photo camera.

Figure F-5: Atmosphere at Club *Revolution* in Neuss, also known as a *Russian Disco*



Source: Niester 2012, S. 11–15.

Figure F-6: Advertisement for the *Russaki in Germany Festival* at the Unity Club in Bruchsal, 2019

Source: Unity Club.



Figure F-7: **Advertisement for a Concert at the Dancing Club *Russian Glamour*, 2012**



This and other dancing clubs mentioned by the interview partners cater to various audiences. Some, like *Russian Glamour* in Ludwigshafen, emphasize their 'Russianness,' while others organize specific parties and events for the Russian-speaking public (Fig. F-6, F-8).

Source: Facebook page of the Russian Crème

Figure F-8: Advertisement for the *One Night in Mother Russia* Party at the Unity Club, 2019



Source: Unity Club.

Figure F-9: Step-by-step Teaching and Leaning, Micro-Situative Action 1



Context: The group is rehearsing a new dance routine involving the Isis Wings. Mila becomes disheartened as she struggles to execute a left-side rotation, leading to a loss of hope.
Sequence 1: Liza (in red) comforts her and helps her try to dance with her Isis Wings. Mila follows her advice, attempts the dance, and becomes even more despondent, exclaiming, "*I can't do it* (!)"

Sequence 2: Diara remarks, "*Even with the wings, it doesn't work* (?!)". Mila, picks up her veil, resumes her performance with the veil, but the move still proves challenging: "*I won't manage it from this side*". Following their brief exchange, the dancers collectively discuss how to address the issue and adjust their positioning to execute the choreography successfully. Ultimately, they decide to keep their placement unchanged. Liza provides encouragement, saying, "*come on* (.) *we've only just begun learning this dance.*"

Sequence 3: Diara begins breaking down the left-side rotation into smaller steps, but it appears not to be effective. Mila continues to express her difficulty: "*I can't do it.*" Diara responds: "*if you keep repeating it* (.) *then of course*". She emphasizes: "*keep your back straight, lift your chin* (.) *well* (.) *these little details enable you to execute a good swing* (..) *it's like with a plane* (..) *every detail matters* (.) *including the direction of the wing* (.)" Diara demonstrates the rotation in slow motion.

Sequence 4: She then continues, saying, "*now concentrate* (.) *on the count of four we will rotate with the legs* (.) *one* (.) *two* (.) *focus* (.) *three* (.) *four* (.) [they rotate together] *did you see it* (?) *you tried to do the second rotation* (..) *let's do it again* (..) *without slow* [practicing] *there is no fast* [motion]". After the multiple attempts, Mila gains confidence. She later performed this dance with the group at a party, as shown in Figure F-26.7.

Figure F-10: The Close-Knit Circle, msa 5

Context: While taking a break from rehearsing a new Romany dance, Alia shares a sentimental anecdote about her red babushka, a traditional female headscarf that once belonged to her late mother.



Sequence 1: Liza, who typically has limited and distant contact with Alia, expresses her condolences, asking, "*I am very sorry to hear that* (…) *when did your mum pass away* (?)"

Sequence 5.2: While Diara moves away to restart a CD player, Alia approaches Liza and softly replies, "*a long time ago*" (This red babushka is one of the few memories left to her.)

Sequence 5.3: Liza responds with compassion "*I am very sorry*" ["*Tut mir so leid*" (DE)], while also adjusting Alia's dancing costume, symbolizing her support.

Note: What is intriguing in this situation is that this piece of a dancing accessory suddenly acquires a symbolic value related to affection, loss, or a connection simultaneously. While dancing with each other, they gradually learn about each other's personal situations within these narrowing-down circles. In another instance, two other members discovered that they both originated from the same neighborhood in a Kazakh city.

Figure F-11: Moving Wall, msa 6

Context: Due to the late hour of the rehearsal in winter, no one else is expected to be in the school.



Sequence 1: The dancers are startled by a sudden, unexpectedly loud noise emanating from the corridors. Momentarily, everyone is concerned and frightened. It turns out the front door was left unlocked.

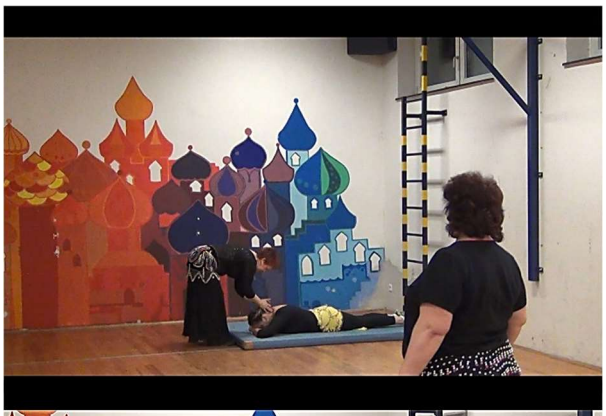
Sequence 2: They decide to check the source of the noise together. As a group, they move forward, with some members carrying sticks for protection. The initial fear dissipates, and they start joking and laughing while inspecting the entrance and school corridors. The 'spooky moment' has passed, and the situation is deemed secure.

Sequence 3: Liza, who holds the key to the rehearsal space, locks the entrance. While forming a tight semi-circle facing the front door, they establish a rule: the last person to arrive locks the door to prevent unauthorized entry.

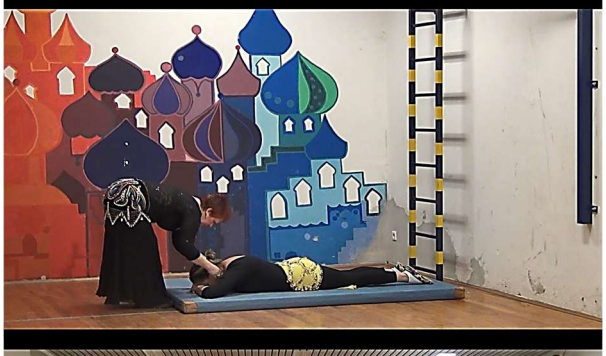
Sequence 4: The group returns to rehearsing the finale of the veil dance.

Figure F-12: Reciprocal Acts of Kindness, msa 7

Context: The beginning of the rehearsal during a warm-up session.
Mila complains of a neck ache.



Sequence 1: Liza, a physiotherapist and sports-trainer, offers to help her with the issue. Alia observes and is momentarily distracted from warming up, finding the situation amusing.



Sequence 2: Liza continues to alleviate Mila's pain by massaging her neck for a few more minutes.



Sequence 3: While Liza is focused on Mila's neck, Diara and Alia continue their warm-up exercises.



Sequence 4: After a brief time, everyone returns to the dance floor, continuing their warm-up routine before rehearsing the choreography.

Figure F-13: The Pioneer Salute in a Dancing Context, msa 8

Context: The group is rehearsing a dance with veils without music (dry rehearsal). Marina is struggling to perform a rotation movement correctly.



Sequence 1: Diara and Liza provide instructions to Marina (in the blue circle) on how to hold her right hand correctly with a veil before performing a body rotation. The hand positioning resembles a pioneer's salute. Diara playfully asks, "*by the way, some were doing a pioneer's salute anyhow* (.) *Marina have you ever been a pioneer* (?)"



Sequence 2: Mila approaches Marina to demonstrate the correct hand positioning with a veil. Diara follows suit, showing the hand placement. After finally getting the placement right, Marina responds to Diara's question with a laugh, "*I was* (…) *now I remember it.*"

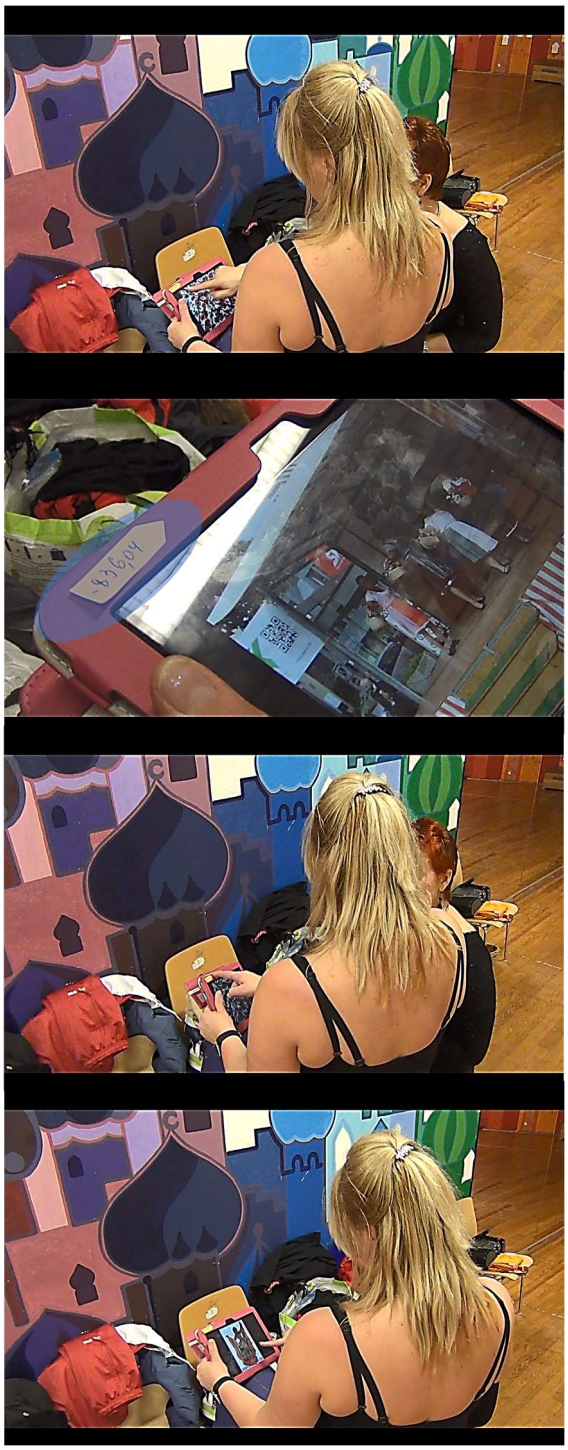


Sequence 8.3. Diara returns to her position and proudly declares, "*I was the most precise pioneer* (.) *I was a komsorg* (.) *so I had the most excellent salute*."[2] Liza chimes in, "*you were a komsorg* (.) *that is the Komsomol*." Diara continues, "*the thumb at the level of forehead*", while indicating the correct hand position for a pioneer salute.

[2] 'Komsorg' is a shorthand term for a Komsomol organizer, while 'Komsomol' refers to *The All-Union Leninist Young Communist League,* which served as the core of youth ideological education in the Soviet Union.

Figure F-14: "I was there" Experience, msa 9

Context: It is the late hour of the rehearsal, and a few members are still present to check fabrics they want to order for the new costumes. Diara uses her tablet to display patterns and costume models.



Sequence 1: While checking fabric patterns, Lisa refers to a post-it note in the upper left corner and asks: "*what is this* (?)". Diara quickly replies, "*this is my overdraft* [at a family bank account]". Marina, who is also present to Diara's left side but not in the focus of the camera, continues to say: "*we have to order fabric with different patterns and check how it looks* (…)"

Sequence 2: Liza insists on referring to the post-it note with numbers, while there is a picture capturing their performance of the German polka dance at the municipal event Intercultural week. Diara explains: "*I wrote it so I keep it in mind*."

Sequence 3: Liza explains, "*I also had this kind of overdraft when I used to live alone**." Diara says: "*I still have to live two more weeks with this overdraft,*" apparently until the end of the month when she and her family get income from her 'mini-job' and social security benefits (due to the low income).

* 'Alone' here refers to living without a husband, following her divorce, while raising her two children under the age of 18.

Sequence 4: Liza continues "*you have a man* (..) [referring to her husband] *when I used to live* ***alone*** (.) *I always had such negative balance* (.)" she has remarried again. Diara jokes back "*if I were living alone* (.) *I would have only positive balance*", while continuing to look through the pictures. Liza changes the subject: "*can I order this costume?*" Diara replies: "*that is in the Moscow shop* (..) *I just wanted to show you a sample of how we are going to design our new costumes."*

Figure F-15: Focusing and Adapting to the Situation, msa 10

Context: Alia brought her youngest son Sasha (6) to the rehearsal, which happens seldom.
Scheme: Maintaining focus within the circle and adapting to the situation



Sequence 1: Alia adjusts her son's clothes and joins the group.



Sequence 2: Since we met for the first time, Sasha is excited by the presence of the camera and me filming. He tries to catch my attention and asks me to film him.



Sequence 3: I film him for a while and then switch to the dancing group. The boy continues waiving hands, moving around the camera, and making loud noises.



Sequence 4: The group remains focused on practicing, not displaying irritation despite the noise and rolling balls on the rehearsing floor. Throughout the rehearsal, there was no sign of annoyance or discomfort; rather, there was a sense of understanding that it was a childcare emergency.

Sasha's active presence at that rehearsal highlighted the difference between when kids are present and when they are not. On the one hand, members with young children must arrange childcare in the evenings to participate in the dancing project. On the other hand, there is adjustment to the situation, tolerance, and an understanding of childcare emergencies when kids are brought to the rehearsal.

Figure F-16: Body Posture and Motivation, 8-Steps Sequence
[Clip 1 of 00:12' seconds]









Sequence 1. [A situational scheme below] The frontal line: Alia and Liza engage in a quiet conversation while Liza takes a brief water break. Acoustically, it is difficult to capture because Alia's son makes loud noises in the background (referencing msa 10, Fig. F-16). What is happening in the back line is more expressive in terms of body language, accompanied by Diara's enthusiastic comments (C1-00:02').

Sequence 11.2. The back line: Diara, Mila, and Marina (almost out of shot) discuss body postures. Diara demonstrates a 'wrong' body posture by leaning forward and comments: "(…) *you have to fix your posture* (…) *and then walk*" ["(…) *нужно положение ставить* (…) *и пошли*"]. Diara mockingly leans forward and marches.

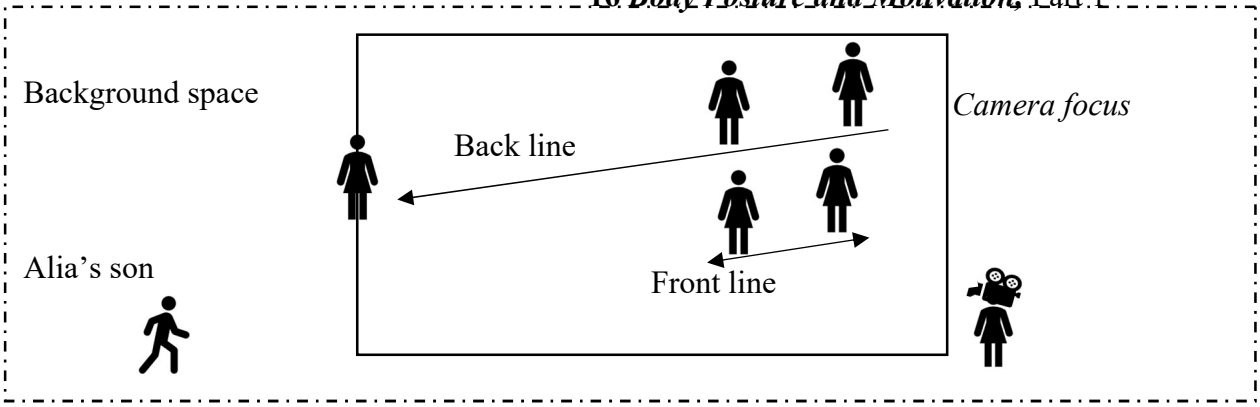
Sequence 11.3. She continues: "(…) *you lift a grandmother**(.) *drop her* (.) *get up yourselves* (.) *straighten*" ["… а вы подняли бабушку (.) положили посадили (.) и сами встаньте (.) выпрямитесь] (C1-00:09').

*This figurative reference to a *grandmother* [бабушка] could associate with age and aging.

Sequence 11.4. Diara changes her body posture, saying, "(.) *and walk* (..) *with your chest* [breast] *forward*" ["(.) *и пошли* (..) *грудь вперед*] (C1-00:10'). At this point, the rest of the group becomes interested in the subject.

To be continued

Figure F-17: A Situational Scheme of Figure F-16 *Body Posture and Motivation*, Part 1





Sequence 5: Diara parades with exaggerated posture back and forth to emphasize her point. Everyone has joined the discussion and laughs at Diara's playful mockery. Diara: "(.) *you should just check it out*" ["(.) *а ты посмотри ради интереса*"].

Sequence 6: Liza adds humor, saying, "*Sometimes I wake up at night (.) and there they are,* [lifts her hands imitating large breasts] *with such breasts* (.) *showing themselves*" ["*Вот ночью бываем я просыпаюсь* (.) *а там такие сидят* […] *с такими грудями* (.) *показывают себя*"]. She is likely jokingly referring to adult night shows on TV.

Sequence 7: In a circle, the participants continue their conversation. Diara remarks, "*Do you know why it's like this* (?.) *because you aren't motivated* (.) *that's why you walk this way* (.) ["*Это знаете почему* (?.) *потому что мотивации у вас нет* (.) *поэтому и ходите так* (.) *и пошли* (..)"]. She arches her back to demonstrate the incorrect posture and encourages everyone to walk properly.

Sequence 8: While Alia checks on her son, Diara concludes with emphasis, "(!) *if you had motivation* (!)" ["(!) *была бы мотивация* (!)"]. She straightens her back, leaning backward proudly. The group then resumes working on the veil dance.

Figure F-18: A Situational Scheme of Figure F-16 *Body Posture and Motivation*, Part 2

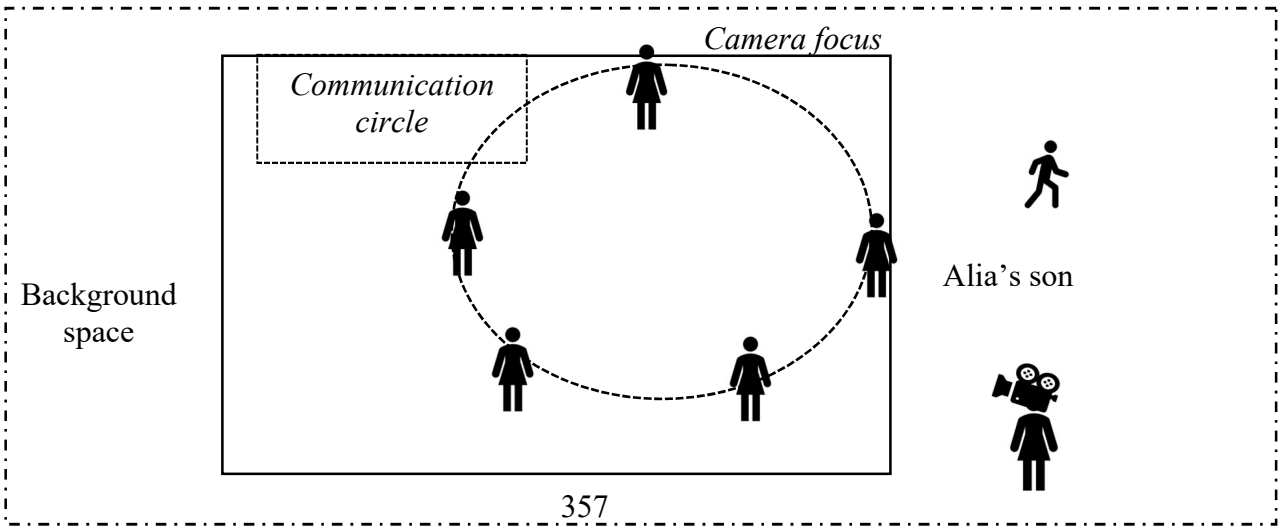


Figure F-19: Auto-Exoticism – Cultural Flexibility, Folkloric Imaginary, and Metamorphosis



Fig. F-19.1: A performance during the Intercultural week, 2013
Dance: Spanish oriental fusion
Music: *Salma Ya Salama* (2005) by Ishtar Alabina, Israel/France
Image source: W. Bödde, private archive



Fig. F-19.2: A performance at the VHS joint event, 2012
Dance style: Uzbek folk dance
Music: Unknown
Image Source: Private archive



Fig. F-19.3: The second performance during the talent-show *Harmonika*, 2013
Dance style: Alpen Polka
Music: Instrumental polka music



Fig. F-19.4: A performance during the corporative event, 2014
Dance style: Malagueñas, flamenco style
Music: Instrumental Spanish folk music



Fig. F-19.5: A solo-performance during the corporative event, 2014
Dance style: Belly dance fusion with Chinese fan veils
Music: Music of the composer Sulton Ali Rahmatov (Uzbekistan)



Fig. F-19.6: The first performance at the *Autumn Ball*, a semi-public party, 2013
Dance style: Belly dance fusion with Isis Wings*
Music: Waterfall/ Водопад (2000) by DiDuLa / ДиДюЛя (Belarus)

* Isis Wings allegedly from Las Vegas, early 20th century



Fig. F-19.7: The second performance at the *Autumn Ball*, 2013
Dance style: Egyptian Saidi-styled dance
Music: Εσένα Μόνο / Esena mono (2003) by Keti Garbi (Greece)

Continued from the previous page



Fig. F-19.9: Engaging the audience to dance after the performance at the VHS event, 2014
Dance style: Belly dance fusion
Music: Arabic drums
Picture source: Private archive



Fig. F-19.10 A dance rehearsal at the public course at the VHS, 2014
Dance style: Indian tribal / Bollywood dance
Music: Maahi Ve/ माही वे (2003) by Udit Narayan, Sonu Nigam, and others (India)

Scheherazade in Local Print Media[3]

Figure F-20: Pre-Scheherazade Time, the Article Cut from the Local Newspaper, 2009



Annäherung und Information

Zum Start der „Interkulturellen Woche" öffnet ein „Markt der Begegnung" seine Pforten

VON HEIDELORE KRUSE

Statt Obst und Gemüse ein buntes Angebot für Begegnung, Annäherung, Information: Das war der „Markt der Begegnung" zum Auftakt der „Interkulturellen Woche" am Samstag auf dem Schillerplatz.

An der Stelle, wo die Hinweisschilder nach Japan, Trinidad Tobago, Spanien, Paraguay, Spanien und die USA aus der Zeit der Fußball-Weltmeisterschaft noch ein Gefühl von globaler Stadt verbreiten, unterhielt über vier Stunden ein Dutzend internationaler Gruppen und Vereine.

Auf dem Weg zum Wochenend-Einkauf nahmen sich von Stunde zu Stunde mehr Passanten ein bisschen Zeit zum Zuschauen, Zuhören, Mitreden. Auf der kleinen Bühne ging es Schlag auf Schlag. Die Kinder-Folkloregruppe der Eritreischen Gemeinde der Pfalz zeigte traditionelle Tänze aus ihrer Heimat und Olga Bardens aus Kasachstan führte mit ihrer Tochter Bauchtänze und Zigeunertänze vor.

Reichten sich eben noch die Akteure des „Action Fraction Square Dance Clubs" zu immer neuen Figuren die Hände, unterhielt Minuten später der Rheinland-Pfalz International Choir mit einem Strauß internationaler Lieder. Die Ballettratten der Ballettschule von Lijdia Mejder warteten da schon ungeduldig auf ihren Auftritt.

Farbenprächtig: der Auftrit der kasachischen Bauchtänzerin Olga Bardens am Samstag auf dem „Markt der Begegnung".

Oberbürgermeister Weichel wirbt für die Wahl des Migrationsbeirats.

In seiner Begrüßung hatte Oberbürgermeister Klaus Weichel von der Bedeutung der Integration von Menschen anderer Herkunft in der Stadt gesprochen. Angesichts einer erschreckend geringen Beteiligung von nur 2,06 Prozent an den damit gescheiterten Wahlen zum Ausländerbeirat 2004 wollte er die „Interkulturelle Woche" auch als Werbung verstehen für die Teilnahme an der Wahl des „Beirats für Migration und Integration" am Sonntag, 8. November.

Die knapp 20 Stände, die den „Markt" umrahmten, boten hinreichend Gelegenheit – auch im Vorfeld dieser Wahl – mehr über die Stadt und ihre Institutionen zu erfahren. Zum Beispiel beim Polizeipräsidium Westpfalz, das in sechs Sprachen eine Broschüre zum Thema „Gewalt in engen sozialen Beziehungen" ausgelegt hatte und „die Polizei im demokratischen Rechtsstaat" in einer eigenen russischen Übersetzung erläuterte.

„Kein Geld, Probleme in der Schule, Ausgrenzung", nannte die Sozialpädagogische Familienhilfe des CJD Jugenddorf Wolfstein aus ihrer praktischen Arbeit mit Migrantenfamilien ihre Erfahrungen. „Wir wollen hier zeigen, dass wir da sind und unser Hilfsangebot bekannt machen", erklärten die Mitarbeiter Gabriele Habicht und Markus Molitor.

„Eine ältere Frau meinte, die Kinder sollten lieber Deutsch lernen als Russisch", berichtete eine Helferin bei „Blick", von einem Meinungsaustausch an diesem Morgen. Der als „russische Schule auf dem Bännjerrück" bekannte Verein bringt Grundschulkindern russische Grammatik und Rechtschreibung bei.

Mit einer Einladung zu einem Gläschen Tee oder einer Tasse türkischen Mokka stellte sich der Türkische Elternverein Kaiserslautern zum ersten Mal im Rahmen des „Markts der Begegnung" vor. „Die türkische Gesellschaft ist mehrschichtig, mit der Zeit wollen sich viele in die Gesellschaft integrieren; das wollen wir zeigen", sagte dazu Vorsitzender Burak Sener. (krh)

Source: Kruse 2009.

The text caption to the title picture: *"Flamboyant: The performance of Kazakh belly dancer L. Bardo on Saturday"* / *„Farbenprächtig: der Auftritt der kasachischen Bauchtänzerin Liza am Samstag"*.

[3] All newspaper articles were contributed by a Scheherazade member. Some of the clippings were difficult to interpret in terms of the publication date, page, or the specific newspaper. It is presumed that these articles originate from the local newspaper *Die Rheinpfalz*. My estimate of the year is based on the content and visuals.

Figure F-21: 'Die Tanzgruppe Scheherazade aus Usbekistan mit ihren spanisch-orientalischen Tänzen:' Clipping from the Local Newspaper, 2012



„Wir machen Fortschritte"

Interkulturelle Woche: Buntes Program beim „Markt der Begegnung"

Gemeinsam unter einem Zeltdach: Die Beiräte für Migration und Integration aus Stadt und Landkreis Kaiserslautern sind eine von knapp zwei Dutzend Anlaufstationen beim „Markt der Begegnung" am Samstag auf dem Schillerplatz. Das bunte internationale Programm auf der Bühne bei der interkulturellen Woche, dazu die vielen Leute, die den Tänzen zuschauen und sich an den Ständen informieren, spricht für die Veranstaltung.

Wie sehen das die Beiräte? „Es ist mühsam, aber wir machen Fortschritte", beantwortet Sofronios Spytalimakis die Frage, wie es mit der Integration in Kaiserslautern vorangeht. Einfach sei die Sache nicht, räumt der Beauftragte des Landkreises ein, aber der Ansporn weiterzumachen sei da. Integration sei keine einfache Sache, sie müsse vorgelebt werden: „So eine Veranstaltung bringt die Leute einander näher als reden." „Ich habe langsam das Gefühl, dass Politik und Verwaltung das ganze Ernst nehmen", erklärt Artur Harutyunyan. Früher habe man dort wohl gedacht, dass Integration eine Sache für Ausländer sei, die sich selbst damit beschäftigen müssten, glaubt der Beiratsvorsitzende der Stadt.

Politik und Verwaltung aus Kaiserslautern und der Partnerstadt Silkeborg sind jedenfalls auf dem Markt unterwegs. Am Vortag haben Experten beider Städte die Integrationspolitik von Kaiserslautern diskutiert. „Unser Schulsystem ist kommunal, wir bestimmen die Fächer und die Stundenzahl, wir können also selbst etwas daran ändern; von der Partnerstadt erhalten wir Inspiration", erläutert Britta Bang, Dezernentin für Kinder und Jugendliche. Eine Anregung für Kaiserslautern war ihr Bericht über Förderunterricht für Migrantenkinder mit Sprachdefiziten, die dafür in Klassen zusammengefasst würden.

„Es war noch nie so bunt, es finden immer mehr Menschen den Weg hierher, die mitmachen wollen", lobt der Oberbürgermeister den „Markt der Begegnung". Das Jahresmotto „Herzlich willkommen – wer immer Du bist" aufgreifend, erklärt Klaus Weichel „Sie haben Kompetenz und Sprachfähigkeit, das bereichert eine Stadtgesellschaft." Kaiserslautern sei stolz, dass Menschen aus 140 Nationen hier wohnten.

Kreisbeigeordneter Gerhard Müller dankt Gisela Fixemer-Reiland, der Sprecherin des Netzwerks für Migration und Integration, für ihr Engagement für die Veranstaltung und erklärt: „In der heutigen Zeit brauchen wir mehr denn je dieses Zeichen."

Essen und Trinken hält Leib und Seele zusammen, es verbindet auch Länder und Kulturen – zum Beispiel am Stand des Türkischen Elternvereins. Der Stand ist mit kulinarischen Köstlichkeiten von Hirsesalat bis zu mit Schafskäse gefülltem Gebäck und Tee bestens ausgestattet und es wird eifrig zugegriffen. Ein gefüllter Hefezopf nimmt sich dazwischen geradezu exotisch aus. „Das ist die deutsch-türkische Verbindung", meint Vereinsvorsitzender Fatih Temel lachend. Auf seine Mitglieder kann er sich verlassen: „Alles was mit solchen Veranstaltungen zu tun hat, machen wir mit."

Bei der Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland gibt's Maultaschen mit Hackfleisch und Blinis mit Quark. Besonders lecker schmecken sie heiß; die Frauen haben die Mikrowelle mitgebracht und freuen sich, dass die Teilchen schmecken.

Auf der Bühne präsentiert der Folkloreclub der Portugiesen in Kaiserslautern mit seinen Tänzen den bäuerlichen Norden des Landes. In frühlingsgrünen Kostümen mit zierlichen Schirmchen tanzen Frau He und ihre Freundinnen dazu ein chinesisches Kontrastprogramm und die Ballettschule Mejder hat sowohl spanische als auch orientalische Tänze in ihrem Repertoire.

Mit der Volkshochschule, dem Jugendmigrationsdienst und Caritas als Partner sei das Bundesamt für Migration und Integration in Kaiserslautern Stadt und Landkreis gut aufgestellt, äußert Regionalbeauftragter Harald Kafitz zufrieden. Das Erlernen der Sprache sei dabei das wichtigstes Anliegen. Als jüngstes Angebot seien aktuell an den Schulen Sprachkurse für Eltern der Kinder in Planung. (krh)

Die Tanzgruppe Scheherazade aus Usbekistan mit ihren spanisch-orientalischen Tänzen begeisterte die Zuschauer zum Auftakt der interkulturellen Woche. FOTO: VIEW

The text caption for the title picture: "The dance group Scheherazade from Uzbekistan with their Spanish-oriental dances." Source: krh 2012.

Figure F-22: 'Die Tanzgruppe Scheheresada trat in farbenprächtigen Kostümen:' Clipping from the Local Newspaper, 2014



Sonnenschein und gute Laune

Interkulturelle Woche mit „Markt der Begegnung" in Schwung gekommen

Jubiläum: Roter Teppich für die Gäste

Die Tanzgruppe Schecheresada trat in farbenprächtigen Kostümen auf dem Schillerplatz auf. FOTO: VIEW

Mit einem bunten, gut besuchten „Markt der Begegnung" auf dem Schillerplatz ist die Interkulturelle

aus gemischten Konfessionen, die sich regelmäßig trifft, regte Passanten zum Nachdenken an: Was wollten sie

ons-Netzwerkerin Leyla Cetintas. Seitens der Betriebe seien zwar noch Barrieren da, doch wer sich darauf

Schillerplatz zur Begegnung einluden, war der Armenische Verein „Lujs". „Armenien ist ein kleines Land, man muss nicht erwarten, dass man

Die Wirtschaf fünf Jahrzehn

Bei einem E dem Festsa Gäste aus Dienstleis dezente bandt un le „Lazy des na boten Glas

The text caption for the title picture: "The dance group Scheheresada performed in flamboyant costumes" Source: [N/A] 2014.

Figure F-23: 'Der lange Weg in die neue, alte Heimat:' Clipping of the Local Newspaper Article, 2014



DIE RHEINPFALZ – NR. 21 — DIE RHEINPFALZ — SAMSTAG, 25. JANUAR 2014

IHR WOCHENENDE

ZUHAUSE IN DER PFALZ

Balkon: Die Damen von Reinacker
Kinderzimmer: Nils Nager im Puppentheater
Bibliothek: Irvine Welshs „Skagboys"
Im Garten: Alte und neue Pfälzer Obstsorten

Der lange Weg in die neue, alte Heimat

1763 lud Katharina II. deutsche Bauern nach Russland ein. Auch Tausende Pfälzer folgten dem Ruf der Zarin ans Schwarze Meer und an die Wolga. Als „Spätaussiedler" kehrten sie seit den 1970er Jahren in die ihre alte Heimat zurück. Das Institut für Pfälzische Geschichte und Volkskunde in Kaiserslautern erinnerte mit einer Tagung daran und plant ein Buchprojekt zur Geschichte der Pfälzer Russlanddeutschen.

Ein Stück Heimat in der Ferne: russlanddeutsche Bauern bei der Weinlese im Südkaukasus. Das Bild links entstand um 1920 in Katharinenfeld.
FOTOS (3): INSTITUT FÜR PFÄLZISCHE GESCHICHTE UND VOLKSKUNDE

VON NATALIE SUDERMANN

Der kleine Seminarraum im Institut für Pfälzische Geschichte und Volkskunde platzt aus allen Nähten. Rund 50 Teilnehmer sind zur Tagung „250 Jahre Auswanderung von Deutschen nach Russland" gekommen, die meisten sind Russlanddeutsche, viele kennen sich untereinander. Und wenn nicht, kommen sie mit der Frage, wo man vor der Rückkehr nach Deutschland gelebt hat, schnell ins Gespräch. Eine bestimmte Zeitzeugin aber, die Institutsdirektor Roland Paul gerne an diesem Dienstag begrüßt hätte, kann nicht dabei sein: Maria Preis aus Kaiserslautern. Eigentlich wollte die 90-Jährige bei der Tagung aus ihrem Leben berichten. Da die Gesundheit nicht mitspielt, hat Preis ihre Erinnerungen auf Papier festgehalten. „Was ich über meine Heimat weiß" hat sie ihren Aufsatz genannt, aus dem Paul vorliest.

Die Geschichten, die Preis über ihr Leben in der frühen Sowjetzeit erzählt – solche oder ähnliche Geschichten können alle Russlanddeutschen der älteren Generation erzählen. Sie schreibt von ihrem Heimatdorf im ukrainischen Saporoschje, wo jeder jeden kennt, und vom bescheidenen Wohlstand, den sich die deutschen Bauern in etwas über 150 Jahren erarbeitet haben.

> „Wer bei uns nichts hat, kann dort glücklich werden", werben Flugblätter in der Pfalz.

Das ändert sich in den späten 20er Jahren, mit der Zwangskollektivierung der Landwirtschaft und der Gründung von Kolchosen. Preis schreibt über die Zerstörung der Dorfkirche, die Hungersnot von 1932/33, über das Vieh, das man den deutschen Bauern abnimmt, und das anschließend langsam in den Ställen der Kolchosen verendet, weil es kein Futter gibt. Über den Besuch der „Kommunisten", die ihrer Mutter das Mehl, mit dem sie gerade backen will, wegnehmen, um die Quoten an Getreidelieferungen, die die Regierung in Moskau in ihren Fünfjahresplänen vorschrieb, zu erfüllen. Sie schreibt von ihrer Ausbildung zur Deutschlehrerin, vom Einzug zur Zwangsarbeit in die Arbeitsarmee, als die Wehrmacht 1941 die Sowjetunion angreift, vom Holzfällen im meterhohen Schnee, ohne passende Arbeitskleidung, von Erschöpfung, Krankheit und Hunger. „Wir waren immer hungrig."

Die Geschichte von Russlanddeutschen wie Maria Preis, berichtet Institutsleiter Paul, beginnt am 22. Juli 1763, mit einem Manifest Katharinas II. Die russische Zarin braucht fleißige Bauern und Handwerker. Und zwar viele. Die sollen in die neu eroberten Gebiete im Süden des Riesenreichs ziehen, das Land besiedeln, es urbar machen, Dörfer und Städte aufbauen. Katharinas Angebot: Übernahme der Reisekosten, Autonomie, freie Religionsausübung, Steuerfreiheit für 30 Jahre, zinsfreie Kredite als Starthilfe, Befreiung vom Zivil- und Militärdienst.

Für eine entsprechende „Publicity" in den deutschen Fürstentümern sorgen professionelle Werber. Flugblätter vergleichen Klima und Landschaft der Zielregionen mit den Oberrheingebieten, versprechen bestes Ackerland: „Wer bei uns nichts hat, kann dort glücklich werden." Sätze wie diese verfehlen ihre Wirkung bei vielen durch Missernten und Landteilung verarmten Bauern nicht: Zehntausende verlassen in den Folgejahren die Pfalz – insbesondere die Südpfalz –, Baden, Württemberg, Hessen, das Elsass und Westpreußen, um sich an der Wolga niederzulassen. Eine zweite Welle folgt Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts, diesmal Richtung Schwarzes Meer.

Sehr zum Unmut der pfälzischen Regierung – schließlich gehen ihr so massenhaft Steuerzahler verloren, Kurfürst Karl IV. Theodor erlässt 1766 ein Auswanderungsverbot. Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts tut es ihm die französische Regierung, unter der die linksrheinische Pfalz damals steht, gleich. Die Bürgermeister sollen illegale Auswanderer melden. Doch in nur wenigen Fällen können die Behörden sie aufhalten, wie am 7. Juni 1809, als fünf Familien aus Godramstein verhaftet werden, als sie den Rhein überqueren wollen.

Die ersten Kolonien, sie haben ein bisschen was vom Wilden Westen: reißbrettartig angelegte Dörfer, mit einer Hauptstraße, an der sich links und rechts die Häuser aneinanderreihen. Vor Ort finden die Siedler oft schwierige Verhältnisse vor: karge Landschaften, fehlende Infrastruktur. Der Boden sei „eisenfest", nur schwer zu bearbeiten, es wachse nichts als Hafer, Weizen und Kartoffeln, im Sommer falle kaum Regen, für Winterfrüchte seien die Winter zu hart und auf 30 Meilen Entfernung wachse kein Wald, dessen Holz man zum Heizen schlagen könne – so beschreiben zwei Männer aus Hördt und Leimersheim, die schon nach kurzer Zeit in die Pfalz zurückkehren, die Zustände.

> Speyer, Kandel, Landau – ihren neuen Dörfer geben die Siedler vertraute Namen.

Die Mehrheit jedoch bleibt, beißt sich durch – es dauert Jahrzehnte, bis sich die Siedler eine Existenz aufbauen können: „Der ersten Generation der Tod, der zweiten Generation die Not, der dritten Generation das Brot", heißt es in einem Sprichwort. Die Selbstverwaltung ihrer Kolonien erlaubt den pfälzischen Siedlern, ihre heimische Kultur und ihren Dialekt zu pflegen, sie bauen Wein an, feiern Kerwe, geben ihren neuen Dörfern vertraute Namen: Heidelberg, Mannheim, Worms, Speyer, Straßburg, Neuburg, Kandel, Landau. Und gründen zahlreiche Tochterkolonien, um 1900 leben 1,8 Millionen Deutsche im Russischen Reich.

Weg zieht es sie erst, als die russische Regierung ab 1871 unter dem Druck des aufkeimenden Nationalismus beginnt, die Sonderrechte der Deutschen zu beschneiden, als Amtssprache wird und Dienst verpflichtet. Ein Teil wandert weiter nach Nord- und Südamerika. Der Rest erlebt die Enteignung, Deportation und Zwangsarbeit während des Zweiten Weltkriegs, die anschließende Verbannung in Sibirien, im Uralgebiet, in Kasachstan.

Dort endet nach zwei Jahrhunderten die Reise gen Osten. Nun zieht es die Russlanddeutschen nach und zurück – in die erste Heimat. Die ersten kommen in den 1960er Jahren nach Deutschland, die große Masse nach dem Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion 1990 – insgesamt zwei Millionen. Viele landen – mal mehr gewollt – an jenen Orten, die ihre Vorfahren einst verließen.

Ist die Rückkehr auch eine Heimkehr? Ja und nein, das wird in der Abschlussdiskussion der Zeitzeugen deutlich. War man in Russland stets Deutscher, werde man hier noch oft als Russe wahrgenommen – trotz pfälzischer Mundart, die gerade die älteren Spätaussiedler nie verlernt haben. Vielleicht, sagt einer der Teilnehmer, wird auch nun erst die dritte, hier geborene Generation richtig ankommen.

ZEITZEUGEN GESUCHT

Das Institut für Pfälzische Geschichte und Volkskunde plant eine Buchveröffentlichung zum Thema und sucht noch russlanddeutsche Zeitzeugen.
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Ob Katholiken, Protestanten oder Mennoniten: Glaube spielte im Leben der deutschen Siedler eine wichtige Rolle. Unser Bild zeigt wolgadeutsche Frauen beim sonntäglichen Gang zum Gottesdienst (um 1920).

Suche Bauern, biete Land und Privilegien: das Manifest Katharinas II. aus dem Jahr 1763.

Stichwort: Russlanddeutsche Küche

Über 200 Jahre in der Ferne sind auch kulinarisch nicht spurlos an den Russlanddeutschen vorübergegangen. Viele Rückkehrer kochen bis heute Gerichte aus der russischen, ukrainischen oder kasachischen Küche. Dabei variieren die Rezepte oft – und zum Teil stark – von Familie zu Familie. Zwei Beispiele.

Der Klassiker: Borschtsch
Zutaten für 4 Personen:
- 300 Gramm rohe Rote Bete
- 250 Gramm Weißkohl
- 1 große Karotte
- 1 große rote Paprika
- 400 Gramm Kartoffeln
- 1 große Zwiebel
- 1 Esslöffel Tomatenmark
- 1 Liter Rinder-/Gemüsebrühe
- 2 Lorbeerblätter
- je 1 Esslöffel geschnittener Dill und Petersilie
- 1 Knoblauchzehe (gepresst oder in feine Würfel geschnitten)
- Salz, Pfeffer
- nach Belieben: Ajvar (scharfe Paprikapaste)
- Schmand

Rote Bete schälen und in Streifen schneiden, ebenso den Weißkohl. Karotte schälen und in feine Würfel oder Streifen schneiden, ebenso die Paprika. Kartoffeln schälen und in Würfel schneiden. Die Zwiebel würfeln und in Öl in einem Topf glasig andünsten, restliches Gemüse (außer den Kartoffeln) hinzugeben und zirka fünf Minuten mitbraten. Tomatenmark dazugeben, mit Brühe ablöschen. Anschließend mit Pfeffer, Salz und Ajvar abschmecken und Lorbeerblätter und Kartoffeln hinzufügen. Bei geschlossenem Deckel rund 20 Minuten (bis die Kartoffeln gar sind) bei niedriger Hitze köcheln lassen. Kurz vor Ende der Garzeit Dill hinzufügen, Petersilie und Knoblauch jedoch erst, sobald die Suppe fertig ist. Suppe auf Teller verteilen und jeweils mit einem Klecks Schmand verfeinern.

Schmecken süß und deftig: Blini
Zutaten für 4 Personen:
- 275 Gramm Mehl
- 500 Milliliter Milch
- 25 Gramm Hefe
- 25 Gramm weiche Butter
- 100 Milliliter Schlagsahne
- 2 Eier
- 2 Teelöffel Zucker
- eine Prise Salz

Die Milch erwärmen und die Hefe darin auflösen, dann mit der Hälfe des Mehls und der Butter verquirlen. An einem warmen Ort 30 Minuten gehen lassen. Währenddessen die Eier trennen, Eigelb mit Zucker verrühren, Eiweiß und Sahne getrennt steif schlagen, dann das Eiweiß unter die Sahne ziehen. Nach der Gehzeit den Teig mit dem restlichen Mehl, Salz, Eigelb und Zucker vermengen, zum Schluss Sahne und Eiweiß unterziehen. Weitere 20 Minuten gehen lassen. Teig in einer beschichteten Pfanne mit wenig Öl dünn ausbacken. Nach Belieben mit Konfitüre, Honig oder mit süßem, mit Zitronenschale verfeinertem Quark bestreichen. (nasu)

Darf's etwas Borschtsch sein? Olga Bardens serviert bei der Tagung russlanddeutsche Speisen. Vorne: mit Erdbeeren garnierte „Blini", russische Pfannkuchen, die, ähnlich wie Crêpes, dünn ausgebacken werden. FOTO: VIEW

The text caption to a color picture down: *"Could we get some borscht, please? L.Bardo's presentation at the conference* Russian-German cuisine. In the foreground: 'Blini' served with strawberries, Russian pancakes similar to thin crêpes"* (Sudermann 2014). * The conference on *250 Years of German Emigration to Russia.* In 2014, there were a few such conferences held across Germany, including one in Xcity.

Figure F-24: Conference on 250 Years of Russian-German History in Augsburg

