

# **Late repatriates' organizations and transnational social space**

vorgelegt von:

Verfasser: Andrej Geldt  
Studiengang: Master Soziologie  
Fachsemester: 4  
Email-Adresse: and-geldt@gmx.de

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# **1. Introduction**

In this research report the subject of late repatriates' organizations will be investigated. While there is a solid basis of literature about late repatriates' integration, identity and everyday habits, institutionalization of this migrant community, its transnational practices as well as its organizations are topics hardly present in scientific literature. Beside of this, the topic of Germans still living in former countries of the Soviet Union is nearly absent in the literature at all.

Considering the fact that there are around 4.000.000 of late repatriates who had successfully immigrated to Germany and around 500.000 people of German ethnicity who are eligible of getting the status of a late repatriates, it is not only a numerically significant immigrant group, but also a serious ethnic community with its own history. Not at least because of this and the lack of research concerning the specific organizational field, more research is needed on this topic.

In my research project I will concentrate on late repatriates from the former Soviet Union, especially those from Russia. There are several terms used to describe representatives of this group such as Germans from Russia, Russian-Germans and (late) repatriates for those, who immigrated. For variety reasons I will use all these terms synonymously, though the difference between those, who moved and those, who has stayed has to be considered.

First, current state of research will be summarized, especially topics such as identity, integration and networks of late repatriates. After this, theoretical background, namely the theory of transnational social space by Thomas Faist will be explained since this will be the reference for my empirical analysis. Subsequently I will illustrate my research results deriving from three expert interviews with leaders of late repatriates' as well as Russian-German organizations from Frankfurt, St. Petersburg and Moscow. Finally, the results will be discussed under consideration of the research question and summarized by a short conclusion. The goal of this research project is to investigate, how organizations contribute to the creation of transnational social space. Especially the role of identity in this process will be analyzed as well as possible consequences of the concept of transnational social space.

## **2. Current state of research**

### **2.1. Definition of the research subject and historical background**

Who are those late repatriates? In order to elaborate this question, it is necessary to go back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century of European history. In the year 1762 the tsarina of the former Russian Empire,

Catharina II, passed a manifest inviting skilled workers to settle on the territory of the Russian Empire and arranging multiple privileges for them such as liberation from military duty (Schneider 2005: 1). Many German farmers and craftsmen followed this invitation, settling mostly around Saratov region in the south-western part of the Russian Empire. Thus, the first German colonies were found around the river of Volga and were built up to independent settlements.

The existence of these colonies ended right before the beginning of the World War II in the former Soviet Union. In 1941, German settlers from those regions were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan, where especially the male population was exposed to duty in the so called "trud-army" (ibid: 1). Even after the end of World War II, the German minority in the former Soviet Union suffered from harassment and discrimination. Even on political or legal level the Germans were not rehabilitated by the Soviet government, meaning that they neither had the right to return to the territory of their former autonomous settlements, nor possibilities for immigration to Germany were created, though especially this idea came up even stronger in the 70ies and 80ies (ibid: 1). Only 1990 the Repatriates Admission Act was passed on which basis people of German ethnicity had the right to immigrate to Germany (Eisfeld 2013: 1). As off 1993, a new act was passed considering resolving of outcomes of WWII and control of repatriates immigration, who were subsequently called "late repatriates" referring to this act (ibid: 1).

Beside of this short historical overview, it is important to mention, that not only Germans from countries of the former Soviet Union had the status of repatriates – for historical reasons many people of German ethnicity living in Poland and Romania obtained this status as well and immigrated to Germany especially between 1950 and 1990 (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2013: 28). The legal basis for this immigration was the so called Federal Refugee Act from 1953, in which repatriates were defined as people of German ethnicity who suffered from the outcomes of WWII and had successfully immigrated to Germany (ibid: 18-21). German ethnicity within this act is defined as descending from persons of German ethnicity or German citizenship, confessing the German folklore and the ability to support a simple conversation in German (B1 level or above) till the end of the stay in the country of origin, which are also requirements for people applying for the status of a late repatriate (ibid: 21).

## **2.2. Identity and mentality**

Among the scientific literature on the subject of late repatriates, or, to be more precise, on the subject of the so called Germans from Russia, questions addressing their identification, identity conflicts and mentality are very prominent.

Even though a generalized, heterogeneous “mentality” of the entire ethnic group as a concept is problematized, one of the challenges in respect of this is seen within the assumed difference between late repatriates and the resident population. While late repatriates are presumed to be mostly socialist-collectively oriented due to their soviet socialization and at the same time emphasizing the unity of their ethnos, a contradiction is seen compared to the collective mentality of the “western” individualistic and performance-oriented socialization (Herwartz-Emden 1997; in: Colla 1999: 83). A similar point is brought up by Darieva (2008). She argues that the prominence of the national and ethnic belonging among late repatriates is directly linked to the outcomes of WWII and the soviet socialization of most late repatriates (Darieva 2008: 352). Another aspect contributing to the strong self-awareness of being a German is the privileged possibility to achieve the German citizenship, which is seen as an exclusive benefit for Germans from Russia though they are immigrants at the same time. In Germany, late repatriates do not contribute to the creation of a homogeneous “container”-identity but they create their own image of being German which pluralizes the general idea of ethnic belonging (ibid: 362). Especially the generation born after 1960 does not strictly empathize their ethnic belonging which is, among others, caused by a higher percentage of ethnically mixed marriages within this generation (Colla 1999: 86).

Another topic presented in the current literature is the relation between language skills and ethnic belonging. Einfeld (1987: 174) argues, that ethnic identity and the ability to speak German are not necessarily related to each other. Language as a symbol of shared identity has mostly lost its importance due to the fact that for symbolic reasons, German language is only used within the domestic circle (Colla 1999: 87). The more current study by Schnar (2010) leads to similar conclusion: in this online-survey the relation between the use of Russian language and the ethnic identity construction among young late repatriates has been analyzed. Schnar has shown, that even though more than half of all participants estimated their German language skills as “good” or “very good”, 55% of them used Russian language on regular basis especially for communication within the family (ibid: 93). Though the results seem to show lack of connection between language skills and ethnic identity, it is important to analyze how ethnic identity and belonging are addressed in every case and which elements of everyday life contribute to its formation.

While identity and belonging are often seen in accordance with the “either-or-principal”, there are attempts to combine multiple identities. In her recent publication, Kurilo (2015) conceptualizes Germans from Russia as cultural hybrids. Being on a par with Ulf Hannerz’ concept of cultural hybridity and creolization (1992: 217-267) she describes late repatriates’ identity as a hybrid identity, due to bilingualism, doubled identity and an ambivalent image of homeland (Kurilo 2015: 66), while even multiple hybridities are possible depending on the dominance of either the German or the post-soviet identity elements. Furthermore, Kurilo argues that unfortunately, this concept is not yet

accepted in everyday discourse or even refused in favor of more simplified and exclusive identity concepts (ibid: 55). The concept of a hybrid identity is also taken up by Reitemeier (2006). He explains the emergence of it by an ambivalent situation of late repatriates after the immigration, which is characterized by the presence of the culture from the country of origin and the missing acceptance of the German community. Late repatriates exist under conditions, under which elements of the foreign culture cannot coexist: due to their privileged migrant status, especially from late repatriates a total identification with the national identity of the receiving country is expected in a situation, when a hybrid approach would be more appropriate, which brings them into this ambivalent, inclined position (Reitemeier 2006: 236-237).

The specific situation for late repatriates after the immigration consists, among other, of the fact that their self-concept of being a German is not confirmed by the awareness of the resident population which often leads to a reevaluation of their cultural identity and ethnical belonging (Kiel 2015: 75). The solution for this identity conflict is dependent from the educational background, religiousness, age and ethnic homogeneity of the family. The conflict is resolved more positively the more resources such as religiousness of education are available (ibid. 81-87).

Finally there is a discussion on the term "homeland" which is directly connected to late repatriates' identity and self-awareness. In this debate, Ipsen-Peitzmeier and Kaiser (2006: 36) question, if this concept is sensible nowadays, when the lifeworld of Germans from Russia is characterized by a high level of trans-local processes and multiple identities. Even though this concept is questioned, transnational perspectives on late repatriates and their practices are still a topic which is hardly researched (Kaiser/Schönhuth 2015: 19). Another criticism from the trans-local perspective has been brought up by Kaiser (2006). He asserts, that a new perception of social space has developed, in which the belonging of individuals to this social space is not necessarily determined by territorial borders (Kaiser 2006: 22; Noller 2000: 21). Thus, communities can evolve regardless of borders of nation states, creating so called trans-localities (Kaiser 2006: 43). Within trans-localities, geographical territory does not exclusively define belonging, in fact, trans-local connection and organizations then play a crucial role for everyday life and serve as reference for identity creation (ibid: 44).

### **2.3. Integration**

One of the main topics present in the scientific literature about late repatriates is integration. Among others, motivational reasons for immigration are evaluated: while the early repatriates immigrated for cultural reasons and still had German cultural habits, repatriates who came to Germany in recent years were especially motivated by economic reasons and had mostly Russian as well as post-soviet habits compared to repatriates, who immigrated in the 1980ies (Kourilo 2008: 383). There are

several integration strategies which can be observed: assimilation, integration, marginalization and autonomous orientation. The selection of the strategy is dependent from the dominance of the Russian or the German background as well as from the renunciation of the corresponding background (ibid: 385). Besides of the integration strategies mentioned, late repatriates are endowed with a special cultural capital which contains the knowledge of the Russian language, their culture and mentality as well as linkages to countries of the former Soviet Union. With these abilities, late repatriates are able to serve as intermediators between these cultures (ibid. 398).

Another topic related to integration, or better to say failed integration, is the phenomena of remigration. Though the numbers of those, who return to the country of origin is not significant compared to numbers of repatriates immigrating to Germany, it reduces the total number of late repatriates in Germany (Fencia et.al. 2010: 2). Beside the phenomena of failed integration, strategies for a successful integration are broadly discussed in the literature. As one of the options, integration in the new trans-local networks is proposed such as civil-societal engagement (Schulz 2003), taking over of honorary posts (Gotzes 2003) or cooperation with bicultural integration projects and integration centers (Franzke/Schönhuth 2003). In this case, integration in the trans-local space would not reinforce a decision between multiple belongings meaning that “sitting on both chairs” would be possible in contrast to “sitting between the chairs” as Ipsen-Peitzmeier and Kaiser (2006: 377) put it metaphorically.

The presentation of integration of late repatriates in literature is often deficit-oriented, which is characterized by a specific understanding of society. This aspect has been criticized by Rabkov (2006). She argues, that the typical parameters for failed integration such as insufficient knowledge of German language, a dominant racial-national attitude (Wenzel 1999: 278) or the lack of democratic education (Grübl/Walter 1999: 188) are not sufficient to fully describe the integration process (Rabkov 2006: 323). The typical integration process has a reductionist understanding of society as its basis, which consists of two dimensions: culture and structure. The initial state of this society is always balanced in respect of integration. Migrants, who are neither integrated into the structure, nor in the culture of the receiving society, contribute to its imbalances which lead to internal tensions within the system (ibid: 324). Among other reasons, this led to a changed perception: in the media debate, late repatriates were no longer seen as Germans returning to the country of origins of their ancestors, but as a wave of immigrants which needed to be controlled (ibid: 341). This example explicitly shows how dominant debate lines can affect collective perception and attitude towards immigrant groups.

## 2.4. Late repatriates' networks

As already mentioned above, transnational perspectives on late repatriates and their practices are still topics which are hardly present in the scientific literature (Kaiser/Schönhuth 2015: 19). Though, some research has been done especially on the organization of informal networks of this immigrant group. Among informal ties, the family circle is mentioned as the most dominant network component (Dietz 1997: 68). A more recent study with similar results has been published by Frank (2011). The initial network right after the immigration showed mostly family members and people of the same ethnicity. Even at the time of qualitative interview (between 5 and 23 years of retention time in Germany) most of the interviewees named members of the family as main members of their network (Frank 2011: 89 in: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2013: 126). Therefore Frank concludes that family members as well as members of the Russian-German community can be defined as central elements within their networks. One of possible reasons for this is the collective identity, which has been built up during the persecutions in the former Soviet Union and the shared immigration background (ibid: 96). Furthermore, Frank found out that the level of transnationalization within late repatriates' networks was quite low, which is especially due to the dominance of contacts in Germany and the concentration on network members of the same ethnicity or family members (Frank 2011: 127, Gamper/Fencia 2013: 269). The same situation can be confirmed in respect of highly qualified migrants from Russia and Ukraine: in her study, Savoskul (2015) has shown that even highly skilled professionals from those countries possess only few transnational contacts in their networks, whereas family members and friends of the same ethnicity are dominant ties in their network (Savoskul 2015).

Beside of informal networks, professional, business-oriented networks have developed over time. Kourilo (2008) remarks, that there is meanwhile a broad network of service agencies, providing services in the field of transport, communication and information for late repatriates, often also lead by late repatriates (Kourilo 2008: 400). Also in Russia, many Russian-German organizations came into being such as the Goethe Institute and the "German House" in Moscow. These organizations are mostly culturally oriented and offer the opportunity to learn the German language, to get to know the German culture and also provide the opportunity to maintain the dialogue with other cultures (ibid: 401). Being centers for intercultural communication turns them into hybrid, multicultural spots (ibid: 402).

While organized networks in Germany become more important, the critical mass for such networks is missing in countries of origin (Ipsen-Peitzmeier 2006: 376). In Germany, late repatriates' organizations, several houses of culture, theatres and newspapers, Russian stores as well as travel

agencies create an internal infrastructure, in which not the typical criteria for integration play a crucial role, but the creation and practice of an own cultural field in the public space (ibid: 377).

### **3. Theoretical background – transnational social space**

As theoretical background for my research project, I decided to apply Thomas Faist's concept of transnationals social space (Faist 2000). Though there are for sure similarities with e.g. the concept of transnational social field (Schiller 2005) or with the concept of trans-locality cited in the previous chapter, Faist's approach enables to investigate my research question especially focusing on the transnational community of late repatriates and its organizations.

The empirical background for this concept is the asserted tendency of international migrant groups, to form networks or differently oriented communities without being determined by a certain geographical location. These networks and communities therefore act transnationally, mobilizing political action, cultural settings and cooperation within the group. Relations between these communities contribute to the creation of the so called transnational social space, which is not necessarily limited by geographic space (Faist 2000: 196-198). Transnational social spaces are based on social and symbolic ties, which constitute networks, organizations and communities of a given migrant group (ibid: 199). Social and economic goods are exchanged within these communities, though mobility and immobility of every single member has to be considered. Also transnational social spaces are influenced by political and institutional frameworks, such as immigration policies and the level of integration of the migrant group (ibid: 200).

Transnational social space is divided into three forms: transnational kinship groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities (ibid: 203-207). The first form refers to the micro-level and considers social ties between family members which are characterized by a high degree of reciprocity. In contrast, transnational circuits are formed by e.g. trading networks. In this form, exchange and reciprocity play a crucial role. Typical example for this form is business networks which are based on the exchange of people and knowledge of which both the sending and the receiving side can benefit (ibid: 203-206). The third form constituting transnational social spaces are transnational communities. These are e.g. communities with a religious or ethnic basis, which are not necessarily bound to one specific territory. A typical example for such a community would be the Jewish diaspora or the community of Germans from Russia in my case. Such communities are characterized by some sort of solidarity between the stayers and the movers based on common beliefs and ideas as well as on the shared collective identity. Typically collective representations such as religion or ethnicity are explicitly empathized within these communities (ibid: 207). Transnational communities though cannot be conceptualized as completely de-territorialized or as global

communities since their transnational character still contains the focus on some nation states, in which this community is dominantly present (ibid: 210).

## **4. Empirical analysis**

### **4.1. Research question**

In this empirical analysis of 3 expert interviews on the subject of late repatriates' organizations, I would like to investigate, how these organizations contribute to the creation of a transnational social space in which late repatriates' community operates. It is especially of my interest to find out, to what extent they contribute to its creation and to what extent they do not. Furthermore, the way how ethnic identity and belonging is addressed in this context will be analyzed as well as the structure of transnational ties and the political level of organizational work and the legal framework, in which it is embedded. In the subsequent discussion, I am going to highlight some possible consequences and difficulties related to transnational social spaces.

### **4.2. Method**

For investigating this research question, I decided to conduct expert interviews with high level representatives of late repatriates' or Russian-German organizations. In order to ensure that multiple perspectives are given, also Russian-German organizations outside of Germany were considered. Due to the fact, that for the exploration of the question, specific information was needed, which is not publically accessible, this method of data collection seemed to be the most appropriate.

In total, three expert interviews were conducted: one with a leader of a late repatriates' organization from Frankfurt and two skype-interviews with leaders of equivalent organizations in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Access to the field in Frankfurt was realized via personal contacts, the interviewee from Moscow could be acquired via recommendation from the first expert, and the third expert could be accessed via cold-mail acquisition. In general, personal network and recommendations provided an easier way to the field, while mail requests, which were sent to about 7 organizations all over Russia, only resulted in one positive reply. Due to this fact, my sample can be characterized as rather accidental and unstructured.

All interviews were half-structured with defined thematic blocks about late repatriates' situation in the given areas, current challenges, tasks and goals of the organization, transnational contacts to other organizations, common projects, questions on shared identity and forecasting of future developments. Due to the research question, especially questions on the functioning of the organization and their goals as well as transnational cooperation of late repatriates' organization

were strongly empathized. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. In case of the two skype-interviews, not the direct record transcript has been taken as a basis for interpretation but the translated version of the same, which has been done as precisely as possible to keep it very close to the original.

The interpretation process is inspired by the method described by Meuser und Nagel (2009). The first step of it was the initial coding: important passages of the interviews were paraphrased thematically according to relevant categories (a detailed overview is in the appendix, chapters: “Thematic Coding / Paraphrasing Protocols I-III). A second wave of categorization has been exercised to ensure all important information has been considered. After this, a thematic comparison of all three interviews has been done to evaluate differences and similarities (a detailed overview is in the appendix, chapter: “Thematic Comparison / Summary of dense results”). Subsequently, the step of theoretical generalization has been taken, meaning that empirical results evolving from the interviews were applied to theoretical background of the research question. This step of interpretation process is mostly displayed in the following chapters and in the subsequent discussion, though notes from earlier steps of interpretation can be found in the appendix (chapters 7.4. – 7.7.). During this reconstruction, I especially paid attention to the way how transnational organizational cooperation, identity and ethnic belonging were addressed.

In case of expert interviews, the term *expert* itself as well as the status of expert knowledge has to be questioned. In general, a person is defined as an expert, if his or her knowledge exceeds the state of knowledge of a well-informed citizen due to the fact that it is specialized and not accessible for everybody (Meuser/Nagel 2009: 18). Also this person should have a status, which legitimizes his or her “institutionalized authority to construct reality” (ibid: 19). In my sample, all three interviewees are leaders of late repatriates’ organizations which suggests, that due to their status they definitely can be defined as experts according to Meuser and Nagel’s definition.

Another question, which results from this definition, is how the knowledge of such an expert can be characterized sociologically. Meuser and Nagel therefore propose to conceptualize expertise as a socially-constructed, open ending process of meaning negotiation (ibid: 28). Since knowledge is negotiated within different expert communities, especially this group of people, who are assigned to be experts, have the power over definition of what is called expertise, which is then as a result legitimized by their expert status (ibid: 27). Because expertise is the result of the ongoing negotiation process, meaning it is subjected to changes, socio-cultural conditions of knowledge production have to be considered when so called expert knowledge is being analyzed (ibid: 26).

## **4.3. Results**

### **4.3.1. Structure and goals of the organizations**

All 3 organizations, from which the leading representatives were interviewed, are so called self-organizations by the community of Germans from Russia. However, depending on the exact organization (and there are plenty) and the location, its goals and structure may vary significantly. In order to elaborate how these organizations contribute to the creation of a transnational social space, I would like to sum up their structure and main goals.

The organization in Frankfurt is part of the biggest association of Germans from Russia called LMDR e.V. which is at the same time the official association to be contacted by the German government in respect of late repatriates' affairs. It has a very dense federal structure including several sub-organizations for young people or students which are by themselves also federally structured.

According to the interview, main goals of this organization are mainly seen in current integrational challenges, out-of-school education and cultural work (Interview 1). Also the organization helps those late repatriates, who are still trying to immigrate to Germany, which was its initial goal once it has been founded, as well as the so called secondary integration of those, who already immigrated. To sum up, it is a mixture of challenge-oriented goals (help concerning the immigration process, integration, solution-work for current challenges of late repatriates in Germany) and educational-cultural oriented goals such as the maintenance of late repatriates' culture, political education and out of school education such as bilingual kindergartens. Beside of this, the organization's role in transnational integration has been empathized during the interview referring to cooperation with other migrant's organizations in Frankfurt and projects with young international migrants.

The organization in St. Petersburg consists of 19 sub-organizations within the City which are structured in accordance with different core areas such as support for elderly people or young people's club. It is by itself a sub-organization of the house of nations in St. Petersburg. Its main goals are built around the focuses such as cultural work, informational work and reconstruction of family archives. According to the interview, especially informational work is one of the organization's main focuses, in order to reduce prejudices among the Russian population about Germans from Russia:

„Ich denke die Hauptaufgabe eines jeden Kulturzentrums in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion ist die Informationsarbeit, um Vorurteile abzubauen, welche es in Verbindung mit Russlanddeutschen und deren Rolle während des zweiten Weltkrieges immer noch gibt.“ (Interview 2).

This informational work is especially about the elucidation about the history and the historical role of Germans in Russia, which is aimed with the family archive reconstruction project. Beside of these

educational offers, language trainings are provided. On the whole, this organization is not only community-oriented, but to a great extent it also tries to reach people who are not part of the German community with the offers concerning informational and cultural work.

The organization in Moscow is part of a broad structure of about 500 Russian-German self-organizations all over Russia. Comparably to the organization in St. Petersburg, this organization also focuses on the maintenance and distribution of the German culture in Russia as well as informational work on Russian-German history:

„Die wichtigste Aufgabe ist die Bewahrung der ethnokulturellen Identität und die Entwicklung eines Netzwerks der Russlanddeutschen in Russland. Diese aktuellen Ziele sind ausschließlich ethnokulturell geprägt, es gibt keine politischen Ziele. Politische Ziele sind heutzutage in jeglicher Hinsicht schädlich für eine öffentliche Organisation.“ (Interview 3).

Furthermore, they run a support program for elderly Germans in Russia as well as their most recent project “heroes” in which Russian-German heroes from the 20<sup>th</sup> century are scouted.

In general, there seem to be different focuses depending on the location of the organization. While in Frankfurt, most of the goals are community-oriented and aim to fix current challenges of late repatriates in Germany, organizations in Russia seem to be more outward-oriented focusing their work on informational and cultural tasks:

„Bei der deutschen Organisation geht es eher um die Integration. Bei den Organisationen in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion geht es eher um die Pflege der deutschen Kultur und Sprache. Und natürlich unterstützen sie noch die Familien, die ausreisen. Sprachkurse zum Beispiel oder Chöre, Tanzgruppen, Theatergruppen, im kulturellen Bereich sind sie auch sehr aktiv“ (Interview 1).

In some way, all 3 organizations try to implement tools to maintain and distribute the community's culture and to offer out-of-school education opportunities.

What does it now mean in respect of my research question? First, it can be fixed, that all 3 organizations contribute to the maintenance and distribution of cultural elements of Germans from Russia to some degree. By doing so, cultural awareness is supported within and outside the community of late repatriates. Also other supporting offers for the community such as integration support or group-oriented offers may strengthen the community's self-awareness. Even the fact, that the community as such is represented by such a dense network of organizations in both countries contribute to the impression, that the community is very well institutionalized and that its characteristics such as language, culture and history are well represented. Thus, collective representation elements as well as solidarity elements of the transnational social space concept can be confirmed, though it should be remarked that this evaluation is only limited to the information which is accessible in the 3 interviews and on which I have to rely. Furthermore, this evaluation only

considers the organizations' point of view, ignoring the point of view of the community of late repatriates outside of these organizations.

#### **4.3.2. Collective identity**

For creating a transnational social space, collective identity or characteristics, contributing to a collective identity are crucial. Therefore, this topic was one of my core focuses during the interview because it is one of the foundations on which transnational social space can develop.

In the first interview with the leader of the organization in Frankfurt, especially the legitimizing function of a shared identity was empathized. The national and ethnic belonging served as a legal basis for immigration to Germany, for which reason this shared identity is maintained over time:

„Ich denke für die Russlanddeutschen war es immer sehr wichtig, und das war unter anderem auch der Grund für die Ausreise, dass sie ihre Identität als Deutsche bewahren wollten. Aufgrund ihrer traurigen Geschichte war es ja nicht immer einfach. Sie wurden aufgrund ihres Deutschtums diskriminiert und ausgegrenzt.“ (Interview 1).

As displayed in this quote, common identity was often addressed as something, which is especially due to a common, tragic history and the overall discrimination of previous generations in the former Soviet Union. The diffuse feeling of belonging to a common ethnicity of a German from Russia is mainly justified by the shared historical background presenting this history as a tale of woe which had strengthened the identity of Germans from Russia. Even today, late repatriates are motivated to maintain their cultural goods for the same reason.

Another important aspect of shared identity mentioned in the interview is the ambivalence caused by the difference between the awareness of the others and the sense of self:

„Ein sehr wichtiger Aspekt bei der Identität ist auch, wie man von der Mehrheitsgesellschaft wahrgenommen wird. Sie haben es ja gesagt, in der Sowjetunion wurden wir als Deutsche wahrgenommen. Es stand ja auch in jedem Pass und die Namen haben es ja schon verraten. Die Leute kommen nach Deutschland, mit dem Bewusstsein, Deutscher zu sein, und dann kommen sie hierher und merken, schon alleine aufgrund des Habitus werden sie von der Mehrheitsgesellschaft nicht als Deutsche wahrgenommen. Und genau das ist diese Gratwanderung „Was bin ich denn jetzt?““ (Interview 1).

This ambivalence, which is always present in the public discourse among late repatriates about their identity, is address as a serious one, which can even lead to identity crisis. Even today, a clearly defined national and ethnic identity is seen as a substantial part of the over-all mental well-being and as a precondition for a successful integration. The conflict stated in the quote above is described as something which can affect both the mental well-being as well as a successful integration. Furthermore the term identity crisis is even used in this context showing, how harmful this conflict is estimated.

The interviewee concludes that the identity of a late repatriate, especially in the context of immigration to Germany, is always problematic and enforces to develop coping strategies. These strategies can vary depending on the resources and the abilities of the given person to re-conceptualize his or her ethnic identity or to adjust to the unexpected awareness of the others since this is something which cannot be strongly influenced.

Referring to the important role of a stable ethnic identity as a late repatriate, the interviewee explained to what extent their organization tries to contribute to the formation of the same by offering out-of-school education especially about the history of Germans from Russia. A strong identity is especially seen as an effect of a sufficient historical awareness:

„Deswegen war es wichtig, wir haben ganz viele Bildungsseminare angeboten gerade zu diesen Themen, Geschichte, Identität und haben dabei uns selbst aber auch die anderen Jugendlichen dabei unterstützt, sich selbst, aber auch die eigene Identität zu finden. Zum Schluss haben sie dann gesagt: „Ja, ich bin halt anders. Ich bin halt ein Deutscher aus Russland. Aber es ist ok so. Das ist meine Identität, und dazu stehe ich. Ich bin eine Bereicherung für die hiesige Gesellschaft.“ (Interview 1).

In the end of the discussion about late repatriates' identity, another strategy was mentioned implicitly. In this strategy, identity is not constructed referring to national belonging to either the receiving or the sending country but to the special case of late repatriates, who are presented as a category by their own. This hybridization of multiple national and ethnic identities, considering also the awareness of the others, is then seen as a solution for the identity dilemma.

Slightly different results could be extracted from the two skype-interviews conducted with leaders of organizations from St. Petersburg and Moscow. In both interviews, a missing identification of Germans in Russia with their initial ethnic belonging is observed:

„Im Alltag jedoch, wenn dieselben Menschen sich in einem anderen kulturellen Feld bewegen, werden sie erstens nicht als Deutsche wahrgenommen und zweitens legen sie auch keinen Wert darauf, sich als Deutsche erkennbar zu machen. Solch eine interessante Entwicklung ist zu verzeichnen.“ (Interview 2).

„Es gibt sehr viele Menschen, die sich mit ihrer russlanddeutschen Vergangenheit überhaupt nicht mehr identifizieren können und sich erst dann Fragen bezüglich der Geschichte ihrer Vorfahren stellen, wenn sie auf andere Russlanddeutsche oder unsere Organisation treffen. Es gibt aber auch Menschen, die selbst nach einer Teilnahme an unseren Veranstaltungen kein Interesse für ihre russlanddeutsche Vergangenheit entwickeln, obwohl sie, sagen wir mal „Hildebrandt“ mit Nachnamen heißen, weil sie sich ebenso stark als Russen identifizieren.“ (Interview 3).

In both cases, national or ethnic belonging is addressed considering a certain kind of dichotomy constituted by the belonging to either the Russian or the German side. At the same time, being a “German” as a term is used in an equal way as being a German in Russia, a so called Russian-German.

Caused by a lack of identification with their ethnic belonging, many Germans in Russia seem to abandon their ethnic belonging in favor of the belonging to the country they live in and which is more familiar to them. Ambivalence between the attributed national and ethnic belonging and the feeling of belonging can be the result of it.

„Es ist ja bekannt, dass die Russlanddeutschen eine Ausnahme im Verständnis von monoethnischen Gruppen darstellen: unter Russlanddeutschen kann man sich als Deutscher betiteln, ohne der deutschen Sprache mächtig zu sein (...unverständlich aufgrund schlechter Verbindung...) und das, was als gemeinsamer, das ethnische Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl stiftender Hintergrund verstanden wird, ist eher die tragische Vergangenheit, welche nahezu jeden Vorfahren eines Russlanddeutschen betrifft.“ (Interview 2).

Identity in the second interview is described as something not necessarily bound to language, but to the shared tragic history which is a similar note with the one from the first interview. In this regards, the Russian-German community is constructed as a “special” ethnic group due to this special characteristic. The missing identification with the Russian-German community goes along with not only the lack of language skills, but also with the lack of historical awareness, which is also especially mentioned in this interview.

Another point of view is presented in the third interview:

„Man kann zwar viel über die tragischen Ereignisse aus dem 20. Jahrhundert reden, über die Deportation und die Repressionen, welche die russlanddeutsche Volksgruppe zusammengerauft haben und zu einem stärkeren Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl beigetragen haben, jedoch finde ich es nicht mehr zeitgemäß, diese Katastrophe in unserer Zeit so dermaßen als ein die Ethnie stiftendes Ereignis auszunutzen und den ausschließlichen Fokus darauf zu legen. Wir leben nun in einem ganz anderen Jahrhundert unter ganz anderen kulturellen Bedingungen, daher ist es wichtig andere Aspekte unserer Identität in den Vordergrund zu rücken. In dieser Situation sprechen wir eher darüber, wie man die Sprache wiederbelebt und den Fokus darauf legt, dass wir eine Sprachgemeinschaft sind, was uns auch von anderen unterscheidet“ (Interview 3).

In contrast to previous sequences, common identity is addressed in this case as something not necessarily related to the tragic history of Germans in Russia but rather to language skills to create a language-based community. This demand is primarily based on the fact that the upcoming generation can no longer build their German identity in Russia upon a diffuse historical background which they and their parental generation have not experienced, and therefore cannot identify themselves with the history only. Instead, language as unique feature should play a more important role. This demand implies the presumption that ethnic belonging and its foundations can develop over time and are therefore not fixed but dynamic at these points.

In the course of the interview, the interviewee also notes the ability to combine several cultural belongings and identities:

„Für mich ist dieser Umstand positiv konnotiert, weil es heißt, dass ich bikulturell geprägt und zweisprachig bin. Es ist nicht verkehrt, dass ich in Deutschland als Russin wahrgenommen werde, da ich auch russische Identitätsmerkmale in mir trage. (...) Russlanddeutsche sind gleichzeitig Deutsche aus Russland und Russen aus Deutschland. Heutzutage wird viel über multiple Identitäten gesprochen. Aus meiner Sicht haben gerade die Russlanddeutschen eine sehr starke doppelte Identität und doppelte Loyalität.“ (Interview 3).

The quote is showing that the idea of a hybrid identity or cultural hybridity is somehow represented in everyday discourse and not only in the scientific debate about trans-nationalization. Though, multiple elements of this hybrid identity are still illustrated as very close to the national belonging or even the belonging to the nation state in which a person lives. However, while considering the hybrid option, the dichotomy between being German and being a Russian is still present in this answer. Hybridity in this case is only addressed as the ability to conceptualize an identity, in which both the Russian and the German elements are equally considered but not as an option, which completely denies concrete national or ethnic belonging in favor of a more diffuse identity. Furthermore, this kind of identity is seen as advantageous because of its broader cultural and linguistic structure.

What are the consequences resulting from this chapter for my research question? The organizations presented in my sample are, at least when the description of their tasks are considered, trying to shape, negotiate and maintain what they call Russian-German identity in terms of culture, language and history. Thus, they certainly contribute to the creation of the transnational social space according to the concept by Faist, though the transnational component of it still needs to be evaluated. At the same time, it can be concluded, that the results from three interviews in respect of identity and how this identity (and belonging) are addressed, are not that clear-cut. While representatives from Russia complain about the growing ignorance of Russian-German identity elements even among the community and state a lack of identification with these elements, the representative from Frankfurt stressed the importance of identity building processes and states the possibility to develop a hybrid cultural and ethnic identity. In front of this background, it can be concluded, that the community of Germans from Russia has a very heterogeneous structure in terms of identity and belonging. Even within the borders of Russia, significant differences are stated depending on the region and on the level of involvement and identification with the local Russian-German community. In most cases, identity is directly related to the common tragic history and cultural elements such as language, though the representative from Moscow argued, that the mobilization of the tragic history is not contemporary and that other cultural elements or habits of everyday life attributed to German belonging can rarely be found among the Russian-German population in Russia.

All facts considered, especially in Russia the precondition for creation and maintenance of a transnational social space by the organization seem to be difficult due to lack of interest and

identification with the community by many representatives of the same. The organizations themselves actively contribute to the creation of condition for a transnational social space, though it is clear, that these organizations cannot be the only agent successfully creating social spaces of any kind.

### **4.3.3. Transnational ties**

In this chapter, I would like to present results from the interviews concerning the transnational part of creation of transnational social spaces. While a social space doesn't need to be a transnational one by definition, according to Faists concept transnational communities such as the community of Germans from Russia are characterized by transnational practices as well.

As it was stated in the first interview by the leader of one of late repatriates' organizations in Frankfurt, very strong linkages are maintained to other organizations in the former Soviet Union:

„Die LMDR pflegt sehr enge Kontakte mit den landsmannschaftlichen Organisationen in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion. Man muss auch sagen, dass die Bundesregierung das auch finanziell unterstützt. Fast in jeder größeren Gemeinde, wo noch Russlanddeutsche anzutreffen sind, gibt es auch so genannte Begegnungszentren, wo die Sprache und Kultur gepflegt werden.“ (Interview 1).

„Die Landsmannschaft kooperiert mit sehr vielen Organisationen, nicht nur mit der DJR, die auf Hessenebene die offizielle Jugendorganisation der Landsmannschaft ist. Auch mit vielen anderen Wohlfahrtsverbänden, kirchlichen Gemeinden, mit allen, die mit Russlanddeutschen zu tun haben. Mit der Politik natürlich auch, obwohl man überparteilich ist, aber es ist wichtig, mit den Entscheidungsträgern zu sprechen, sowohl auf der kommunales auf der Landes- und natürlich auch auf der Bundesebene.“ (Interview 1).

Furthermore, it is highlighted that also ties to other organizations such as churches or political organizations are maintained. Despite the variety of contacts and ties, Russian-German affairs are especially pointed out as main line of interest.

Similarly, also the organization in St. Petersburg supports contacts to other organization, among others in Germany which are not necessarily late repatriates' organizations but also to other German communities such as in Denmark or in Riga:

„Wir werden von sehr vielen kleineren russlanddeutschen Vereinigungen kontaktiert. Diesen Sommer hatten wir die Aktion „Deutsche Spuren in St. Petersburg“ in Zusammenarbeit mit der Vereinigung „Dialog Plus“ aus Düsseldorf mit der Vorsitzenden L. B.. Gleich danach haben wir Besuch bekommen von Deutschen aus Riga und aus Dänemark. Das Interesse ist auf jeden Fall vorhanden. Wir haben eher kleinere Partner, außer des Kontaktes zu Düsseldorf haben wir einen guten Draht zum Integrationszentrum Mettmann, wir machen viele Projekte zusammen und besuchen uns gegenseitig.“ (Interview 2).

A high level of transnational ties can be states referring to the interview. Moreover, despite the fact, that this is an organization having Russian-German affairs as their core interest, not only contacts to

German or late repatriates' organizations are maintained which results in the variety of different contacts in different location and with different focuses.

A similar variety and trans-nationalization of ties can be found in the third interview at the Moscow organization:

„Wir arbeiten mit dem Berliner Behindertenverband zusammen, mit dem Komplex der Kindergärten in Flensburg, da wo auch die dänische Minderheit ansässig ist, mit dem Sorbenverband in Bautzen, mit der Hochschule für angewandte Psychologie und Erziehungswissenschaften, also mit alldenjenigen Organisationen, die uns eine professionelle Partnerschaft bieten können. (...) Viele russlanddeutsche Organisationen wollen natürlich auch mit uns zusammenarbeiten. Nun ist es so, dass sich zum Beispiel die Bundesregierung vor allem auf die LMDR als Hauptverband der Deutschen aus Russland beruft sowie auf Unterorganisation JSDR. Wir akzeptieren diese Sichtweise der deutschen Regierung und arbeiten mitunter auch mit diesen Organisationen zusammen. Es gibt auch ein Budget speziell für die Entwicklung dieser Partnerschaft. Ausgehend vom Budget ist es die dominierende Richtung, ausgehend von unseren Interessen eher weniger.“ (Interview 3).

Cooperation ties of this organization are neither limited by transnational contacts to similar organizations in Germany nor by same-interest organizations. Another interesting finding is that there are official cooperation contracts with the biggest late repatriates' association in Germany, LMDR. Some integration projects are financially supported by the German government, meaning that affairs of this ethnic group are somehow regulated or at least supported by political structures. The political level will be discussed in the next chapter.

In this chapter, presentation of results regarding transnational ties and cooperation had a rather illustrative character. Though, it can be concluded, that there is a high level of transnational official and non-official contacts in all three organizations. Of course, only organizational ties can be considered in this case relying on the expert interviews. Though, transnational level of the social space can be shown so that it can be assumed that the transnational orientation of the organizations presented in my sample is able to contribute to the creation of the transnational social space, especially considering the transnational characteristics of this. Thus, processes are enabled which contribute to exchange between the elements of this transnational social space on organizational level. On the other hand, it has to be highlighted that there is a high variety of ties and concrete contacts, which also means a broader social space. This transnational social space is broader than just the Russian-German community, which is especially displayed in interview 2 and 3, meaning that it not only exceeds borders of nation states but also borders of the Russian-German community and its primary interests. The reason for this could be that the current structure of this community may need a more abstract and less concrete, container-like concept of the self to make the reality of the community more accessible. Due to variety of ties, it can be questioned, if creation of just one transnational social space is than possible. The idea of several different (and maybe overlapping)

social spaces in which these organizations operate would be more plausible in front of this background. While the level of trans-nationalization is high, it is not only community oriented, which would be crucial for the concept by Faist. In fact, cooperation between late repatriates' or Russian-German organization seems to play a rather secondary role, though budget is given for development of this kind of cooperation. The question in this case still would be, if there are enough ties to similar organization or at least organizations from the community itself, in order to create a transnational social space where the community could be located symbolically. Furthermore, the definition of the term "community" then would need to be specified and maybe also made more abstract as already proposed. Beside of this, it may be that even the term "transnational social space" would need to be conceptualized broader and under consideration of organizations, which are not directly part of the Russian-German network or even as a simultaneous multiplicity of several transnational social spaces so all linkages, contacts and areas of interest can be covered by this definition. These deliberations show that there may be an area of conflict between the ethnicity-oriented concept of transnational social space by Faist and the degree of trans-nationalization presented in the interview, which exceed monoethnic logics. Even though organizations and their practices are only one part of a possible transnational social space, the aspects described above should be considered critically.

#### **4.3.4. Political Level**

Transnational social spaces can only exist or be created, when certain conditions are given. Such conditions are usually of political nature, meaning that the field of politics can also be seen as a substantial part of transnational social spaces. For this reason, questions regarding political involvement, contacts to political institutions and effects of official policies were discussed intensively. In the first interview, structure of political institutions for late repatriates' affairs and contacts to its representatives were described:

„Man hat einen sehr guten Draht zu dem Bundesbeauftragten für Spätaussiedlerfragen. Es gibt auch ein Gremium beim Bundesinnenministerium, das sich mit den Themen befasst. (...) Wir sind das einzige Bundesland, das noch einen eigenen Beauftragten für Spätaussiedlerfragen hat, das ist die Frau Ziegler-Raschdorf, zu der wir einen sehr engen Kontakt haben. Es gibt auf Landesebene einen Landesbeirat für Vertriebene, Spätaussiedler und Flüchtlingsfragen, wo die Vertreter der Landsmannschaft und der DJR auch aktive Mitglieder sind. Es gibt speziell im Haushalt der hessischen Landesregierung einen Topf für Integrationsmaßnahmen, gerade auch für Jugendliche, aber auch für Erwachsene. All diese Maßnahmen gibt es in vielen Bundesländern nicht mehr, in Hessen jedoch schon, weil man immer schon im engen Kontakt mit der Landesregierung war, das ist wichtig.“ (Interview 1).

The fact that among many other migrant groups in Germany, late repatriates are represented politically on so many levels show that late repatriates' affairs have always been a topic on political agenda and that there always has been a high level of political involvement in it. Subsequently, some

strong ties to political institutions could be established from e.g. the official association of late repatriates, LMDR e.V. Thus, politics contributed to the integration of late repatriates and the establishment of their organizational structures, contributing to the creation of networks so late repatriates' social space could evolve alongside with its transnational characteristics.

The same level of political support was confirmed in the third interview especially pointing out also the support by the Russian government:

„Seit 1992 gibt es eine regierungsübergreifende deutsch-russische Kommission für Spätaussiedlerfragen. Als Grundlage für eine solche Kommission dient immer ein beidseitiges Unterstützungsprogramm. Das heißt beide Seiten finanzieren Projekte und unterstützen die Tätigkeit der Selbstorganisationen. Bis 2012 hatte die russische Seite sogar ihr eigenes Programm für ethnokulturelle und soziale Entwicklung der russlanddeutschen Gemeinschaft in Russland.“ (Interview 3).

A multi-sited support in terms of late repatriates 'affairs and financial support of the same can be stated in front of the results of the interviews. This shows, that migration of late repatriates is not a self-governed process but a process in which several sites are involved, especially political organs. This instance can be explained by the number of Germans from Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union as well as the political importance of migration of such a big ethnic group from one country to another as well as special policies which legitimized this migration.

If the transnational community of Germans from Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, exchange processes and practices within the same are conceptualized as a transnational social space, it has to be pointed out that every step of this community's history was accompanied by decisions on political level such as the opportunity to immigrate to Germany as of the beginning of 1990ies and subsequent regulations of this policy. Thus, politics can be observed as one of the main agents of creation of this transnational social space, especially the legal framework of the same.

At the same time, restrictive regulations have been passed in order to control the immigration flow of late repatriates to Germany. One of the projects in line with the restrictive regulations was the monoethnic settlement near St. Petersburg called Neudorf-Strelna, which was a project by the German government:

„In der Nähe von St. Petersburg gibt es die in der Nordwestregion einzige monoethnische deutsche Siedlung Neudorf-Strelna. Dort leben ca. 55 Familien. Unser Zentrum versucht bereits seit 1998, also seit Gründung dieser Siedlung dort ein Kulturzentrum aufzubauen, Deutschkurse anzubieten. Jedoch hat das alles nicht in der Form gefruchtet, dass ein deutsches Dorf entstanden wäre, in welchen deutschen Bräuchen und Traditionen zu selbstverständlichen Elementen des Alltags wurden. Deutsch wird in Neudorf-Strelna nur von Vertretern der älteren Generation gesprochen, welche nach und nach ausstirbt. (Interview 2).

The goal of this project was to test, if monoethnic settlements of such kind would be an alternative solution to the permanent immigration of late repatriates. As described by the interviewee, the

project failed to work because the foundation of it, namely the strong monoethnic basis of the community does no longer exist to an extent, which would have made the project possible. The success of the project is measured by the level of installation of German elements of everyday life, which is also very interesting.

The initial idea of this project had the presumption that Germans in Russia as an ethnic community can stay in Russia, when certain preconditions would be given. These preconditions were obviously seen in foundation of such monoethnic settlements of the kind that has already existed before the deportation, serving the demand of some Germans for the recreation of autonomous territory for Germans in Russia as it has been before WWII. The second aim of the project was also preventing late repatriates from moving to Germany in accordance with the demand for restricted immigration policy for late repatriates in the 1990ies. These ideas go in the opposite direction compared to the creation of a transnational social space as it tries to bind the ethnic community of Germans from Russia to one territory within one nation state avoiding transnational mobility.

As shown in this sequence of this interview, political action has not only contributed to the creation of transnational social space among late repatriates but there have also been attempts to reserve the German population locally. For this reason, the role of the politics in respect of this topic cannot be characterized in a unified way though especially the role of policies, which made mobility of late repatriates possible and contributed to creation of transnational social space has to be highlighted.

#### **4.4. Discussion**

The goal of the following discussion is to summarize and discuss the results extracted from the three interviews on the subject of the research question. Furthermore, I will try to formulate an answer to the research question under consideration of criteria of transnational social space according to Faist as well as under consideration of possible consequences and the importance of the same. First, some criteria has to be elaborated which define the conditions for a transnational social space. Then, results from the previous chapter will be applied against these criteria so the research question can be answered in a more differentiated way.

According to Faists, primary resource in ties within a transnational community is some kind or diffuse solidarity, which builds upon shared ideas, beliefs and symbols creating a collective identity (Faist 2000: 207). In my sample, this resource can only be analyzed relying on expert interviews, which is a very special mode of knowledge production as explained in the chapter "Method", also the fact, that only organizational level of the community can be considered has to be kept in mind. When summarizing results from previous chapters, it can be stated that the community of Germans from Russia, as well as late repatriates, are quite heterogeneous in terms of level of identification with the

German ethnicity as well as corresponding symbols and ideas. Even within different countries this community seems to be very heterogeneous as stated in interview 2 and 3, where especially lack of identification was empathized. Though, late repatriates' organizations try to conserve elements of this so called shared identity such as culture, language and history awareness. It has to be noted that the term "culture" in this context is used in a rather essentialist than constructivist way, meaning that it somehow determines the community's collective identity, creating the differentiation between this given community and the others (Wimmer 2008). In front of this background, it is difficult to formulate a clear cut analysis of the state of the shared identity, since opposite processes can be observed: processes contributing to the creation of a shared identity and also processes which show that this shared identity is not comprehensive among the community. What can be confirmed though is that the organizations from my sample, including people participating in them, definitely contribute to the creation of a shared identity and therefore create conditions for a transnational social space. Of course, by confirming it, only the organizational level of the community is considered, meaning that a broader analysis especially of non-organizational practices would be needed. But even this dimension is theoretically explored by Ipsen-Peitzmeier (2006: 376) who confirmed the existence of an own late repatriates' infrastructure in Germany consisting of newspapers, theaters, stores, travel agencies etc. which might imply a certain level of shared identity and solidarity at least among late repatriates in Germany.

Furthermore it is questioned, if one shared identity is even possible under conditions of transnationalization of the community (Ipsen-Peitzmeier/Kaiser 2006: 36). In my opinion, this is a justified question, not least justified by the debate about hybrid identities which was also present in the interviews. It has been shown, that a hybrid identity could be one of the possible adaptation strategies, but it is not clear, to what extent this concept is accepted by the broad population of late repatriates for which more concrete research would be needed.

Similar founding can be presented regarding the main characteristic of a transnational social space according to Faist, namely collective representations such as ethnicity, which I would complement by elements such as language, culture and common history in case of late repatriates. As it is shown in the description of the organizations' tasks and goals, all these elements are core areas of organizational work. All three organizations from my sample are interested in maintenance of cultural goods such as language and try to strengthen ethnic belonging of the members of the community by strengthening their historical and cultural knowledge. Again, this can only be confirmed for the organizational level. It is not clear-cut, which role ethnicity plays among the representatives of the community on broader level. It can be assumed, that as ethnicity is addressed that strongly as one of the main requirements for immigration to Germany, it might have a rather high, at least instrumental, importance among the community. If ethnicity is defined as ethnic

belonging, it gets more complicated since identity issues than has to be considered. The dimension of identity in case of the late repatriates community is influenced by many factors such as identity crisis (Kiel 2015: 75) caused by the difference between the awareness of the self and of the others and the fact that ethnicity gets mixed up by mixed marriages and the missing identification with German ethnicity stated especially in interview 2.

Another element of transnational social space is the existence of transnational social and symbolic ties. In front of the results of the interviews, it can be stated that on organizational level, transnational ties are developed to a high degree, meaning that there are many cooperation with different organizations and political structures. These ties are not only within the community itself and are not restricted to the German-Russian context only, which makes the whole network very heterogeneous and broad. However, transnational ties to similar organizations from the Russian-German community are supported as well, which is even financially supported on political level. This fact leads to the conclusion, that regarding the level of trans-nationalization of ties, precondition for an existing transnational social space are given at least on organizational level. Also in this case, it is difficult to carry over these results on the whole late repatriates community. In the literature, dominance of family members and a low level of transnational ties are stated about late repatriates' personal networks (e.g. Frank 2011). It can be assumed, that except the family, contacts to representatives of the same ethnic group of late repatriates are primary network elements. Therefore, it can be concluded, that private networks of late repatriates in respect of their constellation are primarily constituted by representatives of the Russian-German community which contributes to the creation of a dense transnational social space and exchange processes in it, since representatives of the community are not necessarily bound to one territory.

Also political level of creation of a transnational social space has to be discussed. As historically reconstructed, affairs of Germans in the former Soviet Union became of political interest especially in the end of 1980ies. Even before this, demands for the rehabilitation of former German regions around the river of Volga have existed as well as other political demands, such as the possibility to immigrate to Germany. The Repatriates Admission Act, which was passed in 1990, can for this be seen as a result of ongoing political negotiation on late repatriates' affairs. Since then, this topic has always been on the political agenda in Germany and in Russia, which is constrained by the presence of late repatriates' affairs on many political levels and even the existence of committees and authorized representatives for such affairs as described in interview 1 and the level of financial support by both governments which is especially described in interview 3. At the same time, politics of restriction has been applied against late repatriates in the 1990ies to limit immigration flows to Germany which among others resulted in the settlement-project Neudorf-Strelna as explained in interview 2. After all, the three organizations still stay in contact with political institutions especially

on regional level. In respect of creation of a transnational social space, the role of political constituent is not that obvious. On the one side, political decisions enable the creation of a transnational social space by passing policies enabling immigration, on the other side restrictive politics are applied on the same, which can affect the creation of transnational social spaces negatively by limiting opportunities for mobility within this social space.

By transnational social space, a cross-border (not completely deterritorialized) space is meant, in which a certain community is operating. In my case, especially communities are considered and less transnational circuits or transnational kinship groups, which are also part of the concept. Considering the results of my analysis, the observed late repatriates' organizations to some extent contribute to the creation of a transnational social space in respect of creation of transnational ties, creation of a shared identity and the conservation of shared cultural goods as well as shared history. Though, also exceptions of this have been discussed in detail, such as the missing identification and homogeneity of the community as well as limitations by official policies. The limitations of this result to organizational level of the community have also been discussed. Due to a missing homogeneity of the community, which is one of the exceptions, it might be more reasonable to conceptualize the community as a result deriving from several (overlapping) social spaces and not only one transnational social space.

What are now the consequences of an existing transnational social space or the failure of the same? First, it is important to mention that the concept of transnational social space is just a concept trying to conceptualize the structure of the social under consideration of migration processes as an ongoing exchange and circulation of people, goods and ideas. In my opinion it is important to point out the processual character of what is called transnational social space, which is neither a limited, defined piece of territory nor it consists of clear-cut, homogenous groups and communities.

The first consequence of this concept applied to late repatriates' or any other migrant communities is a changed understanding of what is called immigration. Thus, it is not only a one time move from one country to another but a process, which does not necessarily end after the move. By staying in contact with people from the country of origin and building up a new network in the receiving country including the creation of immigrant networks, which can develop into serious organizations such as LMDR in case of late repatriates, immigrants on micro level create transnational social spaces, consisting of e.g. kinship groups or exchange networks, to use Faist's terminology. How the same process works on organizational level, I tried to illustrate in this research report. Thus, a new understanding of migration process can be established, which is less push-pull aspects oriented but considers immigrations as a social space generating and negotiating process.

The second consequence the concept of transnational social space might bring is the change in understanding of society, especially in combination with the nation state focus. While migration is

omnipresent nowadays, a nation state oriented understanding of societal structure is still existent. The concept of transnational social space can diversify the understanding of society conceptualizing the nation state society as a heterogeneous one, consisting of multiple (transnational) social spaces which are subjected to change permanently and are neither completely bound to territorial borders nor to borders of societal differentiation. In fact, transnational social space might be an alternative structuring concept to overcome the nation state understanding of societal structure or at least to complement the same.

The third consequence of the concept of transnational social space might be a change in the understanding of the process of integration. As it was shown in the chapter "Current state of research", a lot of research has been done especially on this topic regarding late repatriates' integration in German society. This topic has been addressed differently in terms of adaptation level to the receiving society, the level of taking over of cultural elements such as language, establishment of a new network in the receiving country. However, the process of integration has been addressed in the either-or-logics of two nation state equaling two (different) sets of habits and cultural assets. When the underlying concept of immigration is understood differently, the way integration is conceptualized might change in favor of denial of the either-or-logics and the consideration of the concept of cultural hybridity (Hannerz 1992). In this understanding considering the immigrants allocation in a transnational social space, integration might be grasped as an open process, which considers the multiplicity of immigrant individuals in regard of belonging, culture and ethnicity.

The final consequences I would like to highlight in respect of creation of transnational social spaces is the institutionalization of the same which can be the force behind the creation of this social space or the consequence of the same. In any case, it has been shown that such organizations aim to represent the community's interests and therefore function as political agents. By developing linkages to political organizations and high-level politicians or even by inserting candidates from their own community, political representation of the immigrant's community is assured which can lead to pluralization of political field.

Beside of the consequences illustrated above, there are still a few difficulties within the community which should be mentioned in the context of transnational social space creation. The first is the missing homogeneity of the community regarding a common identity, not even in comparison between different countries, but within certain countries which has been shown in interview 2 and 3. In front of this finding, cross-border solidarity of the whole community can be questioned. It is evident that there is cooperation and a high level of networking and linkages within the community on organizational level, but to what extent can the same be confirmed for the members of community outside the organizations? To what extent the creation of transnational social space among late repatriates is disabled by the heterogeneity of this community? Is there even a real

necessity for a transnational social space which combines countries where late repatriates are living? Is the self-perception and self-concept of late repatriates adopted (diverse and hybrid-oriented enough) to the new conditions of evaluation of social space in context of migration? These are, among others, subsequent questions for which further research would be needed.

## **5. Conclusion**

The empirical analysis of 3 expert interviews with leaders of late repatriates' and Russian-German organizations in regard of the research question has shown that to some degree, such organizations are creating condition for creation of a transnational social space by strengthening the common identity of the community as well as conserving its cultural elements and history. Also the high level of trans-nationalization and strong linkages to politicians and political institutions has been estimated as elements of the organizations contributing to the creation of transnational social spaces. At the same time, obstacles for the creation of transnational social space have been identified such as restrictive policies and lack of homogeneity within the community and lack of identification with the German ethnicity.

The topic of ethnic identity has mostly been addressed in an essentialist and bordering way, referring to the shared tragic history of Germans in Russia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in combination with common cultural elements such as language and everyday habits. Beside of this, tendencies to interpret identity in a more complex and less nation state influenced way could be stated such as the idea of cultural hybridity as coping mechanism especially in respect of late repatriates who immigrated to Germany and struggled with their initial identity settings. In contrast to the existing state of research, insight in the organizational level of this ethnic community could be provided as well as insight in the transnational practices of the same, including reflections on identity construction and political involvement.

Abstracting from the results presented in this research report, some limitations of the design have to be pointed out. The results are primarily limited by the formulation of the research question, meaning that only the organizational level of late repatriates' community could be considered, which was constituted by three selected organizations. At the same time, the information extracted from the expert interviews has to be evaluated and reflected under consideration of the special status of these experts, which legitimizes them to construct expert knowledge while being an individual with a subjective point of view at the same time. Furthermore, the limitation to the Russian-German community has to be considered as further limitation since there are corresponding communities in other countries such as Armenia or Ukraine, as mentioned in interview 3. It is also important to mention, that late repatriates or Germans from Russia are not solely influenced by their ethnicity and

characteristics related to it, but are also part of other communities and social milieus and therefore are subjected to many other influence factors. All facts considered, more research would be needed in order to receive broader insights into the social conditions and dynamics of late repatriates and especially transnational practices of this community.

## 6. References

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