From Privilege to Restrain: The Migration of Ethnic Germans from Romania and Poland

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Introduction

Social transformations of great magnitude that took place in the previous century bring to the forefront processes in which ethnicity played a structuring role. The ethnic migration of the Germans from east-central and south-eastern Europe towards the Federal Republic of Germany during the Cold War and in the post-communist period represents such a process and captured scholars' attention with its dimension and length. This migration process occurred on the basis of ethnic motivation and affinity (Brubaker 1998), but also on the basis of state ethnic selection of migration (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], Part 1; Groenendijk 1997), being rooted in the political situation of the postwar period and driven by the political reason of the West German state to protect the population of German descent remaining in authoritarian communist states in Eastern Europe (Joppke 2005, 187). It bears similarities to the movement of ethnic Russians from non-Russian successor states of the dismantled Soviet Union to Russia, of Jews from the territories of the former Soviet Union to Israel (Joppke 2005; Dietz 1999, 4), and of Black Sea Greeks from Ukraine, Russia, and Kazakhstan to Greece (Dietz 2011, 246), and to a certain extent to that of ethnic Hungarians from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine to Hungary (Brubaker 1998, 1048).

The present paper undertakes a reconstitution of the migration process of the Germans from Central and Eastern Europe towards the Federal Republic of Germany, with a focus on Poland and Romania, as a background research and departure point for the study of the social transformations and changes entailed in the societies of origin of the *Aussiedler*. In a context of an enlarged European Union with an increased liberty of movement, and of emergence of transnational spaces and practices, new perspectives and researches of this migration process can bring fruitful contributions to the understanding of ethnic migration and ethnicity, and to the way states and institutions approach and

formulate immigration and integration policies. In the first part the paper discusses key theoretical concepts for the study of ethnic migration and provides some information about the macro-political context and historical background of the process. In the second part it discusses the main driving forces of the *Aussiedler* migration, with an emphasis on the legal framework and immigration policy put in place by the West German state, while going through the main stages of migration and explaining how the migratory flows have been influenced by these measures and legal provisions, by the sending countries and political context, and how the process unfolded and structured at the social level, beyond the ideological and official discourse. Further on, the third part discusses the transformation of this originally-coined one-way migration into a circulatory movement between Germany and the origin country in the case of ethnic Germans from Poland and Romania, in which "return" becomes one of the many returns to one of the destinations (Michalon 2004), and where people negotiate their belonging both "here" as well as "there", that is, in the country where they come from and in the one where they frequently return or imagine to return, in a process of redefining their ethnic belonging (Iorio and Corsale 2012; Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011; Michalon 2004). In the last part, the paper proceeds with ways-ahead for the research of *Aussiedler* migration and with theoretical observations that can have further implications for the study of ethnicity and ethnic migration.

The officially coined *Aussiedler* resettlement encompasses a number of migration flows of ethnic Germans originating in different countries and in varied social, economic, and cultural settings, with different degrees of ethnic resilience and consciousness, and with different migratory practices and motivations. This term however bears limited information of the socially lived migration and ethnicity, as it pulls out mostly the political aspect of the process, defining it through a general and broad concept of "ethnic belonging" that works both as a push factor in the sending country as well as a pull factor in the destination country, hiding the diversity of this migratory movement (Brubaker 1998, 1048). The links between migration, ethnicity, and the socio-economic context at a macro and meso level are in reality much more complex and require further examination. This puzzle is approached here as the paper goes beyond the political and ideological framing of the process, and explores the way the migration of German ethnics from countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Hungary or Romania unfolded, and the practices through which it was enhanced, supported, and developed at the social level.

Politicized ethnicity and state ethnic selection of migration

Nested in the social and political reality of the postwar period this migration was engendered and regulated by the West German state and was motivated by ethnic and political factors (Dietz 2011, 245), framed inside an inclusive immigration policy that was meant to protect German co-ethnics living in authoritarian socialist regimes. People of German descent living scattered in different territories in Central and Eastern Europe permanently resettled in Germany (Anghel 2012, 10), receiving full citizenship and integration opportunities at arrival on the basis of ethnic credentials and presumed discrimination and persecution pressure in the countries of origin (Dietz 2011, 245; Joppke 2005, 214), being officially considered not migrants or foreigners but "Germans without citizenship" (Brubaker and Kim 2011, 52-3), returning to their 'mother country' (Brubaker 1998). Referred to as *Aussiedler* (out-settlers) and *Spätaussiedler* (late out-settlers) these categories of Germans were part of the third largest migration movement towards Germany, after the refugees and expellees arriving at the end of the war, and the influx of migrant workers arriving under the *Gästarbeiter* program (Bade and Oltmer 2011, 79). In this process ethnicity functioned both as a push factor at home and as a pull factor at destination, in what Rogers Brubaker addresses as ethnic 'unmixing' migration (1998, 1048). Different from other coercive forms of migration, such as expulsion or forced migration, this type is circumscribed and driven not only by ethnic conflict but also by significant elements of ethnic or cultural affinity, motivation and choice, and as it is shown in the present paper, by ethnic preferences put in migration policies (Sheffer 2005 [2003], 20; Brubaker 1998, 1049). About 4.5 million Germans resettled as *Aussiedler* and *Spätaussiedler* from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to the Federal Republic of Germany during the period of 1950 to 2007 (Bade and Oltmer 2011, 79; Oltmer 2006, 98). This out-migration process almost put an end to the centuries old German communities in territories that stretched from former Yugoslavia to the Baltic countries and from Poland to Russia, reducing them to mere symbolic presences (Iorio and Corsale 2012).

This migration has been officially defined as a "return" (Ruckführung) of co-ethnics to their homeland (Joppke 2005, 171), and as a permanent settlement, induced by Germany's post-war constitutional provisions for regulating the situation of those of *Volkszugehörigkeit* (membership of the *Volk* or ethnic nationality) living in Central and Eastern Europe, who did not have neither German, Austrian or Swiss citizenship (Heinemann 2011, 359), but whom subjectively and objectively shared this ethnic identity (Joppke 2005, 187). This provision of privileged status was extended and prolonged from the almost 12 million German refugees or expellees who fled their homes during the Second

World War to the remaining German populations stranded in several communist states and in the Soviet Union (Brubaker and Kim 2011; Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], Part 1; Brubaker 1998). Authors such as Anghel (2013) and Brubaker (1998) consider that this migration has been rather status driven than network driven, and it has been framed, codified, and bureaucratically administered by official ethnicity in the terms of the German state (Brubaker 1998, 1051). A strong emphasis is put on ethnicity, which seems to drive the entire process. Ethnicity works as the source of repression of Germans in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as the commitment of re-settlers of maintaining this ethnicity in their origin societies, and as the putative significance of the Federal Republic of Germany as the "homeland" where this ethnicity could be freely expressed, practiced and safeguarded (Ibid.). How Brubaker states, this official codifying of ethnicity was largely a "legal fiction" that enabled ethnic Germans outside Germany to qualify for special constitutional privileges, bearing little relevance to the socially "lived" ethnicity of these immigrants (Ibid.). Very little attention has been given to labor migration and to the social and economic motivations for departure, and to ethnic migration networks for the routes of migration. Official ethnicity seems to have played the major role making this migration possible, while informal ethnicity seems to be absent (Levy 2005 [2003], 270). Social perspectives, economic reasons, and the role of networks are considerably overlooked in this equation. This process has been labeled from the beginning as a "return" migration, as a return to the mother-country driven by ethnic affinity, with a strong conditionality on the direction of the migration flow, excluding any "return" back to the sending country, and putting on the side line other motivations for migration.

Ethnicity is given a considerable political weight and becomes the main concept framing and regulating this process (Joppke 2005; Brubaker 1998, 1048), being understood and employed both as a political discourse as well as a legal tool in engendering and endorsing the resettlement of the ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe to Germany. From an ethno-cultural perspective of nationhood the German state made German ethnicity the condition for entering the country and receiving citizenship, and the criteria for accessing inclusion and integration provisions at arrival, motivated by the harsh treatment ethnic Germans in the Soviet Union and Central Europe have been subjected to during and after the war (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], Part 1; Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 763-66). This perspective has been translated and applied in a very inclusive manner into the *Aussiedler* return policy, targeting the ethnic Germans in Communist states, whether they were known for harboring any German minority or not, while leaving aside other Germans who were living outside this political realm (Joppke 2005, 182-3). The implicit discrimination and persecution of these persons in the authoritarian

and repressive regimes in Eastern Europe has represented one of the main arguments of the *Aussiedler* immigration policy (Ibid., 214), and a complementary term in understanding the role of ethnicity in this process.

Thus, ethnicity appears as a social concept with different meanings and different dimensions (Anghel 2012, 23). First of all, as a legal (Ibid.) and political status (Brubaker 1998) ethnicity represents the ground breaking factor of this process. Without the legal endorsement and institutional support of the German state the discourse of ethnic affinity between Germans in the eastern part of Europe and their kin in Germany would have remained a simple and elegant political statement. The migration of ethnic Germans at this dimension and scale would not have been possible without the resettlement frame and policies put in place by the Federal Republic (Dietz 1999), doubled by ethnic citizenship laws which favored persons of German descent, while excluding other migrants who did not possess ethnic credentials (Joppke 2005). Ethnicity as a cultural asset, such as language (Anghel 2012, 23), genealogy, education, and way of life (Michalon 2004, 3) represents another dimension of this concept, which has enabled and facilitated in large lines the movement, settlement, and integration of the *Aussiedler* in Gemany (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 761). And ethnicity as a social resource such as social solidarity and social trust (Anghel 2012), although slightly overlooked at the beginning of the process, existent in ethnic networks and organizations, has functioned as an important mechanism of migration (Brubaker 1998), supporting, enhancing, and patterning the movement of ethnic Germans from their origin communities to the receiving states (Bundesländer) in Federal Germany (Dietz 1999). The "ethnicization" of the immigration policy worked as a structuring factor of this process (Michalon 2004, 3), and enabled the resettlement of the *Aussiedler*, but generated in return significant political, social, and juridical tensions in relation to the German society and to other migrant groups (Joppke 2005, Chapter 4; Dietz 2003).

However, Germany's ethnic commitment to its diaspora living as national minorities in the countries behind the Iron Curtain (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], 3; Thränhardt 2001, 285) has been driven rather by political considerations than ideological and ethnic ones (Joppke 2005, Chapter 4; Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004), and it was possible as long the migration was small in numbers and the liberty of movement was restricted in socialist states (Oltmer 2006, 98; Thränhardt 2001, 285). It became part of a political project of national reunification that was meant to accommodate a unique historical event, the expulsions and repressions that ethnic Germans suffered in retaliation for World War II (Joppke 2005, Chapter 4), and has led to the implementation of one of the most flexible and open immigration policies, in respect of its co-ethnics living in Eastern Europe (Ibid.). Due to its

political status and situation at the beginning of the Cold War, West Germany (after the separation from East Germany) made use of a rather "quixotic legal fiction" and created a form of transborder nationalist membership politics (Brubaker and Kim 2011, 33) that had to assure some sort of political continuity to the divided German nation. The Federal Republic provisionally assumed the responsibility to be the sole legitimate representative or custodian of the political unity of the nation (cf. Brubaker and Kim 2011, 33) and put in place plans and policies that would constitute the architecture of reunification and restoration of one country for all Germans. As a consequence, West Germany has never ceased to consider East Germans as its own citizens and co-ethnics and to aspire to bring them back into one polity, as it has never proceeded to enact a constitution or basic law (Grundgesetz) that acknowledged the existence of two German nations or which served solely the Germans living in the Federal Republic (Joppke 2005, Chapter 4). As a matter of fact the German Basic Law (Grundgesetz) has never been officially considered the constitution of the state and functioned only as a juridical backbone until the unification with East Germany in 1990 (Ibid.). This political and juridical thinking was extended to the ethnic Germans living in the socialist republics of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, which were seen and imagined (Anderson 1983) as being part of an enlarged German nation, which was divided by borders and other nations (Dietz 2006, 117), in the complicated landscape of Central and Eastern Europe.

The existence of German populations in this region is closely related to the history of European migration movements (Dietz 2006, 117), and they can trace their origins back to the medieval colonization of the 12th and 13th centuries (Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011, 2), and to later settlements of the period of 15th - 19th century in regions which were part of the former Holy Roman German Empire, Hungarian Kingdom, and later on of Austro-Hungary or Russian Empire (Dietz 2006, 117), and as well as to border changes and nation states building in the 20th century (Brubaker and Kim 2011, 27; Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011, 2; Dietz 2006, 117; Gräf and Grigoraș 2003, 55). A considerable part of the Germans had been invited by the governments of the receiving states or by monarchs or local rulers of those territories to defend borders, cultivate land, work in agriculture and forestry (Dietz 2006, 117), in minerals' exploitation or administration (Castellan 1971, 53). They were granted significant privileges and resources and their activities had a considerable contribution to the development of colonized regions (Dietz 2006, 117; Roth 2006; Dowling 1991). The 20th century political transformations and revolutions as well as the two global conflagrations in which Germany played as an aggressor (Dietz 2006, 117; Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011, 2-3), coupled with the nationalizing

tendencies of the emergent states (Brubaker and Kim 2011; Verdery 1985; Michalon 2004; Chelcea 1999) have led to the deterioration of social and economic conditions and loss of privileges for the ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe. They have been reduced to the status of national minorities and subsequently suffered deportation and expropriation in their countries of origin (Dietz 2006, 117-118).

The forced resettlement of Germans from these territories have started already during the Nazi regime as part of the policy of changing the ethnic profile of different countries, and continued with refugees and expellees that totaled 12 million at the end of the war (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], 10), originating mostly in Poland and former Czechoslovakia (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 763). Despite the massive expulsion (Vertreibunsdruck) and ethnic cleansing (Schlögel 2005 [2003], 94-96; Groenendijk 1997, 462) from 1945 to 1948, 1.4 to 1.5 million people of ethnic German or mixed origin remained in the territories of Soviet Union, about one million people in Poland, more than 400,000 in Romania, 200,000 in the cultural pockets of Hungary, and some 150,000 in Czechoslovakia (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], 10). This remaining population of ethnic Germans would later become the immigration basis of migrants coming to Germany (Ibid.). Thus, Germany, which defined itself for a long time as "not a country of immigration" (Joppke 2008 [1999]), has confronted with a significant migration inflow consisting of different types of immigrants, where four major groups can be distinguished: asylum seekers, labor migrants and their family members, a remarkably large number of *Aussiedler* coming from Eastern Europe (Dietz 1999, 4; Groenendijk 1997), and *Übersiedler* coming from East Germany (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004). However, postwar Germany remained consequent on its status and has never considered this process as immigration and Germans from the East as immigrants at all, but as a "return" (Ruckführung) of coethnics to their homeland (Joppke 2005, 171).

The evolution of the Aussiedler migration

The *Aussiedler* status created in 1953 prolonged the legal provision of the Constitution of 1949 which introduced the right to move to Germany and receive full citizenship for ethnic Germans residing and originating in other countries (Dietz 2006, 118). It was part of a special framework enabling them to migrate under privileged circumstances and obtain benefits of integration upon arrival (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], Part 1). All ethnic Germans coming to Germany after 1950 were no longer referred to as *Vertriebene* or expellees, but rather as re-settlers or simply as *Aussiedler* (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 767). This immigration framework was created through a series of amendments

brought to the German Basic Law (Grundgesetz) regulating citizenship (Ibid.). Conceived and applied in a very inclusive manner this status was referring only to ethnic Germans in communist states, and bore a significant political weight (Joppke 2005, 182-3). The framework of this policy is composed by the Article 116 of the Basic Law of 1949, stating ethnicity as the principle of accession to German citizenship and extending it to all people that identify themselves as such, living inside or beyond the borders of Germany (Groenendijk 1997, 462); by the amendment of 1953 called *Bundesflüchtlings-und-Vertriebenengesetz* (BVFG), covering the statute of German citizens (according to the pre-war legislation on German nationality), and of ethnic Germans (Deutsche Volkszugehörigen) not having German nationality (Ibid.); and the Act Regulating Questions of Citizenship – *Gesetz zur Regelung von Fragen des Staatsangehörigkeit* (StaReG) of 1955 stipulating that ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe, but also Germans from the GDR, would qualify for West German citizenship (Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011, 8). The statutory regime and the government policy on *Aussiedler*, apart from a few minor changes, remained unchanged for over three decades. A total number of 3.2 million *Aussiedler* arrived in Germany during the four decades the BVFG has been in force (Groenendijk 1997, 463). It is important to note here that *Aussiedler* translates into a legal status rather than into a collective term for ethnic German migrants (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004). The BVFG granted the *Aussiedler* and their families the right to enter and stay in Germany and also it provided a range of facilities to support their integration into the German society (Brubaker and Kim 2011, 37; Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 763-67). These facilities refer to reimbursement of all direct costs of travel and transportation, housing, language courses as well as full coverage by the social security system (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 761). Recognition of diplomas and of professional experience in the country of origin, grants, and tax facilities were awarded for a better incorporation on the labor market. Many *Aussiedler* were entitled to compensation for property left behind or for detention in the country of origin (Ibid.). The recognition of the German immigrant status was ensued by an entry visa and German citizenship on request, thereby migrants acquiring all rights and duties of a citizen without a waiting period (Zimmermann 1999).

This migration process depended also on the international relations during the Cold War, and especially on bilateral relations between communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the Federal Republic of Germany (Ibid.). The territory of Central and Eastern Europe continued to be a disputed part of the continent in the postwar period and former opponents have redrawn their areas of influence and strategies and used their capabilities to remake their international status. In an attempt to compensate for the losses and sufferings of the Germans that have been swept out by the moving front

of the Second World War, the Federal Republic reinitiated the "repatriation" of those that bore unintended consequences of this atrocious conflict (de Tinguy 2005 [2003], 100) and helped them to "come back into their mother country."

Between 1.4 and 1.6 million Germans had arrived in Germany until 1987 due to this policy (Münz 2005 [2003], 245). With the fall of the Iron Curtain the numbers of immigrants suddenly grew, rising to 400,000 a year, between 1989 and 1990 (Dietz 1999). After the opening of borders the increase in migration is highly visible, with further 2.6 million people of German descent and their families arriving in Germany between 1988 and 1999 (Münz 2005 [2003], 245). This drives the numbers to almost 4.5 million German immigrants coming to Germany through the resettlement policy frame (Ibid.). Polish Germans and Romanian Germans represent the main stream of migration until 1990. After 1992 they were followed by Russian Germans coming from the former territories of the Soviet Union and Russia (Ibid.).

The migration process unfolds in three stages. The first migration flows of Germans of an average of 36,000 annually came mostly from Poland and Romania (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 767). This epitomizes the period of 1950 to 1987 when the migration flow goes at a low level (Münz 2005 [2003], 245), with a peak in the immigration from Poland in 1956-1959 (Groenendijk 1997, 465). Family reunification was central to this first stage of migration. During this period almost 1.6 million German immigrants registered in West Germany as *Aussiedler* (Münz 2005 [2003], 245), where about two-thirds (62 percent) of these German immigrants were from Poland (848,000) and a further 15 percent from Romania (206,000) (Münz 2005 [2003], 247). Until the end of 1987 the resettlement of ethnic Germans has been restricted by political tensions between Germany and the sending countries, and by rigid emigration regulations of the (former) communist states. Thus, migration was possible on the basis of bilateral agreements between West Germany and the governments of Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union (Ibid.). Chancellor Schmidt made agreements with Poland (1975) and Romania (1977), both countries agreeing to the emigration of Germans in exchange for financial support (Groenendijk 1997, 465). Poland received large loans, while Romania was paid a fixed amount for every German emigrant: 5,000 DM per capita in 1978, increased to 7,800 DM per capita in 1983, and finally to DM 11,000 in 1988 (Ibid.). This explains the average annual increase from 1968 to 1986. A sharp increase was registered once the Iron Curtain fell and emigration conditions were relaxed, with 400,000 persons in 1989 and 1990 (Dietz 1999, 5). In the former Soviet Union the liberalization of the emigration legislation under Gorbachov after 1986 caused a large

increase of the *Aussiedler* migration (Groenendijk 1997, 465). Until the end of the eighties ethnic German arriving under this migration framework were in comparatively good command of the German language and most of them did not live in bi-cultural families or in mixed marriages (Dietz 1999, 8). This was the case in large lines of the German minority in Romania or Czechoslovakia, but has not been representative for all the German minority in Poland and the former Soviet Union (Ibid., 9). In Poland and the former USSR the German language competence of the German minorities has diminished considerably since the end of the World War II, and many Germans did not rank German as their mother tongue (Ibid.).

The migration process enters a new stage with the change of the political climate in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. The German authorities started to control and channel the immigration of ethnic Germans when annual quotas are introduced, and new amendments are brought to the citizenship law (Groenendijk 1997, 468). Preliminary to these quotas, the law of *Wohnortzuweisungsgesetz* (WoZuG) introduced in 1989 in order to deal with the large number of migrants arriving after the fall of communist regimes, provided the *Aussiedler* with an assigned temporary residence, for an even distribution of the German re-settlers on the territory of West Germany (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 764). Each federal state received a percentage of *Aussiedler* on the basis of a quota system intending to lessen the impact of migration on any particular federal state (Ibid.). The immigrants were required to stay in the federal state to which they were assigned for a period of two years, unless they proved they had a job, apprenticeship or a study program elsewhere (Ibid.). The *Aussiedleraufnahmegesetz* or the *Aussiedler* Acceptance Law represents another amendment, passed in July 1990, marking a change in the perspective on migration, demanding German re-settlers to apply for admission in the countries of origin (Ibid.). From now on German ethnics have to pass through complicated admission procedures (*Aufnahmeverfahren*). Aussiedler intending to migrate to Germany had to apply for a reception certificate (*Aufnahmebescheid*) at a German consulate in their country of residence, and had to complete a 50-page questionnaire in order to provide proof of their German origin and German language proficiency (cf. Groenendijk 1997). This application procedure allowed an administrative regulation and reduction of the number of immigrants. Already by 1991 the immigration of ethnic Germans stabilized on a level of approximately 220,000 re-settlers per year (Ibid.). This new stage in the migration policy and migration process of the Germans in Central and Eastern Europe comes as a paradox in a moment when the political context in the region becomes much more relaxed and borders more permeable. With the enforcement of a further new amendment, the law of *Kriegfolgenbereiningungsgesetz* (KfbG) or the

Act Dealing with the Consequences of the War, passed in 1992, and coming into effect in January 1993, a new legal category is created, the *Spätaussiedler* (late resettlers), broadening the definition of German ethnicity and replacing the first *Aussiedler* category (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 762-66; Dietz 1999, 5). The *Spätaussiedler* status refers specifically to the Germans coming from the territories of the former Soviet Union and limits the possibility of accessing *Aussiedler* provisions to those coming from its successor states (de Tinguy 2005 [2003], 113). If before, the characteristics of being German and living in a communist regime implied automatic discrimination in that country on an ethnic basis, and the unrestricted right to return, the perspective is once again changed with this law, one having to prove his Germanness through language and descent, or otherwise prove the discrimination or bad treatment he was subjected to because of his ethnic belonging (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 763-67). With 1993 the quota system is reinforced, with almost all German immigrants registered as *Spätaussiedler* coming from the dismantled Soviet Union (Dietz 1999, 5), while ethnic migration policy shifted to a more liberal perspective after the enactment of the Asylum Compromise. This set of rules stipulates new conditions for naturalization in Germany, which are no longer based solely on German ethnicity (Joppke 2005, Chapter 4). In the case of the Germans living in other states of Eastern and Central Europe, privileged immigration provisions are no longer necessary due to political transformations and democratization in this region, political persecutions and discrimination on an ethnic basis being no longer taken into consideration, as these states are categorized now as 'safe countries' (Dietz 2003). After the massive migration of 1989 and 1990 almost no Germans remain in states such as Poland, in the successor states of Yugoslavia, in the Czech Republic or in Slovakia. In Romania, the great wave of out-migration (1989-1992) reduced the German minority population to a core of older people who were unwilling to emigrate (in 1999 - approximately 60,000) (Münz 2005 [2003], 251). As a new measure of restriction a language test was introduced for the *Spätaussiedler* in 1996, who, have to prove a certain command of the German language in order to be able to access the migration provisions reserved for ethnic Germans (Dietz 1999, 6). A Federal Administrative Court decision issued in the same year backed this measure, declaring that subjective ethnicity or descent alone does not suffice for claiming *Aussiedler* status (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 773). The language test was available in a simple or a qualified form. Every applicant for admission had to pass the simple language test, whereas in the case of the qualified test, every family member, also the non-German, had to take and pass the test. The qualified test offered the family the possibility to come to Germany without a waiting period (Dietz 1999). More than half of those that were invited to take the test in one of the previous forms failed (Ibid.,7). This is due to the situation in

the Soviet Union, where Germans were denied to speak German in public and had poor education opportunities in the German language, thus having almost no proficiency in German (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], Part 1; Dietz 1999). Studies also showed that more than 45 per cent of them spoke Russian at home, while the other half lived in bilingual families (cf. de Tinguy 2005 [2003], 109). This brought the numbers of German immigrants entering the Federal Republic down to 103,800 in 1999 (Dietz 1999, 7). Since 2000 the immigration quota is fixed at 100,000 persons a year (Dietz 2003), while privileged admission no longer applies to those born after 1992 (Joppke 2005, Chapter 4; Dietz 1999). Meanwhile the German state has made efforts to improve the status and situation of ethnic German minorities left in their countries of origin and home communities, establishing policies of economic and social aid and supporting the broadening of cultural and political minority rights (Joppke 2005, 210-2).

The immigration process enters a third stage, with migration quotas maintained after 2000 and migration movement continuing at a constant rate, but with a slow decline on the long term. New restrictions on immigration are introduced with the passing of a new version of the WoZuG law in 1996 (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 774). This measure tries to reinforce the restriction of movement inside Germany for the *Spätaussiedler*, under which they must remain in the federal state of assignment, or otherwise must forfeit all social services, such as welfare, unemployment benefits, language courses or job retraining programs (Ibid.). Under the Kohl government the restriction on movement was no longer limited to two years, but was put in place indefinitely and extended to 2007, only to be prolonged by the Schröder government to three years and the validity of the law to be extended to December 2009 (Ibid., 771). Although this measure was meant to assure fair chances for integration for the German immigrants and a decent livelihood in Germany, and even the burden on the states, at the same time it raised serious question marks on the respect of the constitutional right of free movement (Joppke 2005, 215). Most of the *Aussiedler* migration of this stage is restricted to the former Soviet Union and Russia (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 771). The Immigration Law or *Zuwanderungsgesetz* passed by the SPD/Green government in 2002 further tightened the language test for the potential ethnic German migrants, extending it to all members of the family (Joppke 2005, 210). Language gained centrality and became the only objective affirmation mark for the recognition of German ethnicity, not necessarily due to a new vision of ethnicity but rather of the need to integrate ethnic migrants and tackle existent social problems (Ibid., 188). This marked a progressive shifting of citizenship policy from ethnic citizenship and ethnic return migration to liberal citizenship and normalized immigration policy (Ibid). After serious political debates Germany has replaced the former

ethnic and conservative view on citizenship with a more liberal stance. The ethnic migrants' privileges have been transformed into a more equitable treatment of all migrant groups, including also the asylum seekers (Ibid., 213). In terms of development of numbers the percentage of naturalizations already overpassed in 1998 the one of the *Aussiedler* and *Spätaussiedler* migration to Germany (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 775). In the period of 2001 to 2012, 99 percent of the immigrants arriving in Germany and declaring themselves as ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe came from the countries of the Former Soviet Union (Worbs et al. 2013, 29).

The ethnic Germans and their families coming to the Federal Republic have encountered and entered what Portes and Böröcz call "a privileged context of reception" (1989, 619) where formal state structures and programs offered them a "smooth absorption" and incorporation into the German labor market and society, at least until the end of the 1980s (Dietz 1999, 1), and where official information campaigns, legal measures and the public discourse emphasized and articulated a solidary and sympathetic perception of the *Aussiedler*, trying to insulate them from negative and contesting attitudes (Brubaker and Kim 2011, 52). This type of immigration policy driven by ethnic consideration which provided a facilitated access to the homeland society (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], 12) reduced the selectivity of migration and increased the representativeness of the German migrant groups by approximating their socio-demographic background in the sending countries (Dietz 1999, 10). In this case not all of those that engaged in this process had a proper knowledge of German (Brubaker 1998, 1053-4; Zimmermann 1999, 7), spoke German at home (Ohliger and Münz 2005 [2003], 6; Dietz 1999, 7), or detained an appropriate qualification that enabled them to perform well on the labor market in the receiving country (Zimmermann 1999, 9). Many of the *Aussieler* and *Spätaussiedler* came from mixt families (Dietz 2011), had not been educated in German schools, retained as little as German descent as a tie to German ethnicity, as in the case of those coming from Russia and the states of the former Soviet Union (Idem, 1999), and some of them faced serious problems in integrating properly into the arrival context (Dietz 2011, 248; Joppke 2005, 207-9). Although their reasons and motivations for migration stretched beyond the stated ethnic affinity they were not considered "ordinary" labor migrants as their departure and admission were not based on economic calculus, business cycles, and labor recruiting programs (Dietz 2006, 116; 1999, 1), and their use of networks and weak ties has been less important in their re-settlement in Germany than in the case of other migration flows (Brubaker 1998, 1053-4). There are serious debates in the ethnic migration literature on whether they succeeded to integrate and

pursue a better existence in Germany or they became once again excluded and treated as simple migrants coming from the East. A majority of the *Aussiedler* have obtained a successful formal integration in their new country as they received citizenship, the right to vote and take part in elections (Klekowski von Koppenfells 2004; Zimmermann 1999), and their studies and qualifications have been recognized upon arrival, receiving also assistance and proper employment (Anghel 2013, 92; Dietz 2011, 248). Although this kind of assistance was very much reduced after 1990 (Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011, 14), many of the *Aussiedler* and *Spätaussiedler* found a rather comfortable financial situation in Germany and formally became Germans (Anghel 2013, See Chapter 2 and 3). But their social incorporation and acceptance did not reach the level most of them aspired to (Ibid.). They had difficulties of being socially accepted as Germans or as equal to native Germans (Ibid.), and to establish social ties and friendship relations to the local population beyond working or formal relations (Dietz 2011, 249). In the case of the ethnic Germans coming from the former Soviet Union or from the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States they were often denied the social status of Germans due to certain items of social differentiation such as the frequent use of Russian in their communities and particular social behavior and habits brought from the countries of origin (Ibid.). After the change in the immigration policy of the *Aussiedler* and *Spätaussiedler* throughout the 1990s, coupled with the fall of communist regimes and an increase in numbers of the Germans entering the Federal Republic, the German society took a less sympathetic stance and broke down the positive perception and representation, referring to them in the public discourse, media and social relations more often as regular migrants pushed by economic reasons rather than by ethnic affinity and the danger of ethnic assimilation in their countries of origin (Brubaker and Kim 2011, 53; Joppke 2005, 209). From the 1990s onwards they have been perceived as less willing to integrate and as living as a special group inside the larger pool of immigrants in Germany, clutching to the private spheres of their families or to the social networks formed by acquaintances or friends from their countries of origin (Dietz 2011, 249-50; 1999, 11-3). They have been commonly referred to and associated with the countries they were coming from, being often called 'Russians', 'Romanians' or 'Poles', sometimes in negative terms (de Tinguy 2005 [2003], 111).

Social networks or migrant networks have not played a central role in the migration of the *Aussiedler* in Germany up to a certain moment but they became useful as state social assistance was reduced and migration became more regulated. Bauer and Zimmermann (1997), Dietz (1999) and Anghel (2013, 47) show that social networks have been used in this process and their use differs among ethnic

Germans from Eastern Europe depending on their country of origin and along the various stages of migration. These networks are defined as sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin (Dietz 1999, 7; Bauer and Zimmermann 1997, 143), where social capital is mobilized in different forms and in different functions in the processes of economic and social incorporation (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Portes and Böröcz 1989). Migrants construct a bounded solidarity and trust that goes beyond kinship relations and extends to a larger community (Ibid.) diffusing and appearing in both strong and weak ties (Granovetter 1973) in migrant networks. Looking beyond the official policy and paying attention to the political and social context in the societies of origin, and to the way the process has unfolded and has overpassed restrictions and regulations, networks have come to replace the loopholes in the process and bridged migrants and their resources there where institutions or regulations impeded them. In the first stage where migration was strictly regulated by the authoritarian and socialist regimes in the region (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2004, 767) ethnic Germans used their weak and strong ties (Granovetter 1973) in order to overpass restrictions and shorten the application procedures (Anghel 2013, 34-5). Their social networks composed of relatives, friends and acquaintances, some of them already living in Germany, even though they played a secondary role in the migration process, have contributed to the easing of their departure and to the facilitation of resettlement in regions and cities that offered economic opportunities and where they could join other *Aussiedler* originating in the same country or areas as theirs (Ibid., 53-7). In the second stage when the movement across borders has known a period of relaxation of emigration conditions after the fall of communist regimes in the Eastern bloc (Dietz 1999, 5) and admission and integration policy towards ethnic Germans have been significantly revised (Roll 2005 [2003], 255), social networks supplied the resources necessary for moving and settling in Germany (Anghel 2013, 46; Dietz 1999, 8). Following the theory that migrant networks influence migration plans in the sense that the greater and larger the number of migrants a person knows in a sending area the greater the probability that this person will also migrate (Portes 1997, 809), the Germans' movement to the Federal Republic reflects the tendency of following co-ethnics from their towns and regions of origin and regrouping in high concentrations in particular areas and Federal states of Germany around these communities (Bauer and Zimmermann 1997; Dietz 1999; 2011; de Tinguy 2005 [2003]; Roll 2005 [2003], 255). In the case of Germans from Romania and Poland the movement has been rather fast and sudden after the fall of the communist and socialist regimes in 1989 (Anghel 2013, 46; Münz 2005 [2003], 247-9; Zimmermann 1999, 3), when in a few years most of the Germans

left their home communities moving in areas such as Bavaria or Baden Württemberg where Germans from the same regions lived and settled. The Germans from the former Soviet Union had a slightly different trajectory. Their movement and possibility of departing was highly restricted before the 1980s, and grew in numbers after the enactment of the *perestroika* and *glasnost* policy. They soon become one of the most important migration flows entering Germany, growing beyond the real number of those that identified as such in their country of origin, and often displaying serious difficulties in marking their German affiliation through either language, cultural traits or kinship (Brubaker 1998, 1052). Their out-migration process lasted until the late 1990s and out into the 2000s, as the German state restricted and severely regulated the accession to the *Spätaussiedler* status (Dietz 1999, 6-7), and conducted to the formation of 'Russian German' ethnic enclaves and social networks in the receiving country that might possibly indicate a recent deterioration of their status and economic perspectives and segregation from the larger German society, somehow different from the case of the *Aussiedler,* where networks contributed to their integration and economic incorporation (Ibid., 14-5).

Ethnic Germans' return migration in Poland and Romania

As the German state confronted itself with increasing flows of migration and asylum seekers (Oezcan 2004) in the context of demise of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and German reunification (Joppke 2005, 205-6), the restrictions of ethnic migration became mutually reinforcing with liberal reforms on citizenship and a new immigration law, transforming in consequence the former ethnic migration policy and citizenship law into more liberal and inclusive frameworks (Joppke 2008 [1999]).

The integration in the European Union of most of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe that hosted significant German minorities before the fall of communism has rescaled the relation of the *Aussiedler* with their (former) home countries. The ethnic Germans originating in Poland and Romania benefited of new structures of opportunities as the two countries entered the European Union and obtained unrestricted liberty of movement for their citizens, becoming once again connected with their co-ethnics inside a European political assemblage and overcoming at least symbolically the boundaries and the closure that made them depart their regions in the first way. They started to engage in return migration for visiting family, resettling and recovering properties, or for root tourism (Iorio and Corsale 2012). This way a process of circular migration between Germany and their origin communities has been engendered, enlarging the space in which ethnic Germans moved, lived, and defined their

identification and belonging.

In the case of Poland, after constituting into mass migration in the 1980s the *Aussiedler* migration has diminished substantively during the period of the Third Republic (Górny et al. 2007, 152). Progressively the German state changed its approach and perspective and proceeded to policies that were meant to keep in place the German ethnics and assure for them cultural and political collective rights in the society of origin (Joppke 2005, 210-2), going to the point of even extending German civil and political rights for the creation of dual citizenship (Faist 2013, 15; 2007; Górny et al. 2007). German populations in the Lower and Upper Silesia, Masuria, and Opole region have constituted the main basin for the *Aussiedler* immigration and a much disputed field of the national and ethnic supremacy of Poland and Germany in the last century (Cordell and Wolff 2005, 9-10). Fearing assimilation and growing tensions in these regions ethnic Germans progressively departed to the Federal Republic under the *Aussiedler* status. However after the re-settlement policy has been brought to an end the number of people identifying as Germans and as German speakers in south-west and north-west Poland remained significant. They rapidly embraced the option of becoming German citizens. According to the Polish National Census of 2002 there were 279,639 Polish citizens holding German citizenship, making as much as 63 percent of the population with dual citizenship, but their real number is being estimated to be much larger, overpassing 300,000 people (cf. Górny et al. 2007, 152). In the Opole Silesia (one of the major German speaking regions of Poland) the number of German ethnics holding dual citizenship is estimated to be at around 120,000-130,000 persons (Ibid.). The policy of granting citizenship to ethnic Germans living in Poland has not generated negative attitudes and public debates, and was ensued by the opening of a number of German consulates throughout the country which made the procedure much faster and more efficient (Ibid.). This legal provision enabled them to access the European labor market and a set of social facilities and rights. It even granted them the right to vote in Germany's federal elections starting with September 2013 (The Economist 2013). Henceforward the ethnic Germans in Poland did not seek anymore to permanently settle in the Federal Republic but engaged in a circular mobility constituting of repeated trips to take up work, while maintaining a permanent residence in Poland (Górny et al. 2007, 152). Many oriented themselves to countries far further than Germany, benefiting from their new legal status as European and German citizens.

Facing a slightly different situation from their peers in Poland, the ethnic Germans in Romania enjoyed a far more favorable status, benefiting from access to a German schooling, the right to take part in German cultural and social associations and the liberty of practicing their Lutheran confession. Even though their remained under the control and pressure of the authoritarian communist regime they were recognized as an ethnic minority of Romania with full civil and political rights, that supported and recognized the Romanian state, and considered to pose no threat to the communist authorities and to the existent political arrangement (Verdery 1985). Subsequently they entered under the cover of different frameworks and treaties for the protection of ethnic minorities and collective rights to which Romania adhered, and under the civil and political rights granted by the democratic constitution Romania adopted after the fall of communism. Those that remained in their communities of origin were not granted German citizenship as it happened in Poland, but those that migrated were allowed in many cases to keep their Romanian citizenship as they acquired the German one.

Originally rooted in Transylvania, a former Austro-Hungarian realm disputed both by Hungary and Romania, and known as Transylvanian Saxons, a name derived from a medieval juridical term (Roth 2006) that was later turned into an ethnic denomination (Verdery 1985), they constituted among with Banat and Sathmar Swabians, Maramures Zipsers, Bukovina and Dobroudja Germans and other ethnic minorities the multiethnic fabric of Romania. They lived in multicultural communities where they occupied a favorable niche in the ethnic hierarchy, valued for their industriousness, economic skills, and good organization, and praised for their civilizing agency (Brubaker 1998). Throughout the 20th century they witnessed the passage from empires to nation states, the changing of borders, as well as dramatic changes in their legal, social and economic status (Gräf and Grigoras 2003, 55). Despite these tumultuous experiences the German minority remained in Romania, by large, until the fall of the Communist regime, when they migrated in mass to Germany (Ibid.), leaving only a dwindling number of an aged population in their sending communities. Regarded as a social trauma, their departure is very weakly tied to manifested ethnic persecution and discrimination, as it has been the case in other parts of Eastern Europe, but rather to a difficult and worsening economic context and a change in the structure of opportunities, which made migration the only desirable option. Although they have received a good deal of positive attention recently (Kulish 2009), the Germans of Romania are seen today rather as a 'vanishing' (Dowling 1991), disappearing culture and ethnic group (Sudetic 1990), who leaves behind a valuable material and immaterial heritage in their once affluent villages and towns (Ban 2009), and memories often thorn between nostalgia and oblivion (Iorio and Corsale 2012; Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011).

However, recent scholarship and research in the former German settings of Transylvania and Banat have shown a much more complex situation. Continuing the work pioneered by Katherine Verdery (1985; 1983) on social transformations in the ethnic German communities in Romania, Bénédicte Michalon (2004; 2003) shows how in the recent period, prior to the entrance of the country in the European Union, the originally coined "return migration", conceived in a definitive and reductionist way as a permanent migration, has transformed into a circular migration between the receiving country and the sending country, where 'return' is dispossessed of its strong normative meaning and becomes one of the many returns ethnic Germans take between their 'lost and found' homeland in Romania (Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011) and their 'adoptive' homeland in Germany.

The *Aussiedler* migration has developed at a moment when liberty of movement was highly restricted and extremely reduced in Romania and became one of the most important out-migrations in the postwar period (Horvath and Anghel 2009). It has rapidly became associated with a privileged status in a period when only privileged people could obtain a passport and visa to travel in Western Europe and when leaving the country 'un-authorized' was considered a crime (Münz 2005 [2003], 247; Verdery 1985). When the political and economic context changed both in Germany and Romania, as well as in Europe, the politically and ideologically fraught ethnic 'return' migration shifted towards a back-and-forth migratory movement, enhanced by social networks and family ties, supported by the pretext of ethnic affinity and driven by a powerful economic motivation (Michalon 2003). Those that did not migrate, although they had the proper entitlement, engaged in temporary labor migration while maintaining their residence in Romania (Idem 2004), while those that settled in Germany as *Aussiedler* came back for short periods of time to visit family and friends, for leisure and tourism (Anghel 2013, Chapter 2 and 3; Iorio and Corsale 2012), and sometimes to settle-back or recover properties and other assets (Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011, 16). Transylvanian Saxons that left their country as *Aussiedler* and who return in present to re-discover their roots are re-inventing and re-negotiating their belonging both to an "idealized and mythic" homeland placed in Transylvania as well as to a concrete and present homeland in Germany (Iorio and Corsale 2012; Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011), while Banat Swabians return to Timişoara on regular trips during vacations to visit friends and to have social encounters, re-constructing ties with their origin society (Anghel 2013, Chapter 1and 3). Sometimes their social networks enlarged beyond ethnic lines, facilitating migration and employment in Germany for neighbors and friends (Michalon 2003; 2004). In many cases mixt-families made out of ethnic Germans and Romanians or Hungarians were constituted due to repeated trips to Transylvania or Banat (Anghel 2013). However transnationalism was very poorly developed in the case of *Aussiedler* in

Romania. Most of the time it was reduced to family re-unification and taking part in family events and religious holidays (Michalon 2003).

Ways ahead for the research

The *Aussidler* migration and the social transformations it has enhanced still hold many questions that need to be answered and researched. Going beyond the official discourse, policy frames or statistics and exploring the socially lived migration, the motivations behind and the social relations that sustained it is a necessary undertaking for understanding the phenomenon of migration and the ambivalent situations it creates, whether we call it ethnic migration, forced migration or labor migration. Most of the inquiries until now have been directed towards the society of destination and to the processes of incorporation, integration, and adaptation of the ethnic Germans in their receiving society, while less attention has been given to the changes entailed in the aftermath of the migration process in the society of origin. As every migration creates new motivations and expectations, and disrupts the social order in the origin societies, new routes of research could be opened by exploring the social transformations at the other side of the migration chain.

Exploratory fieldwork in the urban settlements in Transylvania, Romania, characterized in the past by a strong Saxon presence revealed an ongoing process of social class formation, ethnic reconfiguration, and social change, where once exclusive Saxon ethnic organizations and institutions open themselves to the entrance of non-Saxons, leading to the formation of an urban social class which uses Saxon ethnic items and practices for social status and prestige gain, reinventing the notion and affiliation to Saxon ethnicity, and reviving ethnic organizations and institutions. A possible research route could endeavor to grasp the multiple ways ethnicity is constructed, employed, internalized and transformed in a (former) multi-ethnic locale in Transylvania. The emergent urban social class in question is negotiating and acquiring a higher social status, drawing boundaries of identification and differentiation along the lines of an ethnicized social identity, constructed through the employment and reenactment of ethnic Saxon cultural and social values and practices, which are locally praised and valued. The process is facilitated and enabled by Saxon educational, ecclesiastical, and cultural institutions and organizations, as well as by democratization and European integration which have opened the way to social pluralization, ethnic boundary crossing and upward social mobility (Wimmer 2008, 1005-6). The formation of an ethnicized social class can have an important contribution in establishing and maintaining transnational ties between the explored locale and the Saxon diaspora, as

well as an enhanced role in fostering economic development and economic relations between Romania and Germany, enabled by ethnic German institutions and organizations, language and cultural affinity.

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