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My Russian speaking neighbor – Who are you? Why are you here?

The different roles of the diaspora in the integration process of Russian-speaking migrants in Germany and Norway

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The waves of migration in Europe at the end of the twentieth century brought significant number of new citizens to European states from the countries of the former Soviet Union. Among these European countries are Germany and Norway. The process of migration is understood here according to G. Madison as

“..... geographic mobility from one country to another where the second is experienced as significantly different from the first and for a sufficient duration that the person engages in daily activities and is challenged to undergo some adjustment to the new place.” (3)

In 2008-2010 we conducted a research of Russian speaking migrants in these countries with 190 respondents in Germany and 62 in Norway (pilot study).

The background for migration of Russian speaking migrants differs strongly in Germany and Norway. While ethnic migration was the main reason for moving to Germany, the majority migrating to Norway did so due to cross-cultural marriages and work. In Germany, a special governmental program aimed at the realization of the right of ethnic Germans to return home and compensation for the results of the second world war, when considering ethnic jews, focused on receiving ethnic Germans and Jews from the CIS countries, including Russia, and thus, providing a significant social support to displaced people. In addition to this, Germany has had an extended historical experience of receiving Russian migrants, and there is a large Russian-speaking diaspora with extensive resources present in the country.

The first group of “ethnic Germans” and their family members, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Germany (Bundesministerium der Innern), brought more than two million people to Germany with this status from 1950 to 2001.

The other group; “Jewish immigrants and their families” represents the second largest group of immigrants who moved to Germany from 1991/92 to 2007. According to the German authorities responsible for integration of migrants, there are more than two hundred thousand people who moved to Germany in the frameworks of this programme (Bundesverwaltungsamt, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge). In addition to these large groups of Russian-speaking migrants, it is necessary to include the number of citizens from the former Soviet Union living in Germany as a result of joint marriages with the local population, or various kinds of employment or academic migration:

As one of the interviewed during the research in Germany experts said

"In principle, there are two large groups: the first - the so-called "aussiedler" or "spätaussiedler", who have the status as Germans, although they came from the former Soviet Union. Their parents in the third or fourth generation came from Germany. The second largest group is the so-called Jewish line. These groups are not equal. There are smaller groups as well, such as students and those who came here to work." (Germany)

The Russian speaking Diaspora in Germany is quite large, with a population of more than 2,5 million. This is a resourceful community with several related NGOs and a substantial financial support. Furthermore, due to the background of its members, the migrant group is a fairly tightly connected society providing significant support to its members. At the same time this community is not homogeneous as it could be expected. One example of the complexity in this group may be found in the book of S.Kiel "Wiedertsind die Russlanddeutsche?" She describes, for example, 5 types of "Russian Germans" : 1. "nichtrichtige Deutsche" 2. "Deutsche mit Makel", 3. "Deutsche mit "russischem Glanz", 4. "Die "wahren deutsche", 5. "Die "sowjetischen Leute" (2, pp 155-159).

Contrary to its German sister group, the Russian speaking Diaspora in Norway is a rather small and diffused community having a mere 14 thousand members. With few resources available to cover a large geographical area, this migrant group may only provide limited support to its members.

In both countries Russian speaking migrants created different sorts of communities which, all together, could be named "the Russian speaking diaspora"

We consider Diaspora following R. Berns-McGown as"

...primarily a space of the imagination. It does more than describe the fact that a person is an immigrant, or that a person's grandparents or great-grandparents were migrants. It does more than describe difference: a diasporic person's skin colour, religion, and ethnicity might not be that of the majority, but on the other hand they might be. It does not necessarily describe estrangement, or societal apartness, or lack of political engagement, or an increased sense of political activism, although it can be a condition that underlies all of those things.

To be in the Diaspora is to perceive oneself as linked to multiple places and to hold a complex identity that balances one's understanding of those places and the way one fits into each of them. It can be deeply nostalgic, and it raises questions about the nature of "home" and belonging.

Diaspora, then, is best defined as a space of connections-connections in two dimensions, to be precise. The first is the tension between elsewhere-let's call it the "mythic" homeland, and here-the adoptive country. The second lies in the connection to the wider-"mainstream"-society, which may or may not be fraught. The nature of both of these connections is critical to questions of social harmony, tension, or

cohesion, and they have immense implications for security, social policy, and foreign policy. “ (1)

What are the differences and what is common between these two Russian speaking diasporas?

One significant difference between the data collected during our research from the two countries, were found in the answers to the question: “Who from your family moved with you?”, as seen in Table 1

Table 1: Migration with or without ones family

| Who from the family moved with you | Germany | Norway |
|------------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Spouse | 29,4 % | 21,2 % |
| Parents | 19,9 % | 9,1 % |
| Children | 27,4 % | 13,6 % |
| Brother / sister | 11,6 % | |
| Other relatives | 6,1 % | |
| Moved without relatives | 5,5 % | 56,1 % |
| | | |

More than half of the migrants to Norway migrated by themselves and without any family members, while only 5,5% of the migrants to Germany did the same. Furthermore, the migrants to Germany moved not only with their spouses, but also with their children, parents, brothers and sisters, and even other relatives besides the close ones. This, as seen from the data, was not immediately the case for Norway.

Based on the data above, we may define the migration to Norway as being mainly “individual” migration, and the immigration to Germany as being “group-” of “family-” migration. This is further emphasized through the fact that, in some cases, so to say the “whole villages” of ethnic Germans from countries of former Soviet Union such as Kazakhstan or Russia moved to Germany. Furthermore, such groups often even settled down in close proximity of each other when moving the Germany, here we mean what in German-language literature is called “siedlungskonzentration”. As a result of this, many migrants moving to Germany were surrounded by their closest family and friend, were able to speak their own language, i.e., Russian, as well as follow their own traditions and practices.

„Dass die Koloniebildung für die russlanddeutschen Aussiedler eine Chance im Integrationsprozess ist und kein Leben im ‚Ghetto‘ bedeutet, unterstreicht Hans-

Werner Retterath, stellvertretender Leiter des Johannes-Künzig-Instituts in Freiburg. In seiner Untersuchung kommt er zu dem Ergebnis, dass ethnische Siedlungskonzentrationen Entfremdung und Minderwertigkeitsgefühl auffangen können. Die Kolonie- und Netzwerkbildung hat vorerst eine Schutzfunktion gegenüber der Mehrheitsgesellschaft. Sie verhindert eine Integration aber nicht. Retterath: „Kolonien bieten deshalb im Hinblick auf die Mehrheitsgesellschaft neben integrationshemmenden auch integrationsfördernde Elemente.“ (4)

The migrants moving to Germany knew in advance about the network of relatives and organizations which would support them in this country. Furthermore, they were well informed of their special rights and privileges for this support in Germany based on the juridical definition of their migration, their migration status, as well as having their “big family” on their side. With this in mind, there was little urgency in finding a job or learning German, as they would always have the state on their side, providing sufficient financial and other support.

In the case of Norway it was more the expectation for help from the side of the state as the “European, well developed, fair...” state but not clear promised support from the side of Norway as it was in Germany. Besides they moved mostly by themselves and they could wait for help only from the side of close relatives in Also strong similarities in process of adaptation of Russian speaking migrants in two countries could be found in the situation with getting the job and the preferences of ideal working environment. In both countries_ although there was help from the side of relatives, friends etc. most of migrants found the job place by themselves, and percent of those is 2 to almost 3 times more than of those who got the position with the help from outside.

Answering on the question on the more detailed analysis of the ideal team (working environment) the migrants mentioned that the most important is not the ethnical structure of the team (see table 2), there are “other” reasons which organize ideal working team, but if they look at the ethnic composition of their working environment then they prefer that it would be consisting mainly form the natives e.g. Germans or Norwegians. Also it was sufficiently important for the migrants that chef would be not from the Russian speaking migrants. It could be demonstrated the difference between answers of migrants in Germany and Norway, where the migrants in Norway were more welcoming the working team consisting form Russian speaking persons 13% to 7,4% in Germany.

Table 2: The ideal working environment

| What is in your opinion an ideal team in a job environment? | Germany | Norway |
|--|---------|--------|
| Mainly consisting of ones compatriots | 7,4 % | 13 % |
| Mainly consisting of the local population | 22,1 % | 24,1 % |
| Mainly nice people | 15,4 % | 0 % |
| Whatever, as long as the manager is a member of the local population | 14,0 % | 16,7 % |
| Whatever, as long as the manager is a compatriot | 3,7 % | 0 % |
| Other | 30,9 % | 46,3 % |
| Good manager | 0,7 % | 0 % |
| Does not matter | 2,9% | 0% |
| Everybody understand each other, friendly atmosphere | 2,9% | 0% |

One of the major signs of integration is the comfortable feeling in the new place of living; even feeling being at home here in Germany and Norway.

Where is home for migrants? Where they have their “big family” and then they do not need to visit their country of origin? Or where they are simply living now and feeling themselves comfortable, doesn't matter if they have most of their relatives with, or if does then only the closest?

The position of migrants concerning these problems was checked in our questionnaire with direct questions: “Where do you think is your home?” and “Are you feeling yourself here, where you are living at home? “

For the most of migrants “home” is the place where they are living now. That is actual for 68,9% percent of migrants in Germany and 76,3% in Norway. Almost equal amount of migrants in Germany and Norway are thinking that “home” is the place where they were born and grown up: 10,4% Germany and 10,2 % Norway. The light difference is in the position- home is the place where largest part of my family is living 14,2% for Germany and 8,5% for Norway. For our opinion it is correlates with the position that for many of migrants in Germany their whole families are in this country, and migrants in Norway have oft parts of their families in the countries of former Soviet Union.

At the same time not all migrants in Germany and Norway are feeling themselves “at home” in their new countries of living. In Germany the percentage of those who feel themselves at home all together is sufficiently less than a half – 38% in Norway almost exactly the half of migrants 50,9%. At the same time those who are feeling themselves not “at home” in new countries of living is for Germany 38,6% and for Norway 35,7%. A lot of migrants cannot definitely decide in answering this question 23,5% and 13,6% for Germany and Norway consequently.

Additionally migrants in both countries need more or less communication with Russian speaking community, culture. Migrants in Norway or Germany prefer to spend their free time either with their compatriots: about a half of migrants in Germany (54,9%) and about one third in Norway (36,8%) or it does not matter for them with whom to spend the free time with their compatriot or with local population (Germany 30,8%, Norway 47,4%)

Conclusion

It could be concluded that

1. The Russian speaking diaspora in Germany is larger, active, it helps more to the newcomers and is vitally stronger. All these is grounded in the objective factors of creating of Russian-speaking diaspora in Germany
2. The Russian speaking diaspora in Norway is smaller, more separated, more often communicate and is strongly connected with Motherland. They migrated as single persons or sometimes with very close relatives; not like the migration to Germany where it was often the whole family with several generations.
3. That leads to different expectations of help by migrants in two countries from the side of already migrated relatives and friends
4. The problems and process of settling down is almost similar in both countries.
5. All that leads us to the conclusion that migrants in Germany should feel themselves more at home in Germany then migrants in Norway In reality according to the data obtained from the questionnaire and deep interviews migrants in Norway are feeling themselves more often at home and feeling that Norway is their home then migrants in Germany. On the background of the existing research results and analysis of available sources we allow us to suppose that the reason of such a position of migrants in Norway is that they are not pretending to be the Norwegians in the whole meaning of this word. They are so to say “Russian speaking migrants” who are successful and satisfied citizens of Norway, who are not pretending on being considered as Norwegians. In case of Germany most of the migrants do possess certain German identity and the problem is more than they do not get in the expected amount acceptance from the local population as real Germans. From the other side they have curtain connections with the country of birth (countries of former Soviet Union) and that leads also to double identity contradiction.

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