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## Ethnic German Immigration from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to Germany: the Effects of Migrant Networks

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Barbara Dietz

November 1999

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Discussion Paper No. 68  
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## ABSTRACT

### **Ethnic German Immigration from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to Germany: the Effects of Migrant Networks<sup>\*</sup>**

This paper employed a widely accepted theoretical concept, the 'theory of migrant networks' to look at the recent immigration and absorption experience of ethnic Germans (*Aussiedler*) from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in Germany. Consistent with network theory, the social background of the *Aussiedler* group became more representative of the sending communities as migrant networks expanded. The paper additionally showed that *Aussiedler* tended to participate in migrant networks after they have moved to Germany. Whereas all studies on the economic effects of migrant networks found a positive impact on the labor market performance of ethnic Germans, the outcome of network participation with respect to social absorption is less encouraging. In recent years migrant networks seem to support ethnic German minority enclaves and an increasing segregation of the *Aussiedler* group.

JEL Classification: J15, J61, J68

Keywords: Migration policy, ethnic Germans, migrant networks, economic and social integration

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## 1. Introduction

The immigration of 3,9 million ethnic Germans (*Aussiedler*) from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to Germany between 1950 and 1998 played a significant role in the country's post World War II immigration and absorption experience. In contrast to the labor migration since the middle of the fifties the admission of ethnic Germans was not related to economic factors like recruitment programs or the business cycle. The influx of ethnic Germans was legitimated by the right of return, which was defined by the postwar German constitution. Because ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union had experienced forced resettlement and ethnic discrimination during and after World War II, they were allowed to immigrate to Germany and were granted the German citizenship. This privileged admission and the comparatively smooth absorption of this group into the German labor market and society until the end of the eighties had the result that the immigration and absorption of ethnic Germans did not attract much attention by migration and assimilation research.

Since the political changes in Eastern Europe and the break-up of the Soviet Union the quantity and quality of the ethnic German immigration has changed. The number of ethnic German immigrants rose considerably since 1989, leading to an inflow of 2,3 million persons since then. Because of changes in the admission regulations, ethnic Germans come nearly exclusively from the successor states of the USSR since 1993. In contrast to the earlier immigration cohorts, which had some command of the German language, most ethnic Germans in the nineties arrive without German language proficiency and an increasing percentage lives in bi-cultural, mainly Russian/German families. Although this migration is still influenced to a high degree by ethnic considerations and the motivation of family reunification, the economic and social break-down in the countries of origin increasingly function as a push factor. As a result of these alterations in the immigrants' quantity and sociodemographic characteristics, the economic and social absorption of the recent *Aussiedler* group has been accompanied by frictions which were additionally

enhanced by an economic slowdown in Germany and serious cuts in the state financed support for ethnic German immigrants.

In the following paper, a widely accepted theoretical concept, the ‘theory of migrant networks’ will be used to look at the recent development of the immigration and absorption of ethnic Germans. It will be argued that network theory contributes to the understanding of the changing quantity and sociodemographic background of the *Aussiedler* immigration. Arguments of network theory will further be presented to look at the implementation of politics, concerning the immigration and absorption of ethnic Germans. In addition, elements of network theory will be employed to analyze the peculiarities of the absorption of the recent *Aussiedler* group.

In the first part of the paper, basic determinants of the ethnic German immigration will be described in the light of migration theories. The second part examines the development and the implications of networks in the immigration process of ethnic Germans. The third part looks at the creation and usage of networks and at their effects in the absorption context.

## **2. Basic determinants of the ethnic German migration in the light of migration theories**

There exist several theoretical concepts that undertake to explain why international migration occurs. The neoclassical approach, which analyses migration in the context of differentials in wages and employment conditions between sending and receiving countries, assuming an income maximizing individual has been of outstanding importance (Massey et al. 1993: 432). In contrast to this individually based concept, the „new economics of migration“ put the household into the center of attention. Migration is seen as the result of a household decision, aiming at minimizing income risks of the family and overcoming the capital constraints of its production activities (Stark 1991, Massey et al. 1993: 436). A further theoretical approach—fundamentally different from neoclassical migration theories—has been suggested by the world systems theory (Sassen 1988, Morawska 1990). This concept links

international migration to the globalization of the market economy. It argues that the expansion of capitalist economic relations into peripheral countries creates a mobile labor force, which is ready to move abroad. Here migration is explained against the background of economic inequality, the creation of a mobile labor force and the refugee crisis in many peripheral regions.

All the theories presented above put a very strong emphasis on economic considerations and the conditions of labor markets in the migration decision. Whereas in the case of labor migrations and economic refugee migrations these arguments seem to be most important, they lack explanatory power in the case of migration movements which are strongly influenced by ethnonational factors. Without doubt, these migrations have become increasingly important in the second part of the twentieth century. Many population movements where ethnicity plays a crucial role in originating and patterning transnational migration contain elements of ethnic cleansing and refugee migration. Many, however, are noncoerced, being based on the interaction of ethnic conflicts in the country of origin and ethnic affinity in the receiving country. Referring to the later cases, Brubaker (1998: 1049) has argued that the concept of forced migration is not very useful for analyzing this type of population movement. Instead he suggests exploring noncoerced ethnomigrations in terms of ethnic unmixing with regard to the sending and ethnic affinity with regard to the receiving society. Typically these migrations involve some special openness on the part of the receiving society, and although economic considerations may be very important in the migration decision, ethnicity and ethnonational politics play the decisive role. These features are similarly highlighted by the concept of Diaspora migration, which is based on the perception of belonging and returning of migrants to a former homeland (Shuval 1998: 9).

The movement of ethnic Germans to Germany after World War II may well be explained in the framework of ethnic affinity and Diaspora migration. Both concepts stress the ethnic factor in transnational migration—even if it is only considered as a legal myth—and the role of (nation) states in migration policy formation and migration control. It will be demonstrated below that these features characterize the ethnic German return migration to a considerable extent. It may therefore be argued

that the ethnic German migration to Germany can be understood in comparison to other ethnomigrations, for example the Jewish migration from the (former) Soviet Union to Israel, the migration of Greeks and Finns from the successor states of the USSR to their respective homelands, the movement of Hungarians from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and the Ukraine to Hungary and the migration of Russians from the non-Russian successor states of the Soviet Union to Russia.

### *Ethnic German return migration*

After the end of World War II, Germany, the „reluctant land of immigration“ (Martin 1994: 189) has experienced a remarkable population inflow, which consisted of different types of immigrants (Schmidt 1994, Münz and Ulrich 1998). Immediately after the war 12 million German refugees and expellees from Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union moved to Germany. Between 1950 and the construction of the Berlin wall in 1961 over 2,6 million Germans migrated to the Western part of Germany according to official statistics. A labor shortage in the middle of the fifties forced the German authorities to actively recruit foreign labor in Southern European countries. To prevent long-term immigration, foreign workers were engaged on the base of a rotation system (Seifert 1997: 444). In 1973, facing a recession following the first oil price shock, the German government announced a recruitment stop. A period of restrained migration began, although the foreign population in Germany grew further because of family reunification, a comparatively high fertility rate in the foreign population and the admission of refugees and asylum seekers. The high number of foreigners in Germany (7,4 million in 1998) must also be attributed to the German citizenship law, existing until 1999, which made it very difficult for foreigners to become German. After 1987 immigration to Germany again increased remarkably, caused among other reasons by the fall of the Iron Curtain, which allowed an intensified East-West migration. A large part of the population inflow from Eastern Europe and the majority of migrants from the former USSR to Germany consisted of ethnic Germans.



The migration of ethnic Germans from the (former) Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to Germany and their privileged acceptance as German citizens has been legitimated by the postwar German constitution. Article 116 (1) of the Basic Law defined the right of former German citizens and persons belonging to the German people (*Volkszugehörigkeit*), who were stranded in Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union after World War II, to move to Germany and receive the German citizenship (Kurthen 1995: 921, Halfmann 1997: 262). For the German government, ethnonational arguments played the key role in the admission of ethnic Germans.<sup>1</sup> On the side of the German minority in Eastern Europe and the USSR, ethnic and cultural discriminations had been the most important push factors when the migration movement started. The ethnic affiliation to Germany and the privileged admission by the Federal Republic functioned as strong pull factors.

Until the end of 1987, the resettlement of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had been restricted by political tensions between Germany and the sending countries and by the rigid emigration regulations of the (former) communist states. In 1988 the immigration of ethnic Germans rose sharply, up to nearly 400,000 persons in 1989 and 1990 (see figure 1). This development was the result of the fall of the Iron Curtain and the relaxation of emigration conditions in the sending countries. Throughout the post war period, the German governments had defined Germany a nonimmigration country. This political statement had already been severely challenged by the labor migration in the fifties and sixties, by the family reunification and the asylum migration in the seventies and eighties. Since the beginning of the nineties, the great influx of ethnic Germans additionally pointed to the fact that Germany had to face the problem of a growing immigrant population. As a reaction the former open door policy towards ethnic German immigration turned ambivalent. Although the German authorities did not want to abolish the right of return, they exerted a strong effort to channel and control the immigration of ethnic Germans (Groenendijk 1997: 468). To achieve this goal, several new laws were

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<sup>1</sup> In addition, the emigration of ethnic Germans from socialist countries has been interpreted in the context of the East-West confrontation. In the period of the cold war, West German politicians used the ethnic German emigration as an argument to prove the superiority of the West German nation state and economic system (Münz and Ohliger 1998: 189).

introduced since the beginning of the nineties (Zimmermann 1999). At first, a legal procedure was passed in July 1990 (*Aussiedleraufnahmegesetz*), which demanded German resettlers to apply for their immigration in the countries of origin. This application procedure allowed an administrative regulation of the number of immigrants. Already by 1991 the immigration of ethnic Germans stabilized on a level of approximately 220,000 resettlers per year. With the enforcement of a further new law in 1993 (*Kriegsfolgenbereinigungsgesetz*) the immigration of ethnic Germans was explicitly regulated by a quota system. Per year a maximum of 220,000 ethnic Germans were allowed to come to Germany. This law also terminated future immigration, because ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union born after December 1992 will no longer be entitled to apply for admission in Germany on the base of the right of return. In addition this law allowed only Germans from the former Soviet Union to come to Germany without individually proving that they had been discriminated in their countries of origin because of their German descent. These regulations resulted in a further stabilization of the *Aussiedler* immigration and a switch in the hierarchy of the sending countries from Poland and Romania to the former Soviet Union, which accounts for more than 90 percent of ethnic German immigrants since 1993. In addition to immigration barriers, the German government established a policy of economic and social aid for the German minority in the (former) Soviet Union and East European countries of origin. An improvement of the economic and social situation and a broadening of cultural minority rights and activities should keep potential immigrants there. Finally, in July 1996, a German language test was introduced for potential ethnic German immigrants from the successor states of the Soviet Union. As a confirmation of their belonging to the German people (*Volkszugehörigkeit*) the potential immigrants have to prove a certain command of the German language. The language test can be taken in a simple or qualified form. Every ethnic German applicant for admission in Germany has to pass the simple language test, whereas in the case of the qualified test, every family member, also the non German ones, have to succeed in the language test. If the qualified test has been passed successfully, the family can come to Germany without waiting period. Since Germans in the former Soviet Union were

denied to speak German in the public in the fifties and sixties, many of them had lost their ties to the German language. This is clearly reflected by the results of the language test: out of 134,000 ethnic German applicants for admission to Germany who were invited to do a language test between July 1996 and April 1999, 62.6 percent failed. Most of them (83.8%) participated in the simple language test, which was not passed by 38.8 percent. In the case of the qualified test 64,2 percent failed (information of the Federal Administration Office).<sup>2</sup> This brought the number of ethnic German immigrants down to 103,800 in 1999.

The German policy towards ethnic German immigration in the nineties has been characterized by a mix of measures, which are usually undertaken to prevent unwanted immigration (Martin 1994: 217). The criteria for those eligible to enter have become severely stricter, an immigration quota has been established, the German government has provided economic assistance in the home countries to keep potential immigrants there and the integration assistance for ethnic German immigrants in the receiving country has been cut.

### **3. Networks in the immigration process of ethnic Germans**

It has been argued by network theory that immigration may begin for several motives, for escaping ethnic discrimination, for individual income gains, for international displacement processes or for a combination of all of these factors (Massey et al., 1993). But the reasons for a persistence of migration movements may become independent of the causes, which originally triggered off migration: across time and space migrant networks develop, which make additional movements more likely. Usually, migration networks are defined as „sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin. They increase the likelihood of international movements because they lower the costs and risk of movement and

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<sup>2</sup> Applicants who failed in the qualified test but could prove a sufficient knowledge of the German language are considered to have passed the test in its simple form.

increase the expected net returns of migration“ (Massey et. al. 1993: 448). This implies that migration networks are expected to influence the individual migration decision in such a way that the greater the number of migrants a person knows in a sending area the greater the probability that this person will also migrate (Portes 1997: 809). Although restrictive government policies in sending and receiving countries function as structural constraints on individual migration decisions, the development of networks may counteract migration politics. Because of the supportive effect of migrant networks, governments are expected to have increasing difficulties in controlling the migration flows after a migration movement has started.

The development of the *Aussiedler* immigration to Germany can be seen as an example for the unfolding network dynamic over time, also influencing the quantity and quality of the migration movement. Until the end of the eighties, emigration of ethnic Germans from former socialist countries was limited to family reunification—basically to cases of first grade family members. Unintendedly this restrictive policy contributed to the creation of migrant networks where remaining relatives formed a migration potential in the sending countries. When the exit barriers in the Eastern European countries and the (former) Soviet Union were loosened as a result of the fall of the iron curtain, the immediate and dramatic growth of the *Aussiedler* migration to Germany was supported by migrant networks.

It has been observed in numerous migration movements that migration is a selective process—especially in its beginning (Massey et al. 1994: 705). In many cases, relatively skilled, productive and highly motivated people are drawn away from the sending countries (Borjas 1987, Borjas 1994). If one looks at the ethnic German migration a self-selection could also be observed, although the selection expressed itself in criteria which were related to the ethnic minority background of this group. Until the end of the eighties, ethnic German immigrants were in comparatively good command of the German language and most of them did not live in bi-cultural families or in mixed marriages.<sup>3</sup> This reflected the background of the

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<sup>3</sup> Official data on the German language proficiency at the time of immigration and on the rate of mixed marriage are not available for ethnic German immigrants. A representative survey of ethnic German immigrants, who migrated from the former Soviet Union to Germany between 1977 and 1987 revealed that 92% of the married respondents had a German spouse. Additionally the survey found out

German minority group in Romania to a certain degree, but has not been representative for the German minority in Poland and the former Soviet Union. In Poland and the former USSR the German language competence of the German minorities has diminished considerably since the end of World War II. Although the Soviet Union population census revealed in 1989 that 48,7 percent of the German minority named German their mother tongue, this statement was first of all related to an ethnic identification and not to the language competence (Dietz 1995: 43). The micro census in Russia in 1994 found out that 36.4 percent of the ethnic German minority denoted German their mother tongue, but only 12.9 percent spoke German in the family (Goskomstat Rossii 1995: 6, 91). The rate of mixed marriages in the German population of the USSR has been high, compared to other ethnic groups in this country: at the end of the seventies nearly half of the German couples lived in mixed marriages in Kazakhstan and Russia (Dietz 1995: 46). In 1988 and 1989 Soviet Union population statistics showed that Germans had the highest rates of mixed marriages (65%) among the analyzed nationalities in these years (Dietz 1995: 46).

According to surveys, authorities and welfare organizations a high percentage of the recent *Aussiedler* cohort, mainly arriving from the successor states of the USSR, does not bring along German language competencies. In addition, the rates of mixed marriages and of bi-cultural families in this immigration are growing. A survey study, which had been conducted in 1995/96 with young ethnic German immigrants who had come from the former Soviet Union to Germany between 1990 and 1994, proves the diminishing language competence. Only 33.2 percent of the young respondents were in good or very good command of the German language when questioned in 1995/96. Most of the young *Aussiedler* (52.6%) reported a mediocre knowledge of the German language, whereas 14.3 percent knew German badly or very badly (Dietz and Roll 1998: 64). The growing bi-cultural background of the recent ethnic German immigration has been documented by the above cited

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that 65% of the respondents had a good command of the German language before migrating to Germany (Dietz and Hilkes 1994: 51). Similar results were found by a further representative survey, which explored the sociodemographic background of ethnic German immigrants from Poland, Romania and the USSR, who had come to Germany in 1976 (Arnold 1980).

survey and additionally by the Federal Administration Office. The survey study with young ethnic German immigrants found that 39 percent of the respondents lived in mixed (mainly Russian/German) families (Dietz and Roll 1998: 26). This figure, which refers to the immigrant population between 1990 and 1994, has nearly been confirmed by the statistics of the Federal Administration Office. Since 1993, the results of the ethnic German registration procedures are published. It must be noted that the Federal Administration Office distinguishes in its registration procedure between *Aussiedler* (according to § 4 (1) of the federal refugee law) and spouses or relatives of *Aussiedler* (according to § 7 (2) and 8(2) of the federal refugee law) who are not ethnic Germans themselves. In the year 1993 a comparatively high percentage (74%) of the *Aussiedler* immigration had been of ethnic German minority descent. In the year 1998 however, this percentage had gone back to 31 percent (see table 1). Network theory has argued that immigrants become less selective in socioeconomic terms and more representative of the sending communities as the migration networks expand and the costs and risks of migration fall (Massey et. al. 1993, 450). It seems reasonable to argue that such a development also manifested itself in the case of the recent ethnic German immigration, approximating the sociodemographic background of the immigrant population to the ethnic minority communities in the sending countries.

### **3. Hypotheses on the development, usage and effects of networks in the absorption process of ethnic German immigrants**

In this part of the paper it will be examined whether ethnic German immigrants develop and use networks when they have entered Germany and what this might imply for the social integration of this group. Networks in the absorption process are usually seen as ties of kinship, friendship, ethnicity or descent through which information and other resources are distributed and channeled (Gurak and Caces 1992: 150). Networks can take on various forms, which range from family ties and friendship relations to formal organizations. To operationalize the participation in

migrant networks, the following variables may be used: 'living close to relatives and friends', 'having predominantly close friends from the same country of origin', 'living in an area where migrants from the same country of origin live' and 'participating in organizations, which are established by migrants from the same sending areas'. With regard to the integration into the receiving societies, research literature identifies basically two ways in which migrant networks may function. Migration networks can provide adaptive support in finding employment, housing or social information. This usually short-term adaptive assistance may also have a positive impact on the long-term integration into the receiving society. On the other hand, migrant networks may work in the opposite direction, isolating immigrants in limiting their contacts to the own group and keeping them distant from the indigenous population and from organizations and institutions of the receiving society. In the longer run, migrant enclaves may develop, which often indicate social and economic disintegration.

#### *The development of migrant networks*

Several studies have pointed to the fact that the settlement behavior of ethnic German immigrants has since its beginnings been influenced to a considerable degree by the wish to live close to relatives and friends from the same country of origin (Hofmann et al. 1992, Dietz 1995: 162, Münz and Ohliger 1998: 177). The official data on the distribution of ethnic German immigrants to the federal countries (*Bundesländer*) also demonstrate this. Ever since, the German authorities have distributed ethnic German immigrants according to a quota system throughout the federal countries in Germany to achieve some burden sharing with respect to immigrant absorption on the local community level. Since the German reunification, the eastern countries also participated in the quota regulation. If one looks at the recent settlement behavior (1989-1998) of ethnic German immigrants by countries of origin, significant

differences can be observed (see table 2).<sup>4</sup> *Aussiedler* from Romania overfulfilled the quota for Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, whereas ethnic Germans from Poland predominantly moved to Northrhine-Westfalia. In return, ethnic German immigrants from the former Soviet Union expressed a certain preference for Lower Saxonia and Northrhine-Westfalia.<sup>5</sup> Altogether this settlement behavior indicates that ethnic German immigrants were inclined to build up and participate in migrant networks from the same country of origin. These regional settlement preferences also sustained the development of chain migration.

The immigrant sample of the German socio-economic panel (GSOEP) further confirms the motivation of ethnic Germans to take part in migrant networks.<sup>6</sup> In 1995 it found that 73 percent of the ethnic German immigrants lived close to relatives and friends and that 77 percent had close friends from the same country of origin (Bauer and Zimmermann 1997a: 146). The 1997 GSOEP, which included questions on leisure activities, discovered that in their free time ethnic German immigrants were heavily engaged in contacting (99%) and helping (89.4%) their relatives and friends, whereas going to movies, concerts or other cultural events (44.9%) and taking part in the activities of social or cultural associations (19%) did not play a likewise important role. The already cited survey study with young ethnic German immigrants from the former USSR also revealed the strong social ties of this group to its coethnic peers. More than half (54%) of the young ethnic German respondents predominantly had friends who belonged to the group of German immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Dietz and Roll 1998: 105). These findings highlight the importance of migrant networks for the *Aussiedler* immigration on the individual level.

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<sup>4</sup> The Federal Administration Office usually allows the *Aussiedler* to denote the preferred federal country where they want to live. In most cases new ethnic German immigrants are sent to this federal country, as long as the quota is not filled. Otherwise ethnic German immigrants have to move to the country the Federal Administration Office denotes, if they do not want to lose governmental integration assistance.

<sup>5</sup> In the case of ethnic German immigrants from the former Soviet Union, settlement priorities in the nineties can not be identified that distinctly anymore, because more than 90% of the *Aussiedler* immigration since 1993 comes from the former USSR and is subject to the quota regulation.

<sup>6</sup> The immigrant sample has been added to the German socio-economic panel in 1995 to study the consequences of the new immigration since the end of the eighties. For a description of this sample see Burkhauser et al. (1996).



### *Migrant enclaves*

The question whether the settlement behavior of ethnic German immigrants has led to *Aussiedler* enclaves, meaning a high spatial concentration of ethnic German immigrants, has only been discussed recently. Reports by media, welfare organizations and local authorities state that the settlement of ethnic German immigrants has led to a high concentration of resettlers in certain parts of cities or communities since the early nineties. This development has additionally been supported by the housing policy of the German authorities. In the beginning of the nineties, French, Canadian and U.S. troops were withdrawn from German territory, leading to free housing space. In cases where the German authorities were in charge of these housing facilities, they often used them to accommodate ethnic German immigrants. In cases where housing space of withdrawing troops was offered on the free market, ethnic German immigrant families frequently rented them to live close to their relatives and friends who had already moved to the state supported housing. In some cities and communities this led to a considerable ghettoization of the recent *Aussiedler* group (Münz and Ohliger 1998: 177). As a result, ethnic German immigrants—first of all those who came from the former Soviet Union in the nineties—created their own infrastructure, where they live in high concentration. A predominantly Russian speaking ‘society within the society’ developed, where a limited labor and housing market for immigrants evolved. Several newspapers addressing ethnic German immigrants appeared which are published in Russian. In recent years the bi-cultural background of many ethnic German immigrants seems to pose a new framework for their integration, especially for the increasing number of bi-cultural families. Many of them seem to seek actively to retain major elements of their earlier cultural heritage.

Because of a lack of data on the distribution of the *Aussiedler* on the community level after they have been sent to federal countries, it is not possible to prove their spatial settlement behavior beyond the scope of area reports or case

studies.<sup>7</sup> This also implies that no data exist to measure the spatial segregation of the *Aussiedler* group in Germany, which has been done extensively by migrant and minority research, using segregation or dissimilation indexes to picture the spatial separation of different ethnic groups (Duncan and Duncan 1955, Wong 1998).

### *Participation in migrant networks*

In looking at the participation of *Aussiedler* in migrant networks from the individual level, hypothesis have been formulated and tested, using data of the German socio-economic panel GSOEP (Bauer and Zimmermann 1997a). Bauer and Zimmermann found that the network behavior of ethnic Germans—meaning ‘living close to relatives and friends’ and ‘having close friends from the same country of origin’—can be explained to a large degree by observable characteristics. According to their findings, duration of stay, months of living in a reception camp, population density, country of origin and the provision of public benefits significantly affected the participation of ethnic German immigrants in networks. The probability of having friends from the same country of origin decreased with duration of stay in the receiving society, with the provision of public benefits and with living in a rural area. The first mentioned result confirms the observation that the longer migrants stay in the receiving country, the less they are usually engaged in migrant networks. The provision of governmental benefits seems to compensate network effects in such a way that the higher the per capita governmental expenditures in the federal country where ethnic German immigrants live, the less they depend on migrant networks. Finally, the negative impact of rural settlement on the integration in existing networks indicate the weaker presence of these networks in rural compared to urban areas. The duration of stay in a reception camp after immigration had a significant negative influence on the probability of living close to relative and friends, whereas a high population density significantly increased it. These results show that the ability to participate in migrant networks shortens the time ethnic Germans have to live in a

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<sup>7</sup> Ethnic German immigrants are registered as Germans after they have been distributed to the federal countries and can not be identified by regional statistics.

reception camp and that in highly populated areas networks are organized better. The estimation further revealed that ethnic Germans from Romania are the most likely to be engaged in migrant networks (Bauer and Zimmermann 1997a: 145).

To identify the effects of migrant networks on the economic integration of ethnic German immigrants, 'network variables' have been introduced in models, estimating the economic assimilation of the *Aussiedler* group (Bauer and Zimmermann 1997b; Seifert 1996; Koller 1997).<sup>8</sup> Bauer and Zimmermann discovered that ethnic German immigrants who did not receive help from their relatives and friends in finding a job had a significantly lower income than those who could rely on migrant networks. In his study, Seifert (1996) found a significantly positive effect of migrant networks on the labor market absorption of ethnic Germans. *Aussiedler* who were supported by their relatives and friends in finding a job had better employment prospects. This result has also been confirmed by Koller (1997: 779), who showed that the participation in networks had a positive effect on the labor market performance of ethnic German immigrants.

If one looks at the implications of migrant networks for the social absorption of ethnic German immigrants, the results are not so clear. Especially in recent years networks seem to support ethnic German minority enclaves and an increasing segregation of the *Aussiedler* group. With respect to the last mentioned issue the hypothesis, whether ethnic German immigrants tend to actively withdraw from the receiving society as a reaction towards an increasing exclusion should be tested. This behavioral pattern has recently been observed in the case of other immigrant groups in Germany, first of all by the second generation of the Turkish labor migration (Seifert 1996: 428, Heitmeyer et. al. 1998: 161).

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<sup>8</sup> Bauer and Zimmermann (1997b) and Seifert (1996) used data of the German socioeconomic panel, Koller (1997) employed data of the Institute for Employment Research.

#### 4. Conclusion

It has been argued in this paper that the migration of ethnic Germans to Germany and the privileged acceptance of this group in the receiving society may be explored in the framework of ethnonational migration theories. Without neglecting the importance of economic issues in migration, these concepts stress the ethnic factor in transnational population movements and the role of (nation) states in migration policy formation and migration control. Independent of the reasons why the migration of ethnic Germans initially started, it has been pointed out that network migration sustained the ongoing resettlement of ethnic Germans to Germany. Consistent with network theory, the social background of the *Aussiedler* group became more representative of the sending communities as the migrant networks expanded. This seems to explain the decreasing German language competence and the increasing bi-cultural background of the recent ethnic German immigrant group, coming mainly from the former Soviet Union, where the German minority has lost its ties to the German language and lives to a high percentage in bi-cultural families.

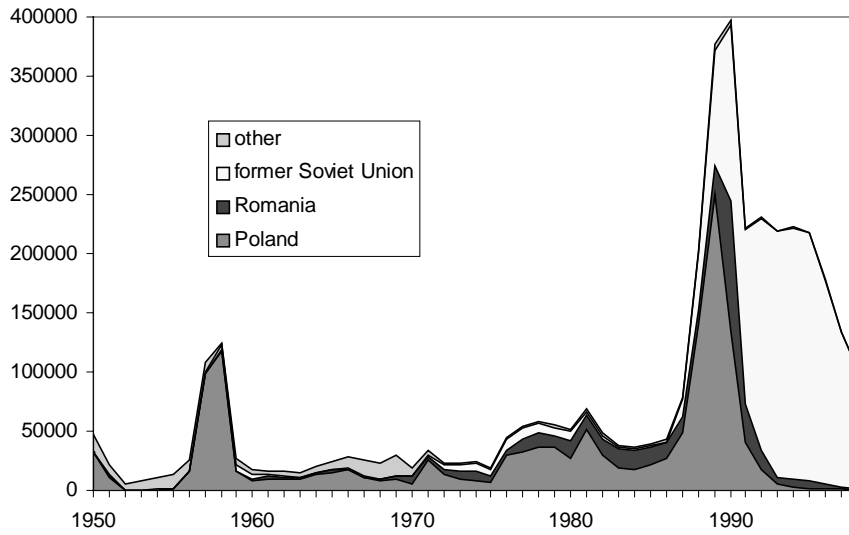
Migrant networks play not only a role in the immigration but also in the absorption process of ethnic Germans. It could be shown that *Aussiedler* tend to participate in migrant networks after they have moved to Germany. Data on the distribution of ethnic Germans to the federal countries revealed that their settlement after immigration differed considerably with respect to their country of origin. The participation of ethnic German immigrants in networks has further been confirmed by studies, discovering the strong social ties of this group to friends and relatives from the same country of origin. If one looks at the effects of migrant networks on the economic and social absorption of ethnic German immigrants, the results are mixed. Whereas all studies on the economic effects of migrant networks found a positive impact on the labor market performance, the outcome of network participation with respect to social absorption is less encouraging. In recent years migrant networks seem to support ethnic German minority enclaves and an increasing segregation of the *Aussiedler* group.

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**Figure 1: Immigration of ethnic Germans to Germany (1950-1998)**



Source: Federal Administration Office

**Table 1: Recognition of ethnic German immigrants 1993-1998 (in%)**

Year	Recognition according to § 4(1) refugee law	Recognition according to § 7(2) and 8(2) refugee law
1993	74.1	25.9
1994	60.9	39.1
1995	55.4	44.6
1996	47.7	52.3
1997	39.7	60.3
1998	34.0	66.0

Source: Federal Administration Office



**Table 2: Planned quota and actual distribution of ethnic German immigrants to federal countries by countries of origin 1989-1998 (in%)**

Federal country	former USSR	Poland	Romania	all countries	Quota, planned*
Baden-Württemberg	13.5	11.1	33.6	15.0	12.3
Bavaria	12.3	9.2	41.3	14.6	14.4
Berlin	2.0	3.5	0.4	2.2	2.7
Brandenburg	3.1	0.1	0.5	2.3	3.5
Bremen	0.9	1.9	0.1	1.0	0.9
Hamburg	2.7	4.1	0.3	2.1	2.1
Hesse	8.0	7.1	5.3	7.6	7.2
Mecklenburg Vorpommern	2.3	0.2	0.2	1.7	2.6
Lower Saxony	10.4	9.0	2.0	9.3	9.2
Northrhine-Westphalia	23.7	44.7	9.1	26.3	21.8
Rhineland-Palatinate	5.7	3.7	2.7	5.0	4.7
Saarland	3.2	1.7	1.3	1.4	1.4
Saxony	5.7	0.2	1.4	4.2	6.5
Saxe-Anhalt	3.2	0.2	0.3	2.4	3.9
Sleswig-Holstein	1.8	2.8	0.3	2.5	3.3
Thuringia	3.1	0.2	0.8	2.3	3.5
Total number	1,620,790	407,091	216,062	2,244,860	

\*The quota has been fixed by the refugee law (version of May 26, 1994).

Source: Federal Administration Office.