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'*Auslandsdeutschtum*' in Brazil (1919–1941): Global Discourses and Local Histories*

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The transnational and global perspectives that have emerged during the last two decades have directed our attention towards histories, entanglements and circulations of actors and discourses beyond the nation state. A number of historians of German history have encouraged us to consider global repercussions and alternative historical spaces.[1] While most of the empirical research pursued within these parameters has occurred in German colonial and imperial history, migration history, surprisingly, has received scant attention. Although migration history is *per se* transnational, historians such as Klaus J. Bade, Jan and Leo Lucassen have felt compelled nevertheless to call for historians to discard their narrow, national perspectives, and the concomitant focus on specific moments of emigration or immigration that continue to dominate much of the research on migrations.[2] From this perspective, immigrants appear to simply move from one nation to another and preserve (or abandon) their 'ethnicity'.

Moreover, while many recent studies have characterized 'ethnicity' as a socially constructed category, they often continue to regard 'ethnicity' as essentially a group identity that can be applied equally to all emigrants – indeed to assume that this is so. Frequently this is the case even among scholars who stress the plurality and hybridity of 'ethnicity'. Terms such as 'diaspora' and 'identity' have functioned similarly:[3] they homogenize groups of people while asserting that the people in those groups consider themselves distinct. Even many studies focused on global and transnational aspects of German migration history continue to seek Germans abroad.[4]

* I would like to thank H. Glenn Penny for inviting me to contribute to this special issue and for helpful suggestions regarding this text.

[1] Jürgen Osterhammel and Sebastian Conrad (eds), *Das Kaiserreich transnational: Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914* (Göttingen, 2004); Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisierung und Nation im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Munich, 2006). Cf. also Jürgen Osterhammel (ed.), *Weltgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 2008); H. Glenn Penny, 'German Polycentrism and the Writing of History', *German History*, 30, 2 (2012), pp. 265–82; Sebastian Conrad, *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung* (Munich, 2013).

[2] Klaus J. Bade, 'Historische Migrationsforschung', in Klaus J. Bade, *Sozialhistorische Migrationsforschung* (Göttingen, 2004), p. 32; Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen and Patrick Manning, 'Migration History: Multidisciplinary Approaches', in Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen and Patrick Manning (eds), *Migration History in World History: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 3–35. For examples of global perspectives on migration history, cf. Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millenium* (Durham, 2002); Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History* (New York, 2005); Albert Kraler *et al.* (ed.), *Migrationen: Globale Entwicklungen seit 1850* (Vienna, 2007).

[3] Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (eds), *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* (Malden, 2003); Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber (ed.), *Ethnizität und Migration: Einführung in Wissenschaft und Arbeitsfelder* (Berlin, 2007); for Brazil in particular see Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham, 1999). For a discussion of ethnicity, cf. Wolfgang Gabbert, 'Concepts of Ethnicity', *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 1, 1 (2006), pp. 85–103.

[4] Cf. Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal and Nancy Reagin (eds), *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor, 2005), p. 5; Mathias Schulze *et al.* (ed.), *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration, and Loss* (Waterloo, 2008).

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This article underscores that these are not new problems. On the contrary, from the early nineteenth century, and especially in the interwar period, German nationalist actors tried to construct a homogeneous German ethnicity that could overcome the national boundaries and link emigrated persons as so-called 'Germans abroad' (*Auslandsdeutsche*) to the German nation.[5] We should not just recapitulate those narratives and categories. Drawing on the example of German immigrants in southern Brazil, this essay argues that national and ethnic categories do little to help us explain migration phenomena, because these categories lose their definitiveness through the very processes of migration and acculturation, if, indeed, they were ever viable in the first place.

Surely, national discourses and politics have frequently played an important role for migrations, and they should be analysed together with the transnationality and global connections at the heart of those migrations.[6] Stefan Rinke has comprehensively shown how various transnational actors shaped German cultural policy in Latin America during the Weimar Republic and instrumentalized German migrants for their political goals, that is, for strengthening German trade and influence.[7] But the history of emigrants themselves belies the simplicity and uniformity of those discourses and narratives, which frequently led to contradictions and conflicts, as Rinke has also pointed out in a more general way, and as this article tries to comprehend through a regional case study.

Rogers Brubaker has argued that we should 'not uncritically adopt *categories of ethnopolitical practice* as our *categories of social analysis*'.[8] This warning is especially appropriate for the term 'Germanness' (*Deutschtum*). Political and intellectual elites fashioned it in the early nineteenth century as a marker for an ethnic nation. They regarded the 'German people' (*deutsches Volk*) as a community with common ancestry, language and culture, and its use in Brazil reified the extremely heterogeneous Germans by positing a misleadingly homogenous unity.[9] Transnational studies, however, should assist us in overcoming not only the spatial but also the ethnic meaning of *Deutschtum*, by incorporating the interdependence of both global and local perspectives into our analyses. For global processes always include local refractions, just as local histories take shape within broader contextualizations.[10]

[5] On the *Auslandsdeutsche*, cf. Gerhard Weidenfeller, *VDA, Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland: Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein (1881–1918): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus und Imperialismus im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt/Main, 1976), p. 37; Bradley Naranch, 'Inventing the *Auslandsdeutsche*: Emigration, Colonial Fantasy, and German National Identity, 1848–71', in Eric Ames, Marcia Klotz and Lora Wildenthal (eds), *Germany's Colonial Pasts* (Lincoln, 2005), pp. 21–40.

[6] For Latin America, cf. Michael Goebel and Nicola Foote (eds), *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America* (Gainesville, 2014).

[7] Stefan Rinke, *'Der letzte freie Kontinent': Deutsche Lateinamerikapolitik im Zeichen transnationaler Beziehungen, 1918–1933*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 291–412.

[8] Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 10. For criticism of the concept of 'identity', cf. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', *Theory and Society*, 29 (2000), pp. 1–47; on the concept of 'diaspora', cf. Pieter Judson, 'When Is a Diaspora Not a Diaspora? Rethinking Nation-Centered Narratives about Germans in Habsburg East Central Europe', in O'Donnell *et al.*, *Heimat Abroad*, pp. 219–20.

[9] Jörg Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus (1770–1840)* (Frankfurt/Main, 1998).

[10] For local perspectives on German history, cf. Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, 1990); Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill, 1997); Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer and Mark Roseman (eds), *German History from the Margins* (Bloomington, 2006); David Blackbourn and James Retallack (eds), *Localism, Landscape, and the Ambiguities of Place: German-Speaking Central Europe, 1860–1930* (Toronto, 2007). Regional initiatives were even important for the global *Deutschtumsarbeit*, cf. Johannes Paulmann, 'Regionen und Welt: Arenen und Akteure regionaler Weltbeziehungen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 296 (2013), pp. 660–99.

As Brazilian scholars are quick to remind us, the Brazilian perspective matters as well.[11] For, in the final analysis, the histories in this study concern Brazilian citizens.[12] Immigrants, however, were also not simply that—simply Brazilian citizens—any more than 'ethnic Germans' in eastern Europe were ever simply Hungarian or Czech or part of another national polity. As numerous studies on the German borderlands in eastern Europe and on ethnic politics in Austria-Hungary have shown, the local populations were not always interested in national projects. Indeed, as Pieter Judson and others have demonstrated, many of these communities developed a vigorous 'bilingualism, apparent indifference to national identity, and nationally opportunist behaviours'.[13] Supposed strong categories such as language and ethnicity were not automatically as definitive as the hegemonic discourses would have us believe. The same is true in Brazil.

This essay expands on these points about the interdependence of global and local situations by analysing the various discourses of *Deutschtum* that gained salience during the Weimar Republic among the German-Brazilian elites in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the main Brazilian destination of German immigrants. Between 1919 and 1941, when foreign-language publications could be published in Brazil, some Germans and German-Brazilians took part in constructing the idea of a global 'German ethnic community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*), a project developed in Germany at the same time.

Due to the outcome of World War I, and the subsequent creation of new German minorities in Europe, the German community abroad (*Auslandsdeutschtum*) emerged in the minds of many as a kind of transnational society of victims. The local elites in Rio Grande do Sul connected the experiences of German immigrants in Brazil to those of many ethnic Germans in eastern Europe and Germany's former African colonies in ways that evidence the global dimensions of German nationality. In southern Brazil, however, those same discourses also confronted reconfigurations that had taken place on the ground, and thus they met with a good deal of scepticism. Not even the German-Brazilian elites of southern Brazil, though they were the most receptive immigrants for ethnic discourses, agreed with the idea of a homogeneous *Deutschtum* in Brazil and they therefore altered, criticized and rejected discourses that tried to construct a German space in Brazil. For in the end, and despite the cultural heritage of many German-Brazilians, the local situation in which they lived was no longer a German one.

I. German Immigration and Migration Politics in Brazil

Only a small percentage of the mass transatlantic migration of Germanophones during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries went to Brazil. In total, between 1824 and

[11] René Gertz, *O fascismo no sul do Brasil: Germanismo, nazismo, integralismo* (Porto Alegre, 1987); Marcos Tramontini, *A organização social dos imigrantes: A colônia de São Leopoldo na fase pioneira (1824–1850)* (São Leopoldo, 2000).

[12] Jeffrey Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 197.

[13] Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 3. Cf. also James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor, 2008); Caitlin Murdoch, *Changing Places: Society, Culture, and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870–1946* (Ann Arbor, 2010); H. Glenn Penny, 'Latin American Connections: Recent Work on German Interactions with Latin America', *Central European History*, 46 (2013), pp. 362–94. For Namibia, cf. Daniel Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad: Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia* (Athens, 2002).

1933, they amounted to around 216,000 arrivals.[14] Nevertheless, German immigrants and their descendants formed, over time, an important part of the population in the southern states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina.

These immigrants were not a unitary group, and before the foundation of Imperial Germany in 1871, they were not even German citizens. Moreover, from 1871 to 1945, the borders and the belonging of people to the German state varied significantly. Even the term 'German national' did not refer to the same group of people across the decades encompassed by this study. The immigrants came from different regions, such as Hunsrück, Pomerania, Westfalen, Württemberg and even Russia. The majority were peasants who settled as farmers in southern Brazil and practised subsistence farming there. Others were craftsmen or, especially after 1900, workers who preferred to migrate to the big cities such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul. Members of the middle and upper classes, such as merchants, industrialists and intellectuals, also settled in the cities.

In addition, there were other distinguishing characteristics among the so-called 'German' immigrants in Brazil. Religion mattered a great deal: these immigrants were equally divided between Protestants and Catholics, with Protestants at a great disadvantage. During period of the Brazilian Empire (1822–1889), when Catholicism was the state religion, Protestants did not have equal legal rights. Politics mattered too: the immigrants represented a wide spectrum of political positions, including liberal, conservative, anarchist, socialist and, later, Nazi. Moreover, their reasons for migrating differed as well: many peasants decided to migrate in order to escape starvation and economic problems, while merchants were looking for new business opportunities, just as merchants had always done. Liberal Forty-Eighters, anarchists and Jews, on the other hand, fled for political reasons. An immigrant's time of entry into Brazil also had critical implications: different waves, or generations, of immigrants acculturated in different intensities to Brazilian society. Especially after 1918, established immigrants and their descendants had reservations about newly immigrated Germans. In the nineteenth century, many immigrants acquired Brazilian citizenship, and in 1889, with the advent of the Brazilian Republic, all immigrants were naturalized.

From the 1860s, Prussian and later German private societies and state authorities sent pastors, missionaries, teachers and diplomats to southern Brazil to help preserve and create *Deutschtum* in Brazil (*Deutschtumsarbeit*). They expected schools, churches and local associations to homogenize the heterogeneous emigrant groups in ways that would strengthen German trade and heighten Germany's political influence in Brazil. Due to the lack of formal German colonies before 1884, many businessmen and officials recognized the potential value of the emigrants for German colonial policy and, later on, as agents for informal empire.[15]

[14] The data is taken from Hernán Asdrúbal Silva (ed.), *Inmigración y estadísticas en el Cono Sur de América: Argentina—Brasil—Chile* (Mexico City, 1990), pp. 149–51, but we should bear in mind that he does not consider return trips and transitional stays. On immigration to Brazil more generally, cf. Boris Fausto (ed.), *Fazer a América: A imigração em massa para a América Latina* (São Paulo, 1999); Lesser, *Immigration*.

[15] Hans Fenske, 'Imperialistische Tendenzen in Deutschland vor 1866: Auswanderung, überseeische Bestrebungen, Weltmachtsträume', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 97–8 (1978), pp. 332–83; Matthew Fitzpatrick, *Liberal Imperialism in Germany: Expansionism and Nationalism 1848–84* (New York, 2008).

Since many of these organizations believed that such emigrants to the U.S. quickly assimilated, and were thus lost to the German nation, they began agitating to redirect the mass migration towards regions where Germans would stay or become German. Southern Brazil emerged in the 1860s as the outstanding alternative for German colonization: a putatively empty space, with temperate climate, where travellers reported that Germans were ostensibly isolated and able to fulfil their cultural mission by preserving their *Deutschtum* abroad.[16] This was, however, a colonial utopia; recent studies have shown that the settlers were anything but isolated in Brazil.[17]

In the imperial period, a network of colonial and ecclesiastical societies, among them the Association for Germanness Abroad (*Verein für das Deutschtum im Auslande*, VDA) which supported German-speaking schools everywhere in the world, worked globally for the preservation of *Deutschtum* and developed critical ties to Germanophone Brazilian urban elites and their societies and press. Schools and churches were the most important institutions within these networks erected to preserve *Deutschtum*, and over time, those included elite Gymnasium and Protestant synods. In contrast to the concerted efforts of these private organizations, the German government's policy towards Brazil was at best half-hearted.[18]

Even without the direct involvement of the German state, the Brazilian government was sceptical about the myriad efforts at *Deutschtumsarbeit*. Initially, political elites favoured large-scale European immigration as a means of gaining a free labour force that could replace slave labour (abolished in 1888),[19] an effective way of securing the sparsely populated south of the country against Argentina's territorial claims, and an opportunity to 'civilize' and 'whiten up' the Brazilian nation by replacing Afro-Brazilians with Europeans.[20] Brazilian elites, like many in Germany, regarded German immigrants as cultural pioneers. Although this view existed until the 1930s, a second and more critical opinion about the Germans gained strength after the foundation of the Republic in 1889. Partly as a reaction to the *Deutschtumsarbeit*, and partly as an expression of the Republicans' new nationalist project, politicians and journalists launched their own homogenizing discourse, energetically criticizing the Germans in southern Brazil for not assimilating into Brazilian society, and calling for national efforts to accelerate the process. By 1900, those complaints in the press also began including frequent discussion of the so-called 'German danger (*perigo alemão*)', emanating from accusations that the German Empire had expansionist plans for southern Brazil. This was fuelled to a large degree by U.S. propaganda against German competition in South American markets.[21]

[16] Robert Avé-Lallemant, *Reise durch Süd-Brasilien im Jahre 1858* (Leipzig, 1859); F. Epp, *Rio Grande do Sul oder Neudeutschland* (Mannheim, 1864).

[17] Tramontini, *organização*.

[18] Gerhard Brunn, *Deutschland und Brasilien (1889–1914)* (Cologne/Vienna, 1971).

[19] On the migration policy, cf. Giralda Seyferth, 'German Immigration and Brazil's Colonization Policy', in Samuel Baily and Eduardo José Míguez (eds), *Mass Migration to Modern Latin America* (Wilmington, 2003), pp. 227–44.

[20] Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças: Cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil, 1870–1930* (São Paulo, 1993); Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham, 1993).

[21] Sílvio Romero, 'O allemanismo no sul do Brasil', in Sílvio Romero, *Provocações e debates* (Oporto, 1910 [1906]), pp. 115–69. Cf. Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase, *Lateinamerika als Konfliktherd der deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen 1890–1903: Vom Beginn der Panamerikapolitik bis zur Venezuelakrise von 1902/03* (Göttingen, 1986).

During World War I, new tensions also arose because many German-Brazilians sympathized with the Central Powers, while the Brazilian majority supported the Allies. When German submarines torpedoed several Brazilian ships during the Atlantic blockade in 1917, mobs destroyed houses and businesses with German names in Porto Alegre and other cities, and between the Brazilian declaration of war on the Central Powers on 26 October 1917 and the middle of 1919, the state forbade German-speaking activities and publications, and German schools were closed.[22]

Beginning in 1930, the nationalistic and authoritarian regime of Getúlio Vargas continued the efforts to nationalize the immigrants. In order to create a Brazilian national community, his regime took measures to mix immigrants regionally, to end cultural activities that might undercut Brazilianness, such as *Deutschtumsarbeit*, and to press for 'assimilation', a concept he took from the Chicago School of Sociology.[23]

II. *Deutschtumsarbeit* in Brazil, 1919–1941

As the loss of the war and the Treaty of Versailles put an end to Wilhemine *Weltpolitik* and stripped the German state of territory and colonies, Germans living outside the state's borders in Europe gained increasing attention in political debates. Those living outside Europe were important as well. As Stefan Rinke has shown, German transnational actors quickly sought to re-establish their connections in Latin America and promote a cultural policy there that would helped to salvage Germany's image abroad and promote commercial relations.[24] The preservation of *Deutschtum* was an integral part of these efforts.

As a result, societies such as the VDA boomed during the interwar period, and German-speaking schools abroad were recognized by these organizations as important pillars of their *Deutschtumsarbeit*. Thus the VDA sent legates to Brazil to evaluate the Germanophone schools and to support the centralization of the school system in order to strengthen German influence in the local schools. For this purpose, the VDA distributed educational material and initiated the first German-Brazilian schools conference (*Deutschbrasilianischer Schultag*) in São Paulo in 1920. There, German-speaking teachers, clergymen and diplomats gathered to show their commitment to 'German ethnicity [*Volkstum*]', discuss political goals and elaborate curricula.[25] Education was integral to promoting identification with Germany. At the third *Schultag* in 1925, the *Landesverband deutsch-brasilianischer Lehrer* was founded to organize the teaching staff and to instruct it in a political way. It received support from the German embassy, the city of Hamburg (whose merchants were traditionally interested in good trade relations overseas) and the VDA, and it was integrated into the *Verein deutscher Auslandslehrer*.[26] The Reich Education Fund (*Reichsschulfond*), which boasted an ever-growing budget to

[22] Similar events occurred in the U.S., cf. Frederick Luebke, *Germans in Brazil: A Comparative History of Cultural Conflict during World War I* (Baton Rouge, 1987).

[23] Cf. Giralda Seyferth, 'Os imigrantes e a campanha de nacionalização do Estado Novo', in Dulce Pandolfi (ed.), *Repensando o Estado Novo* (Rio de Janeiro, 1999), pp. 199–228.

[24] Rinke, *'Der letzte freie Kontinent'*, pp. 291–412.

[25] *5. Deutsch-brasilianischer Schultag zu Porto Alegre vom 4.–7. Januar 1931* (Porto Alegre, 1931), p. 29.

[26] The process, however, remained incomplete. In 1931, only 50% of the German-speaking teachers in Brazil were members. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

support German schools abroad, even supported the creation of middle schools to maintain the education of the German-speaking elites and distributed its largesse to German schools across the south. In 1930 alone, it contributed 250,000 Reichsmarks to the support of German schools in Brazil, where there were more than 800, mostly small community schools, in Rio Grande do Sul alone.[27]

At the same time, Protestant societies such as the *Gustav-Adolf-Verein* (GAV) and Catholic entities such as the *Caritasverband* continued their commitment to *Deutschtumsarbeit*. They supported communities and ecclesiastical organizations in Brazil by providing priests and funds. On the ground, local societies such as the *Volksverein für die deutschen Katholiken in Rio Grande do Sul* and the German Jesuits were also active, cooperating with German organizations. Contacts between local Protestant groups and their counterparts in Germany, however, were particularly strong.[28] Most Protestant communities were affiliated with the *Riograndenser Synode* (RGS), which joined, as the first synod overseas, the *Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenbund* (DEKB) in 1929, allowing the claims by the pastors—mostly German nationals—for support and pensions to be effectively regulated. For its part, the DEKB was granted the authority to discipline pastors who failed in their duty and, if necessary, fine, identify and even recall them.

The close entanglements between the synod and German authorities, for example, became apparent when a permanent representative of the Prussian Church, and later of the DEKB, took up residence in Porto Alegre in 1911. This ecclesiastical diplomat was the main reference person for all German-related cultural and Protestant matters and tried to discipline the local Protestant organizations and to expand German influence over them. The first German provost after the war, Erwin Hübbe (1925–1928), was financed by local German-Brazilian companies and German shipping companies with an interest in Brazilian trade. But he also represented the interests of the VDA, and he cooperated with the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* (DAI), which had been founded in 1917. After 1933, his successor, Gottlieb Funcke (1929–1936), sympathized with the Nazis, as did the local organized Nazi clergy (*NS-Pfarrerschaft*). The presidency of the RGS, however, remained under native control. Hermann Dohms, a Brazilian-born pastor, was president from 1936 to 1956. Regardless, all had stakes in participating in *Deutschtumsarbeit*. The schools, churches, societies and the press not only promoted the German language but also ethnic solidarity and political identification with Germany.

In addition to these actors, quasi-scientific institutes collected information on Germans and German communities around the world, and provided them with services. The DAI in Stuttgart was the most influential in developing the idea of *Auslandsdeutschtum*.[29] It maintained a library, an archive and a museum, organized

[27] Theodor Amstad, 'Die deutschen Schulen in Brasilien', *Jahrbuch des Reichsverbandes für die katholischen Auslanddeutschen* 1931/32, p. 201. On the school system, cf. César Paiva, *Die deutschsprachigen Schulen in Rio Grande do Sul und die Nationalisierungspolitik* (Ph.D. Thesis, University Hamburg, 1984); Bernd Müller, *Von den Auswandererschulen zum Auslandsschulwesen: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Würzburg, 1995).

[28] On the Protestant churches, cf. Hans-Jürgen Prien, *Evangelische Kirchwerdung in Brasilien: Von den deutsch-evangelischen Einwanderergemeinden zur Evangelischen Kirche Lutherischen Bekenntnisses in Brasilien* (Gütersloh, 1989).

[29] Ernst Ritter, *Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut in Stuttgart 1917–1945: Ein Beispiel deutscher Volkstumsarbeit zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Wiesbaden, 1976).

lectures, and kept in touch with other societies in Germany and abroad. Wahrhold Drascher, who had worked as a lawyer in Chile and headed the archive in Stuttgart, initiated its contacts in Latin America. The Institute for the Study of Foreign Countries and of Germans in Border Areas and Overseas (*Institut für Auslandkunde, Grenz- und Auslanddeutschtum*), founded in Leipzig in 1918, was also an important nodal point in the Latin American *Deutschtumsarbeit*. Its director, Hugo Grothe, an orientalist, was also a VDA-member and an authority on Brazil, and he published influential works on *Auslandsdeutsche* there.

German-Brazilian elites were connected with all of the associations. Even before 1914, they had founded their own affiliated societies of the VDA and the GAV, and they actively lobbied for the preservation of *Deutschtum* in the almost 150 newspapers and journals that made up the German-speaking press.[30] These newspapers kept readers abreast of the ongoing efforts at *Deutschtumsarbeit* and circulated reports about the *Auslandsdeutschtum*. At the same time, almanacs addressed the rural population and reminded them, through poems, catechisms and prose, how to lead a German life. Although German-speaking elites were politically and confessionally fragmented, they gained a discursive hegemony through this press and controlled much of the discourse on German immigration in Brazil.

That press was varied as well as extensive. Indeed, during the interwar period, there were a number of important newspapers produced in the state of Rio Grande do Sul: the *Neue Deutsche Zeitung* (*NDZ*), originally a liberal paper that later sympathized with the Nazis; the Protestant *Deutsche Post* (*DP*), founded by the first president of the RGS, Wilhelm Rotermund, with a circulation of 3,000 in 1916; the *Serra-Post*, a countryside paper; and the Catholic *Deutsches Volksblatt* (*DVB*), published by the Metzler family as a 'consciously German newspaper' with a circulation of 7,200 in 1929. The *DVB* became a staunch critic of National Socialism.[31] Rotermund's publishing house also produced the famous annual *Kalender für die Deutschen in Brasilien*, a 'spearhead and defender of German culture and German character', which boasted a circulation of 30,000 in 1923 alone.[32] In addition, Hermann Dohms discussed *Deutschtum* in his *Deutsche Evangelische Blätter für Brasilien* (*DEBB*).

These periodicals were not limited in their scope to local and regional news, or even to the news in Brazil. They all regularly printed articles from German journals, such as *Der Auslanddeutsche* (DAI), *Süd-Amerika* (*Institut für Auslandkunde*), *Deutsche Welt* (VDA), *Die Getreuen* (Catholic), *Die Deutsche Schule im Auslande* (*Verein deutscher Auslandslehrer*), as well as German and German-speaking newspapers from all over the world. Clearly, the DAI had the greatest influence on these newspapers: in the 1920s, for example, the *DVB* published the series *Chronicle of the Auslanddeutschtum*, written by DAI's director Fritz Wertheimer.

Other German publicists such as Grothe wrote consistently for Brazilian newspapers. Many went to Brazil, met with German-Brazilians, and had a critical impact. The

[30] René Gertz, 'Imprensa e imigração alemã', in Martin Dreher *et al.* (ed.), *Imigração e imprensa: XV Simpósio de História da Imigração e Colonização* (Porto Alegre/São Leopoldo, 2004), pp. 100–22. The best overview on the press is still Hans Gehse, *Die deutsche Presse in Brasilien von 1852 bis zur Gegenwart: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und zum Aufgabenkreis auslanddeutschen Zeitungswesens* (Münster, 1931).

[31] Joseph Koenig, '60 Jahre auf dem Posten', Deutsches Volksblatt (DVB) (10 March 1931), p. 2.

[32] Hellmut Culmann, '50 Jahre!', *Kalender für die Deutschen in Brasilien* (1931), p. 2.

theologian Paul Rohrbach, for instance, helped fashion colonial discourses while promoting German cultural imperialism and supporting emigration to Brazil. Rohrbach travelled the world, and was a colonial civil servant in German Southwest Africa between 1903 and 1906. Maria Kahle, a Catholic writer, took up a position as an editor in Brazil from 1913 to 1920. After 1933, she promoted Nazi politics and in 1934 she conducted a major propaganda trip for the VDA to Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay in order to boost local *Deutschtum*.

In 1933, the Nazi 'enforced coordination' (*Gleichschaltung*) extended to all the societies and institutions that worked to support the *Auslandsdeutschtum*, including the VDA and the DAI.[33] They and their networks were harnessed to support Nazi goals. While these societies adopted Nazi discourses about *Deutschtum*, the Foreign Organization of the NSDAP (NSDAP/AO) extended its activities to southern Brazil more aggressively and tried to co-opt the local societies, but failed to bring all of them into line because several societies refused to comply.[34] Nevertheless, Nazi interpretations of *Deutschtum* easily used the networks and institutions that had supported the *Deutschtumsarbeit* as vectors for infiltrating these communities in Brazil.

III. Discourses on *Auslandsdeutschtum* in Brazil, 1919–1941

German discourses on German immigration to Brazil changed after 1918 in the same way that the discourses on the *Auslandsdeutschtum* changed. German colonial discourses of the nineteenth century had constructed the Germans as strong cultural pioneers and colonizers who fulfilled a civilizing mission in the world and formed a global community, the *Auslandsdeutschtum*. In Brazil as well, these Germans were expected to civilize the country, by bringing their alleged moral, cultural and racial superiority to a backward state, inhabited by allegedly racially degenerated people.[35]

Germany's loss of World War I, its colonies, its imperial power and its reputation shifted the contexts in which these discourses existed. In response to the losses, German nationalists cast their country and its citizens as victims of the Treaty of Versailles, and they included the *Auslandsdeutsche* among those victims. Indeed, in some ways these nationalists rediscovered the *Auslandsdeutsche* as threatened and violated minorities. *Volksgemeinschaft* became a key word during the Weimar Republic, and according to this globalized rubric, all members of the German *Volk* formed a distinct whole and shared a common fate.[36]

During the National Socialist period, references to *Volksgemeinschaft* became even more important, and the NSDAP/AO was charged with strengthening the 'solidarity between us Germans in the *Reich* and the Germans abroad'.[37] According to Hans Steinacher, the president of the VDA (1933–1937), the *Auslandsdeutsche* should fight together against this

[33] On the Nazi policy, cf. Tammo Luther, *Volkstumspolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1933–1938: Die Auslanddeutschen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Traditionalisten und Nationalsozialisten* (Stuttgart, 2004).

[34] Gertz, *fascismo*, pp. 80–92; Jürgen Müller, *Nationalsozialismus in Lateinamerika: Die Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP in Argentinien, Brasilien, Chile und Mexiko, 1931–1945* (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 157–79.

[35] Frederik Schulze, 'German Missionaries, Race, and Othering: Entanglements and Comparisons between German Southwest Africa, Indonesia and Brazil', *Itinerario*, 37, 1 (2013), pp. 13–27.

[36] M. Schlenker, 'Das Auslanddeutschtum und die deutsche Wirtschaft', *Deutsche Welt*, 5, 9 (1928), p. 347. Cf. also Eugen Lemberg, 'Vom Deutschtum in Brasilien', *Die Getreuen*, 8, 3 (1931), p. 58.

[37] 'Das Auslanddeutschtum und die deutsche Erneuerungsbewegung', *Der Auslanddeutsche*, 16, 6 (1933), p. 141.

threat: 'The German people from around the world are attacked, as a whole, by their enemies, and they have to defend themselves as a unity'. Indeed, 'the war on the borders of *Volkstum*', he argued, 'was the direct continuation of the war at arms'. It was a war, he claimed, 'for soil and language' and 'for their own divinely ordained form of life'.[38]

While the proponents of this fight sketched out clear battle lines between distinct German minorities across eastern Europe and the rabid nationalists who would oppress them, much of the recent work on German minorities in those states has demonstrated that everyday life in eastern Europe was often more complex. Ostensibly unitary groups of Germans were often fractured, the population did not always map onto the essentialized national discourses, but often embraced hybrid forms of life and bi- and multi-linguistic spaces.[39] The promulgators of nationalist discourses, however, did not care about that, and the nationalists used the problems of the German minorities harshly to lament the French 'assimilation' in Alsace-Lorraine, the 'foreign domination' in the Memel Territory, the risks of being 'displaced' and 'polonized' in Poland, and the 'elimination from public jobs, the theft of schools, land confiscations, systematic economic discrimination, creation of artificial Czech minorities, tax oppression, vexatious treatment, judicial terror' in the Sudetenland.[40]

Similar portraits of abuse, calls for unity in the face of opposition, demands for the revision of the Treaty of Versailles, appeals for the protection of German minorities and the preservation of *Auslandsdeutschtum* also circulated in the German-speaking press in Brazil.[41] Rudolf Becker, for example, a leading Protestant publicist in Brazil, wrote: 'Thus, we hear from all regions Job's news about oppression, deprivation of rights and disregard of the German element'. [42] Victim discourses, much like those invented by the German-speaking elites in Namibia, became wide spread.[43]

These texts, in fact, affirmed that the strong German colonizer had become a threatened species, a victim in need of protection in Brazil and abroad. Indeed, in this narrative, the Brazilian readership was part of a global community with a shared fate, and they could read articles about similar 'German struggles' in Alsace, in the Saarland, in South Tyrol, in Silesia, in Czechoslovakia and other regions in the East.[44] They

[38] Hans Steinacher, *Deutsches Volkstum: Deutscher Lebensraum* (Hamburg, 1934), pp. 15, 17. Cf. also M. Schlenker, 'Das Auslanddeutschtum und die deutsche Wirtschaft'.

[39] Judson, *Guardians*; Bjork, *German*; Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, 2008).

[40] Steinacher, *Volkstum*, p. 6–7.

[41] 'Die Lage der evangelischen Auslandsdeutschen', *Neue Deutsche Zeitung* (*NDZ*) (23 Feb. 1925), pp. 1–2; Rudolf Becker, 'Über den nationalen Gedanken', Deutsche Evangelische Blätter für Brasilien (DEBB), 8, 9 (1926), pp. 119–23; 'Brief von Herrn Arno Philipp, verlesen in der Protestversammlung gegen die Kriegsschuldlüge am 12. Juni 1929 im Gemeinnützigen Verein', *DVB* (14 June 1929), pp. 1–2; 'Deutsches Volk um die Jahreswende', *Serra-Post* (19 Feb. 1932), p. 1.

[42] Rudolf Becker, 'Staat und Volkstum', *DEBB*, 6, 1/2 (1924), p. 4.

[43] Lothar Engel, *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus im deutschen Protestantismus in Namibia 1907 bis 1945: Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Mission und Kirche im ehemaligen Kolonial- und Mandatsgebiet Südwestafrika* (Frankfurt/Main, 1976), p. 300.

[44] 'Der Freiheitskampf der Elsaß-Lothringer', *NDZ* (4 Nov. 1919), p. 1; 'Der Kampf um Oberschlesien', *DVB* (10 Feb. 1921), p. 1; Carl Badendieck, 'Die Lage des Grenzdeutschtums und des europäischen Siedlungsdeutschtums', *NDZ* (11 Sep. 1924), p. 1; 'Deutschenhaß in der Tschechoslowakei', *Serra-Post* (20 Nov. 1925), p. 1; 'Die Bedrückung der Deutschen in Südtirol', *NDZ* (8 March 1928), p. 1; 'Vom ringenden Deutschtum in Böhmen', *NDZ* (18 July 1928), p. 2–3; 'Die Entdeutschung Pommerellens', *NDZ* (13 Aug. 1928), pp. 2–3; Ulrich Sieck, 'Das Sudetendeutschtum unter der Guillotine', *NDZ* (10 Sep. 1932), p. 2; Paul Mohr, 'Die Vergewaltigung des deutschen Ostens', *Koseritz' Deutscher Volkskalender* 1932, pp. 127–31.

could also read about the fate of the Germans in Russia and in the former colonies in Africa.[45] Many of these essays shared the same key terms: 'terror', 'humiliation', 'brutality' and 'slavery',[46] all of which were employed to encourage Germans to stand together.[47] The discourses on *Auslandsdeutschtum* were thus meant to awake the 'popular conscience of the *Auslanddeutsche*' and to draw together and reveal the interconnections among multiple groups of Germans abroad.[48] Indeed, the ultimate 'task of every German' was to co-create the 'German unity front abroad'.[49] 'And what a sublime thought: the *Deutschtum* of the entire world unified as a whole in a common cultural and economic collaboration!'[50] German proponents of such ideas even travelled through Brazil, giving lectures in an effort to raise the awareness for the topic: Jens Jessen, for example, offered reports in 1922 about the situation in North Schleswig, and Maria Kahle organized so-called *Ostmarken-Abende* in 1928.[51]

Many German-Brazilian elites were receptive. They assisted in broadcasting these new discourses of joint, even world-wide victimization because their own experiences seemed to be quite similar. As early as in the second half of the nineteenth century, in fact, these elites had begun to develop a local victim discourse in reaction to Brazilian nationalization policies, which aimed at forced assimilation during World War I. The German-Brazilian elites stylized themselves and other immigrants as victims who were 'exploited and betrayed', who were not acknowledged as Brazilian citizens with equal rights.[52] At best, they were tolerated, but more often they were confronted with distrust and denial, and insulted as 'strangers' and 'foreigners'.[53] Indeed, the German-speaking press even identified a latent 'hatred of Germans' and the nativist behaviour of the Brazilian politicians.[54]

'Quickly and treacherously abandoned by the Brazilian state, aggrieved by the Brazilian civil service in various ways', the powerful German pioneer, readers were told, turned into a victim, suffering from hate and hostility.[55] The fact that the Germans were

[45] 'Die Tragödie der deutschen Bauern an der Wolga', *Serra-Post* (6 Jan. 1922), p. 1; 'Vom Deutschtum in Südwestafrika', *DVB* (17 May 1929), p. 1; 'Die Katastrophe des deutschen Bauerntums in Sowjetrußland!', *NDZ* (26 July 1932), p. 5.

[46] 'Eine Kundgebung der Saarländer', *NDZ* (24 May 1921), p. 1; 'Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Afrika', *DVB* (4 Oct. 1920), p. 1; Kurt Schorck, 'Volk in Not! Die Lage des Sudetendeutschtums', *NDZ* (28 May 1934), p. 2; 'Das Schicksal der Bauern in Sowjetrußland', *NDZ* (16 Aug. 1933), p. 2.

[47] Heinrich Timpe, 'Auslanddeutsche und Auswanderung', *Deutsche Post* (*DP*) (24 Oct. 1924), pp. 1–2; Külz, 'Die deutsche Kulturgemeinschaft', *DVB* (31 July 1926), p. 1; 'Vom Ueberseedeutschtum', *DVB* (24 Feb. 1930), p. 1; 'Deutsche Einheit in der deutschen Vielheit', in *Koseritz' Deutscher Volkskalender* 1933, p. 151.

[48] 'Deutschland das Land der Sehnsucht für die Auslandsdeutschen', *NDZ* (23 May 1932), p. 3. Cf. also Heinrich Timpe, 'Auslanddeutsche und Auswanderung', *DP* (24 Oct. 1924), pp. 1–2.

[49] 'Zusammenschluß des Deutschtums im Auslande', *DP* (2 July 1921), p. 1; 'Das Auslandsdeutschtum und die Pflichten der Heimat', *DP* (14 Sep. 1925), pp. 1–2.

[50] Wolfgang Ammon, 'Eine Weltorganisation des Deutschtums', *NDZ* (30 Apr. 1932), p. 3.

[51] 'Schleswig-Holstein und die Auslandsdeutschen', *NDZ* (2 July 1922), p. 1; Paul Aldinger, 'Die Deutsche Frau in Brasilien', *Kalender für die deutschen evangelischen Gemeinden in Brasilien* 1928, p. 57.

[52] 'Der Sieg der Idee', *Deutsche Zeitung (DZ)* (5 Jan. 1881), p. 1.

[53] 'Estrangeiros', *DP* (26 Feb. 1887), p. 1; 'Nativismus', *DP* (14 May 1887), pp. 1–2.

[54] 'Dr. Parobé über das eingewanderte Element', *Kolonie* (7 Nov. 1903), p. 1. Cf. also 'Das sociale Problem in Brasilien', *DZ* (28 June 1884), p. 1; 'Den Nativisten ins Stammbuch', *NDZ* (19 Sep. 1913), p. 1.

[55] Gottlieb Funcke, Zusammenfassender Bericht ueber die Lage der D. Ev. Kirche in Rio Grande do Sul, 23 May 1932, p. 20, in Evangelisches Zentralarchiv Berlin (EZA) 5/2230.

not appreciated as cultural pioneers, even though the German-Brazilian elites believed that they had helped build Brazil's wealth and progress, and some Brazilian elites had also made these claims earlier, provoked vast frustration among these elites.[56]

IV. Local Adaptions, Reconfigurations and Discursive Failure

There was therefore considerable disparity between the essentializing discourses that circulated both internationally and within Rio Grande do Sul and the realities of the immigrant's experience on the ground. German-Brazilian elites actually reacted to the idea of the *Auslandsdeutschtum* in different ways. If much of the press evoked a unitary *Deutschtum* with essential German values, not even the elites automatically envisioned themselves as either pure German or as a threatened minority that must fight for Germany's honour. On the contrary, already during the nineteenth century, these elites had invented a new, hyphenated identity: 'German-Brazilianness (*Deutschbrasilianertum*)'. By embracing this term, they offered a measured response to critics who pointed to their insufficient assimilation. They declared their civic commitment to the Brazilian state, while demanding their right to maintain their cultural identity, their *Deutschtum*.[57] Politically, they assumed an independent position between Germany and Brazil.

Moreover, the middle-class 'German-Brazilians (*Deutschbrasilianer*)' did not form a homogeneous group either. Rather, they remained fractured and divided over many political and religious issues, including the character of *Deutschtum*. As a result, the discourses of *Deutschtum* promulgated by pundits lost their decidedness in open discussion, and *Deutschtum* itself became the subject of a negotiation process, which, in turn, generated competing and overlapping discourses on the topic. Through that process, German-Brazilian elites were able to influence discourses and *Deutschtumsarbeit* in significant ways.

IV. 1: Refusing Victimhood

Although the middle-class *Deutschbrasilianer* criticized abuses and discrimination in their newspapers, they did not fight on the abstract *Auslandsdeutsche* front. Instead, they tried to change their actual situation by participating actively in Brazilian society and politics. From a civil point of view, they began to feel Brazilian and adopted positions of local political leadership. Increasingly, from the 1880s onwards, the German-language press demanded political engagement from immigrants. This, as several prominent figures of the German-Brazilian elites believed, was the only way to improve their situation. The colonists, they advised, should resolve problems on their own initiative: enhance the infrastructure, create militias against marauding revolutionaries during the Federalist Revolution (1893–1895), and resist the land reform implemented by the government for the expropriation of landowners without tenure—a problem for many immigrants who did not have proper documentation.[58]

[56] 'Die "deutsche Gefahr" in Brasilien', *Export*, 28, 5 (1906), p. 80. Cf. also 'Immer wieder die Kirchturmfrage', *DP* (1 June 1887), p. 1; 'Wir Riograndenser!', *DP* (18 Sep. 1899), p. 1; 'Dr. Parobé über das eingewanderte Element', p. 1; 'Etwas Nativistisches', *DVB* (4 March 1914), p. 1; 'Immer noch nicht begriffen', *DP* (31 Oct. 1927), p. 1.

[57] Giralda Seyferth, *Nacionalismo e identidade étnica: A ideologia germanista e o grupo étnico teuto-brasileiro numa comunidade do Vale do Itajaí* (Florianópolis, 1981), pp. 56–8.

[58] 'Schlechte Wege in den Kolonien', *DZ* (26 Oct. 1861), p. 1, 'Bericht', *DP* (17 Aug. 1887), p. 1; 'Zwischen Hammer und Ambos', *DVB* (29 Jan. 1895), p. 1.

Subsequently, some immigrants founded a society to collect funds to buy colonists out of military service,[59] while groups of Protestants addressed several petitions to the government calling for their legal equality.[60] Although it is true that the official equality of Protestant citizens was only achieved with the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, which separated church and state, it is also true that by that time, their own actions had managed to gain them extensive social recognition.[61]

Moreover, immigrant elites began engaging in national politics to effect changes on the ground. As early as the 1860s, German-language newspapers called on naturalized German-speakers to participate in elections and to seek public office in order to win respect for the German population.[62] Because the political heterogeneity of the immigrants was so great, however, those actions never led to the formation of German immigrant party, even if some people tried to create one.[63]

Instead, beginning in the 1880s, various German-Brazilian politicians were elected as members of existing political parties to the state parliament of Rio Grande do Sul. Initially, many of these players were Forty-Eighters who often worked as newspaper editors. After the Brazilian government in 1880 ceded to naturalized Brazilians the right to be elected without reservations, Carl von Koseritz, for example, the most important German-Brazilian local politician of this period, asked every immigrant to become naturalized and to 'love' Brazil 'like his true fatherland'.[64] Still after World War I, these political players fought back and supported what they thought to be the interests of the German-speaking population, for instance when deputy Arno Philipp defended the German-Brazilians against criticism that they lacked patriotism.[65] The point, then, is that the *Deutschbrasilianer* did not embrace their victimhood as Germans, as the broader discourses implied, but participated—as Brazilians—in the political decision-making process.

IV.2: Distancing Germany: Autonomy

German-Brazilian elites also developed an increasing self-assurance towards Germany. Despite the celebration of German national holidays, their efforts to retain their distinctions, and their dedication to preserving *Deutschtum* in Brazil, a political distance emerged and increased between Germany and the middle-class group of the *Deutschbrasilianer* during the Weimar Republic. Indeed, the *Deutschbrasilianer* consistently refused to accept tutelage and intrusion from Germany.[66] Some even criticized German economic interests in Brazil, accusing them of exploiting immigrants' feelings: 'They

[59] 'Statuten des Vereins zur Befreiung vom Militärdienst', *Der Bote* (26 Aug. 1875), p. 1.

[60] Wilhelm Rotermund *et al.*, *Augusto e Dignissimos Senhores Representantes da Nação!* (São Leopoldo, 1885), in Arquivo Histórico da Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil, São Leopoldo, SR 4/1/007.

[61] Wilhelm Rotermund, 'Die sociale und politische Stellung der Deutschen in Süd-Brasilien', *DP* (30 Nov. 1887), pp. 1–2.

[62] 'Das deutsche Element', *DZ* (11 Nov. 1863), p. 1; A. Friedrichsen, 'Wahlreform-Gesetz', *Koseritz' Deutscher Volkskalender* 1877, p. 108.

[63] 'Zum letzten Mal die "Colonie-Partei"', *DZ* (26 June 1891), p. 1.

[64] Carl von Koseritz, 'Sieg des Deutschthums in Brasilien', *Export*, 3, 2 (1881), p. 22; 'Unser Sieg', *DZ* (27 Nov. 1880), p. 1.

[65] 'Rede des Staatsdeputierten Ten.-Cor. Arno Philipp', *NDZ* (4 Jan. 1924), p. 1.

[66] 'Colonie; Deutsch-Brasilianertum—Deutsches Capital; deutsche Colonial-Gesellschaften', *DZ* (12 Sep. 1899), pp. 1–2; 'Was weiß man in Deutschland vom Auslandsdeutschtum', *DP* (22 June 1923), p. 1.

want to use these [feelings] to be able to do good business in Brazil. .. But we want no part of it'.[67]

Such resistance became especially clear when the NSDAP/AO began its activities in Rio Grande do Sul. Despite the fact that many *Deutschbrasilianer* who had not loved the Weimar Republic were initially impressed by the successes of the new regime, the efforts of its representatives to instruct *Deutschbrasilianer* about their Germanness and their proper course of action quickly led to protest.[68] As Ambassador Arthur Schmidt-Elskop noted during a journey through southern Brazil in 1935, for instance, 'the largest part of the *Deutschbrasilianer* refuses to follow the German [*reichsdeutsch*] leadership, embodied by the local groups [*Ortsgruppen*] of the NSDAP'.[69] Across the diversity of *Deutschbrasilianer* was the shared refusal to allow people from Germany to tell them what to do.

As a result, the *Gleichschaltung* fared poorly in Brazil, where many of the *Deutschbrasilianer*'s long-established societies resisted forced co-optation. They regarded the NSDAP/AO with great scepticism, because 'its members possess very little experience in the country and have not accomplished anything significant for *Deutschtum*'.[70] Moreover, the AO behaved badly and was aggressive, and that raised considerable criticism in the German-language press and facilitated a political split in the immigrant societies between those who did and did not support National Socialism.[71] Newspapers such as the *DVB* and the *Serra-Post*, for example, opposed Nazi ideology directly and published articles about the 'German-Brazilian' 'struggle against all efforts of the NSDAP to co-opt and alienate [us] from the country'.[72]

IV.3: Distancing Germany: No Minority

The notion of a pervasive minority problem and a general demand for the rights of Germans living abroad were crucial elements in the pervasive discourses of *Deutschtum* in the 1920s and 1930s.[73] These issues were discussed in Brazil as well. Hermann Dohms, for instance, engaged with them directly in his journal *DEBB*. Although international law had defined the concept of minorities after the war, Dohms stated that the concept did not apply to the immigrant societies of the Americas. Here, the dogma of assimilation was prevalent. Therefore, Dohms believed that the preservation of *Deutschtum* was even more difficult in the Americas than in Europe because it was not guaranteed by

[67] 'Deutschbrasilianer', *DZ* (19 Nov. 1903), p. 1.

[68] Gertz, *fascismo*, pp. 80–92. Only a minority sympathized with the NSDAP/AO. Norbert Götz overemphasizes the Nazi influence in Brazil, cf. Norbert Götz, 'German Speaking People and German Heritage: Nazi Germany and the Problem of Volksgemeinschaft', in O'Donnell *et al.*, *Heimat Abroad*, pp. 67–8.

[69] Embassy to Auswärtiges Amt (AA), 20 April 1935. Enclosure 3: Deutschtum, p. 2, in Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts Berlin (PA AA), R 60.030.

[70] Walbeck to AA, Porto Alegre, 20 May 1933, p. 2, in PA AA, R 79.001.

[71] Verband deutscher Vereine to AA, Porto Alegre, 12 May 1933, in PA AA, R 79.001; Landesverband Deutschbrasilianischer Lehrer to VDA, Landesverband Hamburg, São Paulo, 5 July 1935, p. 9, in PA AA, R 62.383; Haike Kleber da Silva, *Entre o amor ao Brasil e ao modo de ser alemão: A história de uma liderança étnica (1868–1950)* (São Leopoldo, 2006), pp. 198–216.

[72] J. Doetzer Jr., 'Nationalisierung', *DVB* (19 Jan. 1938), pp. 1–2. Cf. also Steinacher to AA, Berlin, 30 March 1935. Enclosure: Artur Koehler, 'Wer soll die Führung hier im Lande haben', Blumenau, 17 March 1935, p. 1, in PA AA, R 60.030; Embassy to AA, 20 April 1935. Enclosure 3: Deutschtum, p. 2, in PA AA, R 60.030.

[73] Max Boehm, *Volkstheorie und Volkstumspolitik der Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1935), p. 78.

law.[74] This situation was further aggravated by the fact that the Brazilian actors did not distinguish between '*Volkstum* and citizenship', so that, contrary to Europe, the preservation of *Deutschtum* was not legally granted in Brazil.[75] That led Dohms to conclude that the Brazilian *Deutschtumsarbeit* had to be different from the *Arbeit* in Europe. It should not emphasize political identification with the German Empire.[76]

Other German-Brazilians went even further, questioning the applicability of the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* for the immigrants and their descendants. Franz Metzler, for example, a member of the most important Catholic family of publishers in Rio Grande do Sul, became an ardent critic of National Socialism after 1933. He rejected the attempts of the NSDAP/AO to co-opt the German-speaking societies in Brazil and condemned the Nazis' claim to leadership as 'atrociousness'.[77] 'We do not have anything to do with the culture of "racism", with supranational theories of *Volksgemeinschaft*, or with foreign ethnic and power politics!' he wrote in disgust.[78]

Metzler also criticized the Nazi interpretation of *Volksgemeinschaft*. He analysed the concept's emergence in the wake of the war and argued that the minority debate and the loss of the war were the catalysts for a reinvigorated interest in *Auslandsdeutschtum* 'Then', he wrote, '"*Deutschtum* in Brazil" was—"discovered"' by those in Europe. But the situation in Brazil, he maintained, was not comparable with that of German minorities in Europe: 'We', he wrote, 'are not a national minority, according to international law'. He was not even certain how the term *Auslandsdeutsche* might apply to them: '"*Auslanddeutsche*"?' he asked, 'do we *Deutschbrasilianer*, Brazilians of German descent, live here as Germans abroad?!. .. We are here at home and (from our perspective) not abroad!' [79]

That, in fact, was the problem for Brazilians of German descent. Metzler saw good reason to fear 'that the ethnic missionary work [*Volkstumsmissionierung*] we face. .. includes demands that could bring us into conflict with loyal citizenship'.[80] The *Deutschbrasilianer*, he stressed, were 'loyal to the *Volksgemeinschaft*'—but Metzler meant the Brazilian *Volksgemeinschaft*.[81] And in the immigration country Brazil, he explained, there were no minorities, thus the German discussion of their fate completely misconstrued their situation.[82] Indeed, Metzler favoured the quick integration of the *Deutschbrasilianer* into Brazilian society, and he supported the so-called nationalization campaign of the Vargas regime.[83]

The preservation of *Deutschtum*, he argued along with many others,[84] could only occur voluntarily, and never as a result of external pressure.[85] Given his

[74] Hermann Dohms, 'Sind völkische Minderheiten in Südamerika möglich?', *DEBB*, 7, 3 (1925), p. 30.
[75] Hermann Dohms, 'Sind völkische Minderheiten in Südamerika möglich?', *DEBB*, 8, 1/2 (1926), p. 7.
[76] Hermann Dohms, 'Das neue Deutschland und wir', *DEBB*, 15, 7/8 (1933), p. 95.
[77] Franz Metzler, 'Deutschbrasilianer oder Brasilianer deutscher Abstammung', *DVB* (8 May 1935), p. 11.
[78] 'Brasilianische Probleme', *Der Familienfreund* 1939/40, p. 48.
[79] Franz Metzler, 'Deutschbrasilianer oder Brasilianer deutscher Abstammung', p. 11.
[80] *Ibid.*
[81] 'Brasilianische Probleme', p. 36.
[82] 'Deutsche Volksgruppe in Brasilien—oder brasilianische Volksgruppe deutscher Ethnie?', *DVB* (9 March 1938), p. 5; Franz Metzler, 'Und abermals die brasilianische Volksgemeinschaft', *DVB* (26 Nov. 1939), pp. 1–2.
[83] 'Brasilianische Probleme', pp. 23–56.
[84] Hübbe to Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat (EOK), Porto Alegre, 28 Dec. 1925, p. 1, in EZA 5/2159.
[85] Franz Metzler, 'Deutschbrasilianertum', *DVB* (8 May 1935), p. 7.

argumentation, it is not surprising that his paper *DVB* was prohibited in Germany in 1935.[86]

IV.4: Failing Volksgemeinschaft

The notion of a global *Volksgemeinschaft* could never hold up to the reality of German diversity abroad, as the case of the so-called 'Russian-Germans (*Russlanddeutsche*)' in Brazil suggests. Beginning in the 1860s and ending in the 1930s, various waves of German migrants from Russia arrived in Brazil. During the nineteenth century, economic problems and famines caused an exodus of descendants of the German communities that had immigrated to Russia in the eighteenth century, and after 1917 and the traumatic birth of the Soviet Union even more fled the state. When some of those migrants arrived in Brazil in the 1930s, some German-Brazilian publicists were eager to receive the *Russlanddeutsche* and cheered the *Volksgemeinschaft*.[87] The *Russlanddeutsche*, they wrote, were *Auslandsdeutsche* who, after a long stay in Russia, had now migrated to join their tribal brothers in Brazil. The Protestant pastor Friedrich Wilhelm Brepohl, for example, who worked with some of the recently arrived Russians in the Brazilian state of Paraná, called them a 'small, perfectly German people'.[88]

But others pointed to the disparity between the alleged unity of *Auslandsdeutschtum* and everyday reality of these people's lives. In the 1870s, for example, when one of the 'Russian-German' groups left Brazil disappointed and returned home to Russia, the local politician Koseritz termed them 'narrow', unable to integrate, and unwilling to 'give up their traditions, a process which every immigrant in a foreign country has to undergo'.[89] Over the following decades, other observers scoffed at the *Russlanddeutsche*, calling them 'a difficult, inferior and not exactly reliable element', while German consul Felix von Stein observed in Porto Alegre in 1915 that Russia had changed them: the 'German-Russians' were 'entirely brutalized under Slavic dominion and, from an intellectual point of view, depressed to an extraordinarily low position'.[90] Similar evaluations persisted well into the 1930s, showing that the Russian-Germans were no more able to integrate into the world of German-Brazilians than into that of Brazilians in general.[91]

V. Conclusion

The questions 'Who is a German?' and 'Where are German histories?' were central questions in the interwar period. In order to understand these questions about nationality and ethnicity, we have to overcome a national perspective and open up global and local ones. The global focus reveals a globally acting network of associations and actors who discussed these questions and constructed a global *Auslandsdeutschtum*

[86] 'Trotzdem geradeaus!', *DVB* (18 Dec. 1935), p. 1.

[87] Wolfgang Ammon, 'Deutsches Volkstum in der Welt', *NDZ* (12 March 1930), p. 2; 'Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft bewährt sich', *Koseritz' Deutscher Volkskalender* 1933, p. 158.

[88] Friedrich Wilhelm Brepohl, 'Die Wolgadeutschen oder Deutschrussen im Staate Paraná', *DP* (10 May 1927), p. 1.

[89] 'Die russische Einwanderung', *DZ* (30 Aug. 1879), p. 1.

[90] Martin Braunschweig, 'Reise-Bericht: II.1. Südbrasilien (1908)', p. 52, in EZA 5/2173; report by consul in Porto Alegre, 29 June 1915, p. 13, in EZA 5/2220.

[91] 'Was ist aus dem deutschbrasilianischen Siedler bisher geworden?', *St. Raphaels-Blatt*, 44, 5 (1935), p. 180.

that was imagined as a victim community. These ethnic discourses were meant to be homogenizing and came together with practices such as Germanophone schools, churches and press abroad. Southern Brazil, especially Rio Grande do Sul, played a crucial role in these debates, because it was considered as a particular 'German' region abroad. Texts on *Auslandsdeutschtum* therefore also circulated in the Germanophone press in Brazil, and the local German-Brazilian elites were part of the network. The German discourses became, in many cases, part of an emerging consciousness of globality.

The local perspective reveals, however, that these politics and discourses interfered with the Brazilian context because they were not well placed. While the image of the maligned German appeared to be confirmed by the Brazilian situation, where German-speaking people faced nationalization campaigns, and in some cases persecution during the war, even advocates remarked that the general idea of Germans around the world constituting a threatened minority could not gain purchase in an immigration country where minorities did not exist.

Not even the immigrant elites considered themselves Germans; rather they self-identified as 'German-Brazilians'. While they discussed *Deutschtum* and established new discourses and social spaces, ethnicity was not their only concern. Brazilian citizenship mattered as well. Thus they tried to participate actively in Brazilian society. The elites also formed new political spaces, with or against Brazilian politicians and other immigrant elites. Other social spaces are thinkable: for the merchants, club houses and economic relations with German-speakers or non-German-speakers were significant; for the colonists, the family (often mixed with other nationalities) or village communities with other immigrants were central, so that local and regional identifications arose. Religious or linguistic spaces played another key role—in Brazil, several German dialects as well as a Portuguese-influenced German were spoken.

What existed, then, was a plurality of discourses, spaces and social realities of the so-called 'German' immigrants in Brazil, often overlapping, competing and conflicting. They were not simply German, but formed heterogeneous immigrant histories, which rendered impossible any simple classification that the discourses of *Auslandsdeutschtum* tried to establish. Therefore, those discourses often had much less power over reality than we might suppose, and in many ways our focus upon them has helped to obscure the ways in which they were channelled and shaped by local conditions and existed alongside other discourses of Germanness, which were more fluid, flexible and more able to accommodate hybridity and difference.

Abstract

German emigrants became the focus of attention for German proponents of colonialism in the nineteenth century. German emigrants in southern Brazil especially were supposed to stimulate German trade as well as secure German prestige and influence. After World War I, German colonial discourses about Brazil continued under different circumstances and in a slightly new constellation of actors. Private societies, ecclesiastical institutions and scientific actors continued to preserve *Deutschtum* in Brazil, but instead of constructing the Germans in Brazil as civilizing pioneers, as they did before 1918, they co-opted them into a wider conception of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* that was constructed as a community of victims. The loss of the war led to this discourse, which covered not only Brazil, but also other regions in the world with German-speaking communities, and above all eastern Europe. The image of the misjudged German

fitted well to the Brazilian context, where German-speaking persons were nationalized and in some cases persecuted during the war. However, the immigrants not only adopted these ideas but also criticized and changed them by elaborating new German-Brazilian identities.

Keywords: nationalism, immigration, Latin America, Brazil, ethnicity, colonial discourse, Auslandsdeutschtum

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