Filling the gap
Displaced Persons and émigré scholars in the post-slavery society of the US South

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Introduction

Between 1948 and 1952, the US government relocated some 400,000 Displaced Persons from camps in Germany, Austria and Italy to the United States.[1] It was a rather heterogeneous group. Originally, the highly controversial programme implemented by the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 was intended for Holocaust survivors and forced labourers who could not or did not want to be repatriated to their countries of origin. With the beginning of the Cold War, however, the character of the programme changed. The Act brought Displaced Persons and refugees from the now-communist countries of Eastern Europe to the fore, at least in the public debate in the United States, as admission was to be granted primarily to "*Volksdeutsche*" (ethnic Germans) expelled from Eastern Europe and refugees from Soviet communism, including former National Socialist collaborators from the Baltic countries.

Under all previous immigration laws, Eastern Europeans had been granted admission to a very limited extent. The quota system by country of origin had discriminated against them compared to Western Europeans because they were considered less adaptable or less willing to adapt to US society. Anti-Semitism underlay this discrimination.[2] The Displaced Persons Act differed from earlier migration policies not only in regard to the ethnic groups it was designed to address, however. The

1 See Displaced Persons Commission, Memo to America: The DP Story. The Final Report of the United States Displaced Persons Commission (Washington: The US Government Printing Office, 1952), 242–3.

2 See Carl J. Bon Tempo, Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during Cold War (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 24; Haim Genizi, America's Fair Share: The Admission and Resettlement of Displaced Persons, 1945–1952 (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 81–3, 209; Ben Shephard, The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 377–8.

strictly regulated allocation – with "sponsors" obliged to guarantee jobs, housing and transportation for the refugees, who were therefore left with very little choice in these matters – was an unprecedented innovation in the history of US immigration, but it also led to several unforeseen difficulties. "Resettlement problems" became a frequently discussed topic in the media discourse, polarising those in favour of resettlement and those against it.[3] Social scientist Gregor Sebba noted that the latter group often accused the new arrivals of being "communists or criminals" and had little interest in addressing Displaced Persons' adjustment problems, while those in favour of the scheme usually tried to avoid mentioning such issues altogether.[4] This left state institutions as well as a number of heavily involved private aid organisations in desperate need of social scientific advice regarding how to tackle these issues.[5]

This was especially true in the southern states, where comparatively few refugees were resettled. To the astonishment of many, some 75 per cent of the approximately 20,000 Displaced Persons from post-war Europe who were initially resettled in southern states had already moved west or north by the end of 1951.[6] The need to understand the reasons for this exodus prompted resettlement agencies to commission social scientists to undertake comprehensive studies into the Displaced Persons' circumstances. As a result, whereas states with long histories of immigration, such as New York and Minnesota, did not even keep accurate records of how many former Displaced Persons had settled in their communities, the likes of Louisiana, Mississippi and Georgia – each of which accepted approximately 1,000 former Displaced Persons – inadvertently became laboratories for detailed social science research and specifically for émigré scholars who were able to make full use of their linguistic skills and cultural backgrounds in the course of their work. Two such scholars were Rudolf Heberle, whose 1949–50 research with Dudley S. Hall was published as *New Americans: A Study of Displaced Persons in Louisiana*

3 According to Shephard, 72 per cent of the population rejected further immigration, arguing that immigrants would drive Americans from their jobs. See ibid., 373.

4 Gregor Sebba, Displaced Persons in Georgia: Report to the Georgia Displaced Persons Committee (Athens: University of Georgia, 1954), 112.

5 See Sigrid Wadauer, "Historische Migrationsforschung. Überlegungen zu Möglichkeiten und Hindernissen," Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften 19 (2008) 1: 6–14.

6 US Displaced Persons Commission, Memo to America, 250.

and Mississippi, and Gregor Sebba, whose *Displaced Persons in Georgia* was based on research conducted between 1952 and 1953.[7]

In this paper, we will compare the methods and findings of these two studies, although the primary focus will be on Sebba's work. After summaries of Heberle's and Sebba's personal experiences earlier in life and accounts of their projects in the Deep South, the paper concludes with a discussion of epistemological breaks and blind spots in the social scientific research into European Displaced Persons after the Second World War.

The two studies had very different impacts: whereas only a handful of academic monographs have ever mentioned Sebba's report, Heberle and Hall's book received much more attention. We argue that these contrasting receptions may be attributed to the studies' respective tones: Heberle and Hall's attitude towards the resettlement scheme was largely positive, while Sebba was much more critical. Both of these attitudes may be traced back to the émigré authors' own immigration experiences: Heberle's arrival in the United States had been followed by a period of smooth, "successful" integration, whereas Sebba never thought of himself as a fully acculturated US citizen. The general air of optimism in the former's study even extended to the title – *New Americans* – and the illustration of a happy female Displaced Person on the front cover.[8] Sebba felt that such positivity was unjustified, not least because Heberle and Hall's methodology was flawed and their research covered only the first year of the resettlement programme. For instance, in a November 1952 letter to Eric Voegelin – who, like Heberle, taught at Louisiana State University – Sebba revealed that his study would challenge many of Heberle's findings: "Then Heberle can look at what could have been done in Louisiana," he added. "My book will raise dust. I come to results that are not at all optimistic."[9] However, unlike Heberle, Sebba was unable to publish his manuscript because he suffered from a distinct lack of funding and support, as his correspondence in the Gregor Sebba Papers at the University of

7 See Rudolf Heberle and Dudley S. Hall, *New Americans: A Study of Displaced Persons in Louisiana and Mississippi* (Baton Rouge, LA: Displaced Persons Commission, 1951); Rudolf Heberle, "Displaced Persons in the Deep South," Rural Sociology 16 (1951) 4: 362–77; Sebba, Displaced Persons in Georgia. Research for New Americans was conducted between spring 1949 and summer 1950 for the Institute for Population Research in the Department of Sociology at Louisiana State University. Sebba's study was conducted at the suggestion of the Georgia Displaced Persons Committee, headed by Tom Linder, State Department of Agriculture, in order to develop proposals for future immigration programmes, and was financed by Governor Talmadge. See J. C. Holton (Secretary State Committee) to Tom Linder, 9 July 1952, Gregor Sebba Papers [GSP], Special Collections, University of West Georgia, Box 1, Folder 10, Part 7.

8 Heberle and Hall, New Americans, 1951.

9 Gregor Sebba to Eric Voegelin, 25 November 1952, Eric Voegelin Papers [EVP], Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford.

West Georgia demonstrates. It is our contention that this was due to his epistemological approach and his attitude towards Displaced Persons, both of which were at odds with the views of leading political figures in Georgia who opposed further immigration due to fears that it would undermine their efforts to preserve the state's racially segregated, post-slavery society.

Personal experience as a driving force for research

Both Sebba and Heberle felt that personal experience played an important role in their research, albeit in different ways. Born in the north German town of Lübeck in 1896, Heberle established his reputation within the young discipline of sociology at an early age. After studying under Ferdinand Tönnies and others in Kiel (and eventually marrying Tönnies's daughter Franziska), he held the position of a private lecturer (*Privatdozent*) at the same university from 1929 to 1938.[10] As a Rockefeller scholar, he researched migration and social mobility in the United States from 1926 to 1929 and again in 1936. However, during the second of these research trips, the *Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung* informed him that he would no longer be employed by the University of Kiel, although he had been supported there earlier under the National Socialist regime. Heberle himself attributed this decision to his studies of German minorities in Lithuania in the 1920s and the election of National Socialists in the province of Schleswig Holstein in 1932[11] – one of very few reports on National Socialism by a German-speaking sociologist at the time.[12] The ultimate reason, however, was that he was descended from a Jewish great-grandfather, which meant that his *Ariernachweis* (Aryan certificate) was insufficiently "spotless" to allow him to advance from lecturer to full professor, a promotion his university had supported until 1937.[13]

10 For autobiographical notes and more on the importance of personal experience in his work, see Rudolf Heberle, "Soziologische Lehr- und Wanderjahre," in Geschichte der Soziologie. Studien zur kognitiven, sozialen und historischen Identität einer Disziplin, Volume 1, edited by Wolf Lepenies (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 271–98. For a biographical account, see Rudolf Waßner, Rudolf Heberle. Soziologie in Deutschland zwischen den Weltkriegen (Hamburg: Rolf Fechner Verlag, 1995).

11 See Rudolf Heberle, Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus. Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig-Holstein 1918 bis 1932 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1963).

12 See Michaela Christ and Maja Suderland (eds), Soziologie und Nationalsozialismus. Positionen, Debatten, Perspektiven (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014); Andreas Kranebitter and Christoph Reinprecht (eds), Die Soziologie und der Nationalsozialismus in Österreich (Bielefeld: transcript, 2019).

13 See Christian Fleck, A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences: Robber Barons, the Third Reich and the Invention of Empirical Social Research (London – New York: Bloomsbury Aca-

In light of the sudden termination of his career in Germany, Heberle and his family immigrated to the United States in July 1938, whereupon he accepted the offer of a full professorship at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. In this new position, he soon embarked on several studies of the state's mostly African-American agricultural labour force.[14] Thus, the Displaced Persons study he conducted with his student Dudley S. Hall at the end of the 1940s was just one in a long series of research projects. Since Heberle was also a consultant for Louisiana's Department of Agriculture and a prominent member of both the Southern Sociological Association and the American Sociological Society, one might say that he was soon fully integrated into the state's administrative and scientific communities. However, this integration was not quite as straightforward as Heberle himself intimated when claiming that the "culture shock" had not been "that great" and that he had swiftly put down roots.[15] His biographer Rudolf Waßner found evidence in Heberle's unpublished diaries that he actually struggled with "Americanization," especially at first, as it meant "the loss of so many things that are dear to us and for which this country cannot offer equivalents."[16] Yet, his integration ultimately developed into what might be termed naturalisation, to such an extent that he decided to remain in the United States rather than accept the University of Kiel's offer of a professorship in 1960.[17]

Regarding the question of the impact of Heberle's personal experiences on his research into Displaced Persons in the Deep South, he never mentioned his emigration from Germany, his research into immigration to and migration within the United States, or his studies of African-American labourers when writing about his own history, although he did allude to his much earlier Lithuanian research.[18] As we will demonstrate, this cultural framing led to a focus on the migrants' need to integrate, with little consideration given to immigration policies or even the Displaced Persons' personal histories – two subjects that Heberle himself had explored in earlier projects. In short, the emphasis was firmly on the "new Americans" – as the Displaced Persons were euphemistically called – and their "adjustment problems," rather than "old Americans" and their attitudes to immigrants. As a result, there was a huge blind spot in Heberle's research.

demic, 2011), 62. According to Fleck (ibid.), Heberle had tried to adapt to the National Socialist regime by joining the Sturmabteilung. See also Waßner, Rudolf Heberle, 77–8, 110–15.

14 See Heberle, "Soziologische Lehr- und Wanderjahre," 292.

15 See ibid., 291, 294.

16 Rudolf Heberle, quoted in Waßner, Rudolf Heberle, 39; our translation.

17 Ibid., 118.

18 See Heberle, "Soziologische Lehr- und Wanderjahre," 277–8; Rudolf Heberle, "In Praise of Field Work: An Autobiographical Note," Zeitschrift für Soziologie 11 (1982) 2: 105–12.

Sebba, by contrast, arrived at the University of Georgia as late as 1946.[19] Thus, he was still a relatively new arrival himself when he started to study the state's recent immigrants, and he was certainly sensitive to the difficulties of adapting to a society in which there were hardly any foreign-born people. There had been very little voluntary immigration to Georgia throughout history, and the descendants of African slaves continued to be both legally and informally oppressed. For instance, Sebba's own employer, the University of Georgia, did not allow African-Americans to enrol at the time of his research. It would be 1961, after a ten-year legal battle with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), before this policy was finally reversed.[20]

Gregor Sebba was born in 1905 in Libau, Latvia, to a Jewish family that emigrated to South Tyrol three years later. The family was evacuated to Linz after Italy declared war on Austria in 1915, and thereafter his parents ran a small cosmetics shop. However, the family was unable to obtain Austrian citizenship following the defeat of the Central Powers in 1918. Consequently, Sebba continued to hold Latvian citizenship until 1930, whereupon he became stateless following his refusal to return to his homeland for military service. He had graduated from the University of Innsbruck the previous year with degrees in political science and law, then worked as a research assistant in the Institute for Statistics of Minority Peoples (*Institut für die Erforschung von Minderheiten*) at the University of Vienna until 1933. As was typical for a Jewish scholar in 1930s Austria, all hope of an academic career soon vanished.[21] For the next five years, Sebba supported himself by working in the advertising department of Julius Meinl AG and for the journal *Wirtschaftliche Rundschau*. However, he continued to participate in scientific debates and organised a sociological working group, through which he met several scholars who would go on to become prominent sociologists and philosophers in the future. Politically, he was much more of a conservative liberal than a leftist. The Gestapo arrested him in March 1938, and he was forced to leave the country six months later.

Following his expulsion, Sebba suffered a year of alienation and deprivation as a hapless exile in New York. He submitted dozens of job applications but failed to gain any sort of foothold in the US scientific or educational community. But then the war against Germany finally presented him – and many other Jewish refugees – with

19 Peter Pirker, "'Musst immer tun wie neugeboren.' Zum politischen Denken und zur antinazistischen Praxis des Wiener Sozialwissenschafters Gregor Sebba," Voegeliniana Occasional Papers 91B (2013), 6.

20 Peter Besel, "University of Georgia Desegregation Riot (1961)," BlackPast, 11 March 2018 <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/university-georgia-desegregation-riot-1961/> (15 May 2021).

21 See Pirker, "Musst immer tun wie neugeboren," 15–16.

an opportunity. In 1940, the British secret service – the Special Operations Executive (SOE) – recruited him to generate support for the Allied war effort by founding and leading what would soon become the most active Austrian exile organisation in the United States, Austrian Action.[22] However, he was still a stateless Jew, which prompted a number of political rivals to insist that he had no right to represent the Austrian exile community. For instance, Otto Habsburg pointed out that Sebba was "not even an Austrian, but Lithuanian [*sic*] of Jewish extraction."[23] In short, Sebba's rivals succeeded in ousting him from Austrian exile politics and he was socially displaced once again. It was the US Army and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – which he joined in 1943 – that ultimately aided his naturalisation and acculturation to US society through intensive army life. Sebba himself revealed his increasing use of colloquial language and gradual familiarisation with everyday US culture in letters to friends, among them the aforementioned Eric Voegelin.[24]

The US military also played a key, if less direct, role in Sebba's subsequent integration into post-war society. This was because the 1944 GI Bill of Rights paved the way for a massive expansion of US higher education as it entitled millions of war veterans to generous grants and scholarships. The inevitable influx of new students meant many universities were desperate to recruit more teaching staff. As a result, with a little help from the OSS, and although he had no experience as a lecturer and had published very little, Sebba became Professor of Economics at the University of Georgia in 1946.

Six years later, when he turned his attention to Georgia's Displaced Persons, Sebba drew on his own history of displacement, statelessness, alienation, adaption and acculturation. Shortly after starting his research, he cautiously criticised the dean of his own faculty, Robert Preston-Brooks, and the university for its silence on the "Negro question."[25] Describing himself as a "European observer," he quoted from Preston-Brooks's own work on the history of Georgia to draw attention to the state's tradition of denigrating its African-American citizens. While Sebba referred to Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944) to classify Preston-Brooks's bias as conservative, he avoided any reference to the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, a professor at the segregated University of Atlanta at the time and the author of two truly groundbreaking books on the history and sociology of African-

22 For a detailed account, see Peter Pirker, Subversion deutscher Herrschaft. Der britische Kriegsgeheimdienst SOE und Österreich (Göttingen: Vienna University Press, 2012), 100–11.

23 Otto Habsburg to Col. Donovan [William J. Donovan, Office of Strategic Services], 1 April 1942, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Records Group 226, Entry 210, Box 72, Folder 1.

24 See EVP.

25 Gregor Sebba, "Introduction," in Georgia Studies: Selected Writings of Robert Preston-Brooks, edited by Gregor Sebba (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1952), 1–23.

Americans in Georgia.[26] A similarly ambivalent attitude towards Georgia's structural racism is evident in Sebba's study on Displaced Persons.

However, for a few months at least, the process of observing, meeting and interviewing those Displaced Persons may have prompted Sebba to refer his own experiences to inform his scientific research. Rather than repressing his memories – as was his custom throughout most of his life, according to his wife Helen[27] – he seemingly allowed himself to remember, which in turn shaped his approach to his single scientific engagement with refugees from Europe and the "adjustment problems" they faced in Georgia.

Georgia on their minds: Displaced Persons in the US Deep South

From the very beginning, Sebba's memories of his own flight from Austria gave him a deep understanding of the people he was studying. Against the background of his own experience, he argued that they required not merely "a home and a job, but full resettlement in the full sense of the word. Some of them need rehabilitation."[28]

According to official statistics, only 1,250 Displaced Persons had been resettled in Georgia by 1952.[29] However, they were highly mobile, which meant a traditional statistical survey was unfeasible. Therefore, although his official title was "chairman of statistics," Sebba became increasingly critical of positivist methods and decided to adopt a qualitative approach based on interviews with sponsors as well as the Displaced Persons themselves. He was optimistic that he would be able to interview a significant proportion of this relatively small cohort before "Time has done its work, scattering and obliterating evidence." In addition, he envisaged corresponding with members of recently dissolved state commissions and voluntary organisations while memories of the resettlement programme were still "fresh" in their minds.[30]

Below, we focus on two important aspects of Sebba's study: (1) its structural analysis of the "Displaced Persons problem" within a context of profound macro-sociological and economic change; and (2) its fine cultural sociological analysis.

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26 Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy (New York: Harper, 1944); W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction: An Essay toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880 (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1935); W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Folk then and now: An Essay in the History of Sociology of the Negro Race (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1939).

27 Helen Sebba to Willi Schaber, 19 May 1986, Institut für Zeitungsforschung Dortmund, Nachlass Willi Schaber.

28 Sebba, Displaced Persons in Georgia, 12.

29 See ibid., 8.

30 Ibid., ii.

(1) The resettlement of European Displaced Persons in the United States did not take place in a vacuum but rather in the midst of mass rural depopulation due to the ongoing mechanisation of farming and the so-called "Second Great Migration" of African-Americans from the rural South to the urban North.[31] This major demographic shift had a powerful and lasting impact on the nation's history, most notably by galvanising the Civil Rights Movement. Sebba characterised the Displaced Persons programme as a scheme to mitigate this "exodus of the Negro"[32]. Every Displaced Person needed a sponsor to ensure that they did not become a drain on public finances, and many of those sponsors were farmers who "wanted them as a substitute for native labor lost because of low earnings."[33] However, the recently arrived Displaced Persons were attracted by far higher industrial wages just as their African-American predecessors had been, so it is little surprise that many of them soon left their sponsors and relocated to urban areas. As Sebba wrote, "The high mobility of the displaced persons was the result of factors largely beyond their control, rather than individual restlessness."[34]

The problem was compounded by a distinct lack of state planning, irrespective of the fact that the resettlement programme was indeed "a type of planned immigration foreign to the American tradition."[35] This new approach had been prompted by a sharp decline in the number of immigrants to the United States in the inter-war period and a parallel shift in the discourse. Whereas, traditionally, immigrants had been praised for their "rugged individualism," the emphasis was now on their need to adjust and adapt to US values and customs.[36] However, there was no state (let alone federal) plan for how the terms of the Displaced Persons Act should be implemented at the local level. For instance, there were no officials to check that the sponsors were fulfilling their obligations or to resolve any problems that a Displaced Person may face after their initial placement. A small group of sympathetic voluntary organisations provided some assistance, but they could not hope to meet all of

31 For recent overviews, see William Collins, "The Great Migration of Black Americans from the US South: A Guide and Interpretation," Explorations in Economic History 80 (2021) <https://www.nber.org/papers/w27268> (2 November 2021); Nicholas Leman, The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America (New York: Random House, 1991); James N. Gregory, The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Isabel Wilkerson, The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration (New York: Random House, 2010).

32 Sebba, Displaced Persons in Georgia, 15.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 279.

35 Ibid., 8.

36 See ibid., 118–19.

the new arrivals' requirements on their own. For Sebba, these structural deficiencies were the main reasons for the failure of the Displaced Persons programme, or at least for the widespread perception of its failure: "[I]t is impossible to buck the trend of economic development that produces the current shrinkage of the farm population."[37] In other words, the poorly planned scheme never stood a chance of reversing one of the major macro-sociological trends of US post-war society. It did, however, "[force] an unnatural stability upon the newcomers."[38] Moreover, this "unnatural stability" was not merely economic but psychological, too.

(2) One of the Displaced Persons (Case 69 in Sebba's survey) declared: "We did not come to America to be DPs all our lives."[39] His and others' expectations – in part informed by accounts from friends and relatives who had immigrated to the United States before the war – were soon dashed by the reality of life in Georgia, where their sponsors seemed to expect not only a "normal" business relationship with the new arrivals but also their eternal gratitude.[40] The Displaced Persons' disillusionment and strong desire to transform a status that most of the sponsors were equally determined to perpetuate led to an inevitable revolt against paternalism.

The strength of Sebba's approach lies in the fact that he combined analysis of the problems of interaction and contradictory expectations with socio-cultural analysis of the Displaced Persons' psychological adaptation during a number of discrete phases. After the first shock of displacement from their homes, then the struggle for survival and the "demoralizing wait in the DP camps"[41] of Europe, the gulf between expectations and reality in the United States came as another shock to most "new Americans" during the accommodation phase. This was then followed by phases of adjustment and finally acculturation. The crucial point here is that these phases were often contradictory. For example, what was helpful during accommodation (e.g. regular contact with compatriots) could be a hindrance during acculturation, as Sebba explained with a detailed look at eating habits:

> Accommodation means eating turnip greens and grits because a refusal to eat them may be taken amiss. Adjustment means eating them because this is what Southern people eat, but eating creamed spinach and pumpernickel by preference. Acculturation means eating turnip greens and grits like any other Southerner, and liking it.[42]

37 Ibid., 225.
38 Ibid., 101.
39 Ibid., 99.
40 See ibid., 280.
41 Ibid., 93.
42 Ibid., 124.

However, the Displaced Persons' European tastes and customs were deeply embedded and therefore slow to change. This is of course also true for their experiences of imprisonment, since many of them still bore the emotional and psychological scars of detention.

Sebba did not devote much attention to his subjects' experiences in Europe's camps either during or after the war,[43] but it was clear that these ordeals were still having a major impact on their efforts to adjust to life in the United States. For instance, he reported one sponsor's account of a rapid deterioration in his relationship with his allocated Displaced Person, Hans:

> He said that for the first month the family was his idea of a dream come true […] He said that the man was undoubtedly the hardest worker he had ever seen and one of the best […] The only trouble, he said, was that Hans spent half his time daydreaming. And that he would speed past him like crazy only to stop a while a half row or so ahead and lean on his hoe thinking about something and then usually they would stop and he would tell Mr D. all about what he had been thinking about. He said that quite often the thoughts were of things that happened during their days in the concentration camps.[44]

Repeated references to the camps presented a significant challenge to the research team's interview routine, as they were more interested in how the Displaced Persons were coping with their current situation. For example, in his record of an interview with a Jewish immigrant to Atlanta, Sebba wrote:

> In almost every respect outside the English he has adjusted very well. However, he does seem to have a very decided memory of the past years and it seems that these recollections of the years he spent in concentration camps are with him almost constantly. It was very difficult to get him away from that, he kept going back talking about the powers of the concentration camp and the things that happened to them during those years and immediately after.[45]

One can only imagine the trauma that Displaced Persons experienced whenever they applied for a visa or swore the mandatory "employment oath" in which they

43 Interestingly, in contrast to Heberle, who in general speaks only of prisoners-of-war and forced labourers (Heberle and Hall, New Americans, 5), Sebba mentions the experience of violence in a variety of National Socialist camps and focuses on this group of Displaced Persons. See Sebba, Displaced Persons in Georgia, 3).

44 Interview with Mr Ditzell, sponsor, White County, GSP, 19 November 1952, ID MS-0051, Box 1, Folder 3. In a very similar way, a Jewish Displaced Person interviewed in Atlanta was obviously haunted by his concentration camp experience. See Case 28 in Sebba, Displaced Persons in Georgia, 94.

45 Interview with Isaac Wise, Atlanta, GSP, 14 November 1952, ID MS-0051, Box 1, Folder 3.

promised to work for their sponsor for a "reasonable" length of time, not least because they were often misled into thinking that they could be detained or even deported if they refused to comply.[46] As Sebba pointed out, all of these procedures must have evoked painful memories of forced labour, coercion and violence during the war.[47] In short, there was probably a direct link between Displaced Persons' allegedly "peculiar" behaviour and their internment camp experiences.

Eventually, many Displaced Persons started to feel more secure in their new environment, which in turn enabled them to begin the process of embracing many aspects of the American way of life, including car ownership. "Moreover the possession of an automobile gave the DP the feeling that he could move, a feeling important to him even if he did not have to move. In this sense the automobile came to be a symbol of freedom to him."[48] In other words, a Displaced Person's first car often symbolised a definite passage from the past world of camps to a life beyond detention and heteronomy.

A comparative view: epistemological breaks and blind spots

Sebba's study went far beyond his declared aim to evaluate the Displaced Persons resettlement programme in Georgia. He swiftly diverged from the state's perspective on the "Displaced Persons problem" and instead started to focus on the Displaced Persons themselves and the dynamics of their "adjustment problems."[49] This epistemological shift was reflected in a proposal Sebba submitted to the University of Georgia's chancellor that his report should be subtitled *A Study in Adjustment*.[50] Moreover, in a brief abstract for the report, he alluded to some "unexpected" results and suggested: "Considerable doubt is cast on the philosophy and provisions of the Displaced Persons Law of 1948."[51] This standpoint put him in direct opposition to the state, which probably explains why his own university refused to provide the funding he needed to publish his study.[52] Similarly, and even more predictably, the State Committee for Displaced Persons in Georgia showed no interest in publishing the report.[53] It also rejected Sebba's proposal to include private aid organisations

46 Sebba, Displaced Persons in Georgia, 24.

47 Ibid., 25.

48 Ibid., 168.

49 Gregor Sebba to J. C. Holton, 9 June 1953, GSP, Box1, Folder 10, Part 37.1.

50 Gregor Sebba to Mr Caldwell (Chancellor, University of Georgia), 20 January 1953, GSP, Box 1, Folder 10, Part 37.1.

51 Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Study in Adjustment, GSP, Box 1, Folder 10, Part 37.1.

52 The lack of support is obvious from his correspondence. See GSP, Box 1, Folder 10.

53 J. C. Holton to Gregor Sebba, 26 February 1953 and Gregor Sebba to J. C. Holton, 3 March 1953, GSP, Box 1, Folder 10, Part 37.1.

in its inquiry into his findings. The Committee was headed by Agricultural Commissioner Tom Linder, one of the most powerful politicians in what was a largely agrarian state. His assistant, J. C. Holton, justified the decision in a February 1953 letter to Sebba by stating that "the proposed hearing […] would be dominated by representatives of the various agencies who opposed any immigration restrictions."[54] He supported his argument by alluding to a House of Representatives hearing on immigration policy that had been held in Atlanta just four months earlier. At that meeting, in addition to labelling the current selective quota system "racist," organisations such as the Anti-Defamation League suggested that US immigration law reflected the spirit of the Ku Klux Klan. In response, so-called "patriotic" organisations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, who opposed any further immigration, launched a series of anti-Semitic attacks. Linder's position on the matter was clear: during the hearing, he complained about an existing "imbalance of population" and advocated a complete cessation of immigration.[55] He and other southern Democrats attempted to maintain the existing "racial and ethnonational regime" in two ways: at the state level, they refused to revoke racist segregation laws; and at the federal level, they called for new legislation to prevent the immigration of any more Eastern Europeans, whom they identified as mostly Jewish disseminators of socialism and communism.[56]

In marked contrast to Sebba's study, the few that were undertaken in other states – most notably Heberle and Hall's uncritical analysis of the implementation of the Displaced Persons programme in Mississippi and Louisiana – tended to be basic statistical reports supplemented with occasional discussions of individual shortcomings. Heberle and Hall's use of descriptive statistics, coupled with their preoccupation with Displaced Persons' individual adjustment problems, meant their report was positivist research in the truest sense of the term. They continued to use the state's terminology and answer the state's research questions throughout their fieldwork and seemingly never felt the need to shift the discourse by pursuing new lines of enquiry during interviews. Even published by the Displaced Persons Committee of Louisiana, it was "administrative research" *par excellence*.

54 Holton to Sebba, 26 February 1953.

55 Hearings before the President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization, Friday, 17 October 1952, Atlanta, GA, Twenty-Fourth Session. Linder explicitly stated that Jewish Holocaust survivors did not want to integrate themselves and were a breeding ground for socialism and communism. In 1954, when running for the governorship of Georgia, he called white students who wished to attend mixed schools with black students "mentally ill." See "Georgian Asks Mental Tests for Liberal Whites," Jet, 8 July 1954, 14; Jeff Roche, Restructured Resistance: The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 27–8.

56 Bon Tempo, Americans at the Gate, 27.

Although their report briefly mentioned that the Displaced Persons Act marked a significant shift in US immigration policy due to its espousal of planned migration, acknowledged that Displaced Persons were different from other immigrant groups and referred to problems with resettlements on sugar-cane (Louisiana) and cotton (Mississippi) plantations, Heberle and Hall clearly believed that most of the blame for any "maladjustment" rested squarely with the Displaced Persons themselves. They were not farmers; were unfamiliar with American crops; could not speak English; had misconceptions of American society based on what they had seen in the movies or heard from GIs; could not cope with the climate, the isolation of farm life and long periods of inactivity (especially on cotton plantations); were demoralised and dissatisfied; and, finally – the only structural critique – received insufficient wages.[57] Nevertheless, they were still perceived as an improvement on their predecessors – African-American plantation workers – who were notable by their almost complete absence from the report, along with any discussion of the racist structures of the Deep South's post-slavery economy. Instead, although the authors acknowledged that the Displaced Persons were recruited specifically to alleviate a "shortage of labor"[58] on the plantations, the only statistical comparison they offered was with "Louisiana and Mississippi Whites,"[59] as if the states' African-American populations did not deserve to be counted.

In short, Heberle and Hall uncritically reflected the views of their main group of interviewees: farm managers and plantation owners. For instance, they termed the exploitative employment contracts between African-American labourers and plantation owners "custom" and suggested that this was a "neighborhood type" relationship.[60] Of course, this perspective is blind not only to the legacy of slavery but also to the reasons for the "Second Great Migration," even though that mass exodus was precisely why the plantation owners now needed a new labour force of immigrants.

Sebba's study could scarcely have been more different. He drew attention to the great waves of social change that were sweeping across America and linked them directly to the shortcomings of the Displaced Persons programme (see Figure 1). The new arrivals could not replace recently departed African-American farm hands and sharecroppers who were fighting against segregation and structural racism, and they had no intention of trying. Before long, they were following in the footsteps of their African-Americans predecessors by fleeing from the farmers' low wages and paternalistic attitudes and making their way to America's industrial heartlands. They were simply not prepared to remain in exploitative patron–client relationships in order to pay off their "debts" through hard agricultural labour – a system that the

57 See Heberle and Hall, New Americans, 40, 45–7, 73f.

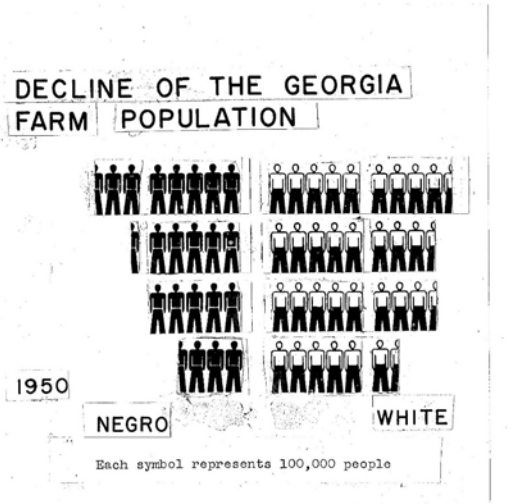
58 Ibid., 40.

59 Ibid., 39.

60 See ibid., 87.

Supreme Court had condemned as "peonage" in 1942[61] – and fill the gaps in the Deep South's floundering post-slavery economy.

Figure 1: Decline of the Georgia farm population[62]



Source: University of West Georgia Collections, Gregor Sebba Papers, Box 1, Folder 13.

Although Sebba covered much more ground – and was far more critical – than even he probably intended, he stopped short of tackling the highly controversial subject of structural racism and anti-Semitism. For instance, he only briefly touched upon the relationship between southern racism and (wartime and post-war) anti-Semitism, and the prevalence of both in attitudes towards Displaced Persons; the emotions felt by refugees who had recently survived Europe's concentration camps when they were put to work in slave-like conditions on their sponsors' farms and

61 See ibid., 211. Sebba referred to the 1942 Supreme Court decisions Taylor vs. Georgia 314US15 and Bailey vs. Alabama 219US219.

62 Sebba was familiar with debates in Vienna on the presentation of statistics (see, e.g., Gregor Sebba, "Review of Say It with Figures, by Hans Zeisel," Journal of the American Statistical Association 44 (1949): 332–3) and produced this visualisation of the decline of Georgia's farm population using Otto Neurath's Isotype method. It demonstrates that he was well aware of the significance of macro-sociological shifts, yet, in a decision that symbolised his approach to the whole project, chose to omit it from the final report.

plantations; and the sociological significance of their arrival for the African-American minority who were in the process of migrating to urban centres and the northern states.

Nevertheless, his report can help to inform readings of some major contributions to US social scientific discourse in the immediate post-war era, such as Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford's *The Authoritarian Personality*.[63] His study also highlights the connection between anti-Semitism and the "refugee problem" before and immediately after the end of the Second World War. It contains a particularly startling interview with a deeply prejudiced woman who articulates a fantasy of a Jewish uprising to seize power within the United States. The authors justifiably interpret this as a projection of the woman's desire for a pogrom against the Jews, but they seem to overlook the importance of the context in which the interview took place – the fierce debate on Displaced Persons' arrival from Europe and their supposedly preferential treatment in 1945:

> I think there will be bloodshed over it in this country. (Do you think it will be justified?) There's no doubt that they're taking over the business affairs of the nation. I don't think it's right that refugees should be taken care of the way they are. I think they should take care of their own problems.[64]

Clearly, this woman, and many other Americans, now associated *all* Displaced Persons and refugees with "the Jews". They were loathed for both their alleged strength and their alleged weakness: "It is the image of the Jewish refugee who is depicted simultaneously as strong ('He takes jobs away from our American boys') and as weak ('He is a dirty outcast')."[65] According to the authors, even interviewees who were otherwise categorised as "mild" anti-Semites displayed strongly anti-Semitic attitudes towards refugees.[66] In other words, simply identifying "the Jew" with "the refugee" had the effect of boosting prejudice against both groups.

Instead of a conclusion, we want to stress that contemporary social science research into the resettlement of Displaced Persons between 1948 and 1952 not only sheds light on the context of social scientific knowledge production in the past but also provides a wealth of valuable resources for the field of migration studies today. However, a close reading of these studies demands an understanding of biographical interdependencies. As we have demonstrated throughout this paper, Gre-

63 Theodor W. Adorno et al., The Authoritarian Personality (New the York: Harper and Brothers, 1950).

64 Ibid., 635.

65 Ibid., 640.

66 See ibid. The traits ascribed to these Jewish Displaced Persons are ingratitude, disregard for the rules of hospitality, loudness and aggression (ibid., 641).

gor Sebba's and Rudolf Heberle's contrasting migration stories exerted a profound influence on their research. Heberle himself was a "new American" who progressed rapidly from adaptation to integration to full naturalisation, but this came at the cost of robbing him of the critical faculties he needed to produce a balanced study of the implementation of the Displaced Persons Act. By contrast, although Sebba was probably the more conservative of the two researchers, he did not shy away from setting his analysis and critique of US immigration policy in the context of simmering anti-Semitism and post-slavery racial segregation, and at least touched upon the crucial issue of intersectional discrimination. As a result, his research went much further than either he or his superiors had expected, but he also paid the price in the form of academic marginalisation.