MAKING SENSE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

IN RUSSIA

By

Elizaveta Potapova

Submitted to

Central European University
Doctoral School of Political Science,
Public Policy and International Relations

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Professor Liviu Matei

Budapest, Hungary

2021
I, the undersigned [Elizaveta Potapova], candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Central European University Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy and International Relations, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unintended and illegitimate use was made of works of others, and no part the thesis infringes on any person’s or institution’s copyright. I also declare that no part the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 12 April 2021

______________________________
Signature

© by Elizaveta Potapova, 2021
All Rights Reserved.

Word Count ~ 41,000
Abstract

A common assumption within the academic discourse is that only `democratic` environments enable the existence of academic freedom in academic institutions. Hence democracy is viewed as a necessary pre-condition for academic freedom. However, research in the field shows that irrespectively of the political context there is no compromise on what is it that needs to be protected, or what is even more important in today’s context, what can be threatened and by whom.

The main ambition of this research is to see how academics in a challenging political environment of today’s Russia make sense of academic freedom, a concept which does not belong to Russian higher education discourses, yet is considered to be a necessary condition for knowledge production and dissemination. I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews in Moscow and Saint Petersburg and then explored participants’ narratives following the analytical cycle of qualitative text analysis. In order to better understand the context of respondents’ performance I made an assessment of legal landscape of academic freedom in Russia using methodology suggested by Karran and Beiter (2017).

At the end of the dissertation I propose to use the findings from the narrative and legal parts of the analysis to construct a framework of academic freedom targeted populations inspired by the original model of Ingram and Schneider (1993). Adapted to the field of academic freedom assessment, this framework allows to identify the most vulnerable part of the academic community, as well as the groups with the capacity to academic freedom mobilization. Thus, apart from insights on the meaning-making process of academics and the role academic freedom plays in one’s professional identity, this research contributes to the higher education policy studies bringing there reflexive potential of interpretivist epistemology and nuanced vision of academic freedom as a practice and a belief.
Acknowledgements

Spring of 2021 finalizes my 10th year of continuous higher education process. As much as I like higher education which has been my research topic for the last 8 years, I also appreciate setting milestones around symbolic dates. So, this is it. I wrote a dissertation and can be classified as an adult academic. But before making a step to the unknown I want to look back for a second and express my sincere gratitude and appreciation of all the wonderful people who witnessed and facilitated this transition.

My personal growth as an academic freedom scholar would not be possible without my supervisor, Liviu Matei who granted me unlimited amount of freedom to move wherever my project takes me being unconditionally supported and encouraged on this way. I owe Liviu a significant portion of my confidence as a young scholar who is not hesitant of their work. I am also sincerely grateful to my panel members, Xymena Kurowska and Marvin Lazerson whose valuable comments and observations let me find my own way of speaking to multiple audiences. With Marvin’s help I got out of the deepest writing blocks and moved forward after months of silene. If I made it to writing the acknowledgements, that is due to Marvin’s involvement in the moments when it was of critical importance.

I would like to thank Terence Karran for endless inspiration and the interest in my project, as well as for a valuable academic lesson that even though research by its nature is a very lonely activity, I do not have to deal with it alone. Even though I am just about to leave CEU and move forward, the sense of contributing to something I care together with other caring people helps me stay optimistic about the future. My special thanks to Higher Education Research Group for caring together through the last five years.

This PhD project would not be accomplished without my interviewees who were willing to share their thoughts about profession and academic life in Russia. Not only I had a chance to collect empirics for my research, but I appreciate this opportunity to grow as a qualitative researcher through this experience. Additional thanks to Vasiliy Korablev for consistent technical assistance of my project.

It would be impossible to make a list of CEU community members that in some way contributed to my work and intellectual development through these years. I am sending my endless love and tenderness to PhD colleagues who were the best flatmates, co-workers, co-travelers and co-livers of our big and intense CEU life. I am incredibly lucky to meet you all and hope to stay in touch!

I would like to gratefully acknowledge my family for never questioning my choices and letting me take my time, space and all the other dimensions to be the best version of myself, accepting and appreciating every new update. Last but not least, I wanted to emphasize the people without whom I honestly would not make it to this point. Aleksandra Khokhlova, Viktoria Poltoratskaya, Lika Mchedlidze, Albina Khairopedninova, and Aleksandr Pavliuk were living my PhD life with me sharing its best and ugliest moments. I cannot express how blessed I am to have wonderful friends like you. A special thanks to Alfredo Hernandez Sanchez for being with me through the last and most tough year of dissertation production, being endlessly supportive and making me feel like a person who can deal with everything, let it be fear of future or writing million pages per night.
# Table of contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................ iii

Table of contents ............................................................................................................................ iv

List of Figures and Tables ............................................................................................................... vii

List of Abbreviations ....................................................................................................................... viii

INTRODUCTION................................................................................................................................ 1

  Thesis structure .......................................................................................................................... 6

CHAPTER 1 Genealogy of academic freedom .............................................................................. 7

  1.1. The origins of academic freedom ...................................................................................... 9

  1.2. Academic freedom in modern universities .................................................................. 11

  1.3. Academic imperialism/colonialism ............................................................................. 13

CHAPTER 2 Academic freedom in Russia: three historical stages ........................................ 15

  2.1. Academic freedom in the Russian Empire .................................................................. 15

  2.2. Academic freedom in the Soviet Union ..................................................................... 17

  2.3. Academic freedom in post-soviet Russia .................................................................... 19

  2.4. Research on academic freedom in Russia .................................................................. 21

CHAPTER 3 Legal landscape of Russian academia .................................................................... 23

  3.1. Composite approach..................................................................................................... 25

  3.2. Fragmented approach ................................................................................................. 27

    3.2.1. Constitution and international agreement ratification ....................................... 28

    3.2.2. Teaching and research ....................................................................................... 31
3.2.3. Autonomy ........................................................................................................... 33
3.2.4. Self-governance ................................................................................................. 36
3.2.5. Protection of tenure ......................................................................................... 38
3.2.6. Calculation of the score .................................................................................... 41
3.2.7. Limitations of the approach ............................................................................. 41

CHAPTER 4 Methodology: design, data collection, analysis ........................................... 44
4.1. Research design .................................................................................................... 45
4.1.1. Justification for qualitative approach ................................................................. 45
4.1.2. Data .................................................................................................................... 47
4.1.3. Sampling ............................................................................................................ 49
4.1.4. Primary data (piloting and interview guide) ....................................................... 50
4.1.5. Ethical considerations ....................................................................................... 53
4.2. Data analysis ......................................................................................................... 54
4.2.1. Interview transcription and data management .................................................. 54
4.2.2. Code development and coding ......................................................................... 54
4.2.3. Data analysis ..................................................................................................... 56

CHAPTER 5 Observing academic freedom narratives .................................................. 58
5.1. Threat and safe space .......................................................................................... 59
5.2. Censorship and Self-censorship .......................................................................... 61
5.3. Extraverted and Introverted Narratives ................................................................ 64
5.4. Narratives and characters .................................................................................... 66
5.5. Disciplinary dimension of academic freedom narrative ........................................ 69
5.6. Conclusion ........................................................................................................72

CHAPTER 6 Interpretation. Suggested framework .............................................74
6.1. Conceptualizing targets and constructions.................................................75
6.2. Academic freedom target populations .........................................................76
   6.2.1. Practice-centered approach .................................................................77
   6.2.2. Belief-centered approach .................................................................78
6.3. Discussion ......................................................................................................79

CONCLUSION .....................................................................................................80

REFERENCES .....................................................................................................82
List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Academic Freedom index in Russia from 1900 to 2020.......................................................... 26

Table 1. Criteria for the assessment of academic freedom legislation .................................................. 27

Table 2. Constitutional protection for academic freedom: compliance levels and scores. .................... 29

Table 3. Constitutional protection for academic freedom: ratification levels and scores ....................... 30

Table 4. Legal provision and Internal operation of autonomy: compliance levels and scores .................. 35

Table 5. State regulation and private sector constraints to university autonomy: compliance levels and scores 36

Table 6. Legal provision and operational self-governance: compliance levels and scores ...................... 37

Table 7. Staff powers of appointment and dismissal: compliance levels and scores .......................... 38

Table 8. Protection for academic tenure and promotion: compliance levels and scores ....................... 40

Table 9. Overall score of de jure academic freedom ............................................................................... 41

Table 10. Demographic characteristics of respondents. ........................................................................ 47

Table 11. The distribution of the participants based on their disciplinary field, affiliation, age, and gender on the stage of piloting ................................................................. 51

Figure 2. Analytical circle of theory building. ......................................................................................... 55

Table 12. Academic freedom target populations. .................................................................................. 76
List of Abbreviations

AAUP – American Association of University Professors
Afi – Academic Freedom Index
CISR - Center of Independent Social Research
ECHR - European Convention on Human Rights
EHEA - European Higher Education Area
EUA – European University Association
FL – Federal Law
GD – Government Decree
HRW – Human Rights Watch
ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MD – Ministerial Decree
MSU – Moscow State University
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights)
OP-ICCPR – Optional Protocol to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
OP-ICESCR – Optional Protocol to International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
RAS – Russian Academy of Sciences
SPbSU – Saint Petersburg State University
STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
V-Dem – Varieties of Democracy
WEF – World Economic Forum
INTRODUCTION

Universities play important societal functions everywhere. They were considered among the key institutions of modernity (Scott 1998) and have become even more visible and important in the age of knowledge society. Whenever the university is compared with other institutions, not only its centrality in society but also its exceptional nature will be discussed (Peters 2003; Scott 1998). The exceptionality of universities is related to their particular role, which is the production, transmission, dissemination and use of knowledge, and also to their particular organizational principles, guiding internal operations and the interactions with the State, society, with what we call today “the (external) regulatory framework” (World Bank 2002:10). It is largely accepted that in order for universities to deliver their social remit, however defined, they need to benefit from a particular type of freedom, which no other modern institutions enjoy, namely academic freedom (Altbach 2001:205; Matei 2020:29).

Academic freedom is still sometimes understood according to the traditional understanding of academic freedom introduced by Wilhelm von Humboldt at the beginning of the 19th century. It was seen as a necessary condition, even a privilege, that the society or the State needs to guarantee in return for the services offered by universities. As Post put it at the beginning of the 21st century, “Academic freedom is (…) the price the public must pay in return for the social good of advancing knowledge” (Post 2006: 73). Academic freedom is broadly understood as a special condition, applicable only to a limited professional category (academic staff, sometimes students and university administrative personnel too) and institutions (universities/higher education institutions).

A question that arises immediately when considering this special position of universities is whether the recognition of academic freedom as a necessary condition for the advancement of knowledge, assumed by many scholars and higher education practitioners to be universal, at least as a theoretical principle, holds true for different social and political contexts. Is knowledge equally valued everywhere? Is the role of the university understood and appreciated in the same way in contemporary societies, so that there are willingness and practical arrangements to allow for or guarantee academic freedom? Are there differences in the understanding and practice of academic freedom related to the nature of different types of political regimes? In a more direct sense, can academic freedom exist in non-democratic societies?

When addressing these questions, we need to acknowledge that here is neither one single definition of academic freedom that would be applicable to the entire diversity of existing academic contexts, nor a universal way how it should be assessed or measured. First, academic freedom is a concept that has multiple origins. It has developed independently in various national and regional contexts, under different conditions and has evolved together with political systems and university policies of the states or, sometimes, supra-national
organizations. Apart from that, academic freedom can exist in various legal forms. While being part of constitutional legislation in some places, it stays just a general recommendation from international associations like Magna Charta Universitatum. Third, it may be a minor obstacle, but when theorized, regulated or practiced in different languages, academic freedom might get or lose some specific and differentiated connotations.

The diverse nature and manifestations of academic freedom are also reflected in the fact that it can be studied from radically different perspectives. Spannagel (2020:175), in an overview of academic freedom data sources, provides a taxonomy with the following types of empirics used in academic freedom studies: 1) expert assessments, 2) opinions and lived experiences, 3) events data, 4) institutional self-assessments, and 5) de jure, or legal assessments. Each of these types has its own limitations and opens the ways to quite dramatically different ways of understanding academic freedom.

Two large-scale comparative research studies of academic environments, namely the International Academic Profession (1991–1993) and Changing Academic Profession (2007–2012) have a wider scope and cover academic freedom indirectly. For example, they address the level of satisfaction by distribution of job-related activities and capture the power dynamics inside institutions, but do not really raise the issue of freedom separately. In Spannagel’s classification this would be the type of data within lived experience.

The varieties of democracies (V-Dem) database, developed based on expert assessment, includes an academic freedom index consisting of constitutional protection and international legal commitment to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, freedom to research and teach, freedom of academic exchange and dissemination, institutional autonomy, campus integrity, and freedom of academic and cultural expression (V-Dem Institute 2020:295). This index covers both legal aspects of academic freedom and features related to everyday work practices, including teaching, researching, publishing or just being present on the territory of the university.

The criterion referenced approach of Karran, Beiter, and Appiagyei-Atua (2017) implies even more detailed attention to the legal grounds of academic freedom within national contexts. They propose an operationalization of academic freedom that pays more attention to national legislations and takes into account components of academic freedom that can be protected. A very important nuance that Karran and Beiter explain in another publication (2020) is that they separate legal protection of academic freedom from the actual practices in the field. Thus, while V-dem has a question about degree of teaching and research freedom, the approach of Karran and Beiter (2020) would imply separate measurements of the legal guarantee to have teaching and research protected, and of academics’ feeling of being protected.

The authors of the methodology behind academic freedom index in V-Dem, Kinzelbach et al (2020), in their report emphasize their dissatisfaction with university rankings evaluating performance of universities without considering the political and human rights climate of the countries in which they are located. They find satisfactory scores of academic freedom at universities in non-democratic contexts misleading and even protecting repressive systems.
from reputation loss (p.5). This report operationalizes the concept in such a way that not only academic freedom is closely connected to the democratic environment in which it is performed, but also implies that academic freedom cannot be seen in non-democratic settings.

An alternative to the view that academic freedom cannot exist in non-democratic or illiberal societies is to apply the idea of “democratic enclaves” to universities. Democratic enclaves, or institutionalized social spaces “challenging state regulatory powers” (Gilley 2010:390), imply the possibility of successful performance of democratic norms even in conditions of authoritarianism, which, moreover, can be selectively supported and considered beneficial by such non-democratic regimes (Gilley 2010:394).

An illiberal regime might tolerate, even encourage certain freedoms (including, for example, academic freedom), while severely repressing others. Russia can serve as a relevant example allowing to uncover this controversial dynamic. Russia exhibits a complex discursive space in higher education, which combines the recognition of the value of academia and attempts to introduce measures to increase its excellence and accelerate internationalization, with ever increasing control over state-funded institutions and restriction of free speech and freedom of information (Kaczmarska 2020). Despite consistent restriction of freedoms of expression and association (Human Rights Watch 2015-2020), the Russian state has a somewhat differentiated approach to academic freedom, which is tolerated within certain limits. Despite not being a liberal democracy, Russia provides a political, legal/regulatory environment (“context”) where the practice of academic freedom is subject to certain limitations and state interference, yet it is very visible and actively used as a building block of professional identity, allowing academic workers to define themselves in a system of relationships with students, colleagues, university administration, and also with the state.

Matei and Iwinska (2014:28) propose a view on academic freedom and university autonomy that does not consider them as either binary/dichotomist or unidimensional variables. Instead, they are and should be understood as multidimensional and working as scales on which universities and individuals in universities have more or less freedom or, rather, freedoms. These scales cannot be expressed in a single numerical value but represent relatively complex configurations that can be expressed in a mix of values on a number of distinct sub-dimensions. The multidimensional nature of these concepts allows to break them down into more narrow aspects and analyze them separately in order to reconfigure the actual complete picture of freedom, or freedoms, in the university and their practices. It is possible that while experiencing significant freedom in some areas, academics can be restricted in their other practices. Or, speaking about autonomy, the university can have limited but real autonomy, controlling some important dimensions of its own operations but have no voice in some others. The configurations of these components matter to a significant extent when we approach the context of a particular regime, country or even individual university. This research does not aim to assess the quality of academic freedom in Russia, yet it very much relies on the assumption about the multidimensionality of academic freedom experience and its interpretation.

In order to understand the nature and limits of academic freedom experienced by Russian scholars, I propose the following research question: can academics experience and understand
themselves as subjects of academic freedom, and if so, how are they doing it? Or in other words, how do academics in Russia make sense of academic freedom? With this question, I focus on the ways academics interpret their professional practices, i.e. what they think they are required or able to do, what is it that they consider they do, and how they assess their own practices, or in other words, make sense of them. Studying academic freedom as a discursive structure instead of assessing the quality of its performance can provide valuable insights on the meaning-making process of people involved in one of the most freedom-demanding activities, i.e. advanced knowledge production and transmission, under challenging conditions.

In Russia, I have found out that rather than referring to academic freedom [академическая свобода], respondents frame their expectations about the degree of liberty as professional freedom [свобода ученых] or even just freedom exercised by academics in a professional context. Practicing this kind of freedom for Russian academics means doing what is included in their understanding of work without interference by those whom they classify as not belonging to their professional communities. This can be considered as a bottom up concept of academic freedom because it does not represent the views of agenda-setters (politicians, ministerial agencies, rectors, top level university administration) but of the regular members of the community (including higher-ranked ones though). This does not necessarily oppose the universal understanding of academic freedom (if there is such a thing at all), but rather reconstructs it from the viewpoint of particular empirical realia. Even though a distinctive feature of a non-democracy is high level of state presence in all the spheres of daily life, it is not only regime that can be blamed for academic freedom violation at the workplace. Not saying that it has no effect, I want to emphasize that to a large extent understanding of academic freedom depends on how different groups of academics define their professional identity and position themselves in relation to each other, administration, and state authorities.

Approaching academic freedom as narrative contributes to the existing scholarship on the matter, broadening the ontological scope of academic freedom studies. To do this I reconstruct and analyze the narratives of Russian scholars identified through interviews. It is crucial to highlight that an inventory of actual practices of academics are beyond my scope of research. All the data collected gives access exclusively to the ways of speaking about academics’ work.

The assumption made in this thesis is that academic freedom is not just a form of legally (formally) prescribed practice or a regulation, but rather understandings of academics, their bodily and speech acts informed by everyday practices. Actions do not happen in isolation but rather through interactions, being outcomes of multiple stimuli and responses to them (Arendt 1958:184, Markell 2003:13). In other words, the understanding of academic freedom is constituted through the associated deeds (Weeden 2008:16-17). Given the rather abstract link between narration and practice (Jerolmack and Khan 2014), I do not make any claim that my research provides useful insights regarding the respondents’ actions. What I have access to are stories about those actions, interpretations of events, allowing to see how respondents make sense of their experiences (Jerolmack and Khan 2014, Swidler 2001). I argue that addressing academic freedom through the stories and understandings of people for whom academic freedom is an important identity-driving construct allows us to see more than simply how good
or bad conditions in the selected context are. Instead, it gives a clue about a deeper meaning of academic freedom in a given community, which helps us see in a more nuanced way how it is protected (or not).

The methodological framework of this research is formulated in line with the assumptions of interpretive epistemology. This means impossibility to get undisputable “brute data” (Yanow 2000:5), which could be approached in a detached value-free manner with the purpose of production of objective knowledge. The chosen methodological approach implies that there is no single reality which can be considered reasonably stable across time and space (Dervin 1998:36) because the knowledge about this reality is received in the process of interpretation, which is inevitably subjective and makes possible a variety of interpretations (Yanow 2000:5). Each experience in the process of interpretive research is reflected by the person who is involved in it and gives it a meaning, as well as by the researcher who cannot be separated from the observation either (Dervin 1999:44; Yanow 2000:5).

Sense-making refocuses attention from fixed understandings of concepts or problems, i.e. nousing approach, to the processes of understanding and the logic of connecting them, i.e. verbing approach (Dervin & Frenette 2001:72). For the context of this research, this implies that simply asking respondents to give a definition of academic freedom does not allow to fully engage in someone’s meaning-making process. This is achieved through discussing with the participants what they normally do at work, how they feel about it, what they appreciate and what is limiting about their academic job. From a theoretical viewpoint, this research aims to critically engage with the liberal discourse, which ties rigidly academic freedom to democracy, not leaving room for freedom experiences in non-democratic regimes.

The approach to academic freedom as a multidimensional concept can provide a more nuanced study of the nature of academic freedom and the relationship between the state, universities and academics. The practical value of the research is applying sense-making methodology to the collection of narratives in Russia, i.e. the meaning of freedom is approached from a bottom-up perspective in a particular context, not imposed and assessed from the outside but rather produced internally by the participants, who are thus being given the voice. In this way, I hope to be able not only to contribute to a better understanding of what academic freedom can be, how it relates to political regimes, but also to understand how, in practice, in Russia and more generally, academic freedom can be protected, promoted, and practiced more efficiently. Studying academic freedom in times when academics all over the world are alarmed about its state provides more solid knowledge and additional awareness about this topic. Otherwise, public awareness of the importance of academic freedom and its difficulties normally occurs only in acute or activist contexts (for example, in the case where a particular university experiences oppression from the state). The results of this research might be used for strengthening the sense of an international (even global?) academic community, through common values based on understanding of freedom and professional reflections, as well as for creation of a healthier freedom and rights climate in the universities.
Thesis structure

The thesis is organized in 6 chapters. **Chapter 1** aims to trace the concept of academic freedom through history to raise the issue of academic imperialism in the context of which the concept has been emerging. I show how the idea of academic freedoms appeared in various parts of Europe, traveled the world and ended up as the principle, or list of principles, we associate with academic freedom today. Then follows the justification why a postcolonial framework is a necessary analytical tool when dealing with the concept of academic freedom, especially when we approach the national contexts that have been previously considered objects of research and discarded from contributing to understanding and formulating the vocabulary of the concept. **Chapter 2** introduces such a context, using Russia as a case study. I start by showing critical junctures in Russian history when the approach to academic freedom dramatically changed and finish with establishing the points of reference allowing to research academic freedom in contemporary Russian academia.

In **Chapter 3** I demonstrate and apply the tools to evaluate the health of academic freedom in Russia. For that I am first using Academic Freedom Index (Afi), and then map the legislative landscape using criterion referenced approach by Karran, Beiter, and Appiagyei-Atua (2017). I use these approaches mostly for illustrative purposes, given that academic freedom as policy and practice is outside the scope of my analysis, yet it is helpful to get a better understanding of the Russian context.

The empirical work in this dissertation is based on semi-structured interviews and the extended narrative inputs of the participants. Justification for this approach is covered in **Chapter 4**. There I discuss the procedure and reasons for data collection and analysis, and how first piloting, then fieldwork and analysis were organized. Ethical considerations, as well as limitations of selected methodology are also covered in this chapter.

The purpose of Chapters 5 and 6 is to identify empirically driven understanding of academic freedom in Russia. **Chapter 5** provides the reader with a snapshot of the field. Major topics identified in the process of the interviews as well as the main differences between the narratives are covered there. **Chapter 6** shows how analysis of the legal background and narrative analysis can be used simultaneously. I introduce academic freedom target populations framework and its two implications for policy studies. Behind every definition of academic freedom there are stories of people who make sense of it through their everyday lives. I hope this research will let these stories be heard.
CHAPTER 1 Genealogy of academic freedom

The main purpose of this chapter is to introduce general historical context of academic freedom, while emphasizing that in fact it is not just one context, but multiple ones. Approaching academic freedom through a collection of individual countries’ academic histories allowed to realize deficiencies of the Euro-centric approach and provided the justification for applying post-colonial optics. However, in order to effectively address identified deficiencies, it is necessary to see the state of art in the field from which certain communities are excluded and why it is happening.

Despite the multitude of academic histories, there are definitions of academic freedom that are more influential in the academic literature. The common ground among various intersecting interpretations based on collective (AAUP 1915; EUA 1988; UNESCO 1997) or individual (Hayek 1960; Humboldt 2002; Karran 2009; Metzger 1987; Post 2006; Russel 1993) interpretations, is that the core universal principles of academic freedom are freedom to research and teach. However, the idea of ‘universe’ here is limited to liberal democracies, while other contexts require adjusted interpretations of what academic freedom is.

A common assumption within the academic discourse is that only ‘democratic’ environments enable the existence of academic freedom in academic institutions. Hence, democracy is viewed as a necessary pre-condition for academic freedom. However, much of this discourse is Anglocentric, as the bulk of the academic studies on the concept emanate from, and focus on, the USA. The reason for this singular focus is that, unlike most other Western democracies, in the USA academic freedom is not protected directly in the constitution or in bespoke national legislation. Academic freedom in the USA is protected under the First Amendment governing freedom of speech and is therefore a contested concept. This contestation accounts for much of the previous and on-going academic discourse on academic freedom. Hence the democratic environment for much of the discourse on academic freedom is couched in terms of the American ideal of democracy.

We see, however, that universities exist and perform, sometimes reasonably well (if one looks at the world university rankings, for example, see China or Russia) even in undemocratic societies or in countries that are not liberal democracies, in any case (like Singapore). Consequently, it is evident that democracy may not be a necessary condition for institutional excellence. We thus find, on the one hand, relatively well-defined conceptualizations and practices of academic freedom in democratic societies and on the other hand, functioning academic institutions without clear definitions of academic freedom in undemocratic societies. This opens up a series of questions: Does academic freedom exist in such countries, despite the absence of clear protocols or consensus on what it means? If so, what forms does it take, why and how does it emerge? If academic freedom does exist in non-democratic societies, do we
need to reconceptualize it in ways that are different than the traditional and dominant understanding of academic freedom in Western liberal or “mature” democracies?

In addressing these questions, I argue for the necessity of the two following steps: first, to disconnect the notion of academic freedom of ‘western’ universities alone, and, second, to re-build the concept, observing how academic freedom is constructed in a specific ‘non-western’ context. “A system of knowledge must be to [a researcher] also what it is to people who participate in its construction, reproduction, application, and development” (Znaniecki 1986:6). This approach allows the researcher to represent a subaltern subject, to speak about it, instead of speaking for it. Basically, being subaltern means having “insufficient access to modes of representation” (Chattopadhyay and Sarkar 2005:359). Therefore, letting the community represent itself, while using its own categories, is how we intervene in the epistemological hierarchies established in modernity. Those who have been described exclusively as an object of research get the opportunity to become co-creators of the investigation of their own lives and practices.

The global academic market is not an arena of equal contributions, and countries with different economic and political development levels have not only different access to its goods, but also different shares in establishing the rules of the game, i.e. what is it to be a successful academic, what constitutes valid and reliable research, and what is the place of a university in a society? There are those nations and their universities who establish the rules of the market and its terms of trade, and those who follow them, because of either historical reasons (colonial legacy), newly established trends (university rankings), or anglophone hegemony. The question of the categorization of countries arises: who belongs to trend-setters? Who are the followers? And by what criteria should we allocate them?

To solve this, Pletsch (1981) developed a metaphor of three worlds guided by two dichotomies: “modern” vs. “traditional” countries, and the subdivision of “modern” ones to “free” and “socialist” countries (1981:573). As Pletsch further explains, first world countries included technologically and economically developed democracies, specifically the countries of the second world war Allies, apart from Soviet Union. Second world countries were also considered modern and technologically sophisticated, although, ideologically driven, not free, i.e. Soviet Union and the countries of the socialist block. The Third World was perceived as underdeveloped in both political and economic terms and included former colonies and the countries of global south (Pletsch 1981). Basically, Pletsch identifies three criteria for classification: regime, welfare, and separately technological development.

Since 1981, when Pletsch’s article was published, not only has the empirical data, but also the theoretical assumptions underlying this metaphor of three worlds become outdated, following the revision of the assumptions about the connections between regime and economics since the 1980’s. Pletsch’s mode of classification can no longer be used in this way without cold war connotations. Today, more frequently used societal partitions refer to the division of the world based on the access to certain goods, for example, “industrial vs. postindustrial” and “developing vs. developed”. The disadvantage of these dichotomies over the previous three-world model is the emphasis on economics, and decreased attention to regime difference and
scientific production. For the purpose of this research, I will stick to the juxtaposition of the Russian model with western liberal democratic states, fully understanding that Russia does not represent all the variety of non-democratic regimes, acknowledging that there are democratic regimes outside of the “global west”, and paying attention to the fact that not all of the western countries are equally influential in the production of higher education discourses.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I start by uncovering to what extent the ‘universal’ understanding of academic freedom that we operate with, is local and belonging to the contexts in which it was elaborated. Then I demonstrate how, and in what ways, this understanding has been changing its shape through time and when traveling from one national context to another. This historical review will let me pinpoint the reasons why I think that the way in which we address academic freedom today needs to be re-considered, opening the window for new empirical contexts, previously underexplored by academic freedom scholars. After that I introduce the discussion about academic imperialism which will establish the ground for further re-contextualization of academic freedom in the environment of today’s Russia in Chapter 2.

1.1. The origins of academic freedom

As the Magna Charta Universitatum states: “Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement” (Magna Charta Observatory 1988:1). This principle lies at the core of the assumption that academia can function properly, i.e. produce knowledge via the process of research and education, only under conditions of freedom. The principle of academic freedom, as we know it today, was significantly influenced by several powerful models of university organization intertwining with each other through the course of history.

Academic freedom appeared as early as the first medieval universities, like the Universities of Bologna, Paris, or Oxford (Neave 1988:33; Thorens 2006:92). These universities (and their staff) were not “free” in the sense we might perceive freedom today. However, they had distinctive features (see Table 1) that proved to be sustainable and, therefore, were promoted and willingly borrowed by other higher education institutions. For mapping the trajectory of development of academic freedom, I will stick to the most influential models, fully recognizing that they did not exist in a vacuum and are likely to exchange ideas with a wider university environment in their historical contexts.

The French university model, or as it is also called ‘Napoleonic’, originates from the University of Paris, or Sorbonne, which was founded in 12th century, way before Napoleon re-established it after the French Revolution. It is called so by analogy with Napoleonic administrative tradition characterized by the principles of uniformity and technocratic orientation (Donina &
Paleari 2019; Kuhlmann 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011) which resonate a lot with the initial setting of Medieval French university. Thus, the name of the model is associated not with a historical persona and his rule, but rather with the management principle formulated later. Rather than operating as knowledge production centers, French medieval university performed as professional schools preparing properly qualified state functionaries (Gellert 1993; Scott 1998: 445). Individual autonomy of a professor in this setting was protected more than one of a student (Karran 2009, Neave 1988) The relationship between the university and the state was organized in such a way that it was the state who was protecting the autonomy of the university and the academic freedom of its members from external interests, while reserving the right to regulate the work of the university. However, some elements of autonomy were left to university community who did the budgeting and elected the rector (Haskins 1957¹:16-17) Given that the Sorbonne emerged from the cathedral school, it was not autonomous from the church either (Amaral & Jones & Karseth 2002:4).

In opposition to the teacher-focused, centralized French university, the ‘Bologna University’ model was concentrated on students who did not only define their learning trajectories but also took part in university governance (Neave 1988:33). Given that it was organized around a community of students and professors coming from all parts of the country and from abroad, the university was a very economically profitable enterprise for the city. Therefore, the local bureaucracy, which was partially organized around the necessity to manage the flow of new students and foreigners, was very supportive of university autonomy. However, this autonomy from the state should not be confused with the freedom from influence of church playing an important role, when the first university was established in Bologna in 1088 (Lines 2017:436). Freedom of teaching was realized in a very specific way in the University of Bologna. The professorial staff did not have permanent contracts, but were rather hired to teach whatever they proposed, if this was sufficient to attract enough students, whose fees would be used to pay the professors’ salaries (Long 1994). Thus, due to the unique role of students, freedom of teaching was at the same time fully performed and limited not by external actors, but internally. Research function of universities was underdeveloped.

The Anglo-Saxon idea of university was based on the organizational model of Oxford University (late 11th - early 12th century), which was consecutively adopted by all higher education institutions in the country, although acting as a model for other English universities, which were performing as teaching institutions only until as late as the 19th century (Newman 1887:228). The core values in this model are “institutional autonomy, professional collegiality and concentration on the education of the whole person” (Scott 1998:444). Following the establishment of the Church of England, the power of the Pope over universities in England passed to the monarch, and hence the state – so each university was given a royal charter, and, in the role of university visitor, the monarch adjudicated in university disputes. All of the above refers to English universities, but not necessarily for the Scottish ones, which were regulated in a different fashion in the exceptional Scottish setting in Medieval and modern times. The place of students in Scotland was more explicit. As Stewart (1991) describes, academic

freedom was articulated and polemically contested by the university staff of Glasgow University during the rector elections in 1716-1717. The conflict, which was, in a nutshell, competition for authority in the university, emerged when the student body was not admitted to the rector elections (which was the traditional procedure) by the principal who tried to seize power (Stewart 1991:4).

1.2. Academic freedom in modern universities

Despite the unquestionable effect of Medieval models of universities on the understanding of the crucial role of academic freedom in academic life, they did not provide a single universal understanding regarding the extent and area in which academic freedom should be implemented. Universities of the Modern Age had to solve these dilemmas for themselves. In this section I want to discuss some models of universities that were affected by Medieval schools but became influential in their own ways.

Probably the most influential model in advancing the idea of academic freedom in Europe and USA is the Humboldtian model of the research-oriented university (Gellert 1993:7; Goldstein 1976:1299; Scott 1998:445), inaugurated around the time of the establishment of the University of Berlin, which was founded on the basis of the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1810. According to Goldstein (1976:1299), this is the paradigm that had one of the most significant influences on the modern understanding of academic freedom. Despite the fact that some historians question whether it was particularly Humboldt’s contribution or rather general ideas existing in academic environment in the early 19 century Germany (Ash 2006:245-249; Miyasaka 2005:7; Nybom 2003:144), they came through the 20th century known as the ‘Humboldtian idea of university’. Three main principles, Lehrfreiheit (freedom of teaching and research) and Lernfreiht (freedom of learning) and Freheit der Wissenschaft (right to academic self-governance) are lying at its core (Metzger 1987:1269-1270). This notion proposed that freedom from the church, local authorities and regional elites be guaranteed and protected by the state (Metzger 1987:1270).

The ‘American’ model of academic freedom in a strict sense cannot be considered a separate one. Neave (2003:145) includes US universities as part of an Anglo-American model, emphasizing their common values and principles. Tappan (1851:45) pushes this idea even further, he claims that “the Colleges of America are plainly copied from the Colleges of the English Universities” in coursework, study process, way of administration. Hofstadter and Metzger (1955: 5) and Rudy (1951:156) support this point, emphasizing that specifically Harvard (the first American university) was founded with a very clear reference to Cambridge and was intended to be the New World version of it. However, this does not have to be the only influence. Rudy (1951) and then Veysey (1965) argue that the impact of the 19th century German model is undeniable, and the modern research university in the United States is a product of German-American academic cooperation and realization of Humboldtian ideas on
the other side of the ocean. By making freedom to research and to study a broad array of subjects, essential features of a modern university, American universities implemented German ideas in a more radical way than they were in their original setting (Vom Bruch 1997). One of the possible reasons of the shift from English to German model of education is a changing American mood in relation to England after the War of 1812 (Calder 1998:97).

Universities established under the early 20th century American model, both private and public, developed the practice of having boards of trustees or oversight boards with fiduciary powers, making them the quasi-“owner“ of the university (Elkana & Klopper 2016:51). This mode of governance gives university autonomy from the state and relocates the struggle for independence happens inside organizations. It means that while advocating for freedom from interference, academics do not refer to state interference anymore, but rather they want individual autonomy from university governing bodies. In this model the general public, via these oversight boards, also has its agency in protection of academic freedom. It comes together with freedom of speech or association (Post and Finkin 2009:42). Later, in 1940, this change of expectations about academic freedom protection was reflected by the American Association of University Professors in the Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure (AAUP 1940).

The models of universities discussed above illustrate that gradually academic freedom becomes a universal value while embedded in various types of university and state relationships (Berdahl 2010:1). However, realization of its utmost importance does not mean that the idea of professional freedom has been conclusively defined and agreed upon in all the multiple contexts of its emergence. Instead academic freedom continues to be defined and re-defined, enriched with new dimensions and associated features. In this way European University Professors’ Magna Charta Universitatum provides a detailed formula for protection of teaching and research (1988). Meanwhile American Association of University Professors (AAUP) adds to the original definition the freedom of publication of the results, extramural expression, and economic security, which is tenure (AAUP 1940). An even wider understanding of academic freedom was proposed by UNESCO in 1997. It covered also “freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they [academics] work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies” (UNESCO 1997).

Nevertheless, research of Karran and Beiter (2020) shows that despite various attempts to conceptualize and promote academic freedom as an international standard, not only the legislations of the countries differ, but so do academics’ perceptions of what academic freedom is. Neither are they sufficiently informed about their legal opportunities (2020:135), nor do they have a somewhat common understanding of what are the borders of their professional freedom which can be seen in the range of responses on the level of academic freedom protection in respondents’ institutions (2020:131). The mismatch between de jure and de facto understanding identifies not only the gap between the principle and the practice, but even a more serious gap between two understandings of academic freedom: one of law-makers and one of those who are expected to be the targeted population of these laws. Multitude of
interpretations and discrepancies that can be seen within different communities of practice actualize the need to see how those interpretations are produced, in other words conduct a research of the meanings of academic freedom and the contexts in which they are produced.

1.3. Academic imperialism/colonialism

For the purpose of this research I am not that much interested in the history of colonization per se, although, historically, academic imperialism is an aspect of colonization. Instead I focus on the relationship between different countries in the global academic market in the 21st century characterized by existing academic dependency of the countries from periphery from the ones considered to be a center (or multiple centers) of knowledge production. Following the definition of economic dependency by Santos (1970), which implies “a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected”, Alatas (2003) carries the metaphor to the academic world. He says that research agendas, methodological solutions, standards of rigor are mainly defined in the West and borrowed by researchers from other parts of the world, thus forming academic dependency (2003:603). By the West in this context, he means the United States, Great Britain, France, and to a lesser extent Germany (2003:602).

Although Alatas (2003) explores social science dynamics, his conceptualization is appropriate for a research of the whole disciplinary spectrum. The idea of center-periphery relationships can be easily transferred to other disciplinary contexts. The center is defined in terms of higher acknowledgement and the impact of the research produced there (von Gizycki 1973:474), and the periphery refers to dependency on the ideas, the media of ideas, education technologies, financial resources, and on demand in the West for the skills of researchers from the rest of the world (Alatas 2003:604).

The most influential definitions of academic freedom we know today come from Magna Charta Observatory, Humboldt’s manuscript on organization of University of Berlin (1810), American Association of University Professors (USA), the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights’ interpretation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, UNESCO, and some individual researchers. Knowledge of, or rather the attempt to find consensus on what forms academic freedom, is a product of self-observation and reflection of the scholars belonging to the first world. Not only was academic freedom developed in the reality of linguistic structures existing in English, German, Italian or French, but also in the geo-political landscapes to which these languages belong now (and had in the past). Academic freedom has been shaped by political and economic developments, as well as social and cultural values. Once we acknowledge this, then the idea of an assumed universality of knowledge
about academic freedom becomes questionable (Berdahl 2010:1). Mignolo (2012:103) calls it the ‘trap of the epistemology of modernity’ when the discourses produced in colonial languages are considered universal, because they both circulated in the central regions and were exported to ‘colonies’ as established knowledge.

As Mignolo and Tlostanova argue, the universality of ‘human’, when we are talking about ‘human rights’, is based on assumed universality of enunciation, with which they disagree. Their claim is that only local genealogy of ideas and needs can be a source of enunciation (2012:154). This argument can be adopted for this research only to the extent that it criticizes universality and aims to unpack the notion of ‘human rights’. In their book, Tlostanova and Mignolo aim to theoretically address any sort of imperial dynamics of the second half of 20th century, basically US and USSR hegemonic ambitions, as well as the gradual decolonizing former European metropoles. However, different place of human rights in the histories of these regions does not allow to unpack their colonial legacies in a similar fashion which brings necessity of localization of human rights practices, and academic freedom in particular, as well as an understanding of the sources of dependency and emancipation (if there are any). This is what Tlostanova and Mignolo call the ‘decolonization of human rights’ (2012:171).

A remarkable feature of colonial research that needs to be properly emphasized is that it is conducted from the position of a colonial subject, which means that it relies on resources and epistemologies of ‘central’ academia while referring to the peripheral one. However, being aware of this positionality and reflecting of its nature helps to establish a new understanding and tradition of the concept (Das 1989:310). This dissertation can be considered an example of colonial research described above. While being a Russian national with a Russian academic background I conduct a research on Russia in English, affiliated with a western university funding this research, with the ambition to publish the results in western journals later. What allows me to challenge the academic dependency of this research is the ambition to contribute to theory while bringing in the authenticity of the field that I am studying.
CHAPTER 2 Academic freedom in Russia: three historical stages

The Russian case is particularly fruitful for understanding how academic freedom was developing in an individual country context. For historical reasons it is a combination of three separate periods, very different from each other. Each starts with the re-invention of academia and re-definition of the role of higher education and science depending on how development and prosperity are planned to be achieved in a new political modality. Academic freedom played a very different role in each of these periods. In the following sections I will provide a brief overview of all three periods with the emphasis on academic freedom (or its absence thereof) and sources of influence on its evolution.

2.1. Academic freedom in the Russian Empire

The history of academic life in Russia starts with the Academy of Sciences designed in 1710s and established in Saint Petersburg in 1725 under Peter the Great’s rule. It might be argued that higher education existed on the territory of the Russian Empire even before that, in the form of the Slavic Greek Latin Academy and the Kyiv Academy established in 17th century. However, these institutions were organized in the monasteries and were regulated by the Church, which was not in line with the reformation of Peter’s reign, when the role of the church in public life was significantly restricted through a series of reforms. Desiring to have local researchers with comparable skills to those of staff in universities in the West, and being able to gradually replace them (Hans 2012:10), Peter the Great laid the foundation for secular academia by combining higher education and research, under a model that lasted until the 1917 revolution. In its early stages, the Academy emulated the best European practices of the moment, specifically the French Academy of Sciences, except that the Russian Academy had the ambition to combine research and higher education (Draft of a decree on the establishment of the Academy of Sciences and Arts 2 1724). It was designed to be controlled by the state to a significant extent, and had foreign staff as well as mostly foreign students, during the first years of its existence (Kaplan 2007:39).

As soon as the first Russian graduates managed to complete higher education in the new system, Moscow State University was established. This was the first higher education institution where teaching staff and students were Russians. It was an ambitious project for

2 Translated from: Проект положения об учреждении Академии наук и художеств
several reasons. First of all, it was directly subordinated to the senate, which gave it a significant level of autonomy (Decree on the establishment of Moscow State University\(^3\) 1755). The University’s separate legal court made decisions on university staff, as well as student issues. Secondly, it aimed at preparing more highly qualified specialists coming not only from the nobility, but accessible to the raznochintsy [commoners]. Increasing social inclusivity was planned to be achieved through the connection of secondary and tertiary education and creation of two gymnasiums, one for the nobility, and another one for the commoners, coordinated by the university (1755). In a way, the establishment of Moscow State University was the first step away from both a state-controlled Academy established earlier, and the blind emulation of European universities (Hans 2012:11), as well as an attempt to organize the recruitment in a way that would reflect current social needs in comparison to the earlier project of the Academy of Sciences (Gordin 2000:13).

During the first half of the 19th century, new universities and gymnasiums all over the Russian Empire were opened as part of an integrated educational system (Hans 2012:21). Even though historians of this period identify various foreign influences, there is no unified opinion regarding the major source of influence from abroad. There are certain features that might be associated with Polish and French influence (Kaplan 2007:43). Other authors are more in favor of the German impact (McClelland 1982:180), saying that the Russian system of tertiary education was inspired by Gottingen University, not only because it was ideologically fulfilling the demand of the moment (Raeff 1973:26-47), but also because of a long tradition of partnership with this school, including student and staff exchange (Flynn 1988:3). However, the increasing need for professionals of various sorts led to the Russian model following not German liberal arts colleges, but rather the French model of specialized schools (McClelland 1979:20).

Among other reasons why Gottingen University was considered a model to follow was its dedication to academic freedom. Officials in charge of the reform in Russia strongly considered academic freedom to be essential for the prosperity of the Russian education system (Flynn 1988:3-4). Therefore, academic freedom was officially implemented as the principle of university autonomy, although it remained a controversial issue during this period of absolute monarchy in Russia (Flynn 1988:1). This is part of the reason why Berlin University (founded in 1811) with the professorate acting as civil servants, became a more powerful model for Russia to follow in the middle of the century (Kaplan 2007:44).

Constant debates about the appropriateness of foreign models and the place of universities in Russia at that time, led to the development of an elaborated understanding of the concept of academic freedom in the General University Charter of 1863. This document provided recommendations about the structure of a university, including emphasis on self-governance ratified by the minister of education, university autonomy, as well as protection of the rights and privileges of the faculty considered to be civil servants (General Charter of Imperial Russian Universities 1863). However, the Charter excluded freedom of teaching, therefore four

---

\(^3\) Translated from: Об учреждении Московского университета
existing faculties\(^4\) had a strict curriculum, while student academic freedom was present but limited by Minister of Education Golovin who proposed that students should have the status of “university private guests” (Kaplan 2007:46). Reflecting on the nature of the established Russian university model, Miliukov considered it to be a mixture of German influence with the faculty exercising self-governance, and also French influences as manifested by a tight curriculum (Miliukov 1902:793).

The second half of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century witnessed the highest involvement of civil society with higher education in Tsarist Russia. Women Courses substituting higher education for women (Johanson 1987), new public (nonstate) institutions (Zmeiev 2000), the private university in Moscow, as well as commercial institutes were opened around the country in response to an increasing demand for higher education for excluded groups, as well as from industry (McClelland 1979; Kaplan 2007). Consequently, by 1914 Russia had more than a hundred thousand students in 105 institutions (Alston 1083:98, Kaplan 2007:50).

By the end of its monarchical history up to the moment of 1917 revolution, Russia had an explicit understanding of a model of academic freedom that fit the local environment the environment, while staying sensitive to European influence and the internal triggers for change. The system of higher education was state-controlled and centralized, yet autonomous in self-regulation, protecting rights and privileges of academic staff, yet very rigid in terms of understanding the universities’ goals in relation to students and, as a result, very strict in the questions of teaching and learning.

### 2.2. Academic freedom in the Soviet Union

There is no academic context in which the Soviet Union can be discussed as providing a home for academic freedom in any possible display. However, for the purposes of an informed discourse, relating to the realities of academic freedom, it is necessary to take a step away from the repressive state machine and examine the Soviet Union’s truly unique system of higher education, built from scratch without any explicit or overt notion of academic freedom (or at least limited to a remarkable extent). This is necessary, first, to see how academia that does not enjoy human rights in any way might still be involved in knowledge production, and second, to have a better understanding of the contemporary system of Russian university education, which still retains certain soviet legacies, not eliminated in the 1990’s.

In the literature, the Soviet higher education is often viewed either instrumentally (as a combination of practices to follow or to never be practiced again), or as a component of the

---

\(^4\) Four university faculties at that time were: History and Philology, Physics and Mathematics, Law, and Medical School.
Soviet totalitarian ideological machinery (Kuraev 2016:182). As Kuraev shows, both approaches are very much value-based, while he proposes a concise and succinct formula of “uniformity, top-down administration, and one-man management organizational principles” which both characterizes the essence of the Soviet model and emphasizes its uniqueness (2016:183). Uniformity implied standardization of institutional structures, methods and the content of teaching and research, enrollment procedures, living conditions, salaries and stipends (2016:186). Top-down command administration meant following the five-year plan, in terms of the numbers and composition of enrolled and graduating students, and obligatory allocation of graduates to their prospective workplaces (2016:186-187). And finally, one-man management principle stood for strict discipline and the concentration of authority at the level of the rectorate, which included a mix of university administrators and party representatives (2016:188).

Soviet academia was not invented once and forever. Immediately after the revolution there were various visions and proposals of how the system could be re-organized to a new regime including self-governing structures (Kaplan 2007:51). However, to the end of 1920-s these ideas were replaced with a system of heavily centralized professional training, as opposed to a system of general education (Fitzpatrick 2002:11, Kuraev 2016:183). Academia went through another ideological change in the 1960s following Khrushchev’s policy when the de-Stalinization of the state moved the focus away from a purely educational role for universities towards a research role, in which research centers and laboratories appeared (Kuraev 2014:156). Later in the 1980-s during Perestroika, private universities were established, as well as international cooperation in higher education (Kuraev 2014:133).

Certain academic units existing during Soviet history are often discussed in the literature as academic freedom hubs of their time, practicing it in some sort of proto-democratic way (Dubrovskiy 2017:178). For example, Novosibirsk State University in the period 1950—1960s (Kuraev 2016:189), Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School in Tartu university in the 1960-1970s, research laboratories in the field of nuclear energy, and the Academy of Sciences (Dubrovskiy 2017:175) enjoyed more freedom than other institutions. Apart from these school there were bottom-up attempts to establish alternative or even oppositional units inside the existing system of higher education. The All-Russian Social-Christian Union for the Liberation of the People was organized in 1964 at Leningrad University\(^5\) and tried to resist existing communist ideology for two years until all the participants were arrested (Dubrovskiy 2017:180). Another self-organized institution was the People’s University (also called Jewish People’s University) which was a non-official network of Math courses existing from 1978-1982 for those who were not accepted for courses in the official universities because of their Jewish origin (Tylevich 2005).

Even despite the attempts to mobilize and re-think the shape of higher education, being an academic in late Soviet times was extremely far from academic freedom ideal. Freedom of research production and dissemination was limited, teaching was controlled and standardized, self-governance was in fact an imposed system which barely represented anyone’s agendas. As

---

\(^5\) Saint Petersburg State University was renamed to Leningrad University during the Soviet times.
Kennedy puts it, academic duty was “a set of obligations that professors owe to others” (1997:23) including students, colleagues, state and wider society, and a reverse side of academic freedom (1997:2). While having certain institutional autonomy (in very limited number of places) academics were treating it as a special privilege used to oppose the idea of state service. Academic freedom was for them a practice of resistance.

With all that is said above, I want to emphasize that academia in the Soviet Union cannot be considered as a territory of academic freedom not only because of hostility to human rights and freedoms. In fact, it was also due to an institutional setting of higher education system, which targeted scholars as functional units with specific functions for which they were paid and promoted, rather than hire creative individuals who could contribute to the common good. Being an academic in Soviet Union meant something in between corporate work and state service. The legacy of this approach can be seen among those who continued working in universities after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

2.3. Academic freedom in post-soviet Russia

The breakup of the Soviet Union and the dramatic fall of the communist regime in 1992 signified another fundamental revision of the higher education system in Russia (Dneprov 1995:61). As Heyneman observed during the system review by an international inspection in the early years of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Education was in charge of only 16 out of 516 higher education institutions. The rest of them were regulated by various government departments, while the whole system was under Party control. High level of centralization paired with secrecy, which meant no coherent statistics on enrollment, student numbers, or budgets that could facilitate the start of the reform (2009:77, World Bank 1995). Thus, without any systematized previous knowledge new system developed a list of four priorities that should have become the ground for prospective change: (1) structure, (2) curriculum, (3) modernization, and (4) student demand (Heyneman 2009:78).

The transition to the market economy in post-Soviet Russia led to abandoning the mandatory job allocation of graduates, privatization of properties, creation of a higher education market with private funded students. Together with concentration of the major governance in the Ministry of Education (even though not all the department-specific universities went through this transition6) these were the main structural and student demand-related changes to the higher education system. The content of higher education went through the reformation, too. New disciplines which were previously missing from the curriculum were added, while ideological subjects (like the study of Marxism-Leninism) were removed. Modernization

6 For example, medical universities are regulated by the Ministry of Health
implied change and diversification of teaching methods, including new forms of examination and diversification of available sources of content (2009:78-79).

Despite removal of party control, transition to the market economy and opening up to international cooperation, it was too early to announce the end of Soviet academia. The structure of the new system remained “top-down” and vertical, implying necessity to externally push universities towards a new shape of higher education institutions (Platonova & Semyonov 2018:341-342). Joining the Bologna Process forced universities to revise program management and content in order to fulfill new national and international standards. The urge to fulfill the performance gap in higher education provision, formed by the years of Soviet isolation in higher education was realized through the wide-scale monitoring of university performance in the 2010-s which followed by multiple closures and mergers of institutions.

Not targeting universities or research organizations directly, legislation restricting NGO ‘funding coming from abroad’, was implemented in 2006 and then toughened up in 2012. This ‘Foreign Agent Law’ had an effect on the professional environment of academics by significantly decreasing their opportunities for cooperation with foreign colleagues (Romanov & Iarskaia-Smirnova 2015). A new restriction, under the ‘Undesirable Organizations Law‘, was signed into law in 2015. It gave an opportunity to prosecutors to shut down any foreign or international organizations considered a threat to the constitutional order and national security (such as Open Society Foundation, European Platform for Democratic Elections, The National Endowment for Democracy are among those that suffered). This has affected the funding opportunities for researchers and increased the restrictions in the field of human rights which, again, do not target academics primarily, but inevitably affects the practices of the people involved, especially those in social sciences.

At the same time, the Federal Law “About tertiary professional education” (FL №198, 27.07.2010) emphasized the necessity of pluralism in opinions and beliefs to be provided by education, in order to train free and independent individuals and guaranteed the provision of academic freedoms to students, educators and researchers and mentions the entailing of academic responsibility. The list of freedoms included: freedom of educators and scholars to choose the topics and methods for research and teaching, freedom of students to get knowledge according to their likes and needs (FL #198, 27.07.2010). In 2012 it was replaced by the new law on education, which has become an umbrella regulation for the educational institutions on all levels from kindergartens to postgraduate studies. New legislation does not have pluralism of opinions and the education of independent individuals among its goals. Instead it focuses in increase of transparency, accountability and autonomy (FL №273 from 29.12.2012, art.3), thus revealing state dilemma between the desire to control the university agendas and at the same time pushing higher education system towards higher financial autonomy.

The main large-scale comparative studies of academic environment held in the last decades are International Academic Profession (1991–1993) and Changing Academic Profession (2007–2012). CAP survey in Russia (2012) is based on the sample of 25 randomly selected universities out of 311 accredited higher education institutions in 9 regions with the densest university population (Bain 2009) Around 1600 respondents filled in the survey which is 60-65 per
university (Yudkevich et al. 2013:9). According to CAP survey (2012) those university employers who prioritize teaching experience more administrative presence in both promotion and control of their workload, than those who consider research their main sphere of activities, even though both groups experience administrative control to a significant extent. (Kozmina 2014:143) This gives a hint that in a rigid structure of university corporation research might be a space for academic freedom, but not as a guaranteed right, but rather as something taken while not being controlled.

2.4. Research on academic freedom in Russia

Based on Altbach’s research, Russia of the late 1990s fell into a group of countries with a re-emerging academic freedom (2001:215). Smolentseva (2003) confirms this idea, emphasizing the lack of funding as the main constraint, while the ideological pressure on universities was no longer seen as an issue. Assessing academic freedom in the second decade of the 21st century, Dubrovskiy (2017) highlights over-regulation of universities and a conservative turn in the relationship of universities and the state, implying increased control and morbid attention to academic everyday activities. This assessment is supported by the latest GPPI report, which emphasizes increased state pressure and atmosphere of self-censorship among scholars as a response to it (Kaczmarska 2020). Yet, it is important to understand that these are performance-assessing research, the goal of which is to understand the general climate. Meanwhile, no empirical studies with a focus on academic self-evaluation has been conducted, except an ongoing project of the Center of Independent Social Research (CISR) in Saint Petersburg (Olimpieva 2020) and some op-eds (for example, Zavadskaya 2019, Potapova 2019), which make attempts to reflect on what the idea of academic freedom is inside the community of practice itself.

Despite the lack of research about opinions or values of academics in the context of academic freedom, there is still a number of academic publications that touch upon the subject of academic freedom in one way or another. For example, Kaplan (2007) and Dubrovskiy (2017) offer a look at academic freedoms in Russia from a historical perspective. Romanov and Iarskaia-Smirnova (2015) comment on the law on foreign agents and express concern that the consequences may affect academic freedom. In addition to this, Babintsev et al. (2016) add technocentrism and the bureaucratization of universities to the list of challenges that academics experience, while Dubrovskiy (2017) discusses the return of ideological pressure from the state on academia.

Due to the fact that little research of academic freedom in Russia has been published in English, it was decided to check the journals in the national language. It was uneasy given the local culture of academic publications lacking interdisciplinarity (as well as access to international
publications in many cases). This forces researchers to make decisions about disciplinary affiliation of their research, which traps them in a narrow corridor of literature in the field and prevents them from having a worthwhile academic discussion.

I managed to identify three disciplinary groups of researchers who focused on academic freedom in their research, but in most of the cases failed to integrate it to a wider discussion. While having a limited development of the concept of academic freedom in the legislation, it could be expected that human rights researchers or legal scholars would be interested in outlining the contours of academic freedom in judicial practice. The absence of this debate over a long period of time makes it impossible for Shugrina (2013) and Gumerov (2012) to hold up either a normative view of academic freedom as a guide or to approach it empirically.

Another group of researchers who could potentially contribute to our understanding of the place of academic freedom in Russia are higher education scholars focusing on academic culture, the role of universities and the daily life of people working in academia (Grebnev 2001; Abramov 2010, 2011; Volosnikova 2005; Nikolsky 2008, 2013). However, according to Smolentseva (2018:3), higher education studies is a very small, newly-established field in Russia, which means that the choice of topics in it is still heavily dependent on the institutions supporting this research, infrastructurally and financially. Following the aspiration of impact-based research, the most widely supported topics are those related to teaching solutions and management, along with the internationalization of higher education, and other practice-oriented topics. Academic freedom, thus, stays at the periphery of academic publications and inquiry, not being studied empirically in the local context.

The third category of researchers for whom academic freedoms may be of interest are researchers conducting economic or managerial studies (Kuzminov and Yudkevich 2007; Balatsky 2014; Kurbatova and Kagan 2016). Their articles, in comparison to those from the two other groups previously considered are data-driven, providing causal models. They do consider academic freedom to be a complex entity, but rather a mundane component of academic activity. However, precisely because of this de-problematization of the concept, they do not create any discussion about the nature of academic freedom in Russia, where it presumably cannot be practiced in a standard way (if one might talk about any standardization at all within the Russian context) by the very definition of academic freedom. Settling different goals and not participating in the determination of the boundaries of academic freedom, these researchers do not intend to contribute to the international debate in this field.

After nearly quarter of a century since the establishment of what is called the higher education system in Russia, there is still very little empirical research on academic freedom, its nature, implications and the ways of practicing it in the local context. This is a clear gap in the current research on academic freedom which needs to be fulfilled by multi-faceted research, including the one which is this dissertation.
CHAPTER 3 Legal landscape of Russian academia

According to the existing scholarship on academic freedom there is neither universal understanding of academic freedom, nor even a regional one. Different involved parties tend to interpret it in such a large conceptual corridor that it sometimes leads to support of conflicting ideas (Åkerlind and Kayrooz 2003: 328). Academic freedom is not present in any international legally binding agreement, although covered in declarations or statements including Magna Charta Universitatum (1988), UNESCO’s recommendation (1997), or Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly recommendation (2006). As the study of Karran and Beiter shows, 20 out 27 EU states have academic freedom protected by constitution, yet 25 out of 27 have it covered in the national legislation (2020:8). Nevertheless, as the survey showed, there is no confidence among European respondents in the protection of their academic freedom (2020:16). This identified gap between manifestation and practice, in a setting one would expect to be the most protective of academic freedom, inspires to continue research of this disparity in the environments which are considered to be challenging in terms of their respect to individual freedoms, like Russia.

When approaching this discrepancy, I argue that the dichotomy of law and ‘reality’ is not entirely functional unless we establish that this juxtaposition is relying on the same ontological assumptions for both, regulations and subjects of regulation. I refer here to the difference between practice, belief, and speaking. The law can be approached as a concentrated expression of beliefs of a given society, but also as a practice that creates specific institutional setting. What people say about academic freedom can be either of the three options (practice, belief, or speaking). We can treat a statement about someone’s work as evidence of what is happening to them, thus analyzing practice of academic freedom. Such statement can be also seen as a belief, i.e. communication of respondent’s expectations from something they have a vision of. Finally, academic freedom can be just a framework of conversation, a narrative, which is indeed supported by the real experiences of the participants, as well as their beliefs, yet it reflects them as much as it reflects the context of speaking or other life obstacles.

The reason why I find this ontological clarity crucial is because it leads to different research problems. If we treat law as an expression of beliefs, and approach respondents’ inputs also as beliefs, then the discrepancy between the law and empirics illustrates the mobility of the norm. This can mean either that it was once formulated and since then have noticeably changed, or that there are multiple groups formulating what is academic freedom to them, for example bureaucrats and academics. This discrepancy identifies presence of academic freedom as a category within selected society problematizing its inconsistency.

In case if we treat law as a practice, we expect that it is a guideline for proper functioning of professional infrastructure, regulator of relationship between various academic actors. Academics, whose input we also consider to be representative of their practice in this approach, when saying that they do not feel that their academic freedom protected, reflect this regulation.
Feeling unprotected in a setting which is regulated by some protective legislation means not experiencing the infrastructure that the law is expected to define, thus identifying lack of noticeable regulation. In this case discrepancy between law and practice illustrates deficiency of academic freedom in the studied context and problematizes the absence of its provision.

Providing illustrations of these two approaches I want to show that the way how we define human subjects’ inputs leads to formulation of different research problems, and therefore different solutions. Among various taxonomies of the approaches how to study academic freedom there are those that are based on data sources used (Spannagel 2020), on division to intellectual and empirical academic freedom (Matei 2020) or de jure and de facto division (Karran and Beiter 2020). I advocate for defining the level of analysis (practice, belief, speaking) as a separate stage while using any of these frameworks.

In this chapter I will focus on the two practice-oriented approaches of assessing legal dimension of academic freedom in a selected context. Both of them imply that the law is more than just a social consensus of the value of academic freedom in a given society, but rather a regulation of the academic institutional setting defining conditions for realization of academic freedom at the workplace. Kinzelbach, Spannagel, and Saliba (2020) assess legal environment of academic freedom as part of a wider spectrum of measurements, thus considering academic freedom as a multidimensional complex of indicators that should be seen together in order to understand the context. I call this approach composite, as it encourages to look at multiple things at once. Karran (Karran 2007; Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017; Karran & Beiter 2020) are on the opposite encourage to look separately at the various implications of academic freedom, as well as on the constituents of those dimensions. I call this approach fragmented because it suggests seeing the complexity of the picture through detailed analysis of its parts that need to be researched separately.

Using both of these frameworks allows to see the legal context of academic freedom in Russia from multiple perspectives. Even though in the actual analysis of the academics’ perspective in the next chapters I approach academic freedom as a framework of speaking, referring to legal practice in a very indirect way as one of the multiple factors that can be considered respondents as relevant when defining their understanding of the academic profession and making sense of the working environment they are involved in. However, I see a separate value here in using this approach to the legislation as a form of practice, thus providing the reader with the context in which my participants live and make sense of their professional activities.


3.1. Composite approach

Composite approach of studying academic freedom refers to the idea that we see the complexity of the picture, by adding all the details to it and treating them as a whole. In this chapter composite approach is represented by the work of Kinzelbach, Spannagel, and Saliba (2020). Through the last years they have been working on effective academic freedom measurement, and in 2020 they presented the results in collaboration with Varieties of Democracy Index (V-Dem). The project’s product is the dataset coded for more than 180 countries in the time range from 1900 to 2019 and consisting of nine indicators, five of which form a new Academic Freedom Index (Afi) (p.1). The team emphasizes that purely legal analysis would provide only a skewed picture of reality without de facto academic freedom (p.2), therefore they rely on expert assessment which aims “to contextualizes de jure protections with observations of the de facto situation” (p.3). Thus, apart from two factual variables, directly referring to legal sources, i.e. “constitutional provision for the protection of academic freedom” and “states’ international legal commitment to academic freedom under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” (p.10), there are no specific indicators referring to legal protection of academic freedom, only in a non-direct fashion through the expert-based index.

Academic Freedom Index includes the following constituents, coded on a 4-point scale on a country-year basis:

- the freedom to research and teach;
- the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination;
- the institutional autonomy of universities;
- campus integrity; and
- the freedom of academic and cultural expression (p.7).

Below is the chart generated by V-Dem website showing the dynamics of academic freedom change in Russia. In line with what have been discussed in the previous chapter it shows some freedom observed in pre-revolution times, dramatic decrease in Soviet times and gradual improvement from 1986 (start of Perestroika), followed by the peak in 1993 after adoption of the Constitution of Russian Federation in 1993, and then noticeable decline during 2010-s. Based on this chart we can see that change of the constitutional order in the country implying the guarantee of human rights and freedoms by the new Constitution correlates with the moment of highest academic freedom appreciation which only goes done since the first Putin’s presidency from 2000.
The assessment of the effects of specific legislation pieces lies out of the scope of methodology proposed by Kinzelbach, Spannagel, and Saliba (2020), focusing on de facto experiences of academic freedom, only indirectly inspired by specific changes in state regulation of higher education and science. Yet what the chart shows is that academic freedom in Russia have been changing in line with the regime fully synchronized with the timeline of the main political changes happening through the last 120 years, independent from the normative innovations developed in the process.

While appreciating comparative capacity of the V-Dem dataset and Academic Freedom Index, such lack of any divergence between academic freedom and the regime fluctuation makes academic freedom look like a derivative of a regime and neglects the point of having a separate index aiming to produce nuanced vision. It is hard to assess if it is due to the composite approach which produces an overly non-specific picture, or due to the coders and their access to the empirics, yet for the purpose of this research and specifically this chapter composite approach represented by Academic Freedom Index is not ideal as it does not allow to approach the rule-making process in a sufficiently detailed way.
3.2. Fragmented approach

Apart from looking at various components of a complex system together, there is a way to approach complexity of a phenomenon by splitting it to its constituents and building the understanding while paying detail attention to each component. This is how Karran approaches academic freedom in a series of publications (2007, 2017, 2020). Legislation in the field of academic freedom regulation is approached through criterions referenced approach which implies that there are five distinctive areas of academic freedom implication (see in Table 1) allowing to assess coherency and effectiveness of the law in selected contexts (Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017:210). As much legislation is treated as representative of the actual practice in the field, it is studied separately from the de facto experiences of academics (Karran & Beiter, 2020), thus speaking only for the regulation of the environment of academic interaction, not the interaction itself.

Table 1. Criteria for the assessment of academic freedom legislation

| International agreements and the constitution (0-20%) | 1) Constitutional protection for academic freedom: compliance  
1a) Provision of Freedom of Speech (0-2%)  
1b) Provision of Academic Freedom (0-2%)  
1c) Reference to Institutional Autonomy (0-1%)  
1d) Reference to Self-Governance (0-1%)  
1e) Robustness of Provisions (0-4%)  
2) Constitutional protection for academic freedom: ratification  
2a) ICCPR (free speech provision) (0-1,5%)  
2b) OP-ICCPR (complaints procedure before UN) (0-1,5%)  
2c) ICESCR (right to education provision) (0-1,5%)  
2d) OP-ICESCR (complaints procedure before UN) (0-1,5%)  
2e) ECHR (free speech provision) (0-4%) |
| Teaching and Research (0-20%) | Protection for teaching and research (0-20%) |
| Institutional Autonomy (0-20%) | 1) Legal provision for institutional autonomy (0-4%)  
2) Internal operation of autonomy  
2a) Rector’s appointment (0-1%)  
2b) Internal structures (0-1%)  
2c) State finding (0-1%)  
2d) Commissioned Research (0-1%)  
2e) staff appointments (0-2%)  
2f) student recruitment (0-1%)  
2g) degree accreditation (0-1%)  
3) State regulation of autonomy (0-4%)  
4) Private sector constraints on autonomy (0-4%) |
| Self-governance (0-20%) | 1) Legal provision for self-governance (0-2%)  
2) Operational self-governance  
2a) Existence of collegial bodies (0-1%)  
2b) Composition of collegial bodies (0-2%)  
2c) Composition of Senate (0-3%)  
2d) Strategic decision-making (0-6%) |
3.2.1. Constitution and international agreement ratification

Presence (or absence) of academic freedom in Constitution and international agreements are the most straightforward checks for general presence of academic freedom in a selected national environment. Those can be seen as separate, not integrated indicators in V-Dem block of measurements of academic freedom. They are also considered to be a relevant assessment by Karran, Beiter, and Appiagyei-Atua (2017:226). What is remarkable about their approach is that it expands further than providing a binary variable of presence or absence of academic freedom, instead general principles like freedom of speech, and various components of academic freedom, like institutional autonomy or self-governance, are given separate weights (see Table 2). This allows to approach Constitutional protection in a more comprehensive way.

The Constitution of Russian Federation (1993) guarantees freedom of speech (art.29.1), information (art.29.3) and creative activities including scientific activities and teaching (art.44.1). Even though reference to teaching partially address the issue of academic freedom, there is no reference to academic freedom as a separate concept, neither to institutional autonomy or self-governance of higher education institutions. There are no regulations that would conflict with those principles either. The general constitutional context can be considered as fairly (partially) addressing the above rights. As long as we treat academic
freedom as a principle related to the context of free speech and free expression, it is buttressed in the Constitution. However, in order to have fully robust provision of academic freedom guarantees, academic freedom needs separate independent recognition. See the calculation of the score for constitutional protection in Table 2.

Table 2. Constitutional protection for academic freedom: compliance levels and scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score for Russia</th>
<th>Provision on freedom of speech</th>
<th>Provision on academic freedom</th>
<th>Reference to institutional autonomy</th>
<th>Reference to self-governance</th>
<th>Robustness of provisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>2% (full)</td>
<td>1% (partial)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>2% (partial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max score</td>
<td>2% full: there is full, explicit provision in the Constitution</td>
<td>2% full: there is full, explicit provision in the Constitution</td>
<td>1% full: there is full, direct, explicit reference in the Constitution</td>
<td>1% full: there is full, direct, explicit reference in the Constitution</td>
<td>4.0% full: the general constitutional context (notably limitation clauses) fully buttresses the above rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s assessment based on Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017. P.226

The Constitution of Russian Federation says: “The universally-recognized norms of international law and international treaties and agreements of the Russian Federation shall be a component part of its legal system. If an international treaty or agreement of the Russian Federation fixes other rules than those envisaged by law, the rules of the international agreement shall be applied.” (art.15, p.4). This means that international laws and regulation ratified by Russia should be considered as part of legal practice in the country.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) adopted in December 1966 signed by the Soviet Union in 1968 and ratified later in 1973 (OHCHR indicators). Karran et al. (2017:227) emphasize the importance of the Article 19 related to freedom of expression (UN 1983a) and Article 2 ensuring participant states’ dedication to create the environment protecting individual rights covered in the Covenant (UN 1983a). The Optional Protocol to the ICCPR (OP-ICCPR) regulates individual complaints for ICCPR and has been signed by Russia in October 1991 with the remark that it can only be applied to prospective issues, and only if an individual “has exhausted all available domestic remedies” (UN 1966b). Even though this is compliance with the reservation, when counting the score, I treat it as fully ratified because the reservations in question do not target educational-related issues, neither they prevent an individual from using this opportunity, thus being protected by the initial agreement.
Another international convention that Karran et al. (2017:227) refer to is International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which moves further from general freedom of expression to a more specific freedom ‘for scientific research and creative activity’ (Article 15(3))(UN 1983b, 9). It also has academic freedom formulated as part of a right for education (Article 13) and encourages states to provide legal environment to ensure these rights (Article 2(1)) (UN 1983b, 5). ICESCR have been signed by the Soviet Union in 1968, ratified in 1973, and stays unchanged for Russian Federation until current day (UN 1966a). Optional protocol to the ICESCR have not been signed or ratified by Russia (UN 2008).

Karran et al. assign bigger weight to European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the right to freedom of expression that it guarantees (ECHR 2010, 11) partially because their research is focused on European Union (2017:227). However, it can be considered a relevant indicator for Russia, too. First of all, it has been ratified since March 1998 (FL №54 from 30.03.1998), which is nearly through the whole history of Russia Federation as a separate state after the breakup of the Soviet Union, and second, Russia is a part of European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and in this respect is part of European academia and its regulatory frameworks. Even though some of ECHR protocols have not been ratified in Russia, they are not related to free speech, and therefore were not considered affecting the calculation of the score.

Table 3. Constitutional protection for academic freedom: ratification levels and scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ICCPR (free speech provision)</th>
<th>OP-ICCPR (complaints procedure before UN)</th>
<th>ICESCR (right to education provision)</th>
<th>OP-ICESCR (complaints procedure before UN)</th>
<th>ECHR (free speech provision)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score for Russia</td>
<td>1.5% (ratification)</td>
<td>1.5% (ratification)</td>
<td>1.5% (ratification)</td>
<td>0% (non-ratification)</td>
<td>4% (ratification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max score</td>
<td>1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions</td>
<td>1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions</td>
<td>1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions</td>
<td>1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions</td>
<td>4% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s assessment based on Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017. P.228

With all recognition of the further follow up UN reports about implementation of the international agreements, I do not include them to the current calculation, as they are also absent from the framework of Karran et al (2017). Moreover, implementation reports can be considered in further developments of suggested approach while being a middle ground in between de jure and de facto approaches to academic freedom. Such report can be helpful to
see whether declared principles meet the reality they are expected to frame, while staying the normative documents, and not simply feedback from the targeted population.

3.2.2. Teaching and research

Federal laws of Russian Federation, as well as Constitution, have legal supremacy on the entire territory of the state (Art.4.2). Federal Laws have the same legal strength as the Constitution. Two major differences are: the level of jurisdiction, and the authority responsible for passing it. Constitutional laws are regulations happening on the national level (art.76.2) and require two thirds of State Duma (lower house) and three quarters of Federation Council (upper house) to be passed (Art.136). Meanwhile federal laws’ jurisdiction is shared between national and regional levels (Art.76.2), and decisions about passing them are made through State Duma (lower house of parliament) majority votes (Art.105). This means that the absence of academic freedom in the Constitution should not be seen as a gap in the respective regulation. If it is present on the level of federal legislation, it is valid and legally enforced.

Federal Law №273 from 29.12.2012 On education in Russian Federation is the main regulation covering all the levels of education starting from pre-school to post-graduate stage (art.23). It also covers what is called additional [дополнительное] education, focused on cultural or sport activities outside curricular of general education, as well as additional professional [дополнительное профессиональное], or continuing education implying professional development and professional retraining programs. The new law has replaced previously separate Law on Education (№3266-1 from 10.07.1992) and Law on Graduate and Postgraduate Education (FL №125 from 22.08.1996) and became an umbrella legislations for all education-related activities. As the Federal Centre for Educational Legislation (FCEL) comments: “the effectiveness of educational legislation in Russia is conditional to its clarity, comprehensiveness, and enforceability”, meaning that even though the new law fulfilled a lot of urgent needs like distribution of powers and quality control, it is repetitive and lacking of effective means of legal enforcement (FCEL 2013).

Article 47 of the law describes the legal status of pedagogical workers, their rights, freedoms and guarantees of their fulfillment. There is no specification of the level of education to which those pedagogical workers should be involved, therefore it can be assumed that it is relevant for teachers at all levels, including higher education. Academic rights and freedoms are covered among other labor rights and guarantees and include the following:

1) freedom of teaching, freedom to express opinion, freedom from interference in professional activity;

2) freedom to choose pedagogically justified forms, means, methods of education and training; [I interpret it as freedom of teaching]
3) the right to creative initiative, development and use of individually-developed programs and methods of training and education within the framework of an ongoing educational program, a separate academic subject, course, discipline (module); [freedom of teaching]

4) the right to choose textbooks, content and means of education and training in accordance with the educational program and in the manner established by legislation on education; [freedom of teaching]

5) the right to participate in the development of educational programs, including curricula, calendar curricula, courses, disciplines, teaching materials and other components of educational programs; [freedom of teaching]

6) the right to carry out scientific, artistic, and research activities, to participate in experimental and international activities, in development and implementation of innovations; [freedom of research]

7) the right to free use of libraries and information resources, as well as to get access to information and telecommunication networks and databases, educational and methodological materials, museum funds, educational and technical support facilities in accordance with the local regulatory acts of the organization carrying out educational activities; [freedom of information]

8) the right to free use of educational, methodological and scientific services of an organization engaged in educational activities in the manner established by the legislation of the Russian Federation or local regulatory acts; [freedom of information]

9) the right to participate in the management of an educational organization, including in collegial government bodies, in the manner established by the charter of this organization; [self-governance]

10) the right to participate in the discussion of issues related to the activities of the educational organization, including through governing bodies and public organizations; [freedom of intramural and extramural expression]

11) the right to join public professional organizations in the forms and in the manner established by the legislation of the Russian Federation; [freedom of association + freedom to join professional unions]

12) the right to appeal to the commission for the resolution of disputes between participants of educational relations; [right to a fair trial]

13) the right to protect professional honor and dignity, to a fair and objective investigation of violations of professional ethics of pedagogical workers. [individual autonomy]

Karran et al. propose to assess the level of protection of teaching and research on a five-point scale based on how clear and inclusive the regulations are (2017:213). They do recognize
certain level of subjectivity when assigning this score (2017:212), especially when it comes to distinguishing between various categories within partial compliance. Even though the Law on Education covers quite some areas of academic freedom implications, the idea of academic freedom as a concept is not formulated there explicitly which prevents it from becoming transferable through the contexts. What is more, trying to cover all the levels of education, the Law focuses on the variety of teaching experiences without going into details regarding research. Based on these considerations, the score assigned for protection and teaching is 10% (out of 20%) which according to the scoring system of Karran et al. refers to “a general statement (…) made on academic freedom, but without the necessary elaboration or concretization of this statement elsewhere in the h.e. legislation or, (…) [revealing] some serious deficits when assessed against generally agreed criteria on academic freedom” (2017:213).

3.2.3. Autonomy

Article 3.9 of Federal Law №273 On Education lists “autonomy of educational organizations, academic rights and freedoms of teachers and students (..), transparency and accountability of educational organizations” among the principles of educational regulation in Russian Federation. The same law grants permission on design and implementation of a unified education policy (Art.6.1), establishing federal state requirements to the education programs (Art.6.6) and state supervision and control of the education organizations’ activities (Art.6.9). It is the state who is in charge of giving licenses, carrying out accreditation and supervising compliance (Art.90.2). However, despite identifying relatively high level of control over educational organizations (including universities) the law makes an emphasis on state-public nature of management of education system, implying reliance on democracy, autonomy, information transparency and public opinion (Art.89.1). It explicitly specifies that educational organizations are autonomous in “determining the content of education, choosing educational and methodological support, educational technologies” (Art.28.2), conducting research or producing artistic expression (Art.28.4). Even though such description of university autonomy makes it barely distinguishable from academic freedom, it covers multiple dimensions of university autonomy. Counting the score of legal provision of university autonomy, I classify it as partial cause its comprehensive coverage is accompanied with the parallel limitations.

Educational organizations are free and independent in defining their form and internal structure (Art.27.1), which includes division to faculties and departments, establishing of subunits, both physical (for example, division to campuses) and functional (for example, labs) (Art.27.2) which is equivalent to full autonomy for the following criteria. Recruitment, promotion and firing of staff as well as defining their job duties (Art.28.5) is regulated on the organizational level. Based on the law the state only defines access to pedagogical labor market by specifying that higher education in related disciplines is necessary to conduct teaching
(Art.46.3). This can be interpreted as complete autonomy for this criterion in the scoring system.

**State funds** are distributed among public universities based on the control numbers of enrollment. What this means is that state defines specific number of students (per university, and per discipline) that will be financially supported and provides university with per capita funds which include the price of each student’s education in terms of teaching and material infrastructure (Art.99.2). Salary of the staff as well as system of support for individual achievements is defined by the educational organization. Yet it would be wrong to assume that state is the only donor of higher education. In fact, state support forms around 60% of a yearly university budget, while the rest of resources comes from universities’ own funds, students who pay for their education, and to minor extent from external or foreign funds (Abankina & Filatova & Vynaryk 2016:132). There is no regulation defining the ways how university should distribute the money within the organization. Neither state approve is needed for universities’ participation in profitable activities or **commissioned research** involving innovations or other practical implications of universities’ intellectual property (Art.103.1). Thus, it can be concluded that higher education institutions have partial autonomy in terms of state funding and partial autonomy in commissioned research. I subtracted part of both coefficients because of deficiencies in the regulations. For example, there is no transparent regulation on distribution of additional subsidies to universities which can be proportional to the funds university gets for students. Neither can we see clarity regarding commissioned research except universities’ eligibility to be involved in it and make profit.

**State accreditation** of educational activities is carried out for educational programs in accordance with federal state educational standards (Art.92.1). The latter ones are mandatory for accreditation of all higher education institutions (irrespectively of their financial and organizational status), except Moscow State University (MSU) and Saint Petersburg State University (SPbSU) (FL № 259 from 10.11.2009), federal universities (there is 10), and national research universities (27 excluding MSU and SPbSU) approved by the President of Russian Federation (FL№ 260 from 10.11.2009). Thus, 39 universities out of nearly a thousand of higher education institutions can have their own educational standards. Even though, those 39 can be considered fully autonomous when it comes to degree accreditation, I find their proportion too little to increase the score for degree accreditation from absent to partial.

The general rule for **rector’s appointment** is that it is either “elected by the consortium of employees of the educational organization with subsequent approval”, or directly appointed by the founder of the educational organization (Art.51.1), i.e. by the Ministry of Education in case of public universities. Rectors of the universities with special status covered earlier are appointed by the President in case of MSU and SPbSU (Art.51.1.3), or by the Government in case of federal universities (Art.51.1.4). Having externally-appointed rector balances higher level of autonomy these universities have in defining their teaching and research agendas. Lack of capacity to affect the process of leadership appointment classifies as absent autonomy in the respected criteria in the scoring system.
Admission to undergraduate degrees is carried out on the basis of Unified State Examination [ЕГЭ in Russian] (Art.70.1) in which all high school graduates take part. However, it is university who makes a decision about the number and combination of the disciplines necessary for admission (Art.70.6) as well as the required exam score (cannot be lower than the minimum pass established by the state) (Art.70.3). For the programs requiring some specific artistic or physical skills it is allowed to have additional exams that will be taken into account together with Unified State Examination results (Art.70.7). Universities having their own educational standards are eligible of having additional exams on the undergraduate level, irrespectively of the discipline (FL№ 260 from 10.11.2009). Number of budget-funded students is defined by the state, yet the overall enrolment depends exclusively by university capacities. Thus, according to Karran et al. (2017:217) system, autonomy in questions of student recruitment in Russia can be considered partial, i.e. state and universities share the responsibilities for formulation of enrolment criteria.

Table 4. Legal provision and Internal operation of autonomy: compliance levels and scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal provision</th>
<th>Rector’s appointment</th>
<th>Internal Structures</th>
<th>State Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score for Russia</td>
<td>2% (partial)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>1% (full)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max score</td>
<td>4% full: comprehensive provision on institutional autonomy exists in the legislation</td>
<td>1,5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions</td>
<td>1% full: the university determines internal structures (i.e. creates /abolishes faculties, and/or departments) without state intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioned research</td>
<td>Staff appointments</td>
<td>Student recruitment</td>
<td>Degree accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for Russia</td>
<td>0,5% (partial)</td>
<td>2% (full)</td>
<td>0,5% (partial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max score</td>
<td>1% full: power to undertake commissioned research expressly detailed in h.e. laws</td>
<td>2% full: The law specifies minimal detail on the categories of academic posts and the criteria for their fulfilment, universities have complete discretion to recruit/ promote staff, without state involvement, professorial appointments are neither made nor confirmed by the state</td>
<td>1% full: the university determines the selection criteria and undertakes the process of choosing students for entry to degree programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from very specific components addressed above, Karran et al. (2017) suggest assessing autonomy based on relationship university has with the state and the private sector. As it was seen before, there are areas of performance in which universities have significant amount of control over their own agendas, yet state still has high stakes in defining the shape and form of higher education. Therefore, in Table 5 I classify it as partial regulation, meaning that state is a noticeable actor in higher education, yet it is not in charge of everything. For example, cooperation of university and private sector does not need any state approval (Art.103.1) and there is no separate regulation that would specify conditions for this cooperation. This is the reason why I classify legislation establishing relationship between private sector and higher education as absent.

Table 5. State regulation and private sector constraints to university autonomy: compliance levels and scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score for Russia</th>
<th>State regulation of autonomy</th>
<th>Private sector constraints to autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max score</td>
<td>4% full: university governing bodies are free from state control and enact regulations and make decisions without prior state approval. The state has minimal involvement in regulating universities' activities, but merely checks compliance with legal requirements</td>
<td>4% full: legislation states categorically that the independence of university teaching and research activities cannot be compromised by private funding; requires absolute transparency concerning the source and size of private funding; and imposes restrictions on private sector representation on university governing bodies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.2.4. Self-governance

Governance of higher education is based on the principles of one-man management and collegiality (Art.26.2) which means that on the one hand, executive power is concentrated within rector’s competence (Art.26.3), but on the other hand, there are also collegial bodies, like academic board, or board of trustees (in some cases) (Art.26.4) whose role, authority and duration are defined in university charters (Art.26.5). Student unions and professional unions act as representative bodies in university governance (Art.26.6). Educational institutions are eligible of defining their own organizational structure (Art.27.1) including systems of educational and research division as well as any additional subunits (Art.27.2). The only exception is the necessity to get state approval before creation of university branches (Art.27.7)
I interpret it as partial compliance with **legal provision** because the law identifies possibility for staff to contribute to university governance through academic boards or professional unions, yet it does not say explicitly that it is their right. For the same reason it is only partial compliance with **existence of collegial bodies** (their duties are not specified), and non-compliance with **composition of collegial bodies** and **senate**, as well as access to **strategic decision-making** because all of those are regulated on the university-level by local normative provisions.

**Table 6. Legal provision and operational self-governance: compliance levels and scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Legal provision for self-governance</th>
<th>Existence of collegial bodies</th>
<th>Composition of collegial bodies</th>
<th>Composition of Senate</th>
<th>Strategic decision-making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for Russia</strong></td>
<td>1% (partial)</td>
<td>0,5% (partial)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max score</strong></td>
<td>2% full: an express and satisfactory provision on the right of university self-governance exists in the legislation</td>
<td>1.0% full: the legislation provides for collegial bodies and specifies their duties</td>
<td>2% full: academic staff are guaranteed overwhelming representation (&lt;60%) on</td>
<td>3% full: an overwhelming majority (60% or more) of university Senate members are representatives of all levels of the academic staff, and there are no ‘democratic’ deficiencies.</td>
<td>6% full: academic staff have at least 50% representation on the strategic decision taking body/bodies, e.g. the Senate and/or board/council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Given that universities are in their right to make decisions about internal structure and organization of self-governance, there is no federal regulation on **appointment** or **dismissal of the deans**. Labor Code of Russian Federation specifies that replacement of deans or other heads of university subunits is not conducted based on open call (Art.332 of Labor code). This means that positions of the dean or the head of department are open to internal members only irrespectively of procedure of their appointment in a specific university (elected or appointed by rector). According to the federal requirements in professional **qualifications**, deans are expected to have a higher education degree (no PhD requirement even though in practice that is most often the case) in the disciplinary area of the subunit they will lead and 3 years of relevant experience. With all that, i.e. deans being internal members of the faculty and having no requirement to have PhD degrees, according to the system of measurements in Karran et al. (2017:222) deans’ credentials are in partial compliance with the criteria. For the other criteria
the score is zero, because even despite possibility of academic participation in self-governance on the subunit level, there is no guarantee of this right on the federal level.

Even though academic staff representatives can participate in proposing the candidate, **appointment** (Art.51.10) and **dismissal of the rectors** of public universities is regulated and executed by the Ministry of Education (by President for MSU and SPbSU, by Government for federal universities). Federal requirements to **qualification of Rectors** include higher education in Public Administration or Management and professional experience of at least five year (MD №163 from 06.10.2010). PhD degree is not a requirement (even though as in deans’ case it is common practice). Thus, the compliance score for the indicators assessing involvement of staff in appointments and dismissals of the rector is 0%.

Table 7. Staff powers of appointment and dismissal: compliance levels and scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dean’s/Head of Department’s credentials</th>
<th>Appointing the Dean/Head of Department</th>
<th>Dismissing the Dean/Head of Department</th>
<th>Rector’s Credentials</th>
<th>Appointing the Rector</th>
<th>Dismissing the Rector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score for Russia</td>
<td>0.5% (partial)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max score</td>
<td>1% full: The dean/head of department is an internal appointment and must have a PhD or Professorial rank</td>
<td>1% full: Academic staff exercise control over the appointment of dean/head of department posts</td>
<td>1% full: Academic staff can dismiss the dean/head of department via a vote of no-confidence (or similar procedure), the state is not required to approve, undertake or confirm such dismissals</td>
<td>1% full: the rector is an internal appointment and must have a PhD or Professorial rank</td>
<td>1% full: Academic staff exercise control over Rectoral appointments</td>
<td>1% full: Academic staff can dismiss the rector via a vote of no-confidence (or similar procedure)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.2.5. Protection of tenure

UNESCO’s Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel
(1997) considers tenure to be an essential part of higher education legislation, “one of the major procedural safeguards of academic freedom and against arbitrary decisions” which is “essential to the interests of higher education as well as those of higher-education teaching personnel”. However, academic professionals and their contracts can be regulated not only by higher education laws and agreements. This is the case for Russian academics whose contracts are subject of Labor Code of Russian Federation (FL №197 from 30.12.2001). Therefore, as other contracts, academic ones can be signed for either for a fixed term or for an undefined one (Art.332 of Labor code). Thus, there is legal possibility of tenure or long-term contracts, yet it is left for university-level decision-making, on the one hand, giving universities more autonomy in defining the working conditions, and on the other hand, leaving academics as a labor segment unprotected from their employers. There is no special provision for contract termination either in higher education legislation, or in general labor-related one.

This holds true for all the academic teaching staff except Rector whose contract is a fixed one and cannot be longer than five years per time, even though it can be reset for up to three times (Art.332.1 of Labor Code). Another condition for holding Rector’s post is being not older than 70 years old, unless special assumption is made by the President of Russia (for example, the Rector of MSU, Viktor Sadovnichiy, is 81 years old and holds his position since 1992). According to the Article 336 of Labor Code the contract with anyone from the teaching staff or university administration (including rector) can be dismissed in case of infringes of the university charters.

Due to decentralization of contract regulation and delegation of this process to the organizational level there is no ministerial or any kind of official data on what type of contracts different educational institutions are using. Member of Federation Council (Upper House of Parliament) Rukavishnikova 7 comments on the negative implications of the ‘effective contracts’ which are based on weighting research activities of teaching stuff, in order to effectively support their academic achievements (2019). Rukavishnikova highlights that from a stimulating incentive, the way effective contracts were initially imagines, they are becoming mechanisms that strengthen precarity of younger scholars and weaken the positions of staff who is involved primarily in teaching activities. However, she also adds that effective contracts are very slowly getting spread, and it is absolute minority of institutions which is already using them as form of regulation of labor relationships within universities. In September 2020 Rukavishnikova introduced a bill to State Duma (Lower House of Parliament) suggesting to introduce changes in the respective articles of Labor Code, and to have academic tenure as a default option for university staff, with the possibility of temporary contracts which would be not shorter than 3 years. The initiative will be put to a vote during spring of 20218. In the meantime, Russia does not comply with de facto protection of academic tenure.

---

7 Irina Rukavishnikova holds the position of the First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Building.
8 The progress can be tracked on the website of Legislative Support System https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/1021402-7 (Accessed on April 11, 2021)
Regulation on the assignment of academic titles (GD №1139 from 10.12.2013) provides an elaborate guideline of the necessary qualifications to be promoted to associate professor [dozent in Russian] and full professor. They are based on qualifications⁹, working experience, number of publications (overall and in the last years), number of textbooks (education-related materials are counted separately from research), number of supervisees, amount of teaching, and position held in the administrative organization of the unit they are associated with (Art.8 GD №1139 from 10.12.2013). There is separate legislation specifying conditions of promotions for those who have degrees received abroad (MD №721 from 11.06.2020). Comprehensiveness of this regulation allows to assign maximal score for the criteria of provision of academic advancement.

Table 8. Protection for academic tenure and promotion: compliance levels and scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score for Russia</th>
<th>De jure protection: duration of contracts</th>
<th>De facto protection: Duration of contracts</th>
<th>Provision for contract termination in h.e. legislation</th>
<th>Provision for contract termination in other legislation</th>
<th>The provision for academic advancement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max score</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>0% (non)</td>
<td>6% (full)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max score</td>
<td>4% full: The legal framework envisages permanent contracts (or fixed-term contracts with a long-term perspective) for all academic staff at post-entry levels</td>
<td>4% full: 66.7% or more of academic staff have permanent contracts of service (or fixed-term contracts with a long-term perspective)</td>
<td>3% full: Legislation exists expressly ensuring that academics’ contracts cannot be terminated on operational grounds, or provides strict protection when such contract termination is contemplated</td>
<td>3% full: civil service/labour law provides comprehensive protection when the termination of academics’ contracts is contemplated on operational grounds, e.g. by requiring a clear statement of the grounds for termination, considering alternatives to termination, and where termination is unavoidable, priority criteria are followed</td>
<td>6% full: legislation makes comprehensive provision (e.g. via a tenure-track system) for advancement to higher positions, based on an assessment of academic excellence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

⁹Russia has a two-stage doctorate. After successful defense of dissertation, a scholar gets a title of ‘Kandidat Nauk’ (Doctoral Candidate). Later, as part of a separate process a person with the ‘Kandidat Nauk’ degree can defend final doctoral dissertation granting them a title of ‘Doktor Nauk’ (Doctor of Science). None of the two is an absolute equivalent of a PhD degree. However, the convention is that all those who have ‘Kandidat Nauk’ degrees are translated and treated as PhDs in the systems with one-stage doctorates.
3.2.6. Calculation of the score

Table 9 summarizes the observations about de jure academic freedom in Russia and shows the calculation of the overall score in accordance with the criterion referenced approach by Karran et al. (2017).

Table 9. Overall score of de jure academic freedom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International agreements and the Constitution</th>
<th>Teaching and Research</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>Self-governance</th>
<th>Protection of tenure</th>
<th>OVERALL SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score for Russia</td>
<td>13.5% / 20%</td>
<td>10% / 20%</td>
<td>8.5% / 20%</td>
<td>2% / 20%</td>
<td>6% / 20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on this table we can see that Russian legislation does not provide a comprehensive protection of academic freedom, being particularly weak in the questions related to protection of individual academics. Putting this score to a comparative perspective, Russian score is below European average which is 52.8%, yet it is remarkable that Russia underscores dramatically only in self-governance assessment (European average 8.6%). When it comes to low score for protection of tenure, the difference is not that big, it is just 1.3% lower than European average (Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017:229). The comparison of Russia to European country is beyond the scope of this research and is presented here exclusively as an illustration allowing to put the numbers to some context.

3.2.7. Limitations of the approach

Even though the framework suggested by Karran, Beiter, and Appiagyei-Atua (2017) is an undoubtedly most comprehensive way of assessing country’s legislation and putting it to a comparative perspective, using it for the analysis of Russia leads to formulation of two lines of limitations, substantive and contextual.

The most fundamental substantive limitation of the approach used in this chapter is dichotomization of agency to university and state, including the influence of business as one of the subdivisions in autonomy calculation, yet no further than that. First of all, it neglects division between public and private higher education leaving aside 213 out of 705 (Ministry of Education 2020) higher education institutions in Russia. Even though private institutions

---

10 Open data provided by Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Available at: https://minobrnuaki.gov.ru/opendata/9710062939-svedeniya-ob-obrazovatelnykh-organizatsiyakh-rossiyskoy-federatsii-osushchestvlyayushchikh-obrazovat (accessed on April 11, 2021)
need state license, as well as accreditation of their programs, as much as the public institutions, other aspects of their autonomy, related to internal structure and staff-related policies cannot be seen within the same framework.

Secondly, I find consolidated nature of higher education institutions a very strong assumption. Configuration of assigned rectors and at least some sort of decentralization on the faculty level creates the whole new layer of relationship within organization, when apart from autonomy demanded from and granted by the state, there are also separate expectations from their immediate organizational authorities. In this case individual researchers would have separate attitudes towards management on organizational and the state level. Same would be true for university administration trying to balance between community regulation and desire to be re-appointed. Even though there are separate criteria capturing credentials of staff in the block related to self-governance, at the final stage they contribute to the overall score interpreted as amount of academic freedom homogenous community within organization has.

Another concern is related to operationalization of self-governance. Methodological framework by Karran et al. (2017) implies assessment of self-governance based on compliance of the state higher education legislation with suggested principles. Yet there are two explanations of non-compliance which would lead to different understanding of the context. On the one hand, self-governance can be missing from the legislation because it is not considered to be an important right of academic workers or simply because of insufficient elaboration. On the other hand, self-governance can be deregulated and delegated to the lower level, like in Russian case, meaning that it is missing from federal legislation because it is responsibility of universities to define it for themselves. This is a more complex scenario as it can mean two opposite things. It can be interpreted as either higher institutional autonomy and in this case lack of state regulation regarding self-governance can be seen as a more positive thing. It can also be seen as fake autonomy, in case if the state increases the scope of universities’ responsibilities together with increase of accountability, thus actually increasing control instead of giving more power. For the purpose of this analysis this unaccounted variety is not critical, because either way we can see that state does not have elaborated policies related to self-governance. However, in case of a bigger scale comparison, I would consider including additional coefficients.

Given that the legal assessment of academic freedom legislation in Russia serves the purpose of establishing the wider context in which my respondents perform their jobs, I do not aim to suggest an alternative measurement here. Instead while approaching the narratives of the participants in Chapter 5 I try to see all possible relationships between individual academics and various layers of authority they have to deal with.

The contextual limitation of using criterion reference approach by Karran et al. (2017) is questionable reliability of the analysis of legislation in the context where the rule of law is often neglected (Human Rights Watch 2020). According to Rule of Law Index by World Justice Project, Russian federation in 2020 is ranked 94 out of 128 countries (World Justice Project 2020), thus raising a serious concern about reliability of results produced in the process of
legislation assessment. How can we expect compliance in the context in which the law is not respected?

After looking closer at the components of the Rule of Law index, one can see that the score is low, yet not for all the components. Constraint on government powers, corruption in the legislative brunch, lack of freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, and massive abuse of criminal justice principles are the weakest sides of Russian legal system. Meanwhile fundamental labor rights, complaint mechanisms, the level of incorruptibility of judicial officials, as well as access to civil justice are around global average which allows to treat specific areas of Russian legislation, for example, education-related legislation, as functional (World Justice Project 2020) and approach them in the analysis as part of a system supported by the real practice.

Even after agreeing that based on Rule of Law Index we can somewhat rely on the analysis of Russian legislation as representing real practice, my main concern that stays unresolved is nearly total absence of court cases related to the Law on Education when it comes to academic freedom protection. Since 2012 when the Law on Education had been passed there has been only two court cases related to academic freedom article. One was referring to the right to a fair and objective investigation of violations of professional ethics of pedagogical workers (Art.47.13) and another one to the right to participate in the management of an educational organization in collegial government bodies (Art.47.9). No legal proceedings related to oppressed freedom of research or teaching, even despite multiple concerns raised in the media by the scholars who experienced restrictions. Among possible interpretations I see lack of legal recourses, meaning that academics simply do not go to the court either due to the lack of trust to the judiciary system or due to the lack of awareness that there are regulations they could refer to. Another possibility is the block of recourses on the level of the courts in case actions against academic freedom restrictions are not initiated.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate relationship between academics and courts. However, this concern opens the window for analysis of trust mechanisms in the academic environment discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 4 Methodology: design, data collection, analysis

There is no single response to what academic freedom is, as well as there is no single unified academia either in the world, or in one country. Even in very compact settings, which is not the case for Russia with its more than nine hundred universities, academic experiences observed in one national context vary significantly, forming a plethora of identities based on institutional or disciplinary affiliation, age, gender, ideological views, and position in a university. The interaction of these identities and associated feelings, beliefs or values can form multiple communities of meaning inside one academia. This dissertation aims to capture the diversity of interpretations existing among various groups, while identifying these groups, the language they use and their entitlements. The purpose of this chapter is to show how, and on what empirical material those interpretations are made. I explain the underlying methodological assumptions and the choices made in the process of data collection and analysis.

Focusing on Russian academics, this research targets people involved in academic work who fulfill the following criteria: they do both teaching and research (proved by academic publications) as part of their job duties, got their primary academic socialization as well as academic degree in Russia, and at the moment of conducting fieldwork continue working there in leading universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. These criteria were chosen for selection of academic workers who have the fullest experiences one can get while working in the Russian system of higher education and science.

Even though research was already seen as one of the core functions of universities through Soviet times (Smolentseva 2017:1096), it is mostly in the first decade of the 21st century when research performance became a mandate in the determination of university excellence and a form of accountability of higher education to society (2017:1101). This holds true not only for special research universities, but for all the higher education institutions that had to meet the necessity to produce and publish academic research. Those institutions which do not have a long history of scientific endeavor and which historically specialized on teaching and preparation of trained labor force, have experienced various difficulties during this transition due to lack of training and rigidity of the local institutional landscapes. Approaching perception of research and the pursuit of freedom related to research production of the academics belonging to the transitional part of higher education system can be valuable on its own, yet not relevant in the scope of this study. Given their deficit of experience of intense scholarly work, the group of university workers from developing universities is not covered in this research.

Another group excluded from the sample is PhD students, or academic workers in the process of getting their degree of ‘kandidat nauk’. Russian higher education system implies a two stage doctorate, and ‘kandidat nauk’, translated as ‘doctor of science candidate’, might be considered as equivalent to a PhD degree. Despite fulfilling most of the criteria necessary to be recruited
as participants of this research, they still hold the status of students. Thus, even if they do perform as teachers and researchers, their position in a university, their rights and duties are to a large extent defined by student regulation. This research deliberately excludes student experience of academic freedom finding it a conceptually different matter. The problem of representation of young academics is solved by recruiting participants who have defended their thesis during the last 5 years.

Russian academics who left Russia and currently work abroad on a permanent basis are also out of the scope of this research. This decision is guided by the intention to understand the sense making process of those who form a community (or multiple communities) of practice inside Russian academia, i.e. those whose values, even if polarized, support participants’ decisions to stay at their job in the country, adapt to its political environment and make sense of their work and work-related perspective there. In order to see the potential variation in academic freedom-related meaning making, happening to respondents when they do work outside Russia, the sample of participants includes those who have part-time or temporary jobs abroad, while staying employees in Russian universities or research centers.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I start with identifying the main assumptions of interpretive epistemology, how they are going to be reflected in my analysis and explain why the qualitative research design is the most beneficial for fulfilling the goals that are set in this dissertation. The questions of rigor and generalizability are discussed in this section, too. After that I proceed with the description of what has been done in relation to data collection and analysis. This includes making a questionnaire, piloting it, reflecting on the necessary changes, sampling respondents, collecting and managing data, and then analyzing it. While the actual analysis will be covered in more detail in further chapters, here I explain the methodological procedure from coding transcribed narratives to construction of a story reflecting all the data collected.

### 4.1. Research design

#### 4.1.1. Justification for qualitative approach

The theoretical framework of this dissertation relies on the conceptual apparatus of interpretive epistemology. This implies that there is no ‘brute data’ or reality that lies outside of any interpretation (Yanow 2000:5), therefore meanings are considered to be central in the analysis of human subjects, their believes and courses of action (Yanow 2007:111). The goal of this research is to approach the meaning-making process of Russian academics through their interpretations of academic freedom and related working experiences.

Given that the meanings are situation-specific, they cannot be generalized without situating them (Yanow 2007:111). A phenomenological approach is taken for the purposes of this
research. It is focused on noticing how one’s interpretation is affected by the lived experiences of this person not only in the context of a particular event, but through the course of previous life (Yanow 2007:113). In other words, between sense-made observation and sense-making, there is a layer of subjectivity, individual optics developed by a combination of life-obstacles from family and class background to participation in some life-changing events (Yanow 2000:5, Yanow 2007:113). Thus, in order to see what academic freedom to Russian academic professionals is, I have to talk not only about academic freedom - involving situations at work - but to some extent about the wider academic and political context respondents live in. Even though each respondent’s interpretations are also affected by their individual biographies, the scope of interviews is limited to professional life-related experiences, because that can be shared by various respondents performing in the same professional environment. Through finding the similarities of plots, I can connect the findings from individual narratives to a common one.

The empirics informing this dissertation are conversations with the interviewees about their experiences and beliefs related to academic work and academic freedom. Even though those experiences and beliefs are subjects of conversation, they are not considered to be the subjects of my research for two reasons. First of all, while referring to the situations in the past, respondents do not reproduce exactly what has happened to them, because the passage of time has abstracted the events since then, as well as the thought processes and reflections that happened during that time (Jerolmack and Khan 2014:181). Instead the respondents provide a representation of the situation in the process of communication with the interviewer in my case. The same is true for beliefs. As Dean and Whyte put it, the interview setting allows to reveal only as much as a respondent is willing to share with the interviewer at the particular moment of conversation (1958:34).

Relying on memories, fantasies and stories as evidences of events would inevitably take me either to attitudinal fallacy (Jerolmack and Khan 2014:179) or fact-checking. As said earlier, my main focus is meaning making supported by the assumption of contextuality and multitude of possible situational ‘truths’. This means that I am interested in how people talk about their actions and thoughts on them, rather than what they really do. Therefore, looking for hard facts or proof-checking respondents’ inputs is outside the scope of this research.

The second reason lies in the conceptual realm. In this dissertation my point of contribution to previous studies is not in finding a new definition of academic freedom, but in proposing an alternative to what academic freedom can be. I claim that apart from being a value (either formal or informal), a practice allowing to assess academic climate, it can be also considered a framework of thinking about work, one of the many. Noticing how respondents for whom academic freedom is not part of a casual vocabulary talk about it in the context of their relationship with colleagues, administration, or even the state, allowed me to see the possibility of alternative points of reference, or alternative frameworks of free performance at the academic workplace outside the scope of traditional understanding of ‘academic freedom’ in the literature.
4.1.2. Data

The data for this research has been collected in three waves, including piloting stage, followed by two field trips, which forms a corpus of twenty-six in-depth interviews with academics from Moscow and St. Petersburg lasting from thirty minutes to an hour and a half. See demography of the study’s population in Table 10.

Table 10. Demographic characteristics of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>10 women, 16 men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>10 from Moscow, 16 from St. Petersburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplines</td>
<td>5 natural and exact sciences, 21 social sciences and humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>8 below 40, 12 in the range of 40-60, 6 after 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Affiliation</td>
<td>4 are primarily affiliated with RAS, 22 are primarily affiliated with universities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews focused on identifying the frames of disciplinary and professional identity of respondents and then figuring out what the place of academic freedom is in the ways they talk about their work.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected as a data collection method for three main reasons. First of all, they allow a relatively free flow of storytelling while still being guided by the questions. This helps to identify the categories used by respondents for self-description and for naming the situations that they find themselves in and the feelings related to these situations. This is how they give meaning to their professional experiences and expectations, and this is what I am specifically interested in in this research while trying to figure out what the place of academic freedom is in these stories.

Secondly, the in-depth interview is a helpful tool when identifying diversity of experiences or variety of interpretations of the same categories. For example, this helped me not only to identify situations in which respondents think about their professional freedom, but also to figure out which contexts they disconnect from the very idea of academic freedom, even if this sounded counterintuitive to existing theory.
Thirdly, even though I would not classify conducted interviews as elite ones, my sample consists of professionals involved in the hierarchical structure in which they appreciate recognition of their status. Therefore, arranging individual conversations instead of focus groups or surveys was not only a matter of logistics, but also the only possible way to approach the respondents.

Even though triangulation is very much recommended for increasing validity of the empirical results (Patton 1999:1192) and on earlier stages of this dissertation I was multiple times suggested to conduct a survey, this opportunity has never been used. The main reason for this is aspiration to epistemological and methodological consistency. Choosing interpretations as the focus of this research, I accept the assumptions of the interpretivist approach, i.e. situational nature of meaning-making, contextuality and subjectivity(-ies). No fact checking is required, because, according to this approach, there are no ‘facts’ beyond interpretation that would be relevant for this research.

The research employs an inductive strategy of participant recruitment which implies formulation of selection criteria in the process of data collection. Yet there are certain characteristics of the participants that were chosen as starting points of the selection process as potential sources of variance in working experience, and therefore, understanding of academic freedom. The list of expectation-driven features of the participants includes the following characteristics: organizational and disciplinary affiliation, visibility and prestige of the institution respondents are associated with, as well as the gender of the participants.

The expectation related to university affiliation was that academics working in conditions that vary from the point of infrastructure, funding and visibility have different experiences both in a personal sense, but also in a wider professional and civic way (Gornall et al 2013). Even though my original focus was only on Moscow and Saint Petersburg, which undoubtedly limits scope on its own, even in the capitals only respondents from highly recognized institutions were chosen. Thus, in fact, the institutional diversity covered does not have significant hierarchical distinction which is very noticeable among top and ‘second league’ universities.

There is no extensive debate about the disciplinary aspect of academic freedom even though there are voices expressing a demand for disciplinary-specific approaches. Calhoun (2006) advocates for disciplinary lens mostly because academic identities are strongly affected by the research subject-specific practices they are involved in, which affects their definition of authenticity and, therefore, academic freedom (Kuh & Whitt 1988; Tierney & Rhoads 1993). Nelson (2011:7). He develops this argument adding that because of deferent needs, academics with diverse disciplinary identities vary in methods of protecting and promoting academic freedom in their fields. Another relevant dimension that is beyond the scope of this research yet deserving to be mentioned is academic freedom in application to students. Nelson argues that freedom in a classroom is realized in disciplinary-specific ways because of the nature of knowledge that is delivered (2011:24). Thus, in order to capture the diversity, I chose respondents from social, exact, and natural sciences. Yet, in the process of inductive selection, the former group showed more variety in itself, which led to their predominance in the sample.
Another source of potential variety of experiences is gender. According to previous research, even in the context where special equality measures are introduced, employment in higher education stays unequal because the managerial tools remain insensitive to gender issues (Teelken & Deem 2013:522). Russia is in 52nd place out of 187 countries according to the gender inequality index presented in the UN Development Program in 2019 (UNDP 2019) and 75th out of 149 countries according to The Global Gender Gap Report 2018 (WEF 2018). The country shows good results in women’s involvement in education but very low political empowerment as was interpreted in earlier research (Hausmann & Tyson & Zahidi 2011). The official conservative polemics in questions of demography, family policies and domestic violence create additional skewness to the patriarchal discourse of Russian power (Temkina & Zdravomyslova 2014:263). Less than one third of all doctoral degrees are held by women, The Russian Academy of Sciences at different levels has less than 25% of women involved in top membership levels (corresponding and full members of RAS). Given this, I expected the Russian academic environment to be somewhat unwelcoming to women, or at the very least having some effect on women academics’ vision of themselves in a predominantly male community in a conservative national setting. This selection criterion was abandoned after the pilot stage. The way my conversations were organized around work-related experiences and pursuit of freedom did not elucidate any work-related gender dynamics.

4.1.3. Sampling

Theoretical sampling means that the data is collected in a way that each next step would stimulate further theory development, controlled by the emerging theory (Strauss 1987:38-39; Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000:27). This approach implies the recruitment strategy being organized in such a way that some of the respondents have minimal difference in features considered crucial for original selection, while other respondents being as different as possible in the selected scope. Minimization allows to find the basic categories and their properties and can be practiced even by starting with one single case, while maximization implies an investigation of the diversity of properties in its widest range (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000:27-28). This technique is normally used in the process of creation of analytical categories and their further classification. Given the time and resource limits of this research, there is no plan to prepare an exhaustive classification of all existing experiences within the Russian academic environment. Yet some within-sample categorization is possible. In Chapter 5, I show the patterns in respondents’ narratives and taxonomies based on them.

The choice of theoretical sampling provides an opportunity both to trace the borders of the sample and develop its interior structure. This agile approach to the selection of the respondents is also called ‘purposive sampling’. It was proposed as a more specified version of theoretical sampling by Corbin and Strauss (1990). It implies keeping an open mind towards all the
experiences that occur during theoretically driven data collection, while concentrating pragmatically on the richest cases and continuing their collection until the point of saturation (Emmel 2013, Silverman 2013:148). The point of saturation is the moment when all the theoretic dimensions are sufficiently elucidated and adding new cases does not make a significant contribution to a novelty of findings, but rather replicates the structure of argumentation (Hennink & Hutter & Bailey 2011:88-90). Thus, when several interviews are conducted and the last few seem to be repetitive, meaning that the new responses do not contribute with new topics or features or do not allow to explore any new theoretical dimensions, this signifies that the point of saturation has been reached.

The idea of recruiting participants based on the considerations of the researcher is opposite to representative sampling featuring all the important characteristics of the studied population on an equal and balanced basis. However, despite the great extent of flexibility, purposive sampling should not be considered purely voluntarist. The main criterion of choice is theoretical expediency, which means that the sample should be of a sufficient size to test the theory or construct a meaningful argumentation (Bryman 1988:90; Silverman 2013: 151).

I am aware that following this approach might result in criticism regarding the researcher being biased in the process of selecting cases, as well as the sample being imbalanced and skewed. The problem of generalizability, which in a nutshell is the concern behind the potential criticism, has been addressed by numerous theorists of qualitative research. For example, Sacks doubts the very possibility of generalization of any conclusions about social practices to the entire statistical population of cases (1992:485, Silverman 2013:155), while Peräkylä argues that it is not the practices but their possibility is generalizable (2011:375, Silverman 2013:155). Gobo (2008) approaches the issue saying the ‘cases’ in different methodologies might mean different things. In quantitative research, ‘cases’ are countable observations, while in qualitative research, ‘cases’ mean the configurations of instances and obstacles in which the observation happens. Therefore, rather than being counted, the cases need to be zoomed and juxtaposed.

4.1.4. Primary data (piloting and interview guide)

The decision to conduct a series of pilot interviews was informed by three considerations. First, the idea was to see whether the interview guide which was developed deductively, supported by literature and expectations from data, actually allows to effectively cover selected topics while provoking further elaborations. Secondly, it was important to see the reaction of the respondents to the raised questions, whether they clearly understand them, to what extent they are ready to discuss selected issues. And finally, I needed some practice as an interviewer to feel more confident in the setting of my research, to prepare for different sorts of emerging challenges.
The interview guide was first formulated as a list of questions, but then I transformed it to the list of topics because every talk was emerging in its own manner and having overly specific questions prevented smoothness. The structure of the talks was the following:

1) Personal info (affiliations, current projects)
2) Academic freedom as a concept (what? From whom? To do what? Not to do what?)
3) Academic freedom in practice (informal signals, self-censorship, avoiding risks)
4) Contextualization of academic freedom (EUSP closure, academic purges in Turkey in 2016-2017)
5) Closing question (What conditions should be respected in an ideal setting in which you would be able to say that you are completely free in the academic sense?)

Each interview started from a respondent’s personal information and ended up with the question about desired future (or present). Everything in between was covered in different ways, i.e. while some of the respondents were more willing to talk and covered most of the issues in their narratives without me questioning, the others needed more guidance.

Seven pilot interviews were conducted. See the distribution of the participants in Table 11. After critical assessment of the quality of the conducted interviews, all of them were taken to the main corpus of data and used for further analysis, even despite some changes in the interview guides that were made after piloting.

Table 11. The distribution of the participants based on their disciplinary field, affiliation, age, and gender on the stage of piloting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5 women, 2 men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>7 from St. Petersburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplines</td>
<td>Political science, Sociology, IR, Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>5 below 40 2 in the range of 40-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg European University, St. Petersburg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking into account the goals formulated earlier and the fact that my strategy of recruitment is purposive sampling, which allows to start the investigation from any meaningfully rich cases, I decided to approach the group of respondents who were more likely to experience tension in terms of academic freedom. This included political scientists, sociologists and human rights
researchers. My second consideration was to start from those who are neither political, nor human rights activists, but rather pure academics with emerging careers, which apart from teaching, includes intense research activities, active publishing and international experiences. I decided to approach political scientists with whom I already had established contacts. They met my selection criteria and were open to give me feedback on the process of the interviews, which I considered highly relevant at this stage.

After piloting the interviews, I modified the interview guide. First of all, I had to probe more before approaching the academic freedom question because some of the respondents did not have any working definition of the concept. In fact, while formulating my research question as a sense-making one, I was not even interested in a definition per se, yet I had to also make it clear for my respondents. An example below shows how an overly straightforward question leads to a very compact response closing the topic.

“Interviewer: What do you actually associate with academic freedom? If not this [we talked about choice of proper wording in the classroom earlier], then what else?

Respondent: To be honest, I associate it with you very much. (...) I have never thought about it before. I heard about it in the context of [Professor] who was teaching human rights and then had to move to the US. This is just an illustration how seldom I think about academic freedom. I don’t formulate it this way.

Thus, I decided that in the following interviews I need to pay more attention to specific experiences, thus moving to a conceptualization of academic freedom in a slower way. It could still be addressed and discussed on an abstract level but after the respondent got the chance to reflect on it right on the spot.

Another aspect that deserved changes was exploration of respondents’ community ties. Through the pilot interviews I realized that this is not a topic that naturally emerges without being specifically addressed. My original take on this topic was to see the scope of academic professional identity, while finding the borderline between relatable and non-relatable experiences of other academics. I used the case of the European University’s closure in St. Petersburg\(^\text{11}\) as an example of restrictions happening at relative proximity to respondents with their disciplinary colleagues in the city they all live. Another case were the purges against

\(^{11}\) European University in St.Petersburg (EUSP) was one of the best social science research institutions. Its license was revoked twice during the last ten years. The first time was in 2007 when EUSP got a European Commission grant for improving the quality of monitoring during elections. The second time was in 2017. Among the 3 main potential reasons are: 1) too liberal and open-minded; 2) scramble for the historic building in which EUSP was based; 3) activities in the development of a new reform proposal for the police which would significantly cut the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
academics in Turkey through 2016-2017. Raising it, I wanted to see if academics belonging to another national context and experiencing regime pressure were relatable to my respondents as people in the same profession living through the strengthening of authoritarianism.

Not only did I find that my respondents had very limited knowledge about Turkish academics, my framework of approaching the scope of inclusion through geographic proximity needed to be replaced completely. Even though at the piloting stage I did not have a chance yet to see the clear division between the varying academic freedom narratives that I describe further in Chapter 5, it was already noticeable that the communal ties are relatively short and need to be approached through other proxies.

Instead of one professional identification, for example, academic employee, or university professor, or researcher, respondents with presumably similar occupation showed a spectrum of relevant identities informed by academic activities they are involved in; For example, additional non-university affiliations. At the piloting stage I realized that being a researcher under the organizational umbrella of the university and an independent research body can have a very different value for a respondent and be associated with varying practices.

Another topic that emerged in some of the interviews and was later included to the guide and discussed with the next respondents is self-governance. Even though my firm intention was not to nudge respondents towards any particular academic freedom formula, the subject of the relationship with different levels of university administration was raised, as well as some sort of discontent with the hierarchical nature of those relationship. I saw it is a potential for a conversation about self-governance and the degree of involvement of the academics in the process of decision-making on the institutional level.

4.1.5. Ethical considerations

In accordance with the chosen methodology, the data is based on the narratives of the respondents. In fact, these are the stories about work practices, disciplinary issues, relationships with colleagues or the stories heard from someone. These narratives include personal data, private episodes or details connected to the particular work responsibilities, names of other people. This is data that requires special protection in order to fulfill the requirements of ethical research.

The participants were approached via email covering the purposes of the research and the procedure of the interview. So, when they consented to participate and arrange the meeting, they were already informed about what I was going to do. At the beginning of each interview

\[12\] From July 21, 2016 to July 19, 2018 Turkish anti-war scholars not supporting Turkish official line of action against the Kurd population experienced severe purges during which 41,705 employees (30 percent of total expulsions) were expelled from educational institutions (Source: https://merip.org/2018/12/turkeys-purge-of-critical-academia/).
I gave the promise of confidentiality, anonymity which includes the anonymization of transcripts and any possible citations and ask for permission to record. Even though none of the respondents prohibited the recording, I made it clear for them that in case they change their mind about participation in my project, they can subtract their interview from my data sample either during the interview or at any moment afterwards.

Some of the questions or topics raised during the interview might be considered somewhat sensitive, therefore I tried to leave a sufficient corridor of flexibility for respondents to feel comfortable during the interviews. As for the potential harm that might be caused by sharing of the private information, compliance with the principle of confidentiality works as a sufficient protection.

4.2. Data analysis

4.2.1. Interview transcription and data management

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim in the language of conducting, i.e. Russian, and anonymized in the process of transcription, which includes changing the real names or places. The principal decision of not translating the transcripts was taken in order not to lose the nuances of meanings. My assumption is that the sense-making process of the Russian academics reflecting on their experiences happening on the territory and in linguistic space of Russia should be approached in the language of origin. Given that due to anonymity reasons I can share the access to full transcripts, only particular citations that are used in the text of the dissertation were translated to English.

Managing the transcripts, coding and analysis were conducted via Atlas.ti, software package for qualitative data management. The decision to use computer-assisted analysis was taken given the amount of data and the necessity to refer to the different segments of the interviews. It was also a big help in the process of coding development providing an opportunity to create and manage the system of codes supporting them with explanatory notes.

4.2.2. Code development and coding

The analytical circle of theory building (2011) is a tool which allows to conduct and report the process of data management in a clear and transparent way.
The analytical procedure (see Figure 1) starts with the descriptive stage. This means going through the text and identifying all the themes that are met that helps to get familiar with the data and estimate its informational potential: what phenomena or ideas are met in the text, what concepts are used to describe them, how these concepts and ideas are connected to each other. This is the stage at which I divided my transcripts to the micro-plots, or basically stories that are covered by the respondents. Among those are “teaching”, “research”, “extramural expression”, “EUSP”, etc. At this stage of coding there was no ambition to produce some sort of a system, rather just a list of plots.

The next step, comparison, implies the first critical reading of the list made at the previous stage and noticing similarities and differences between the fragments within one category. At this stage I identified three main dimensions of variety, emotional (how the respondent feels about the experience), temporal (whether the storyline refers to something that belongs to the past, or is experienced in the present) and subjective (was the story about the narrator or someone else), and some minor specific ones. For example, specific kinds of pressure respondents have identified (community pressure/ pressure from university/ state pressure), or whether respondents considered EUSP closure as a political or a non-political act.

While comparison led to splitting of categories based on identified sources of variety, on the categorization stage I grouped them into a family of codes based on common patterns. For example, the “sources of academic freedom” group consists of the following codes: ‘academic freedom – given’, ‘academic freedom – taken’, and ‘academic freedom – natural’. All of them reflect the nature of academic freedom as a privilege or some sort of symbolic resource, or some sort of non-distributable essence that is naturally present. Another group, “freedom to do”, consists of the codes referring to different practices that a free academic would do. Among those are ‘freedom to teach’, ‘freedom to research’, ‘freedom of union’, ‘freedom to move’, ‘freedom of publication’, and ‘freedom for disciplinary identification’. We see that these codes
are originally from different storylines that were identified at the description stage, yet they refer to the emotional and subjective division identified at the comparative stage. These codes refer to the respondent’s personal (subjective dimension) experiences or expectations, either positive or desired (emotional dimension).

**Conceptualization** implies exploration of the relationship between the identified codes and families of codes. This is the process of giving meaning to the system of codes developed through previous stages. Based on the identified structure of the text it was decided to focus on the features characterizing narrative analysis with its focus on characters, their roles and how the storylines are developed around them. I demonstrate this stage in more detail in Chapter 5 when moving through conceptualization to the stage of **explanation**, when I build a consistent story, a theory that can be used autonomously from the data on which it was built.

### 4.2.3. Data analysis

This dissertation uses narrative analysis as the method of research, strengthened and made more systematic and transparent by the procedures of qualitative text analysis described in Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2011). This means that the object of research are not experiences as such, but rather stories about those experiences produced by the participants of the research and approached in a manner of inductive text analysis.

According to Patterson and Monroe, narrative is distinctive from other forms of communicating experience because of its four features: requirement of agency (characters or actors in the stories), sequential ordering of events, speaker’s positionality (voice of the speaker), and speaker’s primacy (speaker’s perspective of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’) (1998:316).

Identifying storylines in the conversations with respondents means engaging with them, finding the order, or some sort of a system in the verbatim of interviews. As much as every plot need characters, the narrative as an analytical heuristic requires having actors that will play different roles in the stories, thus contributing to narrative development. Even talking about themselves at work, respondents identify the agents of interaction, including their colleagues, authorities, or wider community. Discussing interactions with these multiple characters, respondents’ scope the fabric of the reality within the context of conversation.

Riessman formulates the idea of narrative as a “talk organized around consequential events” (1993:3), meaning not only temporal consequentiality, but also the logic of the connection between different parts of the stories. In this research, I study professional academic narratives, or more specifically narratives of academic freedom. This means that I am interested in stories in which my respondents talk about what they do at work, what is the place of academic freedom in it (if any), and then what happens or should happen, so that this understanding would change. This should not necessarily speak to some ‘real’ changes. Instead it can be
realization of academic freedom after not paying attention to it or adding some specific features to the original understanding. So, the change in question is happening on respondents’ individual timelines in respondents’ individual systems of meanings.

Construction of a narrative is in fact a form of making sense of lived experiences (Gee 1985; Patterson & Monroe 1998:319; Riessman 1993:4). This experience belongs to the person narrating, therefore the voice of the author, or narrator’s perspective is a crucial part of the storyline. The way respondents refer to themselves in the stories they share shows “how the speakers organize experience and reveals the distinctions people make in their everyday lives” (Patterson & Monroe 1998:316). Through relating themselves to others and seeing themselves in various contexts, respondents make the oppositions between good and bad, ‘theirs’ and ‘others’, thus not only being the voices of their own experiences but also the main point of reference, the definition of what is canonical. Thus, if the respondent proceeding through the sequence of the events comes to the conclusion about their meaning, it is outside of the methodological purpose or capacity to agree or disagree with it. As a researcher I can give an interpretation of the story, yet the story itself always provides its own version of ‘truth’.

Following analytical cycle of theory building described in the previous section, I proceed from the stage of getting familiar with the data to applying the narrative analysis framework. The stage of categorization during which coded data is systematized is already informed by the notions of ‘plots’, ‘characters’, ‘positionality’, ‘authenticity’, but it gets more visible on the stage of conceptualization. There I move to production of a narrative, this time one belonging to me as a researcher, in which I share my observations on the main characters, their storylines, assessments and positionalities. While engaging with the meaning-making process of the respondents and identifying their cognitive maps of themselves, as a researcher I am giving meaning to my observations. As Scott puts it: “experience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted” (1991:797). Therefore, in Chapter 5 I focus on my respondents’ interpretation of their experience, and in Chapter 6 I will proceed with interpreting this narrative trying to explain why this is possible. This speaks both to the stage of theorization of analytical cycle, and also to the process of grounding this theory in a wider cultural context.
CHAPTER 5 Observing academic freedom narratives

As one of the respondents says: “you do not realize how much freedom you have, unless it is taken from you”. This was a comment emphasizing lack of reflection on the nature of academic freedom outside the context of its restriction. In other words, it is the intervention or change of status quo that brings the actualization of the previous experience, not the experience on its own. It took an effort from the respondents to recall specific settings in which they (or researchers in general) need some sort of special freedom as it is assumed to be naturally there, and therefore unnoticed. Instead it was usually formulated in a minimalist way as ‘to do what we already do’ or ‘to do our work’ or ‘to research’ and not deconstructed further unless certain difficulties were met at one of the stages.

While being capable to capture restrictions or negative interventions, participants in this research experienced difficulties to express a straightforward academic freedom implication. In a question about imaginable ideals that should be met for respondents to feel absolutely unrestricted and free in terms of their professional expression, barely anyone mentioned anything beyond their current lives. Contrary to my expectations, this question neither provoked complaints about unsatisfying conditions, nor it led to verbalization of expectations. Instead most of the respondents described their own working conditions as very optimal. As one of the respondents put it: “I am a mature person and I accept the life I live”, thus meaning that their job was consciously chosen with recognition of all the trade-offs and yet still found satisfying. This was an important signal for me to stop waiting for stories I expect to hear and let the narratives develop naturally.

Given that there is no existing scholarship about perceptions of academic freedom in Russia or any empirically driven research on this topic, only the most general expectations were formulated in advance. Even though academic freedom is protected by specific parts of national legislation, as it can be seen in Chapter 3, it only starts becoming a part of academic discourse, given its absence from university charters and rudimentary presence in public discourse. But what is probably most important, and the interviews indicated it already at the piloting stage, is that the concept of academic freedom does not naturally belong to the vocabulary of Russian academics. Instead there is a complex system of related concepts and ideas which together form the notion of academic freedom. The purpose of the following chapter is to approach this system of ideas and reconstruct it for the reader, in other words to make sense of the respondents’ ideas about academic work, science, and each other (in a grand communal sense).

Narrative analysis described in Chapter 4 is used to approach the meaning making of participants. In this chapter I claim that in order to understand academic freedom it needs to be treated not as a standalone concept, but rather a beacon to navigate within the reflective
processes of the respondents about their profession and the role each of them plays in it. Identifying the plots of the narratives through the categories of threat and safe space, I am looking for the variation of the effect understanding of academic freedom can have on one’s life. Figuring out who are the main characters of these plots and what are their relationship among each other, I contextualize the storylines in the settings of the workplaces discussed.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I start with introduction of the core concepts of the analysis, threat and safe space, what do they mean, how are they identified, in what contexts they appear in the interviews. I explain how binary opposition contributes to meaning making and how recognition of challenges related to academic freedom helps to get a clearer knowledge of what is this concept all about. For that reason, I proceed with the reflection of what is considered to be censorship and self-censorship among respondents. I show how trivialization is used as a coping strategy against interventions at the workplace.

Next two parts familiarize the reader with the two identified storylines (extraverted and introverted narratives) and the characters involved in those two narratives. Relying on the notions of threat and safe space I show how academics classify the social space around themselves, how they establish and protect their boundaries, and who are they protected from.

The chapter is finalized by the discussion about the role of disciplinary affiliation in understanding of academic freedom. In that part I explain why it is reasonable to expect variation, and then show the lack of it, thus challenging the expectation. I show how the ways academics talk about themselves is disciplinary-specific, yet not varying in the context of academic freedom understanding.

5.1. Threat and safe space

Threat and safety are categories that play a crucial role in the ways and how respondents spoke about themselves and their experiences, these being the central categories connecting mundane and extreme deviating experiences, allowing to identify relationship between actors involved. Respondents set up an opposition between ‘their’ group of free academics and ‘others’ who intervene in this notion of freedom and create a threat for its performance. According to MacLure (2003:10) establishing binary oppositions is one of the core ways meaning or knowledge is produced. Through reflection of the difference to a constructed ‘other’, which is always lacking the defining features of the phenomenon, one makes sense of its meaning (2003:10). Thus, in order to make sense of academic freedom, which in its minimalist definition by the respondents, is rather academic ‘unbotheredness’, I have to see what is considered to be an intervention and who does it. In other words, to see what safe space looks like, it is necessary to identify threats.
While talking about the safe space in the context of professional freedom, it is important not to confuse it with physical locality. Even though respondents might have specific feelings related to their spaces of work, this was not discussed in the interviews. What is meant under safety is more about comfort and familiarity. Respondents feel safe from intervention when they are able to do what they consider to be part of academic job in the conditions with which they are familiar and to which they consented. This category is specifically relevant in the narratives because it works as an anchor. As long as it is safe, it is worth staying in academia.

As much as academic freedom is negatively defined, meaning freedom from interference in research and teaching, rather than freedom to do teaching and research, it is also true for safe space. It is safe as long as an academic is surrounded by those with whom they share their professional identity, and those who do not belong, ‘others’ do not show off. ‘Otherness’ can be seen on various levels of professional communication. This can refer to the immediate colleagues, or to bureaucracy, which is usually administrators in the university and ministry level. Those are noticeable initiators of control or change which are not welcome and intensify the threat of losing what is considered to be safe.

While idea of safe space is more concrete and varies only in its scope, threat is seen in two separate ways. One is more specific; it comes from inside of the institutional environment including colleagues of different sorts or administration. The emotions characterizing it are irritation, tiredness, chagrin.

One coopts and realizes that you cannot say what you want using this [academic] language. They say academic community, so-called community of free people engaged in cognition. Not a bit! These are interest groups, students, teachers, budget, rankings, ambitions.

This quotation illustrates how respondent juxtaposes the idea of being free academic and getting engaged in university politics including building network of relationships, looking for excellence. Necessity to make adjustments to fit the professional environment is seen as limiting and unpleasant.

Another type of threat is more abstract, it refers to hierarchically superior force that participants struggle to operationalize further than ‘state’ or ‘regime’. The emotions expressed in relation to this threat are closer to worry, anxiety, or even sometimes fear.

I think that people feel that they live under pressure, under the gaze of ideological control executed by some kind of authority, and they can imagine that there are certain informants that will… (…) and, of course, any teacher in these conditions will try to protect themselves.
The author of the fragment above refers to this anxiety caused by the possibility of being observed or potentially threatened. This respondent finds natural the desire to close up and limit challenging interactions with the environment that is seen as hostile. Concern about possibility of sanctions, feeling of unsafety is an illustration of the abstract, ‘state’-related threat.

5.2. Censorship and Self-censorship

Irrespective of how visible is the notion of threat in respondents’ narratives, they were somewhat confused identifying the target of potential pressure, i.e. who is the first to be subjected to restrictions. Possibility of censorship is recognized, but marginally, outside of respondents’ own workplaces or social circles. Physicists suspect social scientists face more problems, political scientists assume this about sociologists, sociologists consider historians more in danger, and historians think that unless it is political science, they are safe. The feeling of threat is real yet threat itself is perceived to be elsewhere.

In this respect censorship is seen as either strict prohibition of some fundamental academic self-expression, and not experienced in this radical manifestation, or as some general background limitation, which is unpleasant, yet avoidable. The latter understanding refers to the idea of threat happening inside institutional environment in which censorship is considered an informal practice. Informality is juxtaposed to law which is formulated clearly and without too much window for interpretation. Thus laws are rules of the game that one consents to follow when choosing to live in a certain country or to have a certain profession, while censorship is something that occurs in the process of your work, and that you were not aware of in advance.

---

I do not think it is necessary to make any compromises, sacrifices. But then again, do you think that saying in a class that in 2014 Crimea was adjoined [присоединен] to Russia? Yes, there was an adjoinment [присоединение], the correct wording is “reunification [воссоединение] with Crimea”. Is it compromising? I do not think so. Simply because there is a law of our country, and we obey it.

---

In this fragment respondent refers to Article 280.1 of Criminal Code of Russian Federation (FL 28.12.2013 №433), public calls for the implementation of actions aimed at violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation are considered to be administrative infraction punishable by a fine. The nature of the law is not questioned in this case yet recognizing its legal status respondent does not go through the trouble of justifying necessity to correct the language. I chose this fragment to show not the sentiment towards current Russian foreign policies of which all the respondents might have different interpretations, but rather the trivialization of intervention. This is reflected in the following fragment, too.
“I trust my students but there are things that I should not say by law. If I have students under 18, I shouldn’t propagandize suicide, which is not actually randomly picked. In game theory I cannot give students the problem about Russian roulette. (...) But what I do instead is a simple change of the plot. So, it’s not a revolver anymore but a cube with 6 planes, and the loser has to crawl under the table. It stops being a problem immediately. (...) So, I just obey the laws, which I find relatively innocent, to be honest, and which are bad just by the fact of their existence. However, when it is already there, obeying them does not create any difficulties.

The quotation refers to administrative responsibility for the law settling criminal responsibility for inclination to suicide and the promotion of suicide (tips, information, provision of means of suicide, etc.) (articles 110.1 and 100.2 of criminal code). It illustrates how potential restrictions can be perceived as completely unproblematic and easily solvable, both practically and symbolically from the point of explanation.

Among other pieces of legislations that motivated respondents to formulate specific vocabulary in the classroom are the following ones:

- the law settling, “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships among youth under 18” (article 6.21 of administrative code)

- the law on mass media which does not allow talking about organizations banned on the territory of the Russian Federation without mentioning that they have been either eliminated or banned (article 4, law N2124-1 from 27.12.1991, edition from 18.04.2018).

I would like to emphasize that these laws, including violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation and promotion of suicide, do not target university professors specifically. This list is provided here exclusively because respondents considered them relevant in the context of our discussion. However, despite recognizing them as somewhat framing, neither those respondents who follow the laws strictly, nor those who do not recognize legitimacy of restricting measures, did not consider any of these laws as a limitation of freedom of speech or their academic freedom.

It would be wrong to assume that only the classroom is a target of censorship. When it comes to research, getting a grant on research related to regime change is, as one researcher puts it, unimaginable, yet there are alternative ways to frame a project dealing with the same topic, so that it becomes a legitimate grant proposal for state funds. Necessity to make this camouflage effort is considered to be a response to censorship. Lack of access to specific archival sources is associated with censorship, too. It is explained by the lack of state capacity to properly organize archival infrastructure. Identifying limitation but then either rationalizing it or finding the way how to avoid it, respondents trivialize the intervention, thus considering it irritating,
yet tolerable part of regular performance not affecting much the idea of being a free professional.

While desensitizing their fields of academic interest was a noticeable feature in both types of the narratives, that will be discussed at length further, respondents unanimously recognize problematic nature of self-censorship and do not consider themselves being affected while protected by the optics that also make censorship tolerable. That is rationalization and trivialization.

When another scandal happens, I do not say that the parties involved are not guilty. (...) but explain what socio-political factors have an impact on this situation. And on the one hand, it is academic honesty because I know it, the world is really like that. (...) On the other hand, I understand that when people from the system see me, I am among ‘handshakeable’ experts for them because I do not cast fire rain on the heads of everyone who was passing by. (...) It is quite a noticeable gap and in many cases I would love to talk as a citizen, not expert, but I cannot.

This fragment is an example of rationalization of self-censorship while leaving it aside academic framework. Despite recognizing that saving access to the field and relationship with the stakeholders is worth compromising some expressive capacities, respondent accepts this price. Academic role is seen as less agitated and in fact liberating. In a context in which freedom of expression is an issue in question, ‘academic’ way of approaching a loaded issue is seen as an opportunity.

Self-censorship in terminology of 70-80s has nothing to do with self-censorship today. That one implied fear (...) under that one if you criticize the communist party, etc. There is no such thing now. You can criticize anyone at any time. Self-censorship is different now. It surely exists but became opportunistic. (...) Why would I bother writing about stem cells now, if it doesn’t go anywhere. What would I write, I don’t know, against methodological idealism, if it’s mainstream? This is how it works and of course it clamps down the innovation. For sure. This fusion with what is mainstream in a selected country now.

The author of this quotation is paying attention to depoliticized nature of self-censorship and its infrastructural motivation. By comparing it to the presumably tougher past, this respondent shows that as much as it is limiting in its current shape, self-censorship is definitely a lower-scale threat, i.e. associated with the local level of performance rather than state. This lesser intensity and de-ideologization of what is considered to be censorship is reflected in the following fragment.
A university can support certain research and not support other, I do not have problems with it, as long as I am not said what I can and cannot write in my own papers. Especially the latter when I cannot write something. The fact that university can prioritize certain research is ok, I do not think it is censorship.

This respondent recognizes institutional capacity to affect research agenda to a certain extent, yet it is seen as moderation of an opportunistic setting rather than interference in individual agendas.

Apart from pragmatic approach to self-censorship discussed above, more anxiety-driven regime-focused modus of self-censorship has been as well identified in the respondents’ narratives. It reflects the vision of the earlier quote comparing current self-censorship to its older version hostile to criticism.

When we try not to use the word ‘authoritarian’ in the names of the seminars, lectures, public things, it’s self-censorship. No matter how you interpret it, when we change one name for another one – it is self-censorship. Do we practice it? Of course. We know that it’s censorship because we are afraid of the state. But it’s not on the level of substance, I have never experienced something like that.

The author identifies some degree of consternation and measures taken to prevent any possible confrontation (not using the word ‘authoritarianism’). Yet, ‘the level of substance’ as respondent refers to it stays unaffected which gives credit to the quotation above, emphasizing lesser degree of pressure, but also speaks to the notion of more abstract state-oriented threat which should not necessarily be supported by lived experiences but is rather a phantasy about potential negative outcomes.

5.3. Extraverted and Introverted Narratives

Two storylines of academic freedom perception have been uncovered in this research. I further refer to them as extraverted (outwardly directed) and introverted (self-preserving) narratives of freedom. Extraversion and introversion are used here as a metaphor and do not have anything to do with the types of respondents’ personalities. Both narratives imply noticeable concern about potential threat (no matter if respondents experienced anything like that personally or not), the opposite of this concern, awareness of what is achievable safe space, and finally
relationship with other people in the scope from bonding and sharing safe space to juxtaposition and alienation. Those are the building blocks of the identified storylines. Participants varied in the degree of concern they have and the limit of acceptable interference, yet those categories are persistent in the identified storylines.

Academics with an introverted narrative of freedom are concentrated on opportunities they have at the moment. They do not deny the possibility of threat, yet while not experiencing it in a first-hand immediate manner, they are trying to preserve existing safe space as long as possible. If the expectations are fulfilled, they are not worried about what is happening elsewhere, outside their professional space, or what is happening to others, not belonging to their closest professional circle. The introverted narrative implies a very narrow framing of in-group membership allowing to concentrate on the daily working routines and closest community ties. It includes the immediate workplace and people with whom respondent cooperates for work-related reasons. For them the most visible threat is the university administration changing the rules of the game for some reasons which are considered alien and unrecognized or unwelcome by the respondents. An interesting nuance is that this observation is consistently true for respondents independently from their position in university hierarchy. Even though there were no top-level administrators in my sample, respondents vary from early carrier academics to ones at more advanced positions on the level of research centers or faculty leadership.

Academics with an extraverted narrative of freedom put a larger emphasis on what is happening outside their workplace. While paying more careful attention to professional environment, in general they experience more anxiety about their freedom and possible threats. They relate to the troubles of their colleagues because nearly everyone is aware of at least several stories of unfairly fired academics or those that were censored in some way, such as the case of the European University in Saint Petersburg’s temporary closure which was very much discussed and reflected on. Respondents with extraverted narrative of freedom contextualize themselves not only in their professional environment, but also on a bigger political picture. That is why the state is very visible as a character in their stories, and this is usually a disturbing image.

Respondents with an extraverted narrative are more sensitive towards ‘threats’, or at least they have a somewhat clear vision of what is actually ‘threatening’. There are two strategies of coping with the anxiety among interviewees with extraverted narrative. Some of them, especially those who can be considered reasonably established scholars choose to actively confront whatever challenges can happen to them. These defensive type respondents make safe zone out of their preparedness for confrontations. Another strategy is escape. Respondents who are overly aware of the threats and do not feel comfortable fighting against administration, state machine, find their ways to escape, either diversifying affiliations and being prepared to physically leave, or through minimization of risk behaviors, even if this includes certain amount of self-censorship. For this cautious type having a plan B means to find themselves in a safe space.
5.4. Narratives and characters

While the two identified narrative plots are organized around the juxtaposition of threatening and safe, the characters identifiable in these stories are also polarized to friends and foes. The main simple division is to those who are considered to be fellow academics and those who have the potential of intervention. What deserves additional attention is that fellow academics are not simply people in the profession, this includes only those who are considered to be ‘real’ or ‘good’ academics, and others are considered as not belonging and belong to the narrative only marginally.

When I have my academic community, I stop being an individual researcher, and become, so to say, a constituent. And within the borders of this community we have our standards of quality. We don’t let people, who are not free, get in, because this lack of freedom is expressed in their bad texts. (...) So, it’s not the state, but us who create a certain climate, complex of rules both formal and informal. We don’t tolerate, but we honestly review each other. And this gives us additional capacities (...) We have our professional specifics. It’s about our corporate loyalty. Our academic community contributes to the promotion of our communal interests. In this way it… we help each other. We don’t let each other sink. We don’t let into our community, so to say, those who are unclean in any way, in terms of articles, relationships. (...) In a way, we live a more complex life, because we live the fullest, because we, I am sorry, but we literally put ourselves in shackles. So, our limitation is actually our freedom.

In this quotation respondent emphasizes strong communal ties developed by academics both due to institutional and informal reasons. Recognition of each other’s professional expertise supported by common values of freedom, academic honesty and rigor is the foundation of trust-building. Complying with these criteria has also a limiting effect, yet the respondent points up that this is a limitation one willingly accepts (“we put ourselves in shackles”) because it allows to professionally perform freely while being part of trustworthy community, or ‘safe space’.

Referring to in-group membership one of the respondents says that in order to be part of the community one needs to fulfill ‘standards of quality’. This resonates among other respondents identifying ‘real’ or ‘proper’ academics. In these narratives being a free academic is not about amount of freedom one has but rather a state of mind, a distinctive feature of a ‘real’ academic.

There is such thing as academic unfreedom and it is in one’s head. It is a choice that one does. (...) To a major extent it is about decisions that someone makes at the fork, and an individual is always at the forks.
The author of this fragment refers to freedom, or in this case ‘unfreedom’ as a result of someone making choices through their careers. This implies that there are ‘correct’ choices that prove a person to be a free academic, and the choices that demonstrate lack of such capacity. Even though each respondent talking about a community of ‘proper’ free academics refers to it as a commonsensical category, a relatively diverse spectrum of features is meant. Yet what unifies these definitions is having the core condition which is trust to members of the identified group of ‘real’/‘proper’ free academics.

The most immediate trust-building mechanism is following the procedures of academic rigor, including, for example, respect academic honesty, blind peer reviewing, participating in conferences and getting feedback from the colleagues. This is how one gets familiar with the work of other scholars and makes assessment of the quality of their work. The most important problem here is creation of stable bubbles which were once formed and do not rotate thus preventing their participants from expanding the outlook and getting challenged by outsiders, which would normally be considered a natural part of academic networking.

Another way of bonding and establishing professional trust is belonging to the same organization. An organizational community is united by shared experiences of the same working environment (including shared physical space), leadership, regulation, as well as the academic culture that works as . The community of this type can be a department, a research center or entire institution based. The foundation for trust in this type of communities is not individual members’ quality of work, but rather one of the identified motivations: belonging to a grand narrative of institution (long history or unique mission) , belonging to a group associated with individual ‘big name’ (schools of thought), belonging to a setting that proved to be good (through ranking, scientometrics, etc).

A very specific example of developing an institutional identity that holds strong and can be even hostile to alternative forms of organization is the opposition between university researchers and those from Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). Having these identities is more than being simply affiliated with one or another, especially given that all the RAS-affiliated respondents work part-time in universities. Associating with one of these two forms of research organization, participants identify their belonging to different academic cultures with separate history, different internal hierarchies and carrier strategies, and what is also important, different understanding of science.

For me it is more important that in Russia there is a division on the Academy of Sciences and academia [in a general sense]. I belong to university science, which means that I have never shared the views of research institutes and Academy of Sciences. Maybe I am biased. (...) It’s about their self-positioning. They a priori consider themselves cooler than others, knowing things better. If someone worked abroad, he does not belong to mafia of the Academy of Sciences, he is not good enough for them. (...) When I worked in [one of the European capitals], it was not a
university from top-5, maybe something closer to 15-16 position, but I felt comfortable and was recognized in my field. People from the higher ranked college talked to me. When I came to Russia, I was asked whether I am a full or corresponding member of RAS. I am telling them: no, I am a dean. And they were like, we are not going even talking to you. And no one wants [to talk], and no one will. This is a disaster.

The author of the quote identifies himself as a university-based academic who experienced alienation from his RAS-affiliated disciplinary community. Trying to establish contact this respondent identified the hierarchical structure informed by institutional design of RAS which was affecting meaningful interaction among scholars. When being asked if he holds a full or corresponding membership, which is not just the name of the position, but a status of honor and recognition, he says that he is a dean, thus introducing an alternative system of measurement, i.e. university administrative structure. Identifying himself as a dean, this respondent treats the positions of members and corresponding members of RAS as degrees of career advancement, neglecting their symbolic weight. Depicting colleagues from RAS as contemptuous and oriented on official regalia rather than work assessment, the respondent draws the line between himself and ‘others’, not meeting the expectations about colleagueship.

This impression is supported by the person affiliated with RAS and holding a high position there cited below. He denies universities’ capacity to produce research.

A very little part of science is produced in the universities (...) First of all, there is not enough qualified professionals in the university. And even those very few are from the Academy of Sciences. (...) There is no such thing as an independent academic science there.”

Identifying insufficient number of professionals, this respondent refuses to accept academic qualities of the researchers outside his organizational-based community. The only way he is willing to recognize them is shared affiliation. That is an example of a very exclusive professional framing.

The distinctive feature of ‘foes’ is its reference to anyone ‘intervening’ the process of teaching, research, and organization of working processes. Certain pressure or restriction can happen on the following levels:

- Group level, when the immediate colleagues from the same organizational unit (for example, research institute, department) or within close disciplinary circle impose some rules or standards contradicting respondent’s understanding of individual autonomy.

- Organizational level, when the source of interference or threat is university administration or
- Higher administrative level, when the agent of obstruction is the Ministry of Education and its various agencies and/or, to an extent, the government and the Office of the President.

I intentionally distinguish state-related agencies from ‘state’, which is in fact one of the frequently used characters in respondent’s narratives. When the interviewees referred to state causing inconvenience, I always specified who is responsible for the delivery of those inconveniences, or in other words: who exactly is conducting interference. However referring to ‘state’ as an agent in their narratives, respondents could not identify who was the exact source of power, whether it is ministry of education on the local, regional or state level, government, president, or any other source of power. The responses varied in the scope of three levels identified above and sometimes even implied the possibility of state’s pressure implemented on the personal level, i.e. through self-censorship.

Sense of misgiving is partially framed by a wider knowledge about national political context, as well as by this anonymity of threat, uncertainty of potential consequences in case if something is made wrong. It was problematic for respondents even formulating what are the ‘wrong’ things that can be done, because this ‘wrongness’ is not grounded in formal regulations, but rather caused by the ambiguity of the informal rules. Thus, state acts as a metaphor of anxiety that is noticeable at every level from top level administrative to individual one.

The ways of trusting and thus forming communal ties are of utmost relevance in both type of freedom narratives. Respondents with the introverted storyline identify their circle of colleagues to whom they trust and calibrate the threat level based on how this community is feeling. Participants with the extraverted narrative while establishing longer social ties use the circle of trust in a similar way while choosing community with relatable experiences in order to assess the general climate. In the conditions of limited amount of community-building strategies and therefore high level of fragmentation of academic environment, finding the ways in which academics are ready to cooperate is extremely relevant.

### 5.5. Disciplinary dimension of academic freedom narrative

There is a strong disciplinary division in the analysis of academic freedom with regard to the subject-specific practices that academics are involved in in terms of research (Tierney & Rhoads 1993; Kuh & Whitt 1988) as well as classroom activities that defined by the disciplinary-specific nature of knowledge (Nelson 2011:24). Among other rationales in favor of disciplinary division in the analysis of academic freedom is different state regulation of the final intellectual product. I specifically mean research in areas of strategic advantage (space and ocean related inventions) or related to military developments including some types of engineering, physics of chemistry. This argument is supported by the amount of academic
prosecuted for espionage in the Russian context. Among those dozens of accused academics most are physicists, oceanologists, engineers (Chelischeva 2020).

While recognizing these arguments emphasizing differences in practice of academic freedom by academics in separate disciplines, I argue that when it comes to academic freedom narrative these differences are not that recognizable anymore. As it was discussed earlier academic freedom narrative even though inspired by the respondents’ experiences of everyday life cannot work as a documental representation of their practices, not even as accurate representation of their beliefs. Instead in the collected stories we see the general frames shared and get access to the process to the meaning-making process of respondents, in other words how do they interpret their lives and experiences in academia. In the previous section the main storylines and the characters have been identified, and the reader can see that the categories of those narratives are not disciplinary-specific.

The characters identified in the respondents’ narratives emphasize two major dichotomies central to academic identification, one is separation of academic activities from everything non-academic happening inside universities, and another one highlighting distinction between ‘proper’ professionals and ‘fake’ ones. Each of these words locates the person it describes within a particular universe and invests them with a particular identity – ‘real scientist’ and ‘other’. My findings are in line with the ones that Bayir, Cakici, and Ertas (2014) got when exploring the difference of perceptions among social and natural scientists. They figured out that counterintuitively there is just minor difference in the ways academics talk about science and their place in it. Same holds true to the Russian setting. When defining quality of academic work and frames of academic profession, respondents from social sciences, humanities, and exact sciences made similar observations. Even more noticeable this similarity is when participants identify threat and use the image of state to channel the anxiety on different levels of their interactions at work.

For example, one of the most immediate expectations about academic freedom experiences reflected in academics’ narratives is the one about social scientists experiencing more visible censorship (or self-censorship) because they work with sensitive topics that might be considered disturbing by the authorities of certain level. This causal link is not supported by empirics: respondents talk about similar threats irrespectively of their disciplinary affiliation. In addition to that, barely anyone of the respondents, irrespective of their subject of research, identified their field of interest as somewhat sensitive. Instead most of them were considering their research belonging to the absolute mainstream in terms of topic, methods and external validation expressed in receiving grants to work on the topic, getting published and invited to various professional events. And even those who did not associate themselves with the mainstream felt that their research is marginal only in relation to community which does not provide sufficient support and approval, yet it is not something that can cause any trouble on higher levels or among wider audience.

In order to prevent accusation in exclusive choice of respondents, part of my rational in the process of purposive sampling has been choosing people with the most conflicted research interests, including those who have experienced some pressures related to their academic and
civil positions. Yet even those who are working in the areas, which are usually expected to be considered somewhat sensitive, for example, minority rights, authoritarianism studies, Russian history of the 20th century, as well as those who received warnings from university administration or even had to change the workplace, shared the same confident narrative about their work and capacity to do it in line with once own standards of research.

One of the possible explanations to lack of variation among disciplines is lack of a shared space in which multiple academic identities would be reflected and made sense of. In order to establish connections with the researchers from another discipline, or relate to their experience in a juxtaposing fashion, high level of awareness about each other is required. In the conditions of highly fragmented community and lack of immediate trust, respondents, especially those with introverted narrative of freedom, are not necessarily interested in what is going in their own disciplinary areas, not even saying in other ones. In the conditions where no common interests are advocated, there is no meaningful discussion allowing to identify differences of approaches.

For example, one of the participants when talking about the experience within disciplinary community expresses immediate skepticism about those whom he describes belonging to “endless regional pseudo-sociology [that] can be studied only as an object. Thus, this respondent shows that being a ‘real’ scientist is viewed as more relevant than sharing disciplinary background. This exclusivity travels further, from the level of exclusion within subject area to methodological exclusion, thus alienating the members trying to stick to several parallel identities.

---

*It’s easy to talk about economics, cause if you want to achieve something, it should be econometrics, it should be quantitative research, it should be mathematical modeling. Any verbal, any historical work is considered to be garbage. This is basically what they say, this should be done at a different faculty at best. As economists, we view economics as mathematics. This is mainstream. Therefore, it is easy to immediately demarcate.*

---

The author of the quote feels unwelcome within the disciplinary community that they would associate themselves with because of the standards established in this community. According to respondent’s belief in order to be considered ‘real’ economist one should do quantitative research with complex maths. Not fitting these criteria creates a sense of alienation.

---

*A historian is someone who goes to archives and collect primary data. If you work with secondary data, and historical sociology is always based on secondary data, cause you cannot go to archives and check all the topics that you need to aggregate, then you are not a true historian either.*
Being a historian according to a different scholar, is grounded in the sources of empirics that one uses to produce research. Finding a niche between sociology and history turns out to be a problem because it leads to exclusion from one of the communities.

...there other things...institutional rules (...) In particular what kind of institutional opportunities exist for publications, or to what extent on the level of departments, in the narrowest circles of colleagues, one can understand that the politics we deal with now need to be researched using other methods. One needs to search for...teach to...work with interpretation of meanings, to use interpretive approach... Yet we as a community keep thinking en masse that [it is not a legitimate methodology]

Similar concern is raised about political science. Positivist methodological framework, according to this quote, is considered to be the dominant one leaving alternative approaches aside. Even despite not talking about themselves as a marginalized scholar, this respondent considers political science environment conservative (mentioned earlier in the interview) and resistant to innovations, thus alienating those members of a community who are willing to make a step outside established methodological mainstream.

Based on these observations about various disciplinary exclusions, the following question arises: how regular academic debate about scopes and methods of research is distinguished from communal segregation in this research? The response is grounded in epistemological assumptions of this dissertation. If respondents find the ways how their colleagues treat them within disciplines disturbing and preventing from free and active performance, I classify those observations as experiences of discomfort, and threat.

5.6. Conclusion

Using the narrative approach implies identification of plots and characters in the respondents’ storylines. This chapter contributes to the understanding of the concept of academic freedom by approaching it through the narratives of people involved in its everyday practice and reflection. It allows to open further discussion about the place of academic freedom in the academic self-consciousness and how this affects respondents’ assessment of the practices they get involved in at their workplaces.

The exploration of two main academic freedom narratives, extraverted and introverted, allowed us to see the anxious framework of professional identity. The category of threat and its opposition, safe space, being central in the ways how people talk about their relationship with employer shows that despite certain level of self-confidence and belief in their profession,
academics communicate the vulnerability of their freedom in the existing social and political setting.

Identification of the main characters in respondents’ stories allow to apply the categories of threat and safe space to more specific empirical setting, while locating the narratives to specific settings of people at work. Finding their ways to build community, or better to say, multiple communities, while building trust to those who are considered to be safe and stimulating free academic work, and alienating those who does not fit in, participants of this research make sense of work as a discursive space of clashing identities and believes.

And finally, this study addressed the issue of disciplinarity which counterintuitively plays minor role in building the narratives of academic freedom. Respondents from both social and exact sciences formulate their anxiety about potential restrictions and rationalize or trivialize those measures they cannot fight with. On the one hand, such lack of internal mobilization either for common interests or against common discomfort is a sign of weak social connections. On the other hand, while not finding ways to bond based on the subject area, there is a potential ground for even wider-scale consolidation based on bigger professional values.
CHAPTER 6 Interpretation. Suggested framework

Apart from being an important principle on which academia stands, academic freedom as a discursive heuristic serves as a vane showing who is in charge of the image of universities and their agendas. Those might be rectors or top-level university administration, journalists, university activists, state officials or international organizations, as well as researchers in history, human rights, policy studies, sociology, and education research. In most of the cases there are several vocal groups, but each of them raises the issue of academic freedom to fulfill their own needs. Thus, they contribute to visibility of academics in separate ways, from emphasizing the role of universities in human rights culture to reflection of the importance of expert knowledge in today’s world.

This dissertation does not have the goal to cover all the possible implications of academic freedom discourses. Instead it is focused on its very straightforward subtext, i.e. how academics define their role in the workplace and society in general, and how do they form expectations from a university as their employer and the state as a major provider of the rules according to which a university plays. I examine academic freedom at the place of its most direct implication and ground what is very often used a powerful slogan or general principle, in practices, beliefs and expectations represented in the narratives of those involved in academic work. My firm belief is that this is where discussion about academic freedom should start in order to build a consolidated narrative that will allow more effective promotion and protection of the academic freedom values.

Academic freedom in Russia has been approached through analysis of its legal landscape in Chapter 3 and through the narratives of the academic workers involved in knowledge production and dissemination, as well as teaching, and other aspects of university lives in Chapter 5. The ambition of this chapter is to show how those two approaches can complement each other while contributing to a better understanding of how academic freedom is understood and practiced within different groups of an academic community. In order to achieve this goal, I apply social construction of target populations framework developed by Ingram and Schneider (1993). The theory was developed to show how a policy can send different messages to its recipients based on what are their social pre-conditions (public image and availability of power resources). In the context of this dissertation I am interested not in general policy-making process, but only in its aspects related to academic freedom protection.

Selection of two dimensions allowing to define academic freedom target populations is inspired by division to de jure and de facto academic freedom (Karran and Beiter 2020). Those dimensions are legal protection and academics’ perspective on the place of academic freedom in their lives. However, as it has been discussed in Chapter 3, approaching academic freedom analytically requires a clarity over ontological nature of the term, in other words, on what conceptual level do we refer to academic freedom, as practice or as a belief. In the next sections I will show how choice of conceptual level affects the implication of the framework.
6.1. Conceptualizing targets and constructions

According to Ingram & Schneider (1993) the social construction of target populations implies division of policy-recipients on groups based on how their behavior varies being affected by implementation of a policy. These groups have common features that are normative and evaluative (Edelman 1964) and can be assigned either by policymakers, or by those who are targeted by the policy. This framework implies that policy cannot affect all the recipients in a same way, therefore it sends them different signals that they interpret from the respective group position. Formulation of groups based on their shared characteristics and similarity of their perceptions based on these characteristics is social construction of a target population (1993:335). The boundaries of targeted populations are not expected to be a subject of a single interpretation. Instead the authors make it clear that as long as they are “empirically verifiable [and] exist within objective conditions”, they can be assessed and re-assessed based on the needs of someone who is applying this framework as analytical heuristic (1993:335).

In order to adapt this framework to the field of academic freedom implication, I needed to find the dimensions that would allow to notice and distinguish the groups with similar experiences of academic freedom. The most immediate choice is based on the findings covered in Chapter 5, i.e. two narratives of academic freedom that were identified among respondents. Introverted and extraverted narratives refer to the ways how academics define their personal scope of academic freedom. While those with introverted narrative limit their scope of attention to the immediate colleagues, or maximum to university level, respondents with extraverted narrative of academic freedom relate to the experiences of a wider academic community unlimited to their own institutional or disciplinary affiliation. It is clear that these two groups with different degree of responsiveness to what is happening around them, will have somewhat different ideas on what are the necessary conditions for proper functioning as academic. This dimension refers to internal aspect of academic freedom assessment, i.e. what academics expect from themselves and whether they are able to do it.

The second dimension of variance between different groups is how much academic freedom is protected. This is an external aspect, as it speaks to the expectations from the outside world, either university or state that should protect academic freedom or at the very least not to interfere. As I will explain later, this external expectation can refer to either legal protection by some formal regulations or to a more abstract feeling of being protected. Even though this partially affects the distribution within the groups, this does not have an effect on the overall model. I use the division to high and low level of protection, implying that low level of protection is provided by the state which has academic freedom regulation with major deficiencies (see Chapter 3 for more specific examples). Meanwhile high level of protection implies that a university, to which a significant part of self-governance is delegated, uses this opportunity to protect and guarantee academic freedom in the areas uncovered not covered in the state legislation, i.e. within the institution. Thus, in the proposed model an academic worker whose professional freedom is protected at a high level relies on both state and university regulation. This division holds true for informal understanding of protection, too. Low level of
protection refers to low level of trust in the possibility of formal protection, either from the state or university. High level implies feeling protected within university structure.

6.2. Academic freedom target populations

As it has been demonstrated in Chapter 3, any conceptual model approaching academic freedom requires its author to make a choice about the level of discussion, should it be about practice or about values. The principal difference is in what those approaches allow to highlight. The practical approach allows to identify deficiencies in existing infrastructure while juxtaposing existing regulation and areas of academic interaction requiring regulation. Meanwhile belief-based approach shows parallel ways of formulation of the value by legislators and practitioners, thus uncovering multiple truths. I do not want to advocate for either of those approaches, instead the ambition is to show the implication of target populations framework for both. Conceptualized in the same model, the focus on practice or beliefs defines composition of the groups.

Combination of internal and external expectations creates four types of target populations, shown in Table 12. Advantaged group includes those who have high level of academic freedom protection (either legally speaking or based on their personal assessment) and introverted narrative of academic freedom focusing on narrow scope of issues happening at the immediate workplace. Members of mobilized group are protected at the same level, yet due to the more inclusive way of perceiving the community, they are cautious of the existing threats, just not concerned about those on the everyday basis. The group with introverted narrative and low level of protection is called dependent because their professional well-being is conditional to their relationship within their small community. The last group that combines extraverted type of academic freedom understanding with low level of protection is called vulnerable cause they are fully aware of potential threats and cannot delegate protection to anyone.

Table 12. Academic freedom target populations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Expectations Level of Protection</th>
<th>Internal Expectations</th>
<th>Academic Freedom Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (state + university)</td>
<td>Introverted</td>
<td>Extraverted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (just state)</td>
<td>Advantaged</td>
<td>Mobilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.1. Practice-centered approach

Studying academic freedom as a practice can be motivated by the ambition to see the effectiveness of interaction between state, university, and academic community in the issues related to regulation of knowledge production and dissemination. In this case, level of protection should be interpreted literally, meaning that it can be either state level legislation on its own or together with university-level normative acts. High level of protection implies that apart from state regulation there is an elaborated system of organizational rules protecting academic freedom within institution. Even though detailed analysis of university-level documents was not part of this dissertation, based on the study of 310 university charters by Sokolov, Lopatina, Yakovlev (2018) it can be safely assumed that universities vary in a degree of protection of their communities having elaborated system of representation in some cases and unitary university governance in the other. In case if the university charter establishes the order in which individual academics are not represented or in other ways protected, I treat it as absent from the model. Federal legislation on academic freedom is considered to be low level protection. Firstly, it is too wide in its scope and covers all the participants of educational process, thus paying less attention to specific groups, like university teachers. Secondly, it does not separate academics from their affiliated institutions, thus being unable to protect individual academics in case university violates their professional freedom. Third, based on the data collected for this research there is very low level of awareness about state regulation of academic freedom. Even though the sample of respondents in this research is not representative, I find this observation worth considering with the potential of further check.

Despite my personal decision not to stretch empirical findings to the level of ‘doing’ in this dissertation, it is not uncommon in organizational studies to use interview data to explore organizational practices (for example, see Nicolini 2009). Therefore, for the purpose of consistency of the model in selected approach, explored narratives can be considered representative or respondents’ practices. In this case, introverted narrative would mean more compact networking, while extroverted narrative would imply more diversified network of connections. Connections in this case are not simply work contacts, but those who are actively followed and who form a community together.

Following practice-oriented lens four identified target groups would be divided based on their internal expectation from academic freedom and then formally classified based on affiliations and types of contract putting those who work in institutions with more academic freedom oriented charters to highly protected category, and the rest to the minimally protected one. This approach allows to see the connection (or lack of it) between formal protection and higher level of academic freedom engagement within community. In other words, whether academic freedom mobilization is happening around deficiencies of provision, or in the conditions of its reasonable effective protection. This aspect can be seen even clearer if operationalization of external protection will include the type of the contracts of academic workers. However, at the moment there is no data available on distribution of contract types within different institutions, therefore this stays as an opportunity for prospective research.
6.2.2. Belief-centered approach

As it has been consistently discussed through the course of this dissertation, academic freedom can be treated not only as a practice, but also as an idea, or belief, which can be formalized in the documents or normative acts, informally shared on the community level, adapted to the changes of the environments, yet staying on a discursive level. Peculiarity of this optics is that in comparison to practice-oriented approach treating what is happening as something ‘objective’, belief-oriented approach implies multiple subjectivities of those who channel different beliefs. Even though targeted population can be defined from either of the sides of policy process (Ingram & Schneider 1993:335), for the purpose of consistent model construction it needs to be one side at a time, either policymakers or policy recipients. Given that one of the dimensions has a pre-defined agency due to the conducted fieldwork, I choose recipients’ perspective as the only available option here.

In belief-centered approach internal expectation of academics is based on two narratives of academic freedom representing in this case not the daily practices but freedom-related ideas of those involved into academic professional activities. Introverted narrative represents belief in preservation of free spirit within tight community, while extraverted narrative refers to the idea of universal value of academic freedom that cannot be limited to one university but needs to be shared by the entire profession. Legal dimension in this approach is supported by the underlying belief that academic freedom must be externally protected. Therefore, low level of legal protection refers to a subjective feeling of insufficient protection, should it be because of negative experiences or lack of information. Accordingly, high level of protection characterizes positive assessment of their academic freedom environment by the respondents.

Division to groups informed by the ideas of academics about academic freedom and its protection is very likely to be different than in practice-centered approach. The first reason for that is lack of trust to formal institutional structure. Even if certain academics are aware of existing regulations, they might find them insufficient or ineffective and feel unprotected by those. This is one of the potential explanations why cases of academic freedom violations are not brought to the court. Besides, feeling of being protected can also be informed by other factors than familiarity with formal rules. For example, seniority and public visibility can serve as the reasons for confidence. Thus, division to target populations based on beliefs of the policy recipients despite using the same matrix, serves an entirely different goal. It allows to see the sources of vulnerability as well as identify the most stable parts of the community and track their confidence and emancipation.
6.3. Discussion

Policy making in the area of effective academic freedom protection in the times of major revision of the concepts poses more complex questions than simply how good academic freedom provision in a selected context is. Instead we need to know what is considered to be academic freedom protection and how it can be facilitated in such a way that would affect groups with different visions of academic freedom scope and limits. In this chapter I proposed an analytical framework that can be applied for two sets of goals, exploration of academic freedom realization in various institutional settings through practice-centered approach, or investigation of vulnerability and emancipation through belief-centered approach.

The main limitation is that while trying to be a composite framework, academic freedom target populations being very empirically demanding, can serve relatively narrow purpose at once, depending on the approach selected. I see the attempts to make it more inclusive as inevitable conceptual erosion. A solution to overcome this limitation can be application of the framework as an additional analytical device complementing research projects with extensive data collection and bigger sets of goals.
CONCLUSION

One of the initial puzzles in this research was possibility of academic freedom reflection and practice in the context that is first, considered to be in many ways challenging for freedom of thought and expression, and second, does not have a continuous tradition of academic freedom. Historical overview of the academic freedom development in Europe illustrates that academic freedom can exist in multiple forms and shapes, adapted to the contexts in which it is conceptualized, even if they are far from liberal democracies. Moreover in different political settings of medieval, and then modern universities academic freedom has been promoted by different groups of interests, from politicians investing in knowledge production to academic staff or students who are not part of this dissertation, yet very important agents in academic freedom advocacy. Bringing back historical experience of European, and then Russian universities serves not as a solid proof, but rather an illustration of creative ways of finding the pockets of academic freedom even in restrictive environments. Apart from being an insight on non-democracies, this project contributes to the stream of decolonization literature by giving voice to those who are normally excluded from contributing to big academic discourses. With this work I want to show that any context can be helpful for the general knowledge as it always enriches the scope of reflection of our own experiences.

Analysis of higher education legislation in today’s Russia allowed to identify its deficiencies in the area of academic freedom protection, yet also highlighted the windows of opportunities especially in self-governance. I discuss the implication of the frameworks by Kinzelbach, Spannagel, and Saliba (2020) and Karran, Beiter, and Appiagyei-Atua (2017) for academic freedom assessment and come to the conclusion that if there is something about academic freedom that Russia does not fit, it is mostly operationalization of assessment. Academic Freedom Index (2020) looks at academic freedom as a derivative of the regime (at least in case of Russia) leaving no chance for any deviation. Criterion referenced approach, on the other hand, even though designed for European universities has a great potential to assess Russian academic environment in certain isolation from a wider political context and to put it to a comparative perspective with other states based on degree of elaboration of academic freedom protection.

However, the research question that this dissertation addresses is not about the status of academic freedom in Russia, it is about academics and their systems of meaning-making. Approaching the narratives of the participants, discussing their interpretations of daily experiences allowed to identify threats and safe spaces at their workplaces, and to see the place of academic freedom there. As analysis showed, feeling unrestricted is an essential feature of people identifying themselves as ‘real’ or ‘true’ academics and they interpret what is happening to them through thus optics. Thus, academic freedom for them is not something that can be granted or taken away, it is constantly present as part of the optics affecting the ways how academics interpret the changes happening around them.
Based on the valuable accounts of individual academics as well as the findings related to institutional background of Russian academia, I proposed an academic freedom target populations framework inspired by Ingram and Schneider (1993) analysis of policy recipients. I demonstrate the potential of this model for academic freedom community studies. An important part of all stages of my analysis is attention to clarity of what conceptual level of academic freedom is being discussed. My argument is that approaching academic freedom as a practice or as a belief serves different research goals and inevitably leads to different research outcomes. I illustrate this argument by showing how academic freedom target populations can be interpreted in two separate ways, depending on the conceptual level chosen.
REFERENCES


87


140) Teelken, C., & Deem, R. (2013). All are equal, but some are more equal than others: Managerialism and gender equality in higher education in comparative perspective. Comparative Education, 49(4), 520-535.


