

MAKING SENSE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN RUSSIA

By

Elizaveta Potapova

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Supervisor: Professor Liviu Matei

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Abstract

A common assumption within 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, irrespective of the political context, there is no consensus on precisely what needs to be protected, nor, perhaps more importantly in today's context, what can be threatened and by whom.

The main goal of this research is to see how academics in the 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. Furthermore, in order to better understand the context of the interview subjects' responses, I made an assessment of the legal landscape of academic freedom in Russia using a criterion referenced approach 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 the identification of the most vulnerable sections of the academic community, as well as the groups with the capacity to mobilize in support of academic freedom. Thus, as well as insights into the meaning-making processes of academics and the role academic freedom plays in one's professional identity, this research contributes to higher education policy studies, bringing together the reflexive potential of interpretivist epistemology and nuanced vision of academic freedom as a practice and a belief.

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Spring of 2021 finalizes the 10th year of my 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 into 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.

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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 the knowledge society. Whenever the university is compared with other institutions, not only is its centrality in society discussed but also its exceptional nature (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 their interactions with the State, society, and with what we call today “the (external) regulatory framework” (World Bank 2002:10). It is largely accepted that in order for universities to fulfill 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, predominantly academic staff, but sometimes students and university administrative personnel too or even whole institutions (universities/higher education institutions) (Rabban 1990).

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 all contemporary societies, so that the will exists to make concrete arrangements to facilitate and secure academic freedom? How do differences in the understanding and practice of academic freedom relate to the different types of political regimes? In more direct terms, can academic freedom exist in non-democratic societies?

When addressing these questions, we need to acknowledge that there is no single definition of academic freedom that is applicable to the entire diversity of existing academic contexts, nor is there a universal way to assess or measure it. 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 various states and, in some cases, supra-national organizations. Furthermore, academic freedom can exist in various legal forms. While being part of constitutional legislation in some places, international associations offer only general recommendations, such as the Magna Charta

Universitatum. Third, although perhaps a relatively minor factor, academic freedom might gain or lose some specific and differentiated connotations when theorized, regulated, or practiced in different languages.

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 measures 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 debate to dramatically different ways of understanding academic freedom.

Two large-scale comparative research studies of academic environments, namely the International Academic Profession (1991–1993) and the 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 convey the power dynamics inside institutions, but do not focus specifically on the issue of freedom. In Spannagel's classification this type of data would be categorized as lived experience.

The varieties of democracies (V-Dem) database provides an academic freedom index based on expert assessment of constitutional protections and 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-DemInstitute 2020:295). This index covers legal aspects of academic freedom as well as features related to everyday work practices, such as teaching, researching, publishing, or simply presence at university premises.

The criterion referenced approach of Karran, Beiter, and Appiagyei-Atua (2017) entails 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 legislation 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 separately treat legal protections of academic freedom and actual practices in the field. Thus, while V-dem has a question about the level of teaching and research freedom, the approach of Karran and Beiter (2020) involves separate assessments of the legal protections of teaching and research, and of academics' feeling of being protected.

The authors of the methodology behind the academic freedom index in V-Dem, Kinzelbach et al (2020), emphasize in their report their dissatisfaction with university rankings evaluating the performance of universities without considering the political and human rights climates of the countries in which they are located. They find satisfactory scores of academic freedom at universities in non-democratic contexts misleading, even having the effect of protecting the reputations of repressive systems (p.5). This report operationalizes the concept in such a way that not only is academic freedom closely connected to the democratic environment in which it is performed, but also implies that there can be no meaningful academic freedom in non-democratic settings.

An alternative to the view that academic freedom cannot exist in non-democratic or illiberal societies the idea of universities as “democratic enclaves” in such societies. Democratic enclaves, or institutionalized social spaces “challenging state regulatory powers” (Gilley 2010:390), imply the possibility of upholding 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 or even encourage certain freedoms (including, for example, academic freedom), while severely repressing others. Russia can serve as a relevant example allowing us 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 restrictions to free speech and freedom of information (Kaczmarek 2020). Despite consistent restrictions of freedom 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 while at the same time being highly visible and actively used as a component of professional identity, allowing academic workers to define themselves in a system of relationships with students, colleagues, the university administration, and also with the state.

Matei and Iwinska (2014:28) propose a view of 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 hence assessed along multiple scales on which universities and individuals in universities have more or less freedom or, rather, freedoms. These scales cannot be expressed by a single numerical value but represent relatively complex configurations of a collection of values along a number of distinct dimensions. The multidimensional nature of these concepts allows us 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 having 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 of the multidimensionality of the experience of academic freedom 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 in Russia 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 into 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 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 (though including higher-ranked ones). This does not necessarily oppose a universal understanding of academic freedom (if there is such a thing at all), but rather reconstructs it from the viewpoint of particular empirical realities. Even though a distinctive feature of a non-democracy is a high level of state presence in all the spheres of daily life, it is not only regimes that are responsible for violations of academic freedom in the workplace. While recognizing the influence of states, I want to emphasize that, to a large extent, the understanding of academic freedom depends on how different groups of academics define their professional identity and position themselves in relation to each other, administrations, 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 is 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 is rather realized by the understandings of academics and their everyday communication and actions. 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 by its associated activities (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 me 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 are in a specific context. Instead, it provides insight into the deeper meanings of academic freedom in a given community, which helps us to 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 the impossibility of getting indisputable “brute data” (Yanow 2000:5), which can 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. a nouning approach, to the processes of understanding and the logic of connecting them, i.e. a 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 us 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 liberal discourse which rigidly ties academic freedom to democracy, not leaving room for experiences of such freedom 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. That is, 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 given a voice. In this way, I hope to be able not only to contribute to a better understanding of what academic freedom can be, and 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 practised more efficiently. Studying academic freedom at a time when academics all over the world are alarmed at 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 cases where a particular university experiences oppression from the state). The results of this research might be used for strengthening the sense of an international or even global academic community, through common values based on an understanding of freedom and professional reflections, as well as for the creation of a healthier freedom and rights' climate in the universities.

Thesis structure

The thesis is organized into six chapters. **Chapter 1** aims to trace the concept of academic freedom through history in order 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, travelled the world, and ended up as the principle, or list of principles, we associate with academic freedom today. Then follows the argument for 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 previously been considered as objects of research and whose contributions to understanding and formulating the vocabulary of the concept were discarded. **Chapter 2** introduces such a context, using Russia as a case study. I start by reviewing critical junctures in Russian history, when the approach to academic freedom dramatically changed, and end by establishing the points of reference which will allow us 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 using the Academic Freedom Index (Afi), and then mapping the legislative landscape using the criterion referenced approach developed by Karran, Beiter, and Appiagyeyi-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. The justification for this approach is given in **Chapter 4**. There I discuss the procedure and reasons for data collection and analysis, and how first piloting, and then fieldwork and analysis were organized. Ethical considerations, as well as the limitations of the selected methodology are also covered in this chapter.

The purpose of Chapters 5 and 6 is to develop an empirically driven understanding of the complexity of academic freedom in Russia. **Chapter 5** provides the reader with a snapshot of the field. Hence, the 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 together. I introduce the academic freedom target populations framework and its two implications for policy studies in the academic freedom community.

CHAPTER 1 Genealogy of academic freedom

The main purpose of this chapter is to introduce the 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 a realization of the deficiencies of the Euro-centric approach and provided the justification for applying a post-colonial lens. However, in order to effectively address identified deficiencies, it is necessary to see the state of the art in the field, from which certain communities are excluded, and why this is happening.

Despite the multitude of academic histories, there are definitions of academic freedom that are more influential than others 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 'universality' here is limited to the liberal democracies, while other contexts require adjusted interpretations of academic freedom.

A common assumption within 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, academic freedom in the USA 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 (see for example, the world university rankings of China or Russia), even in undemocratic societies, or in countries that in any case are not liberal democracies, 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 to 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 from ‘western’ universities alone, and second, to rebuild 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” (Znaniński 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, 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 it is 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 historical reasons (colonial legacy), newly established trends (university rankings), or anglophone hegemony. The question of the categorization of countries arises: who are the 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 the Soviet Union. Second world countries were also considered modern and technologically sophisticated, but ideologically driven and not free, i.e. the 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 the global south (Pletsch 1981). Basically, Pletsch identifies three criteria for classification: regime, welfare, and 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 have 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 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 in fact parochial, belonging to the contexts in which it was elaborated. Then I demonstrate how, and in what ways, this understanding has been changing 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 a window to new empirical contexts, previously underexplored by academic freedom scholars. After that I introduce the discussion of 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, such as 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 conceive 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 have exchanged ideas within a wider university environment in their historical contexts.

The French university model, also known as ‘Napoleonic’, originates from the University of Paris, or Sorbonne, which was founded in the 12th century, long before Napoleon re-established it after the French Revolution. It is so-called by analogy with the Napoleonic administrative tradition which was characterized by the principles of uniformity and technocratic orientation (Donina & Paleari 2019; Kuhlmann 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011) which resonate with the initial setting of the Medieval French university. Thus, the reason for the name of the model is not associated with a historical persona and his rule, but rather with the management principle formulated later. Rather than operating as knowledge production centers, the French medieval

universities performed as professional schools preparing properly qualified state functionaries (Gellert 1993; Scott 1998: 445). The individual autonomy of a professor in this setting was protected more than that of a student (Karran 2009, Neave 1988) The relationship between the university and the state was organized in such a way that the state protected 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 the 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 not only defined their own learning trajectories but also took part in university governance (Grendler 2002; 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 students and foreigners, was very supportive of university autonomy. However, this autonomy from the state should not be confused with freedom from the influence of the church, which played 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. The research function of universities was underdeveloped.

The Anglo-Saxon idea of the university was based on the organizational model of Oxford University (late 11th - early 12th century), which was subsequently adopted by all higher education institutions in the country, although other English universities performed as teaching institutions only 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 to 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, in a nutshell, was due to competition for authority in the university, and 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 Original publication is Haskins, C. (1923) *The Rise of Universities*. Henry Holt and Company. Here I refer to the re-edition of 1957 by Cornell University Press

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 the 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 the academic environment of early 19th century Germany (Ash 2006:245-249; Miyasaka 2005:7; Nybom 2003:144), it became known in the 20th century as the 'Humboldtian idea of the university'. Three main principles, *Lehrfreiheit* (freedom of teaching and research) and *Lernfreiheit* (freedom of learning) and *Freiheit der Wissenschaft* (right to academic self-governance) lie 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, and claims that "the Colleges of America are plainly copied from the Colleges of the English Universities" in coursework, study process, and way of administration. Hofstadter and Metzger (1955: 5) and Rudy (1951:156) support this point, emphasizing that 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 in their original setting (Vom Bruch 1997). One of the possible reasons of the shift from the English to the German model of education is the change in American relations 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 universities autonomy from the state and relocates the struggle for independence to the inside of organizations. It means that while advocating for freedom from interference, academics do not refer to state interference anymore, but rather to individual autonomy from university governing bodies. In this model the general public, via these oversight boards, also has its agency in the 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 academic freedom gradually became a universal value while embedded in various types of university and state relationship (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 the European University Professors' Magna Charta Universitatum provides a detailed formula for protection of teaching and research (1988). Meanwhile the 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. This also covered academics' “freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies” (UNESCO 1997).

Nevertheless, the research of Karran and Beiter (2020) shows that despite various attempts to conceptualize and promote academic freedom as an international standard, not only do the legislations of 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 the boundaries 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. A 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 to conduct an investigation 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 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 of the 21st century, characterized by the existing academic dependency of the countries from the periphery on those 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, and 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 research across the whole disciplinary spectrum. The idea of center-periphery relationships can easily be 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 comes from the Magna Charta Observatory, Humboldt's manuscript on the organization of the University of Berlin (1810), the 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 contexts of the 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 circulated in the central regions and were also 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 the assumed universality of enunciation, with which they disagree. Their claim is that only a 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 the imperial dynamics of the second half of the 20th century, mostly the US and USSR’s hegemonic ambitions, as well as the gradual decolonizing of former European metropolises. However, the different place of human rights in the histories of these regions does not allow the unpacking of their colonial legacies in a similar fashion, necessitating the 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 periphery. However, being aware of this positionality and reflecting on 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 as described above. While being a Russian national with a Russian academic background, I conduct a research project 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 developed in an individual country context. For historical reasons it is composed of three distinct 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 the 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 the 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 the 17th century. However, these institutions were organized by 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 in universities in the West, and being able to gradually replace the monastery Academies (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 Arts² 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 several reasons. First of all, it was directly subordinated to the senate, which gave it a significant level of

² Translated from: Проект положения об учреждении Академии наук и художеств

autonomy (Decree on the establishment of Moscow State University³ 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 the state-controlled Academy established earlier, and the blind emulation of European universities (Hans 2012:11). It also involved an attempt to organize 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 ideologically fulfilled the demand of the moment (Raëff 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, Gottingen University was considered a model to follow because of 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 educational 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 existing faculties⁴ 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

³ Translated from: Об учреждении Московского университета

⁴ Four university faculties at that time were: History and Philology, Physics and Mathematics, Law, and Medical School.

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 strictly specified 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 in higher education in Tsarist Russia. Women Courses providing forms of higher education for women (Johanson 1987), new public (non-state) 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 1982:98, Kaplan 2007:50).

By the end of its monarchical history up to the moment of the 1917 revolution, Russia had an explicit understanding of a model of academic freedom that fitted the local 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 the 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 way. 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 1990s.

In the literature, 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 Soviet totalitarian ideological machinery (Kuraev 2016:182). As Kuraev shows, both approaches are very much value-based, and he proposes a concise and succinct formula of “uniformity, top-down administration, and one-man management organizational principles” to both characterize the essence of the Soviet model and emphasize 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, the 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, up to the end of the 1920s 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 1980s 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 schools, there were bottom-up attempts to establish alternative or even oppositional units within the existing system of higher education. The All-Russian Social-Christian Union for the Liberation of the People was organized in 1964 at Leningrad University⁵ 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 an unofficial network of mathematical 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 the late Soviet times was extremely far from the 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 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 form of academic freedom (1997:2): while having some institutional autonomy (in very limited number of places), academics treated 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

⁵ Saint Petersburg State University was renamed to Leningrad University during the Soviet times.

considered as an arena of academic freedom, and not only because of hostility to human rights and freedoms. In fact, it was also due to the institutional setting of the higher education system, which targeted scholars as units with specific functions for which they were paid and promoted, rather than hiring creative individuals who could contribute to the common good. Being an academic in the 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. The high level of centralization went together with secrecy, which meant no coherent statistics on enrollment, student numbers, or budgets could facilitate the start of the reform (2009:77, World Bank 1995). Thus, without any systematized previous knowledge, the new system developed a list of four priorities that were intended to 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, the privatization of properties, and the creation of a higher education market with privately funded students. Together with concentration of the major governance in the Ministry of Education (even though not all the specialized 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 was also reformed. New disciplines which were previously missing from the curriculum were added, while ideological subjects (like the study of Marxism-Leninism) were removed. Modernization implied change and diversification of teaching methods, including new forms of examination and the diversification of available sources of content (2009:78-79).

Despite the removal of party control, transition to a 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 the necessity of externally pushing universities to become new forms of higher education institution (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

⁶ For example, medical universities are regulated by the Ministry of Health

education, was realized through the wide-scale monitoring of university performance in the 2010-s which was followed by multiple closures and mergers of institutions.

While not targeting universities or research organizations directly, legislation restricting NGO ‘funding coming from abroad’, was implemented in 2006 and then toughened 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 for prosecutors to shut down any foreign or international organizations considered a threat to the constitutional order and national security (such as the Open Society Foundation, the European Platform for Democratic Elections, and the National Endowment for Democracy, which 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 the 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 guarantee the provision of academic freedoms to students, educators and researchers, and mentions the entailing of academic responsibility. The list of freedoms included the freedom of educators and scholars to choose their topics and methods for research and teaching, and the 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. The new legislation does not have pluralism of opinions and the education of independent individuals among its goals. Instead, it focuses on the increase of transparency, accountability and autonomy (FL №273 from 29.12.2012, art.3), thus revealing the state dilemma between the desire to control the university agendas and at the same time pushing the higher education system towards higher financial autonomy.

The main large-scale comparative studies of the academic environment held in the last decades are the International Academic Profession (1991–1993) conducted by the Carnegie Foundation and the Changing Academic Profession (2007– 2012) (Teichler et al. 2013). The CAP survey in Russia (2012) is based on a sample of 25 randomly selected universities out of 311 accredited higher education institutions in 9 regions with the densest university populations (Bain 2009). Around 1600 respondents filled in the survey, which is 60-65 per university (Yudkevich et al. 2013:9). According to the CAP survey (2012) those university employers who prioritize teaching have more administrative presence in the promotion and control of their workload than those who consider research their main sphere of activity, though both groups experience administrative control to a significant extent. (Kozmina 2014:143) This gives a hint that in the rigid structure of the university system, research might be a space for academic freedom, 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 (2001) research, Russia in the late 1990s joined a group of countries with a re-emerging academic freedom (2001:215). Smolentseva (2003) confirms this idea, emphasizing that lack of funding was the main constraint, while 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 detailed attention to everyday academic activities. This assessment is supported by the latest GPPI report, which emphasizes increased state pressure and an atmosphere of self-censorship among scholars as a response to it (Kaczmarek 2020). Yet, it is important to understand that this is performance-assessing research, the goal of which is to understand the general climate. Meanwhile, no empirical studies with a focus on academic self-evaluation have been conducted, except an on-going 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 are still a number of academic publications that touch on the subject of academic freedom in one way or another. For example, Kaplan (2007) and Dubrovskiy (2017) offer a historical perspective on academic freedoms in Russia, while Romanov and Iarskaia-Smirnova (2015) comment on the law on foreign agents and express concern that its 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 on academic freedom in Russia has been published in English, it was decided to check the journals in the national language. It was problematic, given the local culture of academic publications that lack 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 who in most cases failed to integrate it into a wider discussion. While having limited development of the concept of academic freedom in 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 consider academic freedom to be a complex entity, but only as 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 modern 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 filled by multi-faceted research, including this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3 The legal landscape of Russian academia

According to the existing scholarship on academic freedom, there is neither a universal understanding of academic freedom, nor even regional ones. 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 of 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 that one would expect to be the most protective of academic freedom, inspires scholars to continue research this disparity in those 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 the 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 a 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 the practice of academic freedom. Such statements can also be seen as beliefs, i.e. communication of the 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 the law as an expression of beliefs, and approach respondents' inputs also as beliefs, then the discrepancy between the law and empirical realities illustrates the mobility of the norm. This can mean either that it was once formulated and since then has noticeably changed, or that there are multiple groups formulating what is academic freedom to them, for example bureaucrats and academics. This discrepancy identifies the presence of academic freedom as a category within selected society, problematizing its inconsistency.

If we treat law as a practice, we expect that it is a guideline for the proper functioning of professional infrastructure, regulator of relationships 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 a lack of functioning regulation. In this case the discrepancy between law and practice illustrates a 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 how we define human subjects' inputs leads to the formulation of different research problems, and therefore different solutions. Among various taxonomies of the approaches as to how to study academic freedom, there are those that are based on the data sources used (Spannagel 2020), on the division of intellectual and empirical academic freedom (Matei 2020), or on *de jure* and *de facto* divisions (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 the 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 et al. (2020) assess the 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 the examination of multiple things at once. Karran and colleagues (Karran 2007; Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017; Karran & Beiter 2020), on the other hand, advocate looking separately at the various aspects 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 the researcher to see the legal context of academic freedom in Russia from multiple perspectives. However, 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 many factors that can be considered relevant to respondents 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. The composite approach

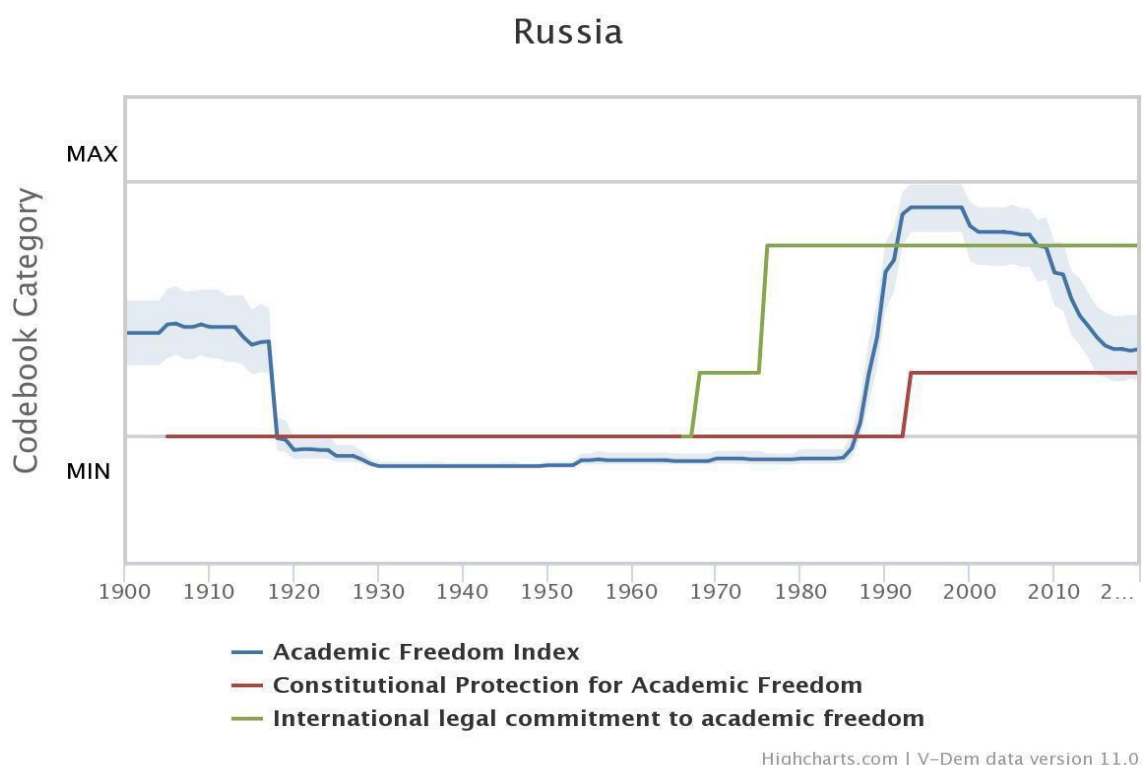
The composite approach to studying academic freedom refers to the idea that we see the complexity of the picture by adding all the details to it and treating them as a whole. In this chapter the composite approach is represented by the work of Kinzelbach et al., (2020). Through the last years they have been working on effective academic freedom measurement, and in 2020 they presented the results in collaboration with the 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 a purely legal analysis would provide only a skewed picture of reality without de facto academic freedom (p.2), therefore they rely on expert assessments which aim "to contextualize 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 the legal protection of academic freedom, only in a non-direct fashion through the expert-based index.

The 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 the V-Dem website showing the dynamics of academic freedom change in Russia. In line with what was discussed in the previous chapter, it shows some freedom in pre-revolutionary times, a dramatic decrease in Soviet times, and a gradual improvement from 1986 (the start of Perestroika), followed by a peak in 1993 after adoption of the Constitution of the Russian Federation in 1993, and then a noticeable decline during the 2010s. Based on this chart we can see that the change to 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 has only gone down since the first Putin presidency started in 2000.

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



Source: Varieties of Democracies (V-Dem) dataset.

The assessment of the effects of specific pieces of legislation lies outside the scope of the methodology proposed by Kinzelbach et al., (2020). They focus on de facto experiences of academic freedom, and are 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 has been changing in line with the regime, fully synchronized with the timeline of the main political changes happening through the last 120 years, and independent of the normative innovations developed in the process.

While appreciating the comparative capacity of the V-Dem dataset and Academic Freedom Index, such lack of divergence between academic freedom and regime changes makes academic freedom look like a derivative of a regime and neglects the point of having a separate index aiming to produce a 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 empirical data. In any case, for the purpose of this research and specifically this chapter, the composite approach represented by the Academic Freedom Index is not ideal, as it does not allow us to approach the rule-making process in a sufficiently detailed way.

3.2. The fragmented approach

Apart from looking at the various components of a complex system together, there is a way to approach the complexity of a phenomenon by splitting it into its constituents and building the understanding by paying detailed 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 a criterion referenced approach which implies that there are five distinct areas of academic freedom (see Table 1) allowing us to assess the coherency and effectiveness of the law in selected contexts (Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017:210). As much as 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%) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Constitutional protection for academic freedom: compliance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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%) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Legal provision for institutional autonomy (0-4%) 2) Internal operation of autonomy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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) Staff powers of appointment and dismissal 3a) Dean's/Head of Department's credentials (0-1%) 3b) Appointing the Dean/Head of Department (0-1%) 3c) Dismissing the Dean/Head of Department (0-1%) 3d) Rector's credentials (0-1%) 3e) Appointing the Rector (0-1%) 3f) Dismissing the Rector (0-1%) |
| Academic Tenure (0-20%) | Protection for academic tenure and promotion 1a) De jure protection: duration of contracts (0-4%) 1b) De facto protection: duration of contracts (0-4%) 1c) Provision for contract termination in h.e. legislation (0-3%) 1d) Provision for contract termination in other legislation (0-3%) 1e) Provision of academic advancement (0-6%) |

Source: Karran, T., Beiter, K., & Appiagyei-Atua, K. (2017). Measuring academic freedom in Europe: A criterion referenced approach. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 1(2), 209-239.

It is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss how fair the weighting of the specific criteria is, or whether they should be operationalized differently. What I am doing next is applying this framework to the Russian context to see how protective the Russian legislation is when it comes to academic freedom. Further discussion of the criteria and what do with the mean can be seen in respective sections.

3.2.1. Constitution and international agreement ratification

The presence (or absence) of academic freedom in the constitution and international agreements provide the most straightforward signs of the general presence of academic freedom in a selected national environment. Those can be seen as separate, not integrated indicators in the 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 researchers to approach constitutional protection in a more comprehensive way.

The Constitution of the 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 the reference to teaching partially addresses the issue of academic freedom, there is no reference to academic freedom as a separate concept, nor 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 (or 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 as such needs 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.

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

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

The Constitution of the 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) was 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 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 a reservation, when counting the score I treat it as fully ratified because the reservations in question do not target educational-related issues, nor do they prevent an individual from using this opportunity, thus allowing protection by the initial agreement.

Another international convention that Karran et al. (2017:227) refer to is the 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 a legal environment to ensure these rights (Article 2(1)) (UN 1983b, 5). The ICESCR was signed by the Soviet Union in 1968, ratified in 1973, and is upheld by the Russian Federation to the present day (UN 1966a). Optional protocols of the ICESCR have not been signed or ratified by Russia (UN 2008).

Karran et al. assign more weight to the 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 the 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 the Russian Federation as a separate state after the breakup of the Soviet Union, and second, Russia is a signatory state of the Bologna Process protocols and thus is part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and in this respect is part of European academia and its regulatory frameworks. Even though some of the ECHR protocols have not been ratified by Russia, they are not related to free speech, and therefore were not considered as affecting the calculation of the score.

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

| | ICCPR (free speech provision) | OP-ICCPR (complaints procedure before UN) | ICESCR (right to education provision) | OP-ICESCR (complaints procedure before UN) | ECHR (free speech provision) |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Score for Russia | 1,5% (ratification) | 1,5% (ratification) | 1,5% (ratification) | 0% (non-ratification) | 4% (ratification) |
| Max score | 1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions | 1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions | 1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions | 1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions | 4% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions |

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

While recognising the subsequent UN reports on the implementation of the international agreements, I do not include them in 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 the suggested approach as being a middle ground between *de jure* and *de facto* approaches to academic freedom. Such reports can be helpful to see whether declared principles meet the reality they are expected to frame, while remaining normative documents, and not simply feedback from the targeted population.

3.2.2. Teaching and research

The Federal Laws of the Russian Federation, as well as the Constitution, have legal supremacy over 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 on the national level (art.76.2) and require two thirds of the State Duma (lower house) and three quarters of the 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 a majority vote in the State Duma (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 the Russian Federation,' is the main regulation covering all levels of education from pre-school to post-graduate stages (art.23). It also covers what is called additional [дополнительное] education, focused on cultural or sport activities outside the curricula 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 the previously separate Law on Education (№3266-1 from 10.07.1992) and the Law on Graduate and Postgraduate Education (FL №125 from 22.08.1996), and became an umbrella legislation covering all education-related activities. As the Federal Centre for Educational Legislation (FCEL) comments: "the effectiveness of educational legislation in Russia is conditional on its clarity, comprehensiveness, and enforceability", meaning that even though the new law fulfilled a lot of urgent needs like the distribution of powers and quality control, it is repetitive and lacks an effective means of legal enforcement (FCEL 2013).

Article 47 of the law describes the legal status of pedagogical workers, their rights and freedoms, and guarantees 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: teaching practice*]

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: curricula development*]

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: teaching practice*]

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: curricula development*]

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; [*dispute arbitration*]

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 a 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 significant areas affecting academic freedom, the idea of academic freedom as a concept is not formulated there explicitly, which prevents it from becoming transferable through all 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 the Russian Federation. The same law grants permission for the design and implementation of a unified education policy (Art.6.1), establishing federal state requirements for educational 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 a relatively high level of control over educational organizations (including universities), the law emphasises the state-public nature of the management of education systems, 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 utilising artistic expression (Art.28.4). Even though such a 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 because its comprehensive coverage is accompanied by concurrent limitations.

Educational organizations are free and independent in defining their form and **internal structure** (Art.27.1), which includes division into faculties and departments, establishing of sub-units, both physical (for example, division to campuses) and functional (for example, labs)(Art.27.2), which is equivalent to full autonomy for these 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 the 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 of enrollment numbers. What this means is that the state defines a specific number of students (per university, and per discipline) that will be financially supported and provides universities with per capita funds which include the price of each student's education, in terms of teaching and material infrastructure (Art.99.2). The salary of the staff, as well as the 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 to higher education. In fact, state support forms around 60% of a yearly university budget, while the remaining resources come from the universities' own funds, via students who pay for their education, and to a minor extent from external or foreign funds (Abankina & Filatova & Vynaryk 2016:132). There is no regulation defining the ways in which a university should distribute money within the organization. State approval is not needed for universities' participation in profitable activities, nor for **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. However, maximum scores could not be assigned for these criteria due to deficiencies in the regulations. For example, there is no transparent regulation on the distribution of additional subsidies to universities which can be proportional to the funds that the university gets for students. Neither can we see clarity regarding commissioned research, except from 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 are mandatory for the accreditation of all higher education institutions (irrespective 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 are 10), and national research universities (27 excluding MSU and SPbSU) approved by the President of the Russian Federation (FL№ 260 from 10.11.2009). Thus, 39 universities, out of nearly a thousand higher education institutions can have their own educational standards. However, even though those 39 can be considered fully autonomous when it comes to degree accreditation, I find their proportion too little to increase the overall score for degree accreditation from absent to partial.

The general rule for a **rector's appointment** is that it is either "elected by a 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 an externally-appointed rector balances the higher level of autonomy these universities have in defining their teaching and research agendas. The lack of capacity to affect the process of leadership appointment is classed as absence of autonomy in the respective criterion in the scoring system.

Admission to undergraduate degrees is carried out on the basis of the results of the Unified State Examination [ЕГЭ in Russian] (Art.70.1), in which all high school graduates take part. However, it is the individual universities who make the decisions about the number and combination of the disciplines necessary for admission (Art.70.6), as well as the required exam score (although this 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 the Unified State Examination results (Art.70.7). Those universities having their own educational standards are eligible to have additional exams at the undergraduate level, irrespective of the discipline (FLN№ 260 from 10.11.2009). The number of budget-funded students is defined by the state, yet the overall enrolment depends exclusively on the capacities of the individual universities. Thus, according to the Karran et al. (2017:217) system, autonomy in terms of student recruitment in Russia can be considered partial, i.e. state and universities share the responsibilities for the formulation of enrolment criteria.

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

| | Legal provision | Rector's appointment | Internal Structures | State Funding |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Score for Russia | 2% (partial) | 0% (non) | 1% (full) | 0,5% (partial) |
| Max score | 4% full: comprehensive provision on institutional autonomy exists in the legislation | 1.5% ratification: ratification of Covenant without expression of reservations to provisions | 1% full: the university determines internal structures (i.e. creates/abolishes faculties, and/or departments) without state intervention | 1% full: the university receives an un-hypothecated block grant without restrictions and can determine its own revenue allocations |
| | Commissioned research | Staff appointments | Student recruitment | Degree accreditation |
| Score for Russia | 0,5% (partial) | 2% (full) | 0,5% (partial) | 0% (non) |
| Max score | 1% full: power to undertake commissioned research expressly detailed in h.e. laws | 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 | 1% full: the university determines the selection criteria and undertakes the process of choosing students for entry to degree programs | 1% full: degree programmes need not to be state accredited |

Source: author's assessment based on Karran & Beiter & Appiagyeyi-Atua 2017. Pp.216-217

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

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

| | State regulation of autonomy | Private sector constraints to autonomy |
|------------------|--|---|
| Score for Russia | 2% (partial) | 0% (non) |
| Max score | 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 | 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 |

Source: author's assessment based on Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017. Pp.218

3.2.4. Self-governance

The 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 the rector's competence (Art.26.3), but on the other hand, there are also collegial bodies, like the academic board, or the board of trustees (in some cases) (Art.26.4), whose role, authority, and terms of office 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 to define their own organizational structure (Art.27.1), including the systems of educational and research divisions, as well as any additional subunits (Art.27.2). The only exception is the necessity to get state approval before the creation of university branches (Art.27.7).

I interpret that in Russia there is partial compliance with **legal provision** because the law identifies the 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 there is only partial compliance with the **existence of collegial bodies** (their duties are not specified), and non-compliance with the ability to determine the **composition of collegial bodies** and **senate**, as well as access to **strategic decision-making** because all of these are regulated at the university level by local normative provisions.

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

| | Legal provision for self-governance | Existence of collegial bodies | Composition of collegial bodies | Composition of Senate | Strategic decision-making |
|------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| Score for Russia | 1% (partial) | 0,5% (partial) | 0% (non) | 0% (non) | 0% |
| Max score | 2% full: an express and satisfactory provision on the right of university self-governance exists in the legislation | 1.0% full: the legislation provides for collegial bodies and specifies their duties | 2% full: academic staff are guaranteed overwhelming representation (<60%) on | 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. | 6% full: academic staff have at least 50% representation on the strategic decision taking body/bodies, e.g. the Senate and/or board/council |

Source: author's assessment based on Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017. Pp.220-221

Given that universities have the right to make decisions about their internal structures and their organization of self-governance, there is no federal regulation on the **appointment** or **dismissal of the deans**. The Labor Code of the Russian Federation specifies that replacement of deans or other heads of university subunits is not conducted based on an open call (Art.332 of Labor code). This means that the positions of the dean or the head of department are open to internal members only, irrespective of the procedure for their appointment in a specific university (either elected or appointed by rector). According to the federal requirements in professional **qualifications**, deans are expected to have a higher education degree (there is no PhD requirement, even though in practice that is most often the case) in the disciplinary area of the subunit they will lead and three 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) the deans' credentials are

in partial compliance with the criteria. For the other criteria the score is zero, because even despite the possibility of academic participation in self-governance at the subunit level, there is no guarantee of this right at the federal level.

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

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

| | Dean's/Head of Department's credentials | Appointing the Dean/Head of Department | Dismissing the Dean/Head of Department | Rector's Credentials | Appointing the Rector | Dismissing the Rector |
|------------------|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| Score for Russia | 0,5% (partial) | 0% (non) | 0% (non) | 0% (non) | 0% (non) | 0% (non) |
| Max score | 1% full: The dean/head of department is an internal appointment and must have a PhD or Professorial rank | 1% full: Academic staff exercise control over the appointment of dean/head of department posts | 1% full: academic staff can dismiss the dean/head of department via a vote of noconfidence (or similar procedure), the state is not required to approve, undertake or confirm such dismissals | 1% full: the rector is an internal appointment and must have a PhD or Professorial rank | 1% full: academic staff exercise control over Rectoral appointments | 1% full: academic staff can dismiss the rector via a vote of no-confidence (or similar procedure) |

Source: author's assessment based on Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017. Pp.222

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 by other means than by higher education laws and agreements. This is the case for Russian academics whose contracts are subject to the Labor Code of the Russian Federation (FL №197 from 30.12.2001). Therefore, as with other contracts, academic contracts can be signed either for a fixed term or for an undefined one (Art.332 of Labor code). Thus, there is the legal possibility for tenure or long-term contracts, yet it is left to individual university-level decision-making, on the one hand, giving universities more autonomy in defining their 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 the higher education legislation, or in the general labor-related legislation.

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

Due to the decentralization of contract regulation and the 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. A Member of the Federation Council (the Upper House of Parliament), Irina Rukavishnikova⁷ commented on the negative implications of the 'effective contracts' which are based on weighting the research activities of teaching staff, in order to effectively support their academic achievements (2019). Rukavishnikova highlights that, far from being a stimulating incentive, which is the way that effective contracts were initially imagined, they are becoming mechanisms that strengthen the precarity of younger scholars and weaken the positions of staff who are involved primarily in teaching activities. However, she also adds that effective contracts are very slowly spreading, and an absolute minority of institutions are already using them as a form of regulation of labor relationships within universities. In September 2020, Rukavishnikova introduced a bill to the State Duma (the Lower House of Parliament) suggesting changes to the respective articles of the Labor Code, and to have academic tenure as a default option for university staff, with the possibility of

⁷ Irina Rukavishnikova holds the position of the First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Building.

temporary contracts which would not be shorter than 3 years. The initiative will be put to a vote during the spring of 2021⁸. In the meantime, Russia does not comply with de facto protection of academic tenure.

The Regulation on the assignment of academic titles (GD №1139 from 10.12.2013) provides elaborate guidelines on the necessary qualifications which are required in order to be promoted to associate professor [docent 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 the position held in the administrative organization of the unit they are associated with (Art.8GD №1139 from 10.12.2013). There is separate legislation specifying the conditions of promotions for those who have degrees received abroad (MD №721 from 11.06.2020). The comprehensiveness of this regulation allows us to assign the maximum score for the criteria of provision of academic advancement.

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

| | De jure protection: duration of contracts | De facto protection: Duration of contracts | Provision for contract termination in h.e. legislation | Provision for contract termination in other legislation | The provision for academic advancement |
|------------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| Score for Russia | 0% (non) | 0% | 0% (non) | 0% (non) | 6% (full) |
| Max score | 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 | 4% full: 66.7% or more of academic staff have permanent contracts of service (or fixed-term contracts with a long-term perspective) | 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 | 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 | 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 |

Source: author's assessment based on Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017. Pp.224

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)

⁹ Russia has a two-stage doctorate. After the successful defense of the 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 of Karran et al. (2017).

Table 9. Overall score of de jure academic freedom

| | International agreements and the Constitution | Teaching and Research | Autonomy | Self-governance | Protection of tenure | OVERALL SCORE |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Score for Russia | 13,5% / 20% | 10% / 20% | 8,5% / 20% | 2% / 20% | 6% / 20% | 40% |

Source: author's assessment

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 into a comparative perspective, the Russian score is below the 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 the low score for protection of tenure, the difference is not that big, it is just 1,3% lower than the European average (Karran & Beiter & Appiagyei-Atua 2017:229). The comparison of Russia to the European countries is beyond the scope of this research and is presented here exclusively as an illustration allowing us to put the numbers into some context.

3.2.7. Limitations of the approach

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

The most fundamental substantive limitation of the approach used in this chapter is the dichotomization of agency between the university and the state, including the influence of business as one of the subdivisions in autonomy calculation, yet no further than that. First of all, it neglects the division between public and private higher education, thereby leaving aside 213 out of 705 (Ministry of Education 2020¹⁰) higher education institutions in Russia. Even

¹⁰ Open data provided by Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Available at: <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/opendata/9710062939-svedeniya-ob-obrazovatelnykh-organizatsiyakh-rossiyskoy-federatsii-osushchestvlyayushchikh-obrazovat> (accessed on April 11, 2021)

though private institutions need state license, as well as the accreditation of their programs, as much as the public institutions, other aspects of their autonomy related to their internal structure and staff-related policies cannot be seen within the same framework.

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

Another concern is related to the operationalization of self-governance. The methodological framework by Karran et al. (2017) implies the assessment of self-governance based on the compliance of the state higher education legislation with suggested principles. Yet there are two explanations of non-compliance which would lead to a 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 the Russian case, meaning that it is missing from federal legislation because it is the responsibility of universities to define it for themselves. This is a more complex scenario, as it can mean two opposite things. It could be interpreted as higher institutional autonomy, and in this case the lack of state regulation regarding self-governance would be seen as a more positive thing. It could also be seen as fake autonomy, as in cases where 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 the 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 the criterion reference approach developed by Karran et al. (2017) is the 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, the Russian Federation in 2020 is ranked 94 out of 128 countries (World Justice Project 2020), thus raising a serious concern about the 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 branch, lack of freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, and massive abuse of criminal justice principles, are the weakest aspects of the 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 us 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 actual practice.

Even after agreeing that based on the Rule of Law Index we can somewhat rely on the analysis of Russian legislation as representing real practice, my main unresolved concern is the 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 have been only two court cases related to academic freedom. One referred 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 the oppression of freedom of research or teaching, despite multiple concerns raised in the media by scholars who have experienced restrictions. Among possible interpretations is a lack of legal recourses, meaning that academics simply do not go to court either due to lack of trust in the judicial system or due to lack of awareness that there are regulations they could refer to. Another possibility is that recourses are blocked on the level of the courts, and in such cases actions against academic freedom restrictions are not initiated.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate the relationship between academics and courts. However, this concern opens the window for the 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, just as there is no single unified academia either in the world, nor in any country. Even in very compact settings, which is not the case for Russia with its more than nine hundred universities, academic experiences observed within one national context vary significantly, forming a plethora of identities based on institutional or disciplinary affiliation, age, gender, ideological views, and university positions. 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, these 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 demands to produce and publish academic research. Those institutions which do not have a long history of scientific endeavor and which historically have specialized in teaching and preparation of a trained labor force, have experienced various difficulties during this transition, due to a lack of training and the rigidity of the local institutional landscapes. Approaching the perception of research and the pursuit of freedom related to the research production of the academics belonging to a transitional part of the higher education system can be valuable on its own, yet is not relevant to the scope of this study. Given their lack 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 rather academic workers in the process of getting their degree of ‘kandidat nauk’. The 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, and their rights and duties are to a large extent defined by student regulation. This research deliberately excludes students' experiences of academic freedom, as it is a conceptually different matter. The problem of ensuring the representation of young academics is solved by recruiting participants who have defended their thesis during the last 5 years.

Russian academics who have left Russia and currently work abroad on a permanent basis are also outside 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 perspectives there. In order to see the potential variation in academic freedom-related meaning making, which is 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 of Russian universities or research centers.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I start by 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 the construction of a narrative 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 beliefs 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 the 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 that 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, in relation to their academic work and academic freedom. Even though those experiences and beliefs are the 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 can only reveal 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 a multitude of possible situational 'truths'. This means that I am interested in how people talk about their actions and thoughts about 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), or a practice allowing one to assess the academic climate, it can also be considered as a framework for thinking about work, though one of 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 the traditional understanding of 'academic freedom' in the literature.

4.1.2. Data

The data for this research has been collected in three waves, including the 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 the demography of the study's population in Table 10.

Table 10. Demographic characteristics of respondents

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

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 a diversity of experiences or a 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 the 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 the validity of the empirical results (Patton 1999:1192), and at earlier stages of this dissertation I was many 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. the 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 the formulation of selection criteria in the process of data collection. Yet there are certain characteristics of the participants that were chosen as the starting points of the selection process and as potential sources of variance in working experiences, and therefore, of understandings 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 the scope of the study 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 the 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 using a 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 by adding that, because of different needs, academics with diverse disciplinary identities vary in their 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 relation 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 such 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 differences in features considered crucial for the original selection, while other respondents are as different as possible in the selected scope. Minimization allows the researcher 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 to 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 the 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 new topics or features or do not allow the exploration of 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 contrary to representative sampling, which features 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 as 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 by arguing that 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 investigated in detail 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, consider whether they clearly understand them, and 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 into a list of topics, because every interview emerged in its own manner and having overly specific

questions prevented smoothness. The structure of the interviews comprised 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 the 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. The distribution of the participants is given in Table 11. After a 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, though there were some changes to 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

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Gender | 5 women, 2 men |
| City | 7 from St. Petersburg |
| Disciplines | Political science, Sociology, IR, Human Rights |
| Age | 5 below 40 2 in the range of 40-60 |
| Affiliation | Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg European University, St. Petersburg |

Taking into account the goals formulated earlier and the fact that my strategy of recruitment is purposive sampling, which allows the investigation to start 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 giving 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 questions 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. Petersburg¹¹ 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 academics in Turkey through 2016-2017¹². 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.

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.

¹² From July 21, 2016 to July 19, 2018 Turkish anti-war scholars not supporting the official Turkish 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/>).

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 pilot 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 occupations showed a spectrum of relevant identities informed by the academic activities that they were involved in; For example, additional non-university affiliations. At the pilot 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 different practices.

Another topic that emerged in some of the interviews, and was later included in the guide and discussed with the next respondents, was 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 these relationships. 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 at 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 their 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, and the 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 I arranged the meeting, they were already informed about what I was going to do. At the beginning of each interview I gave the promise of confidentiality, anonymity, which includes the anonymization of transcripts and any possible citations, and asked for permission to record. Even though none of the respondents prohibited the recording, I made it clear to them that in case they changed their mind about participation in my project, they could withdraw 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

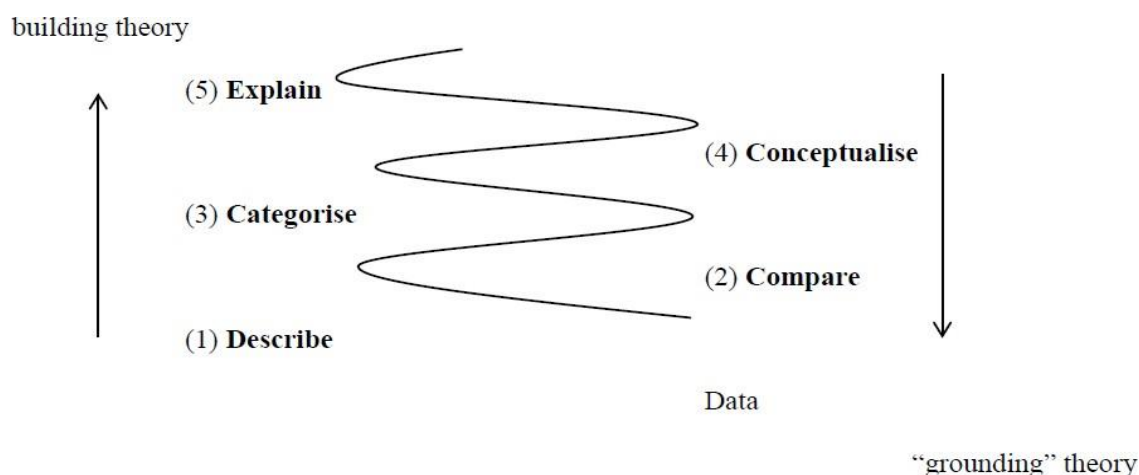
All the interviews were transcribed verbatim in the language in which they were conducted, i.e. Russian, and anonymized in the process of transcription, which includes changing personal or place names. The principal decision of not translating the transcripts was taken in order not to lose the nuances of meanings. My assumption is that the sense-making process of the Russian academics reflecting on their experiences happening on the territory and in the linguistic space of Russia should be approached in the language of origin. Given that due to anonymity reasons I cannot 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, a 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 researchers to conduct and report the process of data management in a clear and transparent way.

Figure 2. Analytical circle of theory building



Source: Hennink, M., Hutter, I., and Bailey, A. (2011) *Qualitative Research Methods*, London: Sage. P.238.

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 with that facilitates familiarization with the data and with estimates of its informational potential: what phenomena or ideas are met with 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 into micro-plots, or basic components of 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 the 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 these reflect the nature of academic freedom as a privilege or some sort of symbolic resource, or 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 these are ‘freedom to teach’, ‘freedom to research’, ‘freedom of union’, ‘freedom to move’, ‘freedom of publication’, and ‘freedom of disciplinary identification’. We see that these codes are originally

from different storylines that were identified at the descriptive 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 the 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 narrative to construct a theory that can be used independently 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 objects of research are not experiences as such, but rather stories about those experiences produced by the participants of the research and approached by 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 interviews. As much as every plot needs 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 the realization of

academic freedom after not paying attention to it or adding some specific features to the original understanding. So, the change in question happens 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, and therefore the voice of the author, or the narrator's perspective, is a crucial part of the storyline. The way in which 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', thereby 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 a 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 the 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 give meaning to my own 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 the 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 a 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) needed some sort of special freedom, as it was assumed to be naturally present, 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 of capturing restrictions or negative interventions, participants in this research experienced difficulties in expressing a straightforward consequence of academic freedom. 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 did it lead 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 can be seen in Chapter 3, it is only beginning to become a part of academic discourse, given its absence from university charters and its 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 as 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 as a beacon to navigate through the reflective

processes of the respondents about their profession and the role that 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 consequences that the effective understanding of academic freedom can have on one's life. Figuring out who are the main characters of these plots and what are their relationships among themselves, I contextualize the storylines in the settings of the workplaces discussed.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I start by introducing the core concepts of the analysis, threat and safe space; what they mean, how are they identified, and 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 this concept is 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.

The next two parts familiarize the reader with two identified storyline types (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 them, how they establish and protect their boundaries, and who are they protected from.

The chapter is finalized by a discussion on the role of disciplinary affiliation in the understanding of academic freedom. In this 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 the understanding of academic freedom.

5.1. Threat and safe space

Threat and safety are categories that play a crucial role in the ways respondents spoke about themselves and their experiences, these being the central categories connecting mundane and extreme deviating experiences, allowing identification of the relationships between the 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 a disruption 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 a 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 their academic job in the conditions with which they are familiar and to which they have 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 interfere. ‘Otherness’ can be seen on various levels of professional communication. This can refer to 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 the 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 the 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 the respondent juxtaposes the idea of being a free academic and getting engaged in university politics including building networks 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 forces 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 threatened. This respondent finds it natural to close up and limit challenging interactions with the environment that are seen as hostile. Concern about the possibility of sanctions and feelings of unsafety are an illustration of the abstract, ‘state’-related threat.

5.2. Censorship and Self-censorship

Irrespective of how visible is the notion of threat in the respondents’ narratives, they were somewhat confusedly identifying the target of potential pressure, i.e. who is the first to be subjected to restrictions. The possibility of censorship is recognized, but marginally, and 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 an institutional environment in which censorship is considered an informal practice. Informality is juxtaposed with law which is formulated clearly and without too much room 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 adjointment [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 the respondent refers to Article 280.1 of the Criminal Code of the 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 an administrative infraction punishable by a fine. The nature of the law is not questioned in this case, yet recognizing its legal status the respondent does not go through the trouble of justifying the 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 this 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 an 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 legislation 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 the 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 the legitimacy of restricting measures, considered 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. The necessity to make this camouflage effort is considered to be a response to censorship. The 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 this limitation but then either rationalizing it or finding a way to avoid it, respondents trivialize the intervention, thus considering it an irritating yet tolerable part of regular performance, not much affecting the

idea of being a free professional.

While desensitizing their fields of academic interest was a noticeable feature in both types of narratives, that will later be discussed at length, respondents unanimously recognize the problematic nature of self-censorship yet do not consider themselves to be affected since they are protected by a perspective that also makes 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 aside the academic framework. Despite recognizing that maintaining access to the field and relationships with the stakeholders is worth compromising some expressive capacities, respondent accept this price. The academic's role is seen as less agitated and in fact liberating. In a context in which freedom of expression is an issue in question, an 'academic' way of approaching a loaded issue is seen as an opportunity.

Self-censorship in terminology of the 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 has become 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 draws attention to the 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 rather than the state level. 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 others, I do not have problems with it, as long as I am not told what I can and cannot write in my own papers. Especially the latter, when I cannot write something. The fact that a university can prioritize certain research is ok, I do not think it is censorship.

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

Apart from the pragmatic approach to self-censorship discussed above, a more anxiety-driven, regime-focused modus of self-censorship was also identified in the respondents' narratives. This reflects the perspective of the earlier quote, comparing the current self-censorship to its older version of hostility 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 the respondent refers to it, stays unaffected, which gives credit to the quotation above, emphasizing a lesser degree of pressure, but also speaks to the notion of a more abstract state-oriented threat which is not necessarily supported by lived experiences but is rather an ideation 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 metaphors and do not have anything to do with the types of the respondents' personalities. Both narratives imply a noticeable concern about a potential threat (no matter if respondents experienced anything like that personally or

not), as well as the opposite of this concern, an awareness of what is achievable in a safe space, and finally the relationship with other people in the scope of bonding and sharing safe space in juxtaposition to 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* concentrate on opportunities they have at the moment. They do not deny the possibility of threat, yet while they do not experience it in a first-hand immediate manner, they try to preserve their existing safe space as long as possible. If their expectations are fulfilled, they are not worried about what is happening elsewhere, outside their professional space, or what is happening to others, who do not belong to their close professional circle. The introverted narrative implies a very narrow framing of in- group membership allowing individuals to concentrate on daily working routines and their closest community ties. It includes the immediate workplace and people with whom respondents cooperate for work-related reasons. For them the most visible threat is the university administration changing the rules of the game for reasons which are considered alien and unrecognized or unwelcome by the respondents. An interesting nuance is that this observation is consistently true for respondents independent of their position in the university hierarchy. Even though there were no top-level administrators in my sample, respondents vary from early career academics to ones at more advanced positions in terms of 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 their professional environment, in general they experience more anxiety about their freedom and possible threats to it. 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 upon. Respondents with an extraverted narrative of freedom contextualize themselves not only in their professional environment, but also in a wider 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 narratives. Some of them, especially those who can be considered reasonably established scholars, choose to actively confront whatever challenges face them. These defensive type respondents make a safe zone in preparation for confrontations. Another strategy is escape. Respondents who are overly aware of the threats and do not feel comfortable fighting against the administration and the state machine find their ways to escape, either diversifying affiliations and being prepared to physically leave, or through minimization of risky behaviors, even if this includes a 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 belonging 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 the respondent emphasizes the 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 also has a limiting effect, yet the respondent points out that this is a limitation one willingly accepts (“we put ourselves in shackles”) because it allows free professional performance while being part of a 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 the amount of freedom one has, but rather a state of mind, a distinctive feature of a ‘real’ academic.

*There is such a thing as academic unfreedom and it is in one's head.
It is a choice that one makes. (...) 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 throughout their careers. This implies that there are ‘correct’ choices that prove a person to be a free academic, and choices that demonstrate a 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 a core condition, which is trust among 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, respecting academic honesty, blind peer reviewing, participating in conferences and getting feedback from colleagues. This is how one gets familiar with the work of other scholars and makes assessments 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 their outlook and being 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 working culture. A community of this type can be a department, a research center or an entire institution. The foundation for trust in this type of community is not individual members’ quality of work, but rather one of the identified motivations: belonging to a grand narrative of an institution (e.g., with a long history or unique mission), belonging to a group associated with an individual ‘big name’ (schools of thought), or belonging to a setting that proved to be of high academic merit (through ranking, scientometrics, etc).

A very specific example of developing an institutional identity that holds strong and can even be hostile to alternative forms of organization, is the opposition between university researchers and those from the 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 histories, different internal hierarchies and career strategies, and what is also important, different understandings of science.

For me it is more important that in Russia there is a division between 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 the 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 the 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 the top-5, maybe something closer to 15-16 position, but I felt comfortable and was recognized in my field. People from the higher ranked colleges 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 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 the institutional design of the 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. the 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', thereby not meeting the expectations about collegueship.

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

A very little part of science is produced in the universities (...) First of all, there are 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 numbers of professionals, this respondent refuses to accept the academic qualities of the researchers outside his organizationally-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’ in the process of teaching, research, and organization of working processes. Certain pressure or restriction can happen on the following levels:

- The group level, when immediate colleagues from the same organizational unit (for example, research institute, department) or within a close disciplinary circle impose some rules or standards, contradicting the respondent’s understanding of individual autonomy.
- The organizational level, when the source of interference or threat is university administration or
- The 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 the ‘state’, which is, in fact, one of the frequently used characters in respondent’s narratives. When the interviewees referred to the 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 the ‘state’ as an agent in their narratives, respondents could not identify who was the exact source of power, whether it is the ministry of education on the local, regional or state level, the 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 the state’s pressure implemented on the personal level, i.e. through self-censorship.

Sense of this misgiving is partially framed by a wider knowledge about the national political context, as well as by this anonymity of threat, uncertainty of potential consequences in case something goes wrong. It was problematic for respondents to even formulate 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, the state acts as a metaphor of anxiety that is noticeable at every level from the top level of administration down to the individual.

The ways of trusting, and thus forming communal ties, are of utmost relevance in both types of freedom narratives. Respondents with the introverted storyline identify their circle of colleagues whom they trust, and calibrate the threat level based on how this community is feeling. Participants with the extraverted narrative, while establishing broader social ties, use the circle of trust in a similar way while choosing a community with relatable experiences in order to assess the general climate. In the conditions of a limited number of community-building strategies and therefore a 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 are 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 forms of state regulation of the final intellectual product. I specifically mean research in areas of strategic significance (space and ocean related inventions) or related to military developments, including some types of engineering, physics or chemistry. This argument is supported by the number of academics prosecuted for espionage in the Russian context. Among those dozens of accused academics, most are physicists, oceanologists, and engineers (Chelischeva 2020).

While recognizing these arguments emphasize differences in the practice of academic freedom by academics in separate disciplines, I argue that when it comes to academic freedom narratives these differences are not that recognizable anymore. As was discussed earlier, academic freedom narratives, even though inspired by the respondents' experiences of everyday life, cannot work as documental representations of their practices, nor even as accurate representations of their beliefs. Instead, in the collected stories we see the general frames shared and how to access to the meaning-making processes of respondents; in other words, how they interpret their lives and experiences in academia. In the previous section, the main storylines and their characteristics were 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 the separation of academic activities from everything non-academic happening inside universities, and another highlights the 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 those identified by Bayir, Cakici, and Ertas (2014) when exploring the difference of perceptions among social and natural scientists. They found that, counterintuitively, there is just a minor difference in the ways that academics talk about science and their place in it. The same holds true of the Russian setting. When defining the quality of academic work and the frames of the academic profession, respondents from the social sciences, humanities, and exact sciences made similar observations. Even more noticeable in this similarity is when participants identify threats and use the image of the state to channel their anxiety on different levels of their interactions at work.

For example, one of the most immediate expectations about experiences of academic freedom reflected in academics' narratives is about social scientists experiencing more visible censorship (or self-censorship), because they work with sensitive topics that might be considered disturbing by the authorities at some levels. This causal link is not supported by empirical evidence;

respondents talk about similar threats, irrespective of their disciplinary affiliation. In addition to that, barely any of the respondents, irrespective of their subject of research, identified their field of interest as being somewhat sensitive. Instead, most of them considered their research as 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 being invited to various professional events. And even those who did not associate themselves with the mainstream felt that their research was marginal only in relation to the community, which does not provide sufficient support and approval, yet it is not something that can cause any trouble at higher levels or among a wider audience.

In order to prevent the accusation of an exclusive choice of respondents, part of my rationale in the process of purposive sampling has been to choose 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 the university administration or even had to change their workplace, shared the same confident narrative about their work and capacity to do it in line with one's own standards of research.

One of the possible explanations of the lack of variation among disciplines, is the 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, a high level of awareness about each other is required. In the conditions of highly fragmented communities and a lack of immediate trust, respondents, especially those with an introverted narrative of freedom, are not necessarily interested in what is going on in their own disciplinary areas, let alone what is happening in other ones. In the conditions where no common interests are advocated, there is no meaningful discussion allowing participants to identify differences of approach.

For example, one of the participants, when talking about the experience within their disciplinary community, expresses immediate skepticism about those whom he describes as 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 a common disciplinary background. This exclusivity travels further, from the level of exclusion within a subject area to methodological exclusion, thus alienating members who try 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 the respondent's belief, in order to be considered a 'real' economist one should do quantitative research with complex maths. Not fitting this criterion creates a sense of alienation.

A historian is someone who goes to archives and collects 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 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 approaches... Yet we as a community keep thinking en masse that [it is not a legitimate methodology]

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

Based on these observations about various disciplinary exclusions, the following question arises: how is regular academic debate about the scope and methods of research distinguished from communal segregation in this research? The response is grounded in the epistemological assumptions of this dissertation. If respondents find the ways that their colleagues treat them within disciplines to be disturbing and preventing them 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 further discussion about the place of academic freedom in 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 distinct forms of anxiety related to professional identity. The category of threat and its opposition, safe space, being central to the ways people talk about their relationship with their employers shows that despite a certain level of self-confidence and faith 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 the application of the categories of threat and safe space to more specific empirical settings, while locating the narratives to specific settings of people at work. Finding their ways to build a community, or better, multiple communities, while building trust with those who are considered to be safe and who stimulate free academic work, and alienating those who do not fit in, participants of this research make sense of academic work as a discursive space of clashing identities and beliefs.

And finally, this study addressed the issue of disciplinarity which counterintuitively plays a minor role in building the narratives of academic freedom. Respondents from both the social and exact sciences similarly formulate their anxieties about potential restrictions and rationalize or trivialize those measures they cannot fight. On the one hand, such a 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 more general 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. Such people 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 each case there may be several vocal groups, with each of them raising the issue of academic freedom to fulfill their own needs. Thus, they contribute to the visibility of academics in separate ways, from emphasizing the role of universities in human rights culture, to reflections on the importance of expert knowledge in today's world.

This dissertation does not have the goal of covering 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 in society in general, and how 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 examined academic freedom at the place of its most direct implication and grounded what is very often used as a powerful slogan or general principle in the 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 values of academic freedom.

Academic freedom in Russia has been approached through an 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 the 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 their social conditions (public image and availability of power resources). In the context of this dissertation I am interested not in general policy-making processes, but only as it relates to the protection of academic freedom.

Selection of two dimensions allowing me to define academic freedom target populations is analogous to the division between *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 was discussed in Chapter 3, approaching academic freedom analytically requires clarity over the 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 the choice of conceptual level affects the implications of the framework.

6.1. Conceptualizing targets and constructions

According to Ingram & Schneider (1993), the social construction of target populations implies a division of policy-recipients into groups based on how their behavior varies in response to the 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 does not affect all the recipients in a same way, therefore it sends them different signals that they interpret from their respective group positions. 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 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 me 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 in which academics define their personal scope of academic freedom. While those with an introverted narrative limit their scope of attention to their immediate colleagues, or at most to university level, respondents with an extraverted narrative of academic freedom relate to the experiences of a wider academic community beyond their own institutional or disciplinary affiliation. It is clear that these two groups with different degrees of responsiveness to what is happening around them will have somewhat different ideas on what are the necessary conditions for proper functioning as an academic. This dimension refers to the 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 refers to the expectations of the outside world, either university or state that should protect academic freedom or at the very least not interfere with it. As I will explain later, this external expectation can refer to either legal protection by some formal regulations or to a more informal 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 into high and low levels of protection, implying that a low level of protection is provided by a state which has major deficiencies in academic freedom regulation (see Chapter 3 for more specific examples). Meanwhile, a high level of protection implies that universities are delegated a significant amount of self-governance, and use this opportunity to protect and guarantee academic freedom within the institution in areas not covered in the state legislation. 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. A low level of protection refers to a low level of trust in the

possibility of formal protection, either from the state or university. A high level implies feeling protected within the university structure.

6.2. Academic freedom target populations

As it was shown 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 the researcher to highlight. The practical approach allows the identification of deficiencies in existing infrastructures while juxtaposing existing regulation and areas of academic interaction requiring regulation. Meanwhile a belief-based approach shows parallel ways of formulation of values by legislators and practitioners, thus uncovering multiple truths. I do not want to advocate either of those approaches. Instead, the aim is to show the implications of the target populations framework for both. Conceptualized in the same model, the focus on practice or beliefs defines the composition of the two groups.

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

Table 12. Academic freedom target populations.

| | | Internal Expectations Academic Freedom Narrative | |
|---|---------------------------|--|-------------|
| External Expectations Level of Protection | | Introverted | Extraverted |
| | High (state + university) | Advantaged | Mobilized |
| | Low (just state) | Dependent | Vulnerable |

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 the state, the university, and the academic community in the issues related to the 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. A high level of protection implies that, apart from state regulation, there is an established system of organizational rules protecting academic freedom within the 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 an elaborate system of representation in some cases and unitary university governance in others. In those cases when the university charter establishes an 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 the 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 those cases where the university violates their professional freedom. Third, based on the data collected for this research, there is a 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 and providing the potential of further research to check on this.

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 the selected approach, explored narratives can be considered representative of respondents’ practices. In this case, the introverted narrative would mean more compact networking, while the extroverted narrative would imply a more diversified network of connections. Connections in this case are not simply work contacts, but those colleagues who are actively followed and who form a community together.

Following the use of the practice-oriented lens, four identified target groups would be determined based on their internal expectations of academic freedom, and then formally classified based on affiliations and types of contract, putting those who work in institutions with charters more oriented towards academic freedom into the highly protected category, and the rest into the minimally protected one. This approach allows us to see the connection (or lack of it) between formal protection, and a higher level of engagement with academic freedom within a community. In other words, whether mobilization for academic freedom happens around deficiencies of provision, or in conditions of its reasonably effective protection. This aspect can be seen even more clearly if the operationalization of external protection includes 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, and so this remains as an opportunity for prospective research.

6.2.2. Belief-centered approach

As was 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 documents or normative acts, informally shared at the community level, or adapted to changes of environment, yet still staying on a discursive level. A peculiarity of this view is that, in comparison to a practice-oriented approach, which treats what is happening as ‘objective’, a belief-oriented approach implies multiple subjectivities of those who express different beliefs. Even though the targeted population can be defined from either side of the policy process (Ingram & Schneider 1993:335), for the purpose of consistent model construction it needs to be created one side at a time, by 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 such a belief-centered approach, the internal expectations of academics is based on two narratives of academic freedom representing in this case not daily practices but the freedom-related ideas of those involved in academic professional activities. The introverted narrative represents the belief in preservation of a free spirit within a tight community, while the extraverted narrative refers to the idea of the universal value of academic freedom that cannot be limited to one university but needs to be shared by the entire profession. The legal dimension in this approach is supported by the underlying belief that academic freedom must be externally protected. Therefore, the low level of legal protection refers to a subjective feeling of insufficient protection, should it be because of negative experiences or a lack of information. Accordingly, a high level of protection characterizes a positive assessment of their academic freedom environment by the respondents.

Division into groups informed by the ideas that academics have about academic freedom and its protection is very likely to be different than in a practice-centered approach. The first reason for that is the lack of trust in the formal institutional structure. Even if certain academics are aware of existing regulations, they might find these regulations to be insufficient or ineffective and feel unprotected by them. This is one of the potential explanations of why cases of academic freedom violations are seldom brought to court. Besides, the 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 reasons for confidence. Thus, the division of target populations based on beliefs of the policy recipients despite using the same matrix, serves an entirely different goal. It allows us to see the sources of vulnerability as well as to 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 asking how good academic freedom provision is in a selected context. 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's scope and limits. In this chapter I proposed an analytical framework that can be applied for two sets of goals: first, the exploration of the realisation of academic freedom in various institutional settings through a practice-centered approach, and second, the investigation of vulnerability and emancipation through a belief-centered approach.

The main limitation is that while trying to create a composite framework, academic freedom target populations are very empirically demanding, no matter what approach is chosen, belief-based or practice-based. However, I see any attempts to make the framework more inclusive as resulting in an inevitable erosion of conceptual clarity. A solution to overcome this limitation could be the application of the framework as an additional analytical device complementing research projects with extensive data collection and a bigger set of goals.

CONCLUSION

One of the initial puzzles in this research was the possibility of academic freedom reflection and practice in a 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. An historical overview of the development of academic freedom 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 being liberal democracies. Moreover, in the different political settings of the medieval, and then the modern universities, academic freedom was promoted by different interest groups, from politicians investing in knowledge production, to academic staff or students who are not covered in this dissertation, yet are very important agents in academic freedom advocacy. Bringing back the historical experiences of European, and then Russian universities serves not as a solid proof, but rather an illustration of creative ways of finding pockets of academic freedom even in restrictive environments. Apart from being an insight into 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.

An analysis of higher education legislation in today's Russia allowed us to identify its deficiencies in the area of academic freedom protection, yet it also highlighted the windows of opportunities, especially in self-governance. I discussed the implication of the frameworks by Kinzelbach et al., (2020) and Karran, Beiter, and Appiagyei-Atua (2017) for academic freedom assessment and came to the conclusion that if there is something about academic freedom that Russia does not fit, it is mostly concerned with the operationalization of assessment. The Academic Freedom Index (2020) looks at academic freedom as a derivative feature of the regime type (at least in the case of Russia), leaving no chance for any deviation. The criterion referenced approach, on the other hand, even though designed for European universities, has a greater potential to assess the Russian academic environment in some isolation from a wider political context, and to put it to a comparative perspective with other nations, based on the 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, but about academics and their systems of meaning-making. Approaching the narratives of the participants, and discussing their interpretations of daily experiences allowed the researcher to identify threats and safe spaces at their workplaces, and to see the place of academic freedom there. As the 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 such personal optics. Thus, academic freedom for them is not something that can be granted or taken away, it is constantly present as part of the ways their perception affects the ways in which academics interpret the changes happening around them.

Based on the valuable accounts of individual academics, as well as the findings related to the institutional background of Russian academia, I proposed an academic freedom target populations' framework inspired by Ingram and Schneider's (1993) analysis of policy recipients. I demonstrated the potential of this model for academic freedom community studies. An important part of all stages of my analysis is attention to ensuring the clarity of whatever 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.

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