FORMS OF AUTHORITY, SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES: CHECHEN DIASPORA AND DIASPORIC ORGANIZATIONS IN AUSTRIA

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ABSTRACT

Despite increasing control over the diaspora, members of Chechen communities in Europe have been mobilizing to create organizations with their own agendas. This study examines the organizational landscape of the Chechen diaspora in Austria. I ask how the leaders of diaspora organizations become recognized as authorities, and how such authoritative leaders mediate the social and symbolic boundaries – both within their community as well as vis-à-vis the host society. Moving beyond Weber's ideal types of authority, I show that organizational leaders depend on complex interplays and accumulations of different sources of knowledge, status and legitimacy. The forms and intersections of authority have improved understanding of how a fragmented diaspora still remains connected.

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1. Introduction. Dispersed diaspora: the specificity of Chechen communities in Austria

In late March 2022, the Lentos Art Museum in Linz gathered around 200 people – Chechens and Austrians, Russians and Germans, speaking different languages but united under one roof. During the event, a group of young Chechens presented their stories and visual narratives which involved warm memories and longing for (imagined) home, the childhood trauma of war, and even deportation experiences. The audience consisted of activists, artists as well as parents of young event participants and Chechens who came from different cities of Austria and Europe. The event was the culmination of a nine-month art project *Stimm*Raum,* organized with the help of *Soziale Initiative* and *Integrationsstelle Oberösterreich*.

Given that Austria is the first country hosting Chechens in Europe in proportion to its population – over 35,000 people[1] – the number of visitors at Lentos does not seem that great. The Chechen community in Austria is far from one homogenous entity; even active diaspora members do not always participate in the same activities. This diverse landscape has been partly determined by the immigration waves from Chechnya that began during the second war in Chechnya and continue to this day due to human rights violations, political as well as economic reasons. In order to shed light on the dynamics of Chechen social life, the forms of their organisation as well as their everyday interactions, it is necessary to consider the contextual dimension of immigration, which is also related to the relationship between homeland and population abroad, the interaction between the host country and immigrants and, finally, the cultural aspects of Chechen life.

The 'homeland – diaspora' nexus has significant implications on the activities of Chechen actors in diaspora. A *Novaya Gazeta* reporter shows how starting in 2007, the leader of

[1] Blaise Gauquelin, "Russia's Relentless Hunt of Chechens Decades after Putin's War," *Yahoo! News*, AFP, May 5, 2022. https://tinyurl.com/4p6arxuz.

Chechnya began to establish ties and, more importantly, to exercise control over the Chechen diaspora in Europe.[2] For more than a decade, Kadyrov has steadily tried to eliminate all forms of opposition and dissent not only within Chechnya but also outside, including journalists, human rights defenders, and active members of Chechen diaspora in Europe.[3] While academic articles sidestep the issue of targeted assassinations and the deportation of Chechens from European countries, journalists have taken over this niche, some of them publishing material for tabloids, others more deeply immersed in the context.[4]

There are softer and more discursive levers of influence on the diaspora, such as the implementation of the Russian law on native languages, which the head of the Chechen Republic commented in the following way:

> We will take exhaustive measures to preserve it [the Chechen language] among the diaspora in Europe, in the Middle East, and in other regions. I repeat my position: a Chechen who does not want to study his language, no matter where he is, *is not a Chechen*.[5]

Despite increasing control over the diaspora, members of Chechen communities in Europe have been mobilizing to create organizations with their own agendas. First, in many European cities, especially where Chechen communities are most numerous, e.g., France, Germany, Belgium and Austria, there are associations with explicitly political focus. Almost all of them are representations of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, a government-in-exile which operates mainly in Europe, has its own constitutions, governmental structure and even

[2] Elena Milashina, "Hozyain Chechencev. Kak Glava Respubliki Ustanavlival Vlast' Nad Zarubezhnymi Diasporami." *Novaya Gazeta*, July 28, 2019. https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2019/07/28/81403-hozyain-chechentsev.

[3] "Like Walking a Minefield,'" *Human Rights Watch*, July 12, 2017, https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/08/31/walking-minefield/vicious-crackdown-critics-russias-chechen-republic.

[4] Antonia Rauth, "Transkript: Tschetschenischer Auftragsmord Mitten in Österreich?," *Der Standard*, July 9, 2020, https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000118609680/transkript-tschetschenischer-auftragsmord-mitten-in-oesterreich.; Kate Manchester, "Tschetschenen in Österreich: Die Eingeholte Diaspora," *Die Furche*, July 29, 2021, https://www.furche.at/politik/tschetschenen-in-oesterreich-die-eingeholte-diaspora-5815947.; "Anschlag Auf Tschetschenischen Dissidenten in Bregenz Geplant," *Kurier*, July 20, 2021, https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/anschlag-auf-tschetschenischen-dissidenten-in-bregenz-geplant/401449501.

[5] "Kadyrov: Chechnya Sdelaet Vse Dlya Sohraneniya Rodnogo Yazyka v Respublike i Za Rubezhom," *TASS*, July 25, 2018, https://tass.ru/obschestvo/5403002?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com.

symbolical passports. In Austria, Ichkerians are represented by *Kulturverein Ichkeria* which is mostly involved in organization of demonstrations, protests and co-operation with other diasporas in the country. While the leaders actively organize work to bring diaspora members together, many Chechens living abroad either do not want to affiliate themselves with Ichkeria, do not fully support it, or are indifferent to their work.

Second, there are organisations that have goals other than political. For example, the above-mentioned event in Linz had a purely cultural objective, while also promoting integration with the preservation of Chechen identity and traditions. This is just one example of dozens existing organisations in Austria that take the form of initiatives, projects and clubs. There are also religious associations – mosques and praying rooms, which continue to play a special role in immigration. The possibilities of both external and internal interaction and exchange between organizations and their leaders in Austrian cities are not evident to the outsider.

The described organizations, which I characterize as diaspora organizations, have horizontal structures, but at the same time the prominent role of one or sometimes two leaders. The possibilities of both external and internal interaction and exchange between organizations and their leaders in Austrian cities are not evident to the outsider. These considerations raise questions related to the concepts of authority and organizations: why do Chechens in Austria recognize organizational leaders as authority? Would these leaders be authorities in contexts other than immigration? Is the creation of organizations by such leaders a logical outcome of working on behalf of the community? Unfortunately, in the span of this work, I do not have enough data to tackle the question of why people *do not recognize* organizational leaders as authorities, but my current findings should outline possible directions for further analysis.

I intend to theoretically analyze formal and informal leaders of Chechen organizations in Austria by utilizing the concept of authority, as it embraces the questions of the leadership grounds, the leaders' functions and roles in communities. Moreover, few studies addressed the

issue of authority in more fluid and fragmented contexts.[6] The theorization of forms of authority in civil society or the 'third' sector remains a rather unexplored area in social sciences, as it does not fit into the 'classic' approach to authority, which considers political leaders, professionals or religious authorities,[7] and does not fully correspond the 'managerial' lens, either.[8]

Another issues to examine draws attention to the existing or imagined social ties in diasporic communities and aims to take into consideration and untangle the external context. It concerns the types and varieties of boundary work strategies Chechen leaders implement in their activities and how they affect Chechen community(-ies). All these questions touch upon the matter of agency and structure which are not understood in terms of a strict dualism but as two phenomena that are studied together and complement each other.

My thesis is divided into six parts, where the last two represent a conceptualization of my empirical work. The separation of the literature review and theoretical account is due to the need to distinguish the thematic facets of the research from the conceptual reflections that deal with abstract concepts and guide the methodological analysis. In the methods section, I explain how I conducted my field research, the related contextual challenges and the limitations of this work. Then, in my analysis of the results of the study, I explicitly follow a theoretical division related to issues of authority as well as symbolic and social boundaries, although convergence between the two will arise in some subchapters. Finally, in conclusion I will present the outcomes and possible future directions of the current work.

[6] Alaric Bourgoin, Nicolas Bencherki, and Samer Faraj, "And Who Are You?": A Performative Perspective on Authority in Organizations," *Academy of Management Journal* 63, no. 4 (2020): 1134–1165.
[7] Pauline Hope Cheong, "The Vitality of New Media and Religion: Communicative Perspectives, Practices, and Changing Authority in Spiritual Organization," *New Media & Society* 19, no. 1 (2017): 25–33.; Judith L. Pace, "Managing the dilemmas of professional and bureaucratic authority in a high school English class," *Sociology of Education* 76, no. 1 (2003): 37–52.
[8] Philippe Aghion and Jean Tirole, "Formal and Real Authority in Organizations," *Journal of Political Economy* 105, no. 1. (1997); Catherine Casey, "Bureaucracy Re-enchanted? Spirit, Experts and Authority in Organizations," *Organizations* 11, no. 1 (2004): 59–79; Magnus Boström, "Regulatory credibility and authority through inclusiveness: Standardization organizations in cases of eco-labelling," *Organization* 13, no. 3 (2006): 345-367.

2. Literature review

2.1. Diaspora studies and Chechens in Austria

Thematically, I position my study as a part of the diaspora studies scholarship. Therefore, in what follows I will explain the main strands in this field through which I approach the research of diasporas. Diasporas come into being and operate through mobilization[9] which can be either state-led or informed by the actions of community leaders. The latter is more often relevant to diasporas spawned by conflict. In my definition of diaspora, I follow Orjuela who points out that this term is best understood through the processual noun "*diasporization*".[10] It can better uncover the continuous process of identity construction which is both a necessary part *of* mobilization and shaped *by* mobilization. In this case, framing and identity construction are crucial for the production of the community imagination because they affect diaspora formation and its mobilization.[11] Lee shows how mobilizing and opportunity structures as well as critical shifts can empower even leaderless diaspora movements.[12] Adamson argues along similar lines, although she places stronger emphasis on the role of political entrepreneurs in diasporic politics who construct or deploy identity categories from the existing social networks to create communities.[13]

Numerous scholars have addressed the topic of diaspora community mobilization, accentuating various issues: diaspora engagement in conflict and post-conflict societies,[14]

[9] Élise Féron and Sofiya Voytiv, "Towards a Theory of Diaspora Formation Through Conflict Deterritorialization," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 21, no. 3 (2021): 210-224.
[10] Camilla Orjuela, "Mobilising Diasporas for Justice. Opportunity Structures and the Presencing of a Violent Past," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2017): 1-17.
[11] Martin Sökefeld, "Mobilizing in Transnational Space," *Global Networks* 6, no. 3 (2006): 265-284.
[12] Francis L. Lee, "Proactive Internationalization and Diaspora Mobilization in a Networked Movement: The Case of Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Bill Protests." *Social Movement Studies*, (2022): 1–18.
[13] Fiona B. Adamson, "Constructing the Diaspora: Diaspora Identity Politics and Transnational Social Movements." In *Politics From Afar: Transnational Diasporas and Networks*, ed. Terrence Lyons and Peter Mandaville (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 34.
[14] Fiona B. Adamson, "Mechanisms of Diaspora Mobilization and the Transnationalization of Civil War." in *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*, ed. Checkel, J. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013), 63-88; Jeniffer Brinkerhoff, "Diasporas and Conflict Societies." *Conflict, Security, and Development* 11, no. 2 (2011): 115–43; Nicholas Van Hear and Robin Cohen, "Diasporas and conflict: distance, contiguity and spheres of engagement," *Oxford Development Studies* 45, no. 2 (2017): 171-184; Maria Koinova, "Can Conflict-Generated

identity mobilization,[15] political mobilization in host countries[16] or diaspora mobilization for development.[17] Most of these authors use the definition of diaspora mobilization coined by Koinova,[18] namely "individual and collective actions of identity-based social entrepreneurs who organize and encourage migrants to behave in a concerted way to make homeland-oriented claims, bring about a political objective, or contribute to a cause".

Although different Chechen communities across Europe are not necessarily maintain actual and frequent transnational social relationship or participate in organized activities, some features of their 'diasporality' can be noted. These are self-imagination of a dispersed community,[19] home orientation[20] as well as "the ability to address the collective interests of members of the social collectivity through a developed internal organizational framework".[21] As Koinova rightly noted "since diasporas are not monolithic, but often include competing

Diasporas Be Moderate Actors during Episodes of Contested Sovereignty? Lebanese and Albanian Diasporas Compared," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011): 437–62; Maria Koinova, "Sustained vs Episodic Mobilization among Conflict-Generated Diasporas," *International Political Science Review* 37, no. 4 (2016): 500-516; Dana Moss, "Voice After Exit: Explaining Diaspora Mobilization for the Arab Spring," *Social Forces* 98 (2020): 1669-1694.

[15] Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff. *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Victoria Redclift, "The demobilization of diaspora: History, memory and 'latent identity,'" *Global Networks* 17, no. 4 (2017): 500–517.

[16] Nadje Al-Ali, "Iraqi Women in Diasporic Spaces: Political Mobilization, Gender and Citizenship," *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, France, Edisud, no. 117-118 (2007): 137-153; Matthew Godwin, "Winning, Westminster-Style: Tamil Diaspora Interest Group Mobilisation in Canada and the UK," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1325-1340; Maria Koinova, "Why do conflict-generated diasporas pursue sovereignty-based claims through state-based or transnational channels? Armenian, Albanian and Palestinian diasporas in the UK compared," *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2014): 1043–1071; Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, "'The Politics of Migrants' Transnational Political Practices," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 760–86.

[17] Alan Gamlen, "Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance," *International Migration Review* 48 (2014): 180-217; Nauja Kleist, "Mobilising 'The Diaspora': Somali Transnational Political Engagement," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 2 (2008): 307-323; Catherine Craven, "Networks Do Not Float Freely: (Dis)entangling the Politics of Tamil Diaspora Inclusion in Development Governance," *Global Networks* (2021): 769–790; Giulia Sinatti and Cindy Horst, "Migrants as Agents of Development: Diaspora Engagement Discourse and Practice in Europe," *Ethnicities* 15, no. 1 (2015): 134-52.

[18] Maria Koinova, "Beyond statist paradigms: Sociospatial positionality and diaspora mobilization in international relations," *International Studies Review* 19, no. 4 (2017): 598.

[19] Sökefeld, "Mobilizing in Transnational Space".

[20] Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1–19.

[21] Fiona B. Adamson and Madeleine Demetriou, "Remapping the Boundaries of `State' and `National Identity': Incorporating Diasporas into IR Theorizing," *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 4 (2007): 497.

groups, I use 'diaspora' for social collectivities and 'diaspora entrepreneur' for individual and institutional activists who make claims on behalf of their original homelands".[22]

The Chechen diaspora in Europe is a recent phenomenon. It has been analyzed through several directions in the past two decades. Some authors address issues of identity construction,[23] integration in host-societies,[24] the legal factors, namely the interaction of Shariah, Adat and positive law[25] and gender aspects.[26] In Austrian context, Chechen migrants and their descendants have been studied through the 'integration' focus, placing the emphasis on the 'unsuccessful integration', criminal tendencies and Islamism[27] as well as traumatic post-war experience.[28] Concurrently, there have been works that address the second generation of immigrants and their everyday life.[29]

[22] Maria Koinova, "Why do Conflict-Generated Diasporas Pursue Sovereignty-Based Claims," 1046.
[23] Grzymała Moszczyńska and H. M. Trojanek, "Image of the World and themselves Built by Young Chechens Living in Polish Eefugee Centers," In *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe Widening the European Discourse on Islam* ed. K. Gorak-Sosnowska. (Warszawa, University of Warsaw: 2011); Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Jasper Schwampe, "Devout Muslims or Tough Highlanders? Exploring Attitudes toward Ethnic Nationalism and Racism in Europe's Ethnic-Chechen Salafi Communities," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 15 (2017): 2616–33; Marat Ilyasov, "Researching the Chechen diaspora in Europe," *Interdisciplinary Political Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017); Marat Ilyasov, "To Be or Not to Be a Chechen? The Second Generation of Chechens in Europe and Their Choices of Identity," *Frontiers in Sociology* 6 (2021): 1-11.
[24] Alexander Janda, *Chechens in the European Union,* (Vienna: Austrian Integration Fund, 2003); Irina Molodikova, "The Chechen Diaspora in the European Union: Integration Features" *International Migration of Population: Russia and the Contemporary World Journal* 29 (2015); Irina Molodikova, "Muslim Refugees from Russia: Do the Chechens Bring Their Own 'aul' from Chechnya to the EU?," In *Muslim Minorities and the Refugee Crisis in Europe*, ed. K. Górak-Sosnowska, M. Pachocka, and J. Misiuna (Warsaw: SGH Publishing House, 2019), 119–133.
[25] Maryam Sugaipova and Julie Wilhelmsen, "The Chechen Post-War Diaspora in Norway and Their Visions of Legal Models," *Caucasus Survey* 9, no. 2 (2021): 140–158.
[26] Petra Procházková, *The Aluminum Queen: The Russian-Chechen War Through the Eyes of Women* (Prague: Lidové Noviny Publishing House, 2002); Alice Szczepanikova, "Becoming More Conservative? Contrasting Gender Practices of Two Generations of Chechen Women in Europe," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 4 (2012): 475-89; Alice Szczepanikova, "Chechen Women in War and Exile: Changing Gender Roles in the Context of Violence," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 5 (2015): 753-770.
[27] H. Schinnerl and T. Schmidinger, *Dem Krieg entkommen? Tschetschenien und TschetschenInnen in Österreich* (Wiener Neustadt, Verein Alltag Verlag. 2008); Alexander Schahbasi, "The Chechen Diaspora in Europe and its Security Implications," In *Chechens in the European Union*, ed. A. Janda, N. Leitner and M. Vogl (Wien: Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, 2008): 207-212.
[28] Barbara Preitler, "Psychologische Betreuung von Flüchtlingen in Österreich," in *Die Praxis der Psychologie*. G. Mehta. (Wien: Springer, 2004), 361-372.
[29] Philipp Trojer, "Lebenswelten Tschetschenischer Flüchtlinge in Österreich," *Master's Thesis*, University of Vienna, 2014; Bettina Lauß, "The Representation of Chechens in Austrian Print Media. A Comparison between the Quality Newspaper "Die Presse" and the Tabloid Newspaper "Die Krone" in 2006 and 2012," *Master's Thesis*, University of Vienna, 2016.

The creation of a dominant discourse based on negative stereotypes, e.g. radicalizations, juvenile delinquency and criminality, women abuse, about Chechens was indicated by Bettina Lauß on the basis of materials from the Austrian press.[30] This negative attribution and stigmatization of Chechens as an outgroup by the Austrian media is problematic for two reasons. First, in low-contact areas people rely on media information about ethnic groups, as they cannot derive their knowledge from personal experience.[31] Second, since such information affects the level of perceived cultural distance, the greater it is, the more problematic adjustment and acculturation stress are.[32] This, in turn, can lead to the withdrawal from the host culture.[33]

Given that one of the themes in the media is religious radicalization of Chechens, the Austrian context, as an external categorization,[34] must be taken into account when consodering Chechen religiosity and religious behavior. Host countries undoubtedly have a significant impact on strategies for reconstructing Islam, religious belonging, and shifting religious identities among immigrants and inside their communities.[35] For example, gendered analysis of Chechen refugee women in Austria, Poland and Germany shows how intergenerational differences in socialization processes (in pre-war Chechnya and war-torn Chechnya) affect how women see opportunity structures in receiving countries in terms of choosing education and career paths, religious modesty or possibilities of combining both.[36]

[30] Lauß, "The Representation of Chechens," 87-89.
[31] Teun A. Van Dijk, *Communicating Racism. Ethnic prejudice in thought and talk*. (London, New Delhi, Beverly Hills, 1987), 163.
[32] John W. Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation," *International Association of Applied Psychology* 46, no. 1 (1987): 5–68.
[33] Jitka Tausova, Michael Bender, Radosveta Dimitrova, Fons van de Vijver, "The Role of Perceived Cultural Distance, Personal Growth Initiative, Language Proficiencies, and Tridimensional Acculturation Orientations for Psychological Adjustment among International Students," International Journal of Intercultural Relations 69 (2019): 11–23.
[34] Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 2014).
[35] Karolina Łukasiewicz, "Chechen-ness reconstructed – family life questioned," in *Politics of Culture*, ed. Ewa Nowicka (Warsam: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011).
[36] Szczepannikova, "Becoming More Conservative?".

2.2. Diaspora organizations

Diaspora organizations play a major role in establishing connections between host-lands, home countries and immigrant populations. The differences in approaching signifiers of associations, e.g., diaspora organization, (ethnic) migrant organization or hometown and transnational immigrant organization, are quite tentative, they depend on the meaning given and conceptualized by a particular scholar.[37] As in my work I have already defined my subject by employing the 'diasporic' lens, I will further operate with this diaspora organizations (or DOs) terminology.

The study of DOs has emerged based on the premises for establishing such organisations, which can either be determined by official home-land policies or based on bottom-up community mobilization. For a long time, scholars have been preoccupied with the former strand – official diaspora institutions as well as activation of diasporic identities through formal policies and discourses, to the detriment of more fluid and diffuse forms of diaspora governance.[38] As DOs can lobby politicians, challenge, or change policies and institutions, through means like remittances, in both settlement and sending countries, they collectively constitute "diasporic civic space". This space is circumscribed by the political, legal, and juridical systems of countries of settlement and origin; hence it is not always pro-democratic.[39]

From the perspective of cultural studies, diaspora organizations "represent the ability to transform largely virtual imagined communities into more tangible communities of practice, as they gather participants around shared activities (e.g. celebrations, commemorations, festivals,

[37] Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 57, no. 3 (2003): 449-79.; Gökce Yurdakul, *From Guest workers into Muslims: Turkish Immigrant Associations in Germany,* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009); Jose C. Moya, "Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 31*, no. 5 (2005): 833-864.
[38] Bilge Yabanci, "Home-State Oriented Diaspora Organizations and the Making of Partisan Citizens Abroad: Motivations, Frames and Actions Towards Coopting the Turkish Diaspora in Europe," *Diaspora* 27, no. 2 (2021): 18.
[39] Yabanci, "Home State Oriented Diaspora," 5.

manifestations) or shared places (e.g. community centers)".[40] They also help migrants adapt to their new societies, serve their cultural, social, and religious needs, construct identities, and assist integration. Vermeulen pointed out three sets of factors that stimulate the formation and development of ethnic organisations, formal and informal: (1) the migration process; (2) the opportunity structures in the host society and (3) the characteristics of the immigrant community (demographic and socioeconomic profile of the immigrant community, religion, age, education and political affiliation).[41] These are important aspects to be considered in conjuncture, if we want to recognize the processes of change and continuity of/in both large and small associations.

The organizational activism of stateless diasporas is a rather underdeveloped topic in the literature. The primary focus is on activities of two stateless diaspora groups: Kurds from Turkey and Tamils from Sri Lanka,[42] though there are also occasional studies focusing on other diasporas.[43] The theoretical relevance of comparing stateless and state-affiliated diasporas was highlighted by Scheffer, who also argued that stateless diasporas focus more on solving their problems in the homeland, by transferring such resources as combatants, weapons, military equipment and money.[44] However, leaving the military dimension aside, stateless diasporas, and especially their diaspora organizations, can experience difficulties while conducting their activities in host-countries. Thus, lacking official state representations, embassies and mere

[40] Jasmijn Van Gorp and Kevin Smets, "Diaspora Organizations, Imagined Communities and the Versatility of Diaspora: The Case of Former Yugoslav Organizations in the Netherlands," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2015): 72.
[41] Dr Marlou Schrover and Floris Vermeulen, "Immigrant Organisations," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, no. 5 (2005): 823-832.
[42] Ayata Bilgin Ayata, "Kurdish Transnational Politics and Turkey's Changing Kurdish Policy: The Journey of Kurdish Broadcasting from Europe to Turkey," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 19 no. 4 (2011): 523-533; Bahar Baser and Ashok Swain, "Stateless diaspora groups and their repertoires of nationalist activism in host countries," *Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 1 (2010): 37-60; Zeynep Sezgin, "Bringing international relations and organizational sociology to diaspora studies. Kurdish and Syrian diaspora organizations in Germany" In *Diaspora Organizations in International Affairs*, ed. Dennis Dijkzeul, Margit Fauser. (London: Routledge, 2020).
[43] Ande Reisman, "Being without Belonging: Seattle's Ahıska Turks and the Limitations of Transnationalism for Stateless Diaspora Groups," *Master's Thesis*, University of Washington, 2012.
[44] Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora politics: At home Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003).

recognition by international community, diaspora organisations are less organized and struggle to defend their interests. Chechen diaspora organizations are exemplary in this regard, as many members of the community strive for the independence of the Chechen Republic; they fled the wars and persecutions, and still are considered Russian citizens.

Despite some progress in the last decade, most research on diaspora organisations in Europe has so far been rather haphazard and insufficiently theorized. What is particularly deficient, and this has been pointed out by few scholars, is an approach to diaspora organisations through organizational sociology and its toolbox. In her research on Muslim migrant organisations in Europe, Zeynep Sezgin turns to the sociology of organisations, among other theoretical perspectives, and operates with notions of legitimacy, organizational ideology and leadership that are important in analyzing organizational activities and structures.[45]

[45] Ludger Pries and Zeynep Sezgin, "Migration, Organizations and Transnational Ties," In *Cross-Border Migrant Organisations in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ludger Pries and Zeynep Sezgin (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2012).

3. Theoretical considerations

3.1. Theorization of authority: legitimacy, knowledge and position

3.1.1. The inquiry into legitimacy

Among Weber's most influential and yet most controversial concepts are the ones of legitimacy and legitimate domination. Their importance is determined by the fact that they entail the study of power relations and their origins in society.[46] Weber argues that "the most common form of legitimacy is a belief in legality: conformity with formally correct statutes that have been established in the usual manner"[47]. These statues regulate how individuals or organizations attain positions of authority. Weber explains mechanisms by which statutes are established through the centrality of social action, but he does not go further in clarifying the difference between norms and social meanings. Instead, he directs his focus on four ideal-typical principles on which a system's legitimacy may be based. Some critics have claimed that (1) "belief in legality" amounts to an empty verbal resolution of the substantive problem of accounting for obedience under conditions of diversity,[48] (2) the question of the legitimacy of a legal system can only be answered by an evaluative judgment about the validity of the legal system.[49] This criticism comes mainly from political theory which tests legitimacy from the normative frame of reference. From sociological point of view, actions and beliefs of social actors are more central for the analysis. In my work, I attempt to consider two strands, yet emphasizing the sociological one.

While "rethinking legitimate domination" Guzmán proposes an interpretation of Weberian account on legitimacy, where he argues that "from the perspective of the dominated

[46] David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power,* (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1991).
[47] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. and trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 116.
[48] Robert Grafstein, "The Failure of Weber's Conception of Legitimacy: Its Causes and Implications," The *Journal of Politics* 43, no. 2 (1981): 468.
[49] Donald H.J. Hermann, "Max Weber and the Concept of Legitimacy in Contemporary Jurisprudence," DePaul Law Review 33 no. 1 (1983): 29.

subject, the principle that validates the authority can often be legality of rules and legal offices, without much regard for whether or not the legal order is legitimate".[50] He develops this interpretation by employing the concept of doxa – the rules that have been settled, becoming unconsciously taken for granted, in order to distinguish between "direct principles of legitimacy and the *blurred or doxic* foundations of legitimacy".[51] This distinction is important for a further discussion of different types of authority and its origins, and will be applied to the case of Chechen authorities to examine the possibilities of doxic legitimacy in the context of immigration.

In organizational literature, legitimacy analysis pays attention to how organizations (mid-level institutions) establish the right and ability to operate and attract resources and support. The so-called organizational legitimacy theory accentuates processes of collaboration, support or recognition within the framework of established power configurations.[52] For instance, Thrandardottir proposes four legitimacy models of NGOs to incorporate them in the context of international politics.[53] Despite her detailed analysis of legitimacy theories ranging from apolitical to semi-political and purely political, these models do not sufficiently account for low-scale voluntary organizations. I consider Gnes and Vermeulen's conceptualization of organizational legitimacy more relevant for my analysis of Chechen organizations (*Vereine*), as it allows to take into account local organizational contexts[54]. The scholars identify two broad directions in approaching organizational legitimacy: (1) "externalist" approach which emphasizes representation and accountability of organizations as well as their claim-making capabilities in order to secure support and establish power vis-à-vis external context (e.g., state);

[50] Sebastián G. Guzmán, "Substantive-rational Authority: The Missing Fourth Pure Type in Weber's Typology of Legitimate Domination," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 15, no. 1 (2015): 75.
[51] Ibid. 75.
[52] Davide Gnes and Floris Vermeulen, "Non-Governmental Organizations and Legitimacy: Authority, Power and Resources," *Journal of Migration History* 5 (2019): 223.
[53] Erla Thrandardottir, "NGO Legitimacy: Four Models," *Representation* 51, no. 1 (2015): 107-123.
[54] Davide Gnes and Floris Vermeulen, "Non-Governmental Organizations and Legitimacy."

(2) neo-institutionalism approach, which is not directly linked to power but perceive organizations as relatively autonomous agents which are able to both reproduce and contest existing structures.[55] Although Gnes and Vermeulen point out that "organizations are not simply social facts … but rather are sites of everyday normative negotiation and discussion among individuals"[56], they mostly disregard the factor of authority and its role in mediating external and internal contexts in organizational setting. The concept and its relevance to my work will be discussed in the next section.

3.1.2. Meaning and types of authority: debates

According to Weber, authority (*Herrschaft)* must establish a belief in legitimacy, and the nature of the claim to legitimacy is divided into *three ideal types* of legitimate rule or authority, established on rational, traditional, and charismatic grounds. Since Weber, the meaning and justification of authority have been contested and renegotiated extensively, the concept proved to be elusive but at the same time central to social scientists as well as legal and political theorists. Based on the fact that in Weber's theory there are three ideal types of authority, but four resources for validating legitimacy (or types of social action), many researchers have been concerned with identifying the so-called fourth ideal type of authority.[57] There is also a lengthy tradition of refining the classic three types.[58]

[55] Elisabeth S. Clemens, and James M. Cook. "Politics and Institutionalism: Explaining Durability and Change," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999): 441-466.
[56] Davide Gnes and Floris Vermeulen, "Non-Governmental Organizations and Legitimacy," 243.
[57] Roberta Lynn Satow, "Value-rational authority and professional organizations: Weber's missing type," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1975): 526–531; David E. Willer, "Max Weber's missing authority type," *Sociological Inquiry* 37, no. 2 (1967): 231-239.
[58] Thomas H. Rigby "Weber's Typology of Authority: A Difficulty and Some Suggestions," *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 2, no. 1 (1966): 2-15; Gitte Sommer Harrits, and Lars Thorup Larse, "Advice Not Safely Ignored: Professional Authority and the Strength of Legitimate Complexity," *Sociology* 55, no. 5 (2021): 1015-1034; Paul C. Hathazy, "Enchanting Bureaucracy: Symbolic Violence and the (Re)Production of Charismatic Authority in a Police Apparatus," *International Sociology* 27, no. 6 (2012): 745–67.

Analogous to legitimacy, authority can be theorized empirically, using sociological theory[59]; or normatively, using political theory.[60] The justification of authority exists on two levels corresponding to the sociological-normative division: (1) *epistemically,* as authority should be reasonable within a certain system of meaning, and (2) *discursively,* as authority should be articulable within political theory judgment.[61] The tension between the two can theoretically lead to sociologically legitimate, but normatively illegitimate authority.[62]

In my work, I follow the synthesis of sociological and normative definitions of authority along the four-dimensional scheme of power suggested by Haugaard.[63] His main argument builds upon the simultaneous consideration of the *power-to* and *power-over* concepts. The former is the capacity for action constitutive of agency, while the latter is the property of delivering *power-to* to other actors.[64] This approach to authority seems to be comprehensive enough for considering various power-relations in social interactions, including organizational settings. It also takes into consideration the relational aspect of authority, as to be an authority, one should be recognized and treated as such by other actors. Moreover, as it was convincingly shown by Alasuutari, we should think of authority not through its hierarchical position that allows one to give commands but rather cumulatively: "by building, utilizing and combining different types of authority, actors aim to accumulate their influence on others".[65] The following framework reflects my understanding of authority and how I intend to conceptualize authority and its types in relation to Chechen diasporic organizational leaders.

[59] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*; Steven Lukes, "Perspectives on Authority," *Nomos* 29 (1987): 59-75.
[60] Hannah Arendt, "What Is Authority?' in *Between Past and Future: Eight Essays in Political Thought*, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Penguin Books, 2006); Richard B. Friedman, "On the concept of authority in political philosophy," in *Authority*, ed. Joseph Raz (NY: New York University Press, 1990), 56-91.
[61] Mark Haugaard, "What is authority?" *Journal of Classical Sociology* 18, no. 2 (2018): 116.
[62] Earlier, Richard Friedman explained this distinction by referring to authority in the de facto and de jure sense, respectively.
[63] Mark Haugaard, "What is authority?" 104-132.
[64] Ibid. 113.
[65] Pertti Alasuutari, "Authority as Epistemic Capital," *Journal of Political Power* (2018): 4.

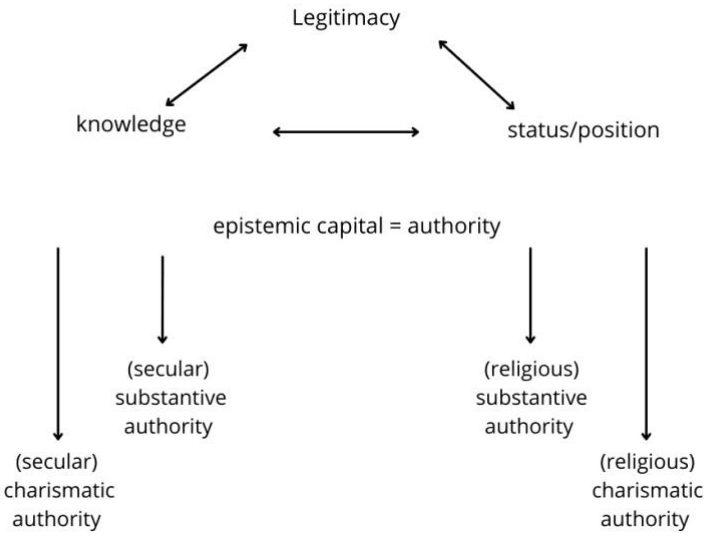


Figure 1. The triangle of authority

The triangle of legitimacy, knowledge, and status reflects the fundamental principles on which any type of authority is built. Legitimacy reflects the properties that an authority ascribes to oneself on the basis of existing respected principles (context of meaning). Besides, the concept in this framework corresponds to the "neo-Weberian" typology of legitimacy which pays attention to *doxic* and *blurred* principles of legitimation. The position or status of an actor carries the meaning of the dispositions and capital that determine the locus of the actor in a particular context. In this sense, status or position is not a matter of acquisition but rather disposition. The notion of knowledge is an integral component of any type of authority, and different kinds of knowledge production, specialization and knowledge validation can in their turn determine the type of authority. In my framework, I distinguish between knowledge and status. According to Mannheim, the knowledge available to observers in the social-historical sphere is necessarily linked to their social status, cultural background, group interests, and so

on. [66] My interpretation of this argument is strictly sociological. When it comes to authority, we should think about knowledge in terms of a dialectic relationship between structure and agency. Knowledge is both a part of one's disposition and a process of accumulation/acquisition. Yet one must keep the external context in mind in order to address the question of how knowledge of "authority" is available to the people who endow the actor with authority. To put it simply, knowledge is also a form of recognition of one's status in a social context.

In these conceptualizations, I am deriving from the Alasuutari's broad account on authority which is understood as epistemic capital.[67] In his analysis, the importance is given to the strategies by which actors aim to influence others, Alasuutari argues that forms of authority are accumulated into generalized epistemic capital attached to actors, texts, and principles. However, in order to analyze the intersection, combination and transformation of different forms of authority, that is, the "gray areas" between the ideal types of authority, it is still necessary to disentangle these conventional types for analytical purposes.

I pointed out earlier that scholars have long tried to theorize a fourth ideal type that would correspond to one of the Weberian four bases of legitimacy for a social order: the value-rational faith. Guzmán encompassed all the attempts to give a notion to 'anomalous cases' which did not fit into Weber's type of formal-rational authority (professional, ideological etc.) into one ideal type: substantive-rational authority. In his analysis, there are two variations of a missing type: a) legitimacy based on the belief that an authority is a correct mediator between abstract ultimate values and concrete practical norms and (b) and legitimacy based on the belief that an authority is a correct mediator between ultimate goals and concrete means.[68] For my case study, I apply this type as ideal, looking at how secular and religious authorities of Chechen communities in Austria could correspond to this type. Moreover, I utilize another ideal type

[66] Michael Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2015), 16.
[67] Alasuutari, "Authority as Epistemic Capital," 4.
[68] Guzmán, "Substantive-rational Authority," 80.

based on charismatic grounds, that is "devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him".[69]

3.1.3. How to study forms of authority?

Authority is a relational and analytical concept which is closely tied to the ones of power and legitimacy. It is also related to the notion of leadership, but does not mean the same thing The latter is more of a social fact, mostly hierarchical, whereas authority is rather a dispersed attribution linked to a specific system of meanings, shared between agent(s) and principal(s).[70] First, there is a methodological problem of disentangling these concepts for sociological analysis, which was my aim in the previous sections. Second, the types designated above are nothing but ideal, hence my task is to critically engage with them on the empirical level by employing interpretive analysis to the materials I collected.[71] Ultimately, the goal is to examine action and activities of Chechen authorities which lead to practices and relate to boundary-making which will be discussed further.

3.2. Symbolic and social boundaries

3.2.1. The strategies of boundary-work

The significance of bringing the concepts of social and symbolic boundaries into present research is determined by the following considerations, (1) they allow us to capture both

[69] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 374.
[70] Chantal Benoit-Barné and François Cooren, "The Accomplishment of Authority Through Presentification. How Authority is Distributed Among and Negotiated by Organizational Members*," Management Communication Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2009): 12-13.
[71] Isaac A. Reed, *Interpretation and Social Knowledge: On the Use of Theory in the Human Sciences* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Allison J Pugh, "What good are interviews for thinking about culture? Demystifying interpretive analysis," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1 (2013): 42-68.

relationality of social interaction[72] and strategical manipulations over communities' boundaries[73]; (2) conceptualizing boundaries can bridge the personal and the collective, the internal and the external, namely to give meaning to comprehensive social processes and dynamics of change; (3) in the analysis of immigrant and diaspora communities, symbolic and social boundaries not only define the relationship strategies between host countries and immigrants, but also bring up the question of how symbolic and social boundaries are transported from one national context to another.

In my research, I use the definitions of symbolic and social boundaries coined by Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, which can arguably be called classic. Thus, "symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices and even time and space", while social boundaries are "objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources and social opportunities".[74] Only when symbolic boundaries are agreed upon, they can be translated into social boundaries. In what follows, I want to highlight only those theorizations that will be important to my case-study, as there is no need to reiterate the categorization made by the sociologists.

Boundary work represents the attempts of actors to create, shape, and disrupt boundaries.[75] In order to disentangle the complex relationship between symbolic and social boundaries, studies of boundary-work focus on the multidimensionality and mutability of symbolic boundaries as well as on multitudes of their configurations (race, religion,

[72] Mustafa Emirbayer, "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 2 (1997): 281–317.
[73] Stine Grodal, "Field Expansion and Contraction: How Communities Shape Social and Symbolic Boundaries," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2018): 783–818.
[74] Michèle Lamont, and Virág Molnár, "The Study of Boundaries Across the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 168.
[75] Thomas F. Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 6 (1983): 781–95.

language).[76] For instance, the symbolic boundaries which are employed on macro-level can pose a question of the salience of one boundaries and insignificance of others in developing attitudes towards immigrants. In this case, the construction of symbolic boundaries affects patterns of creating and maintaining social boundaries, which can range from measures and strategies of integration to complete segregation. According to Jenkins, although the external group categorization and internal group identification are inevitably embedded in power structures and may be influenced from within and without, they also interact and influence each other.[77] Consequently, the dynamics of symbolic boundaries should be considered as much at the micro-level, namely through strategies of groups, actors who represent groups and individuals.

Of theoretical interest to me is the question of how authorities mediate symbolic and social boundaries, although practically I am interested in the concrete mechanisms and how specifically Chechens (and Chechen authorities conceptualized according to different forms) employ them in Austria. Therefore, I incorporate Wimmer's taxonomy of boundary-making strategies.[78] While this framework was developed to tackle different types of ethnic groups in various setting, I argue that it can be advanced to essentially any form of conceptual categorization. Following Wimmer, I will operate with the scheme of strategies, which may be employed by an actor, individual, community or institution, to change the topography of boundaries: (1) fusion, an expansion of existing boundaries, and (2) fission, adding new and contracting previous boundaries. Moreover, there are strategies which aim at modification of boundary meanings and their implication (3) transvaluation, transforming hierarchies and ranks by the means of normative reversion or establishing moral and political equality; (4) positional

[76] Christopher A. Bail, "The Configuration of Symbolic Boundaries against Immigrants in Europe," *American Sociological Review* 73, no. 1 (2008): 39.
[77] Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 46.
[78] Andreas Wimmer, "Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (2008): 1044.

moves, individual and collective status change through re-positioning and boundary crossing and (5) blurring, de-emphasis of ethnic, national or racial affiliation and emphasize of other divisions (localism, civilizationalism and universalism).[79]

3.2.2. The perspective of organizational sociology: fields of interaction and practices

Since in my research community leaders do not always exist and operate autonomously, but through creating, leading and managing diaspora organisations that also include projects and initiatives, the particularities of organizational activity in boundary related processes need to be taken into account. Scholars have conceived of organizations as social structures, embedded in broader institutional environments, created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of specified goals.[80] Every organization is a subsystem of "a wider social system which is the source of the 'meaning', legitimation, or higher-level support which makes the implementation of the organization's goals possible".[81] Organizational entrepreneurs are actors who pursue their objectives by founding a new enterprise – a new organization, but within an existing institutional mold. Specifically, field-level institutional entrepreneurs adapt, create or transform institutional frameworks of rules, norms, and/or belief systems either working within an existing organizational field or creating frameworks for the construction of a new field.[82]

Hence, the concept of organizational field is traditionally approached as "a community of organizations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside of the field".[83] Since the definition of the field is complex and varies across disciplines, I draw on the one adopted

[79] Wimmer, "Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making," 1031-1046.
[80] Richard W. Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (Londong: SAGE Publications, 2014).
[81] Talcott Parsons, "Suggestions for a Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 1 (1956):63–64.
[82] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 117.
[83] Ibid. 56.

by Lawrence and Zietsma: "fields are co-evolutionary systems in which *boundaries and practices* exist in a recursive relationship significantly affected by the heterogeneous boundary work and practice work of *interested actors*".[84]

This conceptualization is important for this study as it takes into account the interplay of boundaries and practices as well as the position of individuals in shaping the fields' boundaries over time, that is an understudied element in organizational analysis.[85] Practices are defined here as shared routines or recognized forms of activity which do not belong to one individual. They must be recognized by the group and conform to social expectations.[86] Practices maintain group boundaries and boundaries limit sets of legitimate practices. In respect to Chechen organisations in immigration, the questions are which actions of the *interested actors* - in this case the leaders of the organisations – become practices or rely on them, how contextual social and symbolic boundaries allow or limit these practices, and whether the leaders and organizations could be disentangled, namely can organizations persist when leaders leave.

3.2.3. How to study symbolic and social boundaries?

Compared to social boundaries, the methodological mapping of symbolic boundaries is a more challenging task. The so-called Lamontian approach suggests deriving judgments about people's perceptions of symbolic boundaries by waiting when boundary drawing will emerge spontaneously during an interview.[87] Sølvberg and Jarness point out to several major drawbacks of this tactic. First, unlike interpreting boundaries as always enacted at discursive level, interviews could be interpreted as behavioral data; second, it is reductionist to talk about

[84] Charlene Zietsma, and Thomas B. Lawrence, "Institutional Work in the Transformation of an Organizational Field: The Interplay of Boundary Work and Practice Work," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2010): 191.
[85] Grodal, "Field Expansion and Contraction," 784-785.
[86] Richard Whittington, "Completing the Practice Turn in Strategy Research." *Organization Studies* 27, no. 5 (2006): 613–634.; Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2001).
[87] Michèle Lamont, and Ann Swidler, "Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing," *Qualitative Sociology* 37, no. 2 (2014): 153-171.

symbolic boundaries as manifested explicitly in social actors' speeches, there are other aspects of subjective perceptions which can rest upon 'doxa'.[88] Scholars argue that contradictory accounts on symbolic boundaries given by respondents during interviews are determined by phrasing of interview questions. The abstract ones elicit honorable accounts, while concrete questions provoke visceral narratives. Their solution is to ideally combine both techniques and questions of different levels of abstraction to then critically approach respondents' answers. Notwithstanding the criticism coming from the consideration of respondents' reflexivity, I consider the approach to be arguably effective. However, while taking into account the propositions of Sølvberg and Jarness, I predominantly stick to the Lamontian account of 'wait-and-listen' due to the specificities of the community and context of my work. It will be further discussed in the next section.

[88] Lisa MB Sølvberg, and Vegard Jarness, "Assessing Contradictions: Methodological Challenges When Mapping Symbolic Boundaries," *Cultural Sociology* 13, no. 2 (2019): 181-182.

4. Methods

In gathering empirical data to understand issues of leadership and boundary formation, there is a rationale for the simultaneous adoption of several methods. I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with leaders of diaspora organizations and Chechen entrepreneurs in Austria, as well as two expert interviews with individuals interacting with the Chechen diaspora within the academic or journalistic sphere. An interview guide in Russian and English was used during the interviews. It included a general biographical block, a contextual block about the Chechen diaspora in Austria, personal experiences of interaction with it, as well as topic-specific blocks such as organizational activities, infrastructure, gender and religion. All interviews except one with a journalist were conducted in Russian, the quotes used in this thesis were translated by me with the idea of keeping the structure and phrases as close to the authentic as possible. For the reasons of confidentiality, the names of respondents are not used in this thesis, the consent forms were also provided to the respondents.

A great emphasis in my fieldwork was placed on ethnography, since (1) the physical positions of leaders are as important for understanding their symbolic positioning, (2) the construction of symbolic boundaries can be observed in practice by employing the famous "wait and listen" technique.[89] The ethnographic work that has been conducted online since late 2021, and in person since early February 2022, has allowed me to earn the trust of some community members for follow-up interviews, talk informally to many members of the Chechen diaspora as well as identify key leaders without dwelling on snowball sampling through one gatekeeper. A content analysis of individuals' social media, as well as of Chechen diaspora organizations, allowed me to identify non-obvious respondents and areas of associational activity. Finally, I approach all my data using interpretive analysis.[90]

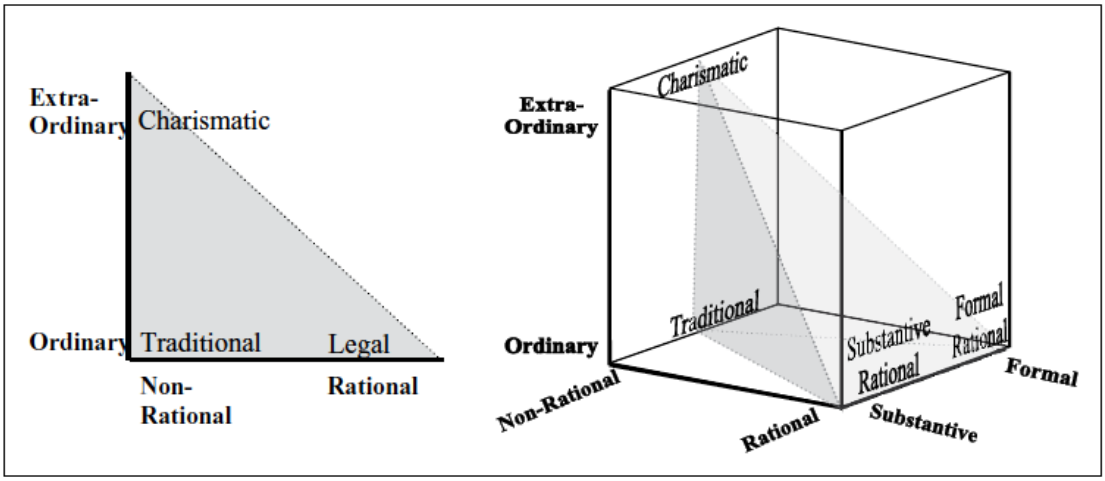
[89] Jon E. Fox, and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood," *Ethnicities* 8, no. 4 (2008): 536–63.
[90] Ulrike Froschauer, and Manfred Lueger, "Expert Interviews in Interpretive Organizational Research," In *Interviewing Experts*, ed. Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig and Wolfgang Menz (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 217-234.

The limitations of my work stem from three main and interrelated factors. The in-person fieldwork began a few days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which on the one hand opened up new research perspectives, as will be discussed in the third section of chapter six, but at the same time deepened the trauma of the Chechen community with regard to Russian aggression in Chechen's history. Since the vast majority of my respondents had fled the Chechen wars and had experienced personal losses there, the invasion of Ukraine was taken very personally. Respondents could start a conversation or switch during the discussion, by expressing their opinion on the political and geopolitical situation, memories of the Russian crimes in Chechnya, and similar topics. In connection with this, my position as a Russian and from Russia may have caused distrust or additional discussion. This position could also have contributed to the elaboration of certain aspects on the part of my respondents. Finally, as noted at the beginning, security issues, which are reflected in the closed nature of Chechen communities in immigration, could have affected the permissions on recording. In this case, I use thorough and detailed notes.

5. Forms of authority and Chechen diasporic organizations: activities, events and networks

5.1. From ideal types to multifaceted forms: theorizing authority in the Chechen diaspora

First, I focus on forms of authority in Chechen diaspora communities. In comparison to the pure types, forms can illustrate the complexity of authority. Second, after discussing the so-called sources of authority, I will proceed to the examination of exercise as well as everyday practices of authorities. By looking at the way daily interactions unfold, we may avoid reducing authority to any of its components and identify processes that cut across organizational forms and roles.[91] To further conceptualize forms, I will use Guzmán's three-dimensional scheme (see below, adopted from his article[92]) which takes into consideration the fourth ideal type. The grey pyramid in the right diagram represents the domain of all possible combinations of non-pure types of authority, which I refer to as forms.



Chechen elderly people preserve and pass on in different forms the traditions and customs, e.g., the ones embodied in the (unwritten) codes of the customary law *adat*, ranging from blood-feuds to the respect of older people. The preservation is especially crucial for

[91] Alaric Bourgoin, Nicolas Bencherki and Samer Faraj, ""And Who Are You?": A Performative Perspective on Authority in Organizations," *Academy of Management Journal* 63, no. 4 (2020): 8.
[92] Guzmán, "Substantive-rational Authority," 81.

individuals in immigration. Thus, the traditional nature of authority – "an everyday belief in the sanctity of long-established traditions and the legitimacy of those whose authority derives from these traditions"[93] – should be considered as one of the possible sources of Chechen diasporic leadership. The respect of elder persons and their decisions is one of the main features of Chechen society, both in Chechen republic and abroad.[94] These people are not necessarily males, although the notable patriarchal structure carries a certain weight and consequence – an elderly woman can also be highly respected in the community. This is influenced not only by the supposedly longer life expectancy among women, but also by the consequences of the last two Russo-Chechen Wars, when men went off to war and women were left to manage their daily lives. Chechen big family unites relatives of small families into the clans or *teips*, where the elderly of one's own clan are the most respected in their decision-making.[95] The clan structure is less visible in immigration, but still retains its importance if extended families or distant relatives settle in a particular area. One of my respondents jokingly observed that more Chechen families live in one region of Austria than in the region of Chechnya from which they left or fled.[96]

If we proceed from the standpoint that Chechens in immigration become some kind of leaders when they acquire *power-over* and not just *power-to*, then the Weberian question of the sources of authority and grounds of legitimacy takes on an interesting dimension. Biographies of Chechen community leaders in various Austrian cities show that before they fled to Austria – in this case between 2002 and 2005 – at least half of them had not held any leadership positions. The trajectories of reaching positions in which a Chechen is considered as a leader, both within his community and outside it, share several common features that allow one to

[93] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 342.
[94] Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Molodikova, "The Chechen Diaspora in the European Union".
[95] Molodikova, "The Chechen Diaspora in the European Union," 122.
[96] Interview, 29.04.2022.

characterize this leadership as substantive-rational authority. These are factors that emanate from dissatisfaction with community life, namely lack of cohesion, loss of traditions, de-politicization, etc., as well as personal incentives, deportations of Chechens and general opportunity structures. To give an example: one Chechen, who was a semi-professional athlete back in Russia, got the opportunity to open his own sports club for children and youth after talking to an acquaintance who introduced the idea to him and after he was able to find a place for training. Factors of his own professionalism, trust within the fledgling diaspora and opportunities in Austrian context (sponsorship, allocated space, equipment) defined his positioning fifteen years ago. It corresponds to what is called a legitimate domination based on instrumental-rational grounds when subjects see the authority as a good rational interpreter of the concrete means to realize their interests or a common good.[97] There are undoubtedly other examples of authority in the Chechen diaspora where substantive rationality is expressed strongly. For example, leaders of political organizations, organizers of events and activities, can be interpreted in a similar way.

According to Guzmán, "what matters to the person accepting professional authority, which is a rationalized version of educated charisma, is the professional's capacity to realize a goal or value on rational grounds – for example, heal an illness using science".[98] Returning to the example of the Chechen athlete, his authority was determined not only by rational grounds but also by his personal charismatic qualities. Thus, when the internal administrative structure of a sports club proved unfeasible, and the four people who should have held the posts of director, deputy director, treasurer and secretary resigned, the athlete took on all the functions alone. In the following years, he managed to coach around two hundred children in a small town in Austria with a minimum contribution from their parents of fifty euros a year.

[97] Guzmán, "Substantive-rational Authority".
[98] Ibid. 87.

In many cases, charisma is a second source of authority. The most prominent example in my case is that of the so-called 'informal' imam in one Austrian town. Having never been religiously educated as an imam but having the credibility and reputation of a literate man in the diaspora, the imam discovered his oratorical skills and desire as well as his ability to influence people through his sermons.[99] Since the mosque opening in 2011, it has had two imams: the aforementioned imam works with youth and the community, while the second imam leads prayers, conducts marriages and undertakes funerals. In the cases of both religious and secular leaders, charisma most indicatively manifests itself in the telling of vivid Chechen parables and anecdotes, as well as in non-verbal gestures.

> I am embarrassed to stand at a demonstration with men here and ask them to leave all their grievances behind. We are still being oppressed, *Kadyrovtsy* are kidnapping us, threatening our relatives, we are also on "bird's rights"[100] here, we have to integrate. Many people have been living here for 20 years, how long can you keep on living in factions? Come to Austrian rallies, it is no shame to shout to stop the deportation, it is no shame to defend a Kurdish boy who is being deported, or an Afghan family. We should all be in solidarity. We would come out for Ukraine, but we will not come out for others, it should not be like this. We inform people this way, but there is a lot of work and not enough of us...And I do not know about others, but if you do not do it with your soul, it is useless. If you have the zeal, but if you do not have the "yes, let's do something" inside, that is if there is no cry of the soul, then dragging everyone along is difficult.[101]

This excerpt from my interview with an activist, who is a female representative of an organization at the European level, is instructive for numerous reasons. First, it brings up the issue of the gender dimension when taking up a leadership position, whereas the activist's account itself does not often reveal the particular position of a woman leader in the community in Austria. In this case, not only was the woman uncomfortable addressing men about their behavior, but also the activist changed her personal pronoun to the plural when talking about a "common" goal. Second, the last two sentences point to distinctive charismatic qualities

[99] Interview, 29.04.2022.
[100] This is a direct translation of the idiom used in Russia, which means that one does not have a strong social position, rights or security. It would correspond to 'be in a precarious situation' in English.
[101] Interview, 29.03.2022.

without which it is impossible to wield authority in a sense of power-over. Third, there is a hint at the internal division within the Chechen community, which lacks solidarity both with each other and with other diasporic as well as ethnic groups.

It has been argued that men participate more in organisations that are active in politics and direct their attention to the country of origin, while women are more engaged in organisations aiming at the receiving society and concerned with finding practical solutions for everyday problems.[102] This is a simplistic division that can be true only to certain extent, as it is shown in the preceding example. The Chechen female leaders I spoke to could be described as secularized by modern standards, as there is a noticeable trend in the Chechen diaspora towards increased religiosity. Indeed, such secularism is a factor in the success of gathering people, running events and engaging with state structures, namely the practice of authority. These women are both mediators and dissociators between men and women, as they work with both groups, while organizing separate and more numerous activities for Chechen women, such as the Chechen Women's Café,[103] projects for Chechen mothers or women's cultural centers.[104]

In all cases, the leaders' legitimacy rests on the system of meaning. Chechen leaders accumulate epistemic capital which then can be seen in various forms of authority. For example, women retain the traditionalism (language, practices) necessary to legitimize their activities as Chechens in the community, and it does not necessarily have to have a strong religious orientation. Moreover, when confronted with new systems of meaning in host communities, those who can adapt the most and understand the "rules of the game," that is, validate the new knowledge,[105] also become legitimate authorities.

[102] Schrover and Vermeulen, "Immigrant Organisations," 823-832.
[103] "18. Oktober: Einladung zum Sprachcafé für tschetschenische Frauen," *Volkshilfe OÖ*, https://www.volkshilfe-ooe.at/sprachcafe-2-2/.
[104] Interview, 22.03.2022.
[105] Alasuutari, "Authority as Epistemic Capital," 4.

5.2. Three branches of authority: intersection and transfers between authorities' structures

From an organizational perspective, of importance are the accomplishment of authority and how the authority is practiced and present in the everyday interactions. It is the next step of the analysis, how the forms of authority in terms of the activation of epistemic knowledge an of individuals works in practice. I argue that there are two trends when we look at Chechen diasporic leaders: (1) exchange and intersection between authorities' functions; (2) creation of organizations with horizontal structures. In what follows, I will tackle the former issue.

The intersection of leadership functions in Chechen communities in Austria is a very complex phenomenon. On the one hand, diaspora exists in the country only for about twenty years and still at its early stages of organizational development. Thus, some people can take up multiple roles if it is necessary. On the other hand, mutual help to members of diaspora and particularly extended family, friends, friends of friends are one of the attributes and characteristics of life in Chechen communities.

The story of the so-called "separation of powers" is exemplary. In the early 2000s, when Chechen organizational work was in its infancy, all the activities were carried out in a mosque in Vienna's 20th district. According to my interviewee, disagreements began to arise among the Chechen organizers, as many events were taking place in one place, so it was decided to divide responsibilities and venues.[106] Thus, "three branches of power" emerged: the religious branch at the mosque, the political branch at *Kulturverein Ichkeria* and the cultural branch at the *Rat* (Council). All of these branches' leaders still work closely together, but no longer in the same place. However, the functional line between leaders is still blurred due to the lack of people carrying out a specific role in the community, as described above.

For example, during the month of Ramadan many Chechen families invite both religious community leaders, imams or mullahs, and the secular ones to evening fasts. As there are not

[106] Interview, 09.04.2022.

enough people to respond to all invitations, the fasts can be organized in one of the organizational places. Or another instance, leaders who are considered to be rather political also perform cultural functions in the community through certain activities. The "peace tripartite agreement" document for Chechen families used by one Chechen organization reflects not the authority of the organization itself, but of its leader, to whom family members come after quarrels or scandals. Moreover, such agreements indicate how authority is actually distributed among community members. Benoit-Barné and Cooren argue that authority does not reside *in* an agent or *in* a leader but appears in a combination of both.[107] The processes of such agreements illustrate this argument, as families entrust their marriage to a leader, who becomes one through trust, and the document, as the medium, authorizes the relationship.

Trust and family ties are essential in understanding the distribution of authority in daily interactions of the young diaspora. The same example of settling family relationships (disputes, arranging marriages) is mentioned most often. If a leader is approached for help, he or she may turn to another community leader to help resolve the situation. However, it does not mean that the more functions you carry out, the more of an authority you immediately become. I would argue that by engaging with different forms of authority and crossing spheres of their functions, you gain more legitimacy which only then can affect other parts of authority triangle (see figure 1) and be transformed into epistemic capital.

Even though the authority can be distributed, and a leader may transfer his skills between different settings, it is necessary to come to grips with the configuration of complementary and competing authorities that characterize those settings.[108] The system of meanings come to play a decisive role. The example of a Chechen activist who is most involved in cultural organizational activities, works closely with Austrian non-profit organisations, municipal

[107] Benoit-Barné and Cooren, "The Accomplishment of Authority Through Presentification," 14.
[108] Philip A. Woods, "Authority, Power and Distributed Leadership," *Management in Education* 30, no. 4 (2016): 159.

departments (MAs) and other authorities, shows that engaging in the wider "cultural branch" provides both acknowledgement and a certain distance from the narrower aims pursued by other actors in the Chechen community. For example, this activist is invited to participate in events hosted by such organizations as the Chechen Council or the student organisation *"Vereinigung Waynachischer Hochschüler Österreichs Serlo"*. Cultural framework allows to maintain identity and traditions as well as to gather and unite people while avoiding a touchy subject of politics. But this is also the reason for the lack of closer collaboration due to the competing meanings of main goals, leading to a perceived fragmentation of the diaspora.

5.3. Organizational structures of the Chechen diaspora

> [The] *Verein* is for conducting events, because I am a representative, but what can I do without an organization? I need it to organize activities, events ... *they* always ask what organization you are from, regardless of whether I am its president, a representative or someone else.[109]

The words of a Chechen community leader reflect the requirements of what has been referred to as they – the Austrian state. In principal, all of the Chechen associations, except Chechen owned supermarkets and some projects, are registered as *Vereine*. Conducting recognized organizational activity with the possibilities of financial or any other support from the state, requires registering an association and complying with the articles of the Associations Act 2002, Federal Law Gazette No. 66/2002. The Act specifies the conditions for establishing an organization as a legal entity.[110] This is a classic example of conceptualizing NGO legitimacy by emphasizing the justifiability of NGO political and social action.[111] In the third paragraph, the Act mentions the statute in which "the organs of the association and their tasks, in particular a clear and comprehensive statement of who runs the association's business and

[109] Interview, 29.03.2022.
[110] Vereinsgesetz 2002, (BGBl I Nr. 66/2002). https://www.bmi.gv.at/609/gesetzestexte.aspx.
[111] Gnes and Vermeulen, "Non-Governmental Organizations and Legitimacy," 224.

who represents the association externally" should be provided.[112] The paragraph, in its turn, legitimizes leaders and their positions in an organization.

At the same time, the legitimization of Chechen organizations exists not only at the normative level. Community leaders are engaged in the creation of an association not only to be legitimate in the eyes of the state and the public, facilitating access to certain benefits, it is also a matter of uniting people by giving them a sense of solidarity and by maintaining memories of home. This is to a certain extent consistent with the second strand of NGO legitimacy rooted in institutionalism and neo-institutionalism, though I would argue that the capacity to adapt, reformulate and even potentially challenge external expectations is less feasible for stigmatized diaspora communities.[113] In any case, two legitimation processes are present in Chechen organizations.[114]

Most of the active and visible Chechen DOs were created in the last decade which again suggests that the diaspora is still at an early stage of development and that the number of organizations and initiatives is likely to grow.[115] In all types of Chechen associations, there are several characteristics to be highlighted. The idea of homeland is evident, since among the main objectives all the organizations and leaders share are the preservation of Chechen culture. It can be manifested through a poster with a landscape of Chechnya, Chechen food and more intangibly through daily interactions of diaspora members. Moreover, there is a spatial aspect to the location of organizations, taking into account the residence of Chechens and the existence of an established "Chechen infrastructure", which is evident in the example of a district of Vienna, but this aspect is far from being decisive.

[112] Vereinsgesetz 2002, (BGBl I Nr. 66/2002). https://www.bmi.gv.at/609/gesetzestexte.aspx.
[113] Hence, it is closer to a strict neo-institutional view of legitimacy formulate by Paul DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell.
[114] Blake Ashforth and Barrie Gibbs, "The Double-Edge of Organizational Legitimation," *Organization Science* 1, no. 2 (1990): 177-194.
[115] However, the formation of an organization is not a logical consequence of leadership activity. It is possible to maneuver between different organizations and projects, which was described by the example of one activist above.

As for the emergence of organizations, there can be both internal and external motivations. They are linked but expressed differently in leaders' narratives. One of my interlocuters directly connected the foundation of the mosque[116] in one of Austrian cities to the events happening externally, namely the outbreak of war in Syria and the recruitment of Chechen men.[117] Another Chechen activist living in Austria recounted in an interview that "at the end of 2012, after the deportation of one of our compatriots, I had my first experience with social activities and I plunged myself into them, even though it was out of despair. Already after this incident we decided that we needed to defend ourselves. The idea was inspired by a German-born human rights activist. At the beginning of 2013 we already registered the organization *Vindex - Protection and Asylum*. Apart from Chechens, people from the local population also joined this organization".[118] Some years later, the same activist was involved in the creation of another cultural organization in the Western Austria, which was also the consequence of the events of 2015.

Some organizations do not have or at some point were deprived of premises, which were most often provided by magistrates. As language courses are an essential activity inherent to all type of organizations, e.g. there are Arabic lessons for women in mosques, Chechen or English lessons for children and adults in cultural as well as political centers, such classes inevitably require space.

> At the moment, it's a little difficult to attract people, I can't offer anything because we don't have the room. When we have our own office, it will be easier for us. There used to be a lot of people, because we would say you could come here, give the address, and every Saturday we would have classes from two to six o'clock. Girls who wanted to could cook, others could have English class, do cartoons, play with the Afghans, or embroider and sew. There were also Afghans on our floor.[119]

[116] The Chechen mosques are also registered as Vereine. Religious associations may, but not necessarily should, be registered additionally in Vienna through IGGÖ - Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft Österreich.
[117] Interview, 29.04.2022.
[118] "Interv'yu S Koordinatorom Assamblei Chechencev Evropy Muhammadom (Aslanom) Murtazalievym," *Chechen Assembly*, December 30, 2020, https://chechenassembly.com/2020/12/30/интервью-с-координатором-ассамблеи-ч/.
[119] Interview, 29.03.2022.

Despite the small number of such associations, projects, clubs and including stores, as well as few people affiliating themselves with them,[120] organizational leaders are very much heard of in Chechen communities in Austria. While being associated with particular people, Chechen diaspora organizations contribute to the symbolic construction of the Chechen group and its interests through the transformation of the I-leader into a we-community. At moments of crisis in the community, journalists and public figures turn to the leaders of vocal organizations for their expertise, as they require normative organizational rather than leadership legitimacy. I will explain this boundary construction between Chechen communities and people acting on behalf of Austria in the next chapter.

[120] This is due to a reluctance to be associated with any political stances, as many refugees and migrants are aware of the repression against regime critics even abroad.

6. Social and symbolic boundary maintenance and formation: external and internal perspectives

6.1. Unfolding external categorization: Austrian policies and media discourses

Since the early 2000s, Austria has hosted Chechen refugees fleeing the two Chechen wars and distributed them among the federal states during and after the asylum procedure.[121] In chronological order, refugees are first placed in initial reception centers, primarily in the Traiskirchen refugee camp. Then they are transferred to accommodations in the federal states - typically boarding or private houses, and refugee homes. Finally, after the asylum procedure has been completed, they continue to be cared for in the asylum houses or they look for their own apartment. In terms of percentage and asylum quota, Vienna, Carinthia, Styria and Tyrol (until the early 2000s) were the federal states that received the most Chechens in absolute numbers.[122] In one of my interviews, the respondent noted that about two hundred Chechen families lived in Austria's westernmost region, Vorarlberg, which is connected to considerable social welfare support in that region.[123]

Since places are the arenas where daily processes marginalize and stratify the lives of the people present,[124] spatiality can be approached analytically as a boundary category. In recent years, the study of spatial boundaries has been expanded, authors have theorized that even if spatial frontiers (or boundaries) do not lead to conflict and crime in the short run, over time, the

[121] While European countries recorded a significant increase in the number of asylum applications submitted by the Chechens who have Russian citizenship in 1999-2000, Austria saw a major increase in 2002, with 2,221 applications (compared to 365 in 2001).
[122] Philipp Trojer, "Lebenswelten Tschetschenischer Flüchtlinge," 62.
[123] Interview, 13.04.2022.
[124] Ulrika Schmauch, "The Hidden Boundaries of Everyday Places: Migrant Women, Homeplace and the Spatial Practices of a Small Swedish Town," *An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 13, no. 2 (2014): 373.

lack of contact between groups will lead to growing potential for misunderstanding and prejudice.[125]

I argue that in the case of Chechen communities, spatial boundaries formation went hand in hand with symbolic boundary making process. On the one hand, the spatial aspect is associated with the close residence of Chechens and the corresponding preservation of certain practices, while on the other hand, spatial (strategic) dispersal is associated with the establishment of boundaries between Chechens and other communities. For example, there are long-lasting tensions with the Afghan community living in the same refugee camps and districts as the Chechens. Some of my interviewees attributed these tensions to the fact that when Chechen and Afghan youth had no other occupation in their neighborhoods, they would hang out together and sometimes get into fights.

The formation of symbolic boundaries takes place on several discursive as well as 'applied' layers: political and/or media as well as face-to-face interactional. The former two are external (Austrian society) and define boundaries drawn by the host society in relation to migrants or 'The Others'. The latter layer is both external (Austrian society) and internal (Chechen community) in boundary making process, it involves actors which are engaged in 'competitive' as well as 'collaborative' boundary work.[126]

Political discourse is a rather complex topic, which I will not examine in detail. One can hardly separate political discourse from the media one, as the former always takes place in the latter. The initial political debate, which later spread across media and moved to the federal level, began before the end of the second Chechen war with the FPÖ's slogan about "Carinthia without Chechnya".[127] Three years after the official end of this war, an visit of Austrian

[125] Ivana Křížková, Meng Le Zhang, Dan Olner and Gwilym Pryce, "Social Frontiers: Estimating the Spatial Boundaries Between Residential Groups and Their Impacts on Crime," in *Urban Inequality and Segregation in Europe and China*, ed. Pryce G. et al. (Springer, Cham, 2021).
[126] Ann Langley et al. "Boundary Work among Groups, Occupations and Organizations: From Cartography to Process," *Academy of Management Annals* 13, no. 2 (2019): 1-88.
[127] Philipp Trojer, "Lebenswelten Tschetschenischer Flüchtlinge," 65.

delegation to Grozny in order to supposedly "speed up the return of refugees home," caused much controversy due to continuing human rights violations in the republic.[128] Until today, political discourse in Austria on Chechen migrants has revolved around the topics of deportation and integration on the part of both conservative and liberal parties.[129]

Media discourses are the most dominant and influential in external symbolic boundary-making. Such prominent outlets as *der Standard, Kurier, Profil, Die Krone* or *Die Presse* have been shaping the image of Chechens since the end of 1990s by transmitting statements of politicians, experts or events taking place. If considering media and political discourses holistically, there are ethnic, religion, gender, culture and moral types of boundaries. Following the criticism of strict boundary separation, I also claim that these boundaries are entwined and reinforce each other.[130] According to leaders of Chechen communities, the Austrian press mostly relies on sensationalist information, which is not representative of the Chechen heterogeneous community in Austria. Among As it has been shown earlier, it results in either critical or uncritical negative stereotyping.[131] In one interview, a Chechen community figure recounts:

> I came [to Europe] in 2005, I was constantly traveling, going to conferences, panel discussions, talking about the [Chechen] war, and I always encountered a positive image. Chechens were freedom fighters and victims. And suddenly, in Austria, I was confronted with the image of Chechen as criminals. I was stunned when my colleague asked me that about the bad reputation. After about a year, I understood what she meant…I don't like being faced every day with the fact that I belong to a criminal nation where everyone dreams of committing criminal acts in Syria or here. I also don't like being portrayed as

[128] Jutta Sommerbauer, Vienna wants to get rid of Chechens," *Die Presse*, October 14, 2011. https://www.diepresse.com/701287/wien-will-tschetschenen-loswerden.

[129] "Grüne: Tschetschenen-Abschiebung stoppen," *Kurier*, December 13, 2012. https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/gruene-tschetschenen-abschiebung-stoppen/1.822.509; Anastasia Kirilenko, "Skandal s Chechentsami v Avstrii Ispol'zovan v Politicheskich Zelyach," *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, February 9, 2017. https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/297466/ ; "FPÖ – Nepp: Tschetschenen, die zur Kriegsteilnahme aufrufen, sofort abschieben," *Austria Press Agency*, March 12, 2022. https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220318_OTS0143/fpoe-nepp-tschetschenen-die-zur-kriegsteilnahme-aufrufen-sofort-abschieben

[130] Anders Vassenden, and Merete Jonvik, "Live and Let Live? Morality in Symbolic Boundaries across Different Cultural Areas," *Current Sociology*, (2021).

[131] Lauß, "The Representation of Chechens," 88-89.

> an oppressed woman. I don't like being defined by any stereotype at all. I have multiple identities, just like any human being.[132]

Among other recent examples, my interviewees mentioned the terrorist attack in Vienna in the fall of 2020, for which the press immediately blamed Chechens,[133] or the recent news about the pro-Putin Chechen (allegedly) "influencer", who urged Chechens from Austria to fight for Russia in the war in Ukraine.[134] Comments by anonymous authors on online news in general confirm the 'success' of constructing symbolic boundaries based on negative attributions, which is hard to eliminate.

When it comes to face-to-face interactional boundary making, Chechen refugees were arguably involved in external symbolic boundary work at the early stages of the Chechen refugee influx. And while Chechen leaders are still mediators between the external context and the internal environment of the community, the influence on the dominant discourse is already more complex. My interlocutor shares her experience after fleeing to Austria in 2002:

> I was very shy at first, I went around schools and gave information about the war in English, mostly in Niederösterreich. I went around *Rathäuser* [city councils], around parks, gathering people, I was always very drawn to it, because I see no one knows anything. It frustrated me that they don't talk about us, they don't talk about the war.[135]

6.2. Mediating boundaries, fighting dominant discourses? Boundary strategies of Chechen organizational leaders

In this section, I will further analyze the interactional category of boundary making processes by examining the role and position of Chechen leaders in the diaspora. Such actors will pursue

[132] Livia Kling, *Lauter Fremde!: Wie der gesellschaftliche Zusammenhalt zerbricht* (Wien: Kremayr & Scheriau, 2017).
[133] Daniel Bischof, "Haftstrafe für Kontaktmann des Wien-Attentäters," *Wiener Zeitung*, October 4, 2021, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/chronik/wien-chronik/2123727-Haft-fuer-Kontaktmann-des-Wien-Attentaeters.html
[134] Kate Manchester, "Tschetschenische Influencer als Kriegstreiber in Wien," *Der Standard*, March 18, 2022. https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000134202372/tschetschenische-influencer-als-kriegstreiber-in-wien.
[135] Interview, 29.03.2022.

different strategies of boundary making, depending on their position in the hierarchies of power and the structure of their networks, as Wimmer pointed out.[136] I further suggest that these strategies may vary according to the forms of authority in Chechen communities.

The fact that many Chechens had already had experience with external categorization during their "internal migration" in Soviet Union is contextually important. Since most of my respondents had lived before the collapse of the USSR, traveled and stayed outside Chechnya before the wars (and several even experienced the life in deportation to Central Asia in the beginning of 1950s), their first encounters with symbolic and social boundaries had already emerged and been recognized as such.

Generally, for all the leaders of Chechen communities, the existence of symbolic and social boundaries is a social fact which is not denied by anyone and is reproduced in the narratives about Austrian society. The Austrian system is *perceived* as one that encourages Chechens to learn the German language, build mosques and establish cultural centres. Thus, one of my respondents compared Austrian democracy to Shariah law in the principle of its work.[137] Situationally, this example corresponds to the transvaluative type of boundary work, namely establishing moral and political equality. The Statistisches Jahrbuch "Migrant and Integration" of 2021 generally confirms narratives of my interlocutors. The report indicates that immigrants from Afghanistan, Syria or Chechnya were on average 57% "completely" and 42% "rather" in agreement with the Austrian way of life. Only very few showed a negative attitude. People with a Chechen migration background were 4% "rather" or "not at all" in agreement with the Austrian way of life.[138] Even more, among persons from Chechnya, 94% of the respondents said that they felt completely or rather at home in Austria.[139]

[136] Andreas Wimmer, "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 4 (2008): 990.
[137] Interview, 29.04.2022.
[138] Jeannette Klimont et al. *Migration & Integration 2021 | Zahlen, Daten, Indikatoren* (Wien: Statistik Austria, 2021), 104.
[139] Ibid. 17.

Conversely, some Chechen leaders mention difficulties with the Austrian bureaucracy and specifically with the long-established social boundary – citizenship. Austria has the most difficult and restrictive citizenship process in the EU, and The Austrian Citizenship Act (1985) does not recognizes dual citizenship, and enforces the principle of *jus sanguinis* in granting citizenship, that is, a child can only acquire citizenship if one of the parents is an Austrian citizen.[140] For the Chechen community, where intermarriages are still the dominant form of marriage,[141] this issue is highly problematic. If children of Chechens born in Austria want to become citizens, their only option is naturalization, and they must (apart from a shortened residence period) essentially meet the same strict criteria as apply to migrants, as they are considered 'foreigners'. This social boundary is mediated by Chechen leaders through work with young people, including those who have been placed in juvenile prisons, as well as through language courses and promotion of education. There are some Chechen women, who work for Austrian NGOs and assist Chechen women with bureaucratic issues. This boundary work relates to the *power-over* function as well as substantive-rational type of authority, such leaders wield. Emphasizing the possibilities of boundary crossing, they employ a strategy of positional move which can subsequently affect symbolic boundaries.

For refugees who have resided in Austria for more than five years, the condition for naturalization is having a permanent job and a steady income. Since 2009, the Austrian citizenship law stipulates a higher income requirement, where regular expenses – such as rent, alimony or mortgages – have to be deducted before an assessment of the income level, leading de facto to a higher threshold.[142] For some Chechens, unofficial work is their main and

[140] Rainer Bauböck, and Dilek Çınar, "Citizenship Law and Naturalisation in Austria," in *Towards a European Nationality: Citizenship, Immigration and Nationality Law in the EU*, ed. Randall Hansen, and Partick Weil (NY: Palgrave, 2001): 255-272.
[141] Michal Sipos, ""We are all brothers here": The making of a life by Chechen refugees in Poland," *Population, Space and Place* 26, no. 2 (2019).
[142] Joachim Stern and Gerd Valchars, "Country Report: Austria" (EUDO Citizenship Observatory, September 2013), https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/60232/RSCAS_EUDO_CIT_2013_28.pdf?sequence=1.

sometimes the only possible source of income, which makes it impossible to obtain citizenship and leaves them with a status of a temporary resident.[143] For example, in the case of one of the leaders, an athlete, absence of citizenship hindered him from going to tournaments. The bureaucratic complexities and settling of Chechens in low-paid jobs due to low access to the high-paying labor market in turn reproduces the importance of informal ties in Chechen communities, where leaders are the bridges. However, such structural inequalities can be perceived as intrinsic and can lead to deemphasizing response even among Chechen leaders who would priorities the younger generation in their boundary work.

Blurring strategy is witnessed in the entrepreneurial activities of Chechens in Austria. Shop names and signs which either framed as Eastern European or sometimes Russian, deemphasize ethnic or national affiliation by emphasizing a cosmopolitan aspect of the place. Through this strategic work, the entrepreneurs expose their (rather invisible) rational type of authority and mobilize the interaction of both the Chechen and "Eastern European" diasporas. Similarly, the student organization operates with a blurring strategy by accentuating Chechens and Ingush as students, but it is evident that compared to the inclusive stores, these types of organizations are exclusive in essence.

The expansion of symbolic boundaries can be seen in the discourse on the *Vainakh* people, i.e. Chechens and Ingush together. In doing so, Chechen actors appeal to a shared history and customs. At the organizational level, expansion together with blurring can be applied when talking about the number of people in a DO. For instance, one leader mentions that everyone knows about the organization he works at, but some people only come when they really need to. "The organization opens its doors for everyone". Since such discourses are frequently exaggerative, they are important both internally and externally in demonstrating the solidarity and inclusivity of *the* community.

[143] Christian Höller, "Tschetschenen als Problemgruppe am Arbeitsmarkt," *Die Presse*, March 28, 2018. https://www.diepresse.com/5396586/tschetschenen-als-problemgruppe-am-arbeitsmarkt.

Contraction, on the other hand, occurs when actors face negative symbolic boundaries concerning deportations, assassinations or criminality. Chechen immigrants in this case utilize fission – splitting the existing category of "Chechens" into several parts. Thus, they employ the notion of *kadyrovtsy* to distance themselves from the supporters of the current regime in Chechnya, or some other categories like 'brainwashed' or 'non-pure' Chechens. The strategy of contraction is not always coherent and strict, especially when it comes to the former category. The internal ambiguities can arise when a Chechen talks about his relatives and friends to people 'from the outside'.

6.3. Solidarity and (non)mobilization: 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Chechen response

The morning of February 24, 2022 – the first day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine – was accompanied by a whole day of protests throughout Vienna. The flags of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, Georgia, and many other visual presences of the "post-Soviet" could be spotted. For Chechens in immigration, the outbreak of the war and atrocities committed by Russian troops in Ukraine brought back acute memories of the First and the Second Chechen wars.

In order to understand the boundary-making and mobilizing strategies of Chechen diasporic leaders during the war in Ukraine, it is useful to borrow the concept of frames, which denotes "schemata of interpretation", from the social movement literature. As framing processes presuppose identity construction[144] and enable different themes to be interconnected by convincing groups from different countries and active on different issues to join a common struggle,[145] they can lead to the mobilization through boundary work. I argue that the main

[144] Scott A. Hunt, Robert D. Benford, and David A. Snow, "Identity Fields: Framing Processes and the Social Construction of Movement Identities." in *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, ed. Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 185.
[145] Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Blackwell, 2006), 81-82.

frames activating symbolic boundaries in the Chechen community during the war in Ukraine are shared victimhood and distancing.

Diaspora leaders have been involved in discursive and practical expansion of symbolic boundaries in previous years by mobilizing Chechens in support other diasporas in Austria. In 2021, a Chechen activist wrote:

> Today, on March 6, a rally against dictatorial regimes and police brutality was held. Representatives from Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Syria and Ichkeria were at the rally. All of the aforementioned countries have suffered from military aggression and crimes against humanity by Russia. Since the collapse of the USSR, Russia has been continuously and unceremoniously interfering in the affairs of the former Soviet republics. It terrorizes fragile democracies by threatening military invasion and imposing dictatorial puppet regimes.[146]

During the protests in early March 2022, Chechens, along with other diasporas, used such slogans as "The pain of Ukraine is the pain of the entire Caucasus" or "Georgia 2008, Ukraine 2014, what is next?". Orjuela points to the strategic efforts of diaspora activists using "past-presencing" to legitimize justice claims in response to global political opportunity structures.[147] The expansion of symbolic boundaries through recognizing the common struggle against the Russian regional hegemony (frame), drastically enhanced a sense of solidarity among certain post-Soviet diaspora communities. For example, during the anti-war demonstration on May 9th in Vienna, the boundary work could be ethnographically observed in practice. While on one side of the square members of the Russian diaspora, wearing military uniforms, celebrated the Victory Day, on the other side Ichkerians and Ukrainians were holding an anti-war event. Occasionally, there were verbal altercations between the two sides, while the Austrian police were silently monitoring the control.

The 'distancing' frame activates the above-mentioned contraction strategy, which is a direct response to Kadyrov's support of the war and the Kadyrovites' involvement in the war in

[146] Chechen Activist. Facebook, March 6, 2021.
[147] Camilla Orjuela, "Mobilising Diasporas for Justice. Opportunity Structures and the Presencing of a Violent Past," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1357-1373.

Ukraine. On the third day of the war, February 27, 2022, the Ichkerian government-in-exile came up with a proposal of signing a military cooperation treaty with Ukraine in order to start the formation of Chechen volunteer units. Yet, two battalions made up of Chechen volunteers, namely the Battalion named after Dzhokhar Dudaev and after Sheikh Mansur, have existed since the first Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014.

According to Akhmed Zakayev, head of the Ichkerian government-in-exile, the cooperation agreement is an important procedure for the volunteers to be protected by the Geneva Convention.[148] A Chechen activist living in Austria also stressed that Chechen volunteers are ready to go to Ukraine only if they receive official guarantees from Kiev that they will not be prosecuted or extradited at Russia's request. The statement was released in response to the call of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) to deport Chechen refugees from Austria, who decided to support Ukraine in its resistance to Russian military aggression.[149] Nevertheless, some Chechen community leaders express their claims by not supporting deployment of Chechen volunteers to the war in Ukraine. This is due to a number of significant factors, such as the trauma associated with the wars in Chechnya, or the fear of deportation, which is more in reaction to the symbolic and social boundaries discussed above. The possibilities of providing different types of humanitarian aid to Ukraine within Austria and broadly Europe became a more frequent occasion for community mobilization through the mediation of Chechen leaders.

[148] "Zayavlenie Pravitel'stva CHechenskoj Respubliki Ichkeriya," *NEP Prague*, February 25, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNyZ6fYk2ho.

[149] "Chechency Avstrii Otvetili na Prizyv Deportirovat' Zemlyakov." *Giachechen-Press*, March 2, 2022. https://thechechenpress.com/news/16570-chechentsy-avstrii-otvetili-na-prizyv-deportirovat-uekhavshikh-na-vojnu-v-ukraine.

7. Conclusion

Weber's conceptualization of types of authority proves to be a useful analytical tool in approaching leaders in fragmented contexts, notably the diasporic. As noted from the theoretical perspective, the three classical types of authority often leave out empirical examples of authority emanating from rational-value sources, which can be understood as substantive-rational pure type. The pure types became the foundation for considering complex forms of authority in the Chechen community. Since authority has been conceptualized through the knowledge-status-legitimacy schema, which is expressed in the actor's (leader's) command of epistemic capital, these three elements were examined together to understand why Chechens perceive leaders as authorities.

First, the Chechen custom of respecting elders and their experience as well as the *teip* system determines the presence of a traditional type of authority among leaders, regardless of their gender. This type of authority intersects with the substantive-rational through the biographies of many leaders who lived in the late Soviet Union. What becomes important here is an easier adaptation to systems of meaning, which many Chechens internalized through the exposure to the bureaucratized USSR as well as the post-Soviet independence years. Chechen leaders often become mediators between the Austrian bureaucracy in the system of informal networks of the Chechen community, which increases their legitimacy and influences their authority in the diaspora. Context turns out to be important for gaining leadership position, but not necessarily authority, who may not depend on leadership. Further analysis is needed to disentangle the experience of authority and the perceived authority among the community members in fragmented contexts.

Second, authority in its traditional sense – following the commands of another person, corresponding to *power-over* – is most prominent when it comes to working and interacting

with young people. In all other cases, authority lies in *power-to*. As it has been shown, authority in organizational contexts is dispersed. The forms and intersections of authority have improved an understanding of how a fragmented diaspora, which is indeed perceived to be fragmented by the Chechen leaders, nevertheless remains connected. The creation of even minor diasporic organizations is a strategic decision to remain outwardly legitimate, to hold events and lessons, maintaining a sense of diaspora for those who want to be involved.

Since theoretically organizational fields are coevolutionary systems in which boundaries and practices exist in a recursive relationship, the very existence of diasporic organizations confirms the constant work with boundaries determined externally. Initially, I associated the various boundary strategies of Chechen leaders with the modification of existing symbolic boundaries rather than with their substantial alteration. However, the analysis shows that Chechen leaders who wield both traditional and charismatic authority, are more involved in the formation of symbolic boundaries within and across communities through the expansion strategy. In comparison, substantive-rational types of authority are organizationally based, and such leaders frequently interact with the Austrian authorities by employing the strategies of blurring and contraction. Since women leaders often organize events targeting Chechen women, the community can be conceived of as one engaged both in emancipatory activism and one where the gender gap continues to be reinforced. This gender dimension is yet to be considered longitudinally. Finally, traumatic events, such as war, can accelerate and change boundary strategies toward expansion and the form of authority toward a more charismatic one.

As a result, the Chechen leaders analyzed belong to a certain cohort of the Chechen community in Austria that is most active in the media and most visible to the outsider – this is the main limitation concerning the research on Chechen diasporas in Austria and other countries. For a more holistic work, apolitical as well as conservative actors should be considered.

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