War, Asylum, and Everyday Life:

The Experiences of Chechen and Ingush Refugees in Poland

Michal Šípoš

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a PhD in Social Anthropology

Goldsmiths College, University of London

I confirm that the work presented in this PhD thesis is my own.

Michal Šípoš   London, UK 30/09/2015

Abstract

This doctoral thesis builds upon long-term and predominantly single-sited ethnographic fieldwork conducted with Chechen and Ingush asylum seekers in one particular asylum centre in Eastern Poland between 2007 and 2009. It is concerned with some of the processes that constitute what some scholars have regarded as the unsettled and uprooted identity of refugees. Acknowledging that the thing that all immigrants from the North Caucasus had in common was the fact that their lives had been dramatically affected by the post-socialist Russo-Chechen wars, I consider war and displacement to be extreme disruptive events. Focusing on refugees' voices, their narratives, life stories, utterances, paintings, but also silences, I examine the variety of ways in which these subjects attempted to make sense of a world, which had been radically changed by violence. Besides, the thesis does not overlook that refugee identity is also produced through the historically specific institutional practices and discourses of those who take part in political and humanitarian intervention. After delineating the way in which the notion 'refugee' was constructed in post-socialist Poland, I describe this political-legal construction as it existed and reproduced itself in the context of everyday life. Last, I consider the way in which these definitions became part of refugees' lived experiences. Describing the people I encountered in the field—mostly refugees but also low-level bureaucrats, social workers, teachers, or local inhabitants of the surrounding urban and economically deprived neighbourhood—this doctoral thesis explores how violent disruption becomes integrated in the everyday life of victims of war and

displacement within a specific political, socio-economic and historical setting.

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Acknowledgments

The completion of this PhD thesis would have been impossible without many people, who inspired me during the preparation of my research proposal and fieldwork and gave me their invaluable support during the writing-up period. My research and part of my studies were supported by Marie Curie SocAnth, an original and stimulating programme, which aimed to promote social anthropology in Central-Eastern Europe. The programme was organised by a group of distinguished anthropologists and research institutions located in Hungary, Romania, Germany, and the United Kingdom and financed by the European Union.[2] I would like to thank the organisers for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this unique network.

I would like to express my greatest gratitude also to my research participants. The people whom I met in the field carried an unimaginable burden. Not only were they poor, displaced, dispossessed, and disempowered but also many of them had experienced the death of a family member, a friend, or someone they knew. They had experienced the proximity of their own death or how some of their closed ones betrayed them. Yet, when I came to live with them they did not hesitate to show hospitality to me. Some of them became my close friends and I became dependent on their knowledge and protection. I learned a lot from these people.

Moreover, the time spent with refugees empowered my trust in humanity. For all this, I am deeply, deeply indebted to them.

I am also extremely grateful to my main supervisor, Frances Pine, for her wise advice and continuous support. Frances helped me to overcome innumerable difficulties and crises. She never stopped believing in me and in the work I had done. Her trust and determination fuelled my motivation. There is also one other academic and scholar who has accompanied me on this long journey from beginning to end. Juraj Buzalka was ready to give me his valuable feedback and support whenever it was necessary. I am very thankful to him for this. I would also like to express my gratitude to Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk who supported me while I was in the field. Last but not least, I wish to thank Lale Yalçın Heckmann, who shared her expertise with me while I was on a short internship at the Max Planck Institute in Halle, Germany, in the 2009. I would also like to thank Jonathan Spencer for his critical comments on my early ethnography.

Being an immigrant from Central-Eastern Europe, with no previous connections to British academia, my time at Goldsmiths, University of London was, I must say, a rather difficult period in social and economic terms. Yet, my new *Alma Mater* was a very inspiring and motivational intellectual environment where I could absorb new skills and knowledge. I would like to thank Sophie Day, Nicholas de Genova, Victoria Goddard, Casey High, Catherine Alexander, Gavin Weston, and Emma Tarlo for giving me their critical feedback at different stages of the project. I would also like to thank Joan Turner and Zahira Araguete for providing me with very useful advice on English language skills. I am also grateful to Zsuzsa Katona, Patrícia Alves De Matos, Muzna Al-Masri, and other postgraduate students for reading and

commenting on my drafts, and for the discussions and chats we had. I thank Saša Vrbová and Peter Vrba, friends from my native town in Slovakia, who settled in the UK, for assisting me with accommodation.

In 2011, I had the opportunity to work as a visiting teacher at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. The lectures I taught and the seminars I had with undergraduate students substantially helped me to overcame the feeling of anxiety around my research. There, I started to talk and write coherently about my field—the difficult fieldwork experience, as I discuss in more detail later on, had deeply affected me. The two years-long internship at the Institute of Social Anthropology gave me a sense of belonging. It helped me to gain necessary distance with my field. This allowed me to write about violence. I owe to the Institute and its people my most sincere gratitude.

Finally, this thesis would have certainly not been completed without the help of my parents. My mother, Milada Šípošová, has always believed in me. So did my father, Ján Šípoš, who unexpectedly passed away in August 2013. I would like to thank my parents for all their support and to dedicate this thesis to my mother and to the memory of my father.

Maps
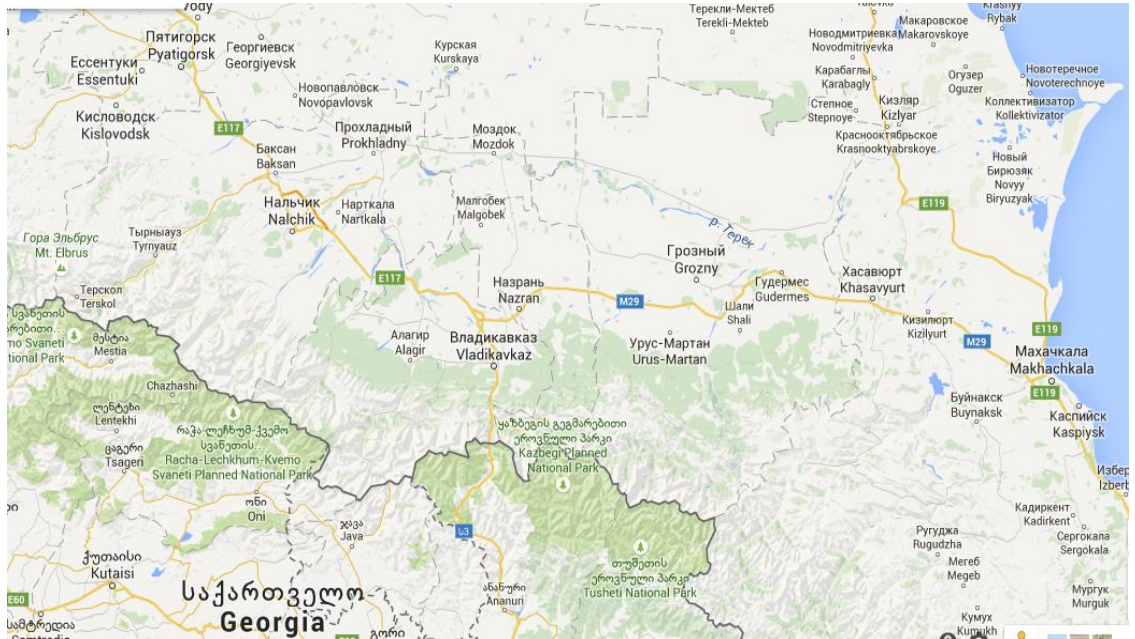
Figure 1- The region of North Caucasus. Source: maps.google.com
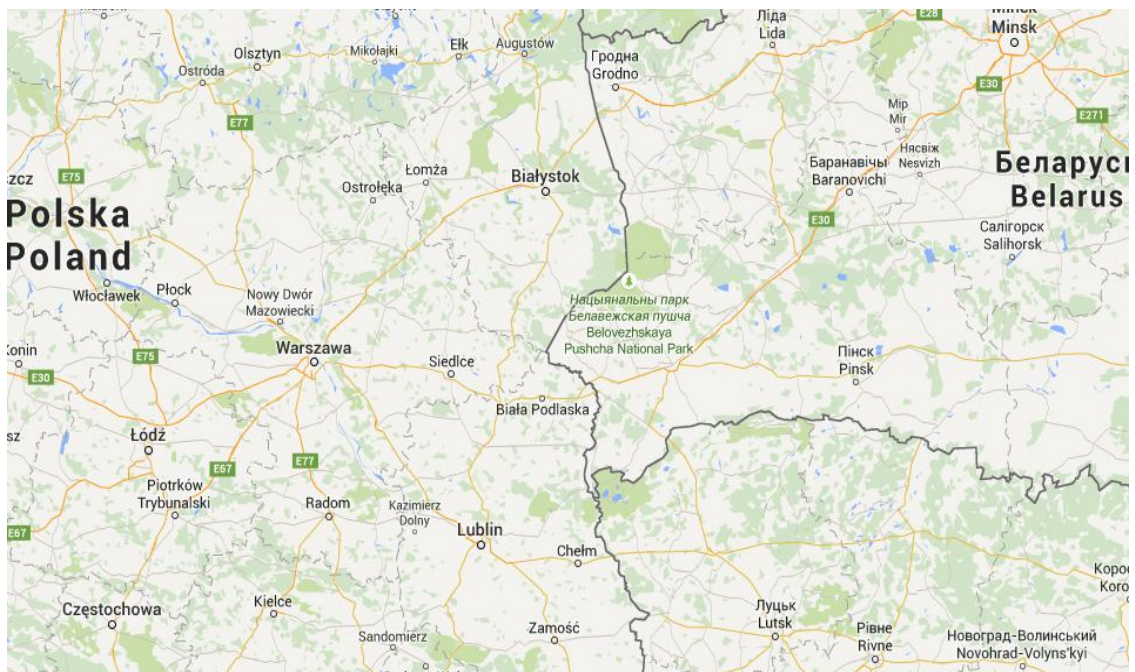
Figure 2 - The Region of Eastern Poland. Source: maps.google.com

Glossary of Chechen and Russian Terms

borz – wolf, the symbol of Chechen nationalists

da, den da – father, grandfather

do'zal – a Chechen traditional family

dottagh, kunak – close friend

geranging, rodstevniki (Ru.) – relatives

jamaat – a group of men who share common religious and sometimes also military interest

jisha - sister

Kadyrovtsy – Chechen paramilitary units loyal to Kadyrov, the pro-Russian president

khant, dik khant – good boy, son

mehkh khel, khel – council of the elders

Nakh, Vainakh – ours, our people

nana - mother

nokhcho – a man who behaves according to *Vainakh* ethic and moral norms

siloviki (Ru.) – members of Russian military and security services

stag, vokkha stag – an old respected man, an authority. The opposite of stag is *muzhik* (Ru.), a vulgar man who drinks and disrespects others

teip - clan

tsa - a house, the traditional residence of Chechen patriarchal family

vasha – brother

Preface

The people whose experiences I analyse in this doctoral thesis and who I call here Chechen, Chechen-Ingush or *Vainakh* refugees had fled to the European Union either from Chechnya or Ingushetia, the republics which both geographically belong to the region of the North Caucasus. Others also came from the Northern Dagestan, which politically is, like Chechnya and Ingushetia, nowadays a federal subject of Russia.

Delineated by the Black Sea, the Caucasian Mountains, the Caspian Sea, and the Russian plains, this region, as Bruce Grant emphasises, is especially famous for its cultural pluralism, and the divisions and conflicts connected to the numerous waves of foreign interventions and colonisations that have occurred in the North Caucasus over the centuries (Grant, Brides, Brigands and Fire-Bringers: Notes towards Historical Ethnography of Pluralism, 2007, p. 47). The most recent open conflict in the North Caucasus, as it is well known, took the form of two violent wars: the First Chechen-Russian War (1994-1996) and the Second Chechen-Russian War. The latter had two phases, the war-phase (1999-2000) and the insurgency phase (2000-2009). It is believed that more than 200,000 people died in the wars. Hundreds of thousands ordinary people, ethnic Chechens and Russians, and people of other nationalities were dispossessed and displaced.

It was especially after the outbreak of the second war in 1999, the war which lingered on in the form of an anti-terrorist operation until at least 2009, that tens of thousands of people who speak Russian and *Nakh* languages, ethnic Chechens and Ingushes, started to flee from the

area to the European Union (EU). In the first decade of the 21st century they became one of the fastest growing diasporas not only in the EU but also in the Old Continent as a whole. Since most Chechen-Ingush refugees have no other option but to travel to the EU by land, Poland was the first EU member state many of them entered. According to the official statistics produced by Office for Foreigners in Poland (Pl. *Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców*), between 2000 and 2009, almost seventy thousand people applied for asylum in Poland. The same statistics produced by the Poland's Office for Foreigners also say that more than sixty five thousand of these asylum seekers were the holders of a Russian passport - i.e. the *Vainakhs* in the first decade of the 21st century constituted the vast majority of refugees in this Central European country.[3]

According to local reports on forced migration flows (Frelak, Klaus, & Wiśniewsky, 2007), however, most Chechen-Ingush refugees did not want to stay in Poland and become a part of Polish society. This finding is also reflected in the official statistics: many asylum processes, as the numbers show, were terminated usually because the applicant had emigrated from Poland to some other country. Nonetheless, as a part of Poland's accession to the European Union and the Schengen Agreement, the country adopted the notorious EU asylum and immigration regulations that do not allow asylum seekers to travel freely across the national borders inside the territory of the supranational state, the European Union.

As a result, *Vainakh* asylum seekers were pressured to stay. State authorities re-directed them to accommodation facilities, most of

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[3] The statistics can be found on the website of the Poland's Office for Foreigners, http://udsc.gov.pl/

which were situated in the eastern regions of the country. At the time of my fieldwork, this was one of the poorest areas in the European Union. In this thesis, I shall write about the experiences of Chechen and Ingush refugees who, between August 2007 and December 2008, lived in one of these asylum accommodation facilities in Eastern Poland. In order to protect my research participants I will not reveal the exact location where my fieldwork took place.

I arrived in this place I had chosen as my main field site in the middle of the summer. At this point, I had not yet received permission to access the asylum facility regularly for the following year and a half of field research. Whilst my request was being considered, I decided to settle temporarily in a student accommodation located approximately four miles away from the neighbourhood. From there, I could commute to Warszawa, a neighbourhood in the vicinity of the asylum centre, where I could meet and talk with local people and refugees. I could also travel to other cities and villages in Eastern Poland where other asylum facilities were located.

While travelling to these other places, I visited another asylum centre and talked to some of the refugees and state employees who were there. This facility was situated at the outskirts of one particular village. The two-storey structure was perhaps thirty years old. The building was of a considerable size and surrounded by nothing else but fields of rye. In the past, this site used to be a prison. When more refugees began to apply for asylum in Poland, the services provided by this facility changed. Nonetheless, the Polish Migration Office, which became the new administrator of the site, did not seem to consider necessary to dismantle the original barbed wire, the main security gate,

and the security lights. The security cameras near the entrance were never removed. This enabled guards to monitor residents.

The facility where I planned to conduct fieldwork was different as it was located in the middle of an urban neighbourhood. The asylum centre was a four-storey building. Its façade was painted in blue and orange. The different colours divided the building into two parts. During socialism, the building was a lodging house, which served the needs of labour migrant workers. After 1989, the lodging house went bankrupt. One part of the building was transformed into a block of flats providing affordable housing for local socio-economically disadvantaged people by the municipality. The other part was turned into a police station shortly after socialism. In 1997, the building was rented to the Office for Foreigners, which adapted it in order to provide accommodation for around 170 asylum seekers.

There were more than fifty private rooms in the accommodation centre. The rooms were double, triple, and quadruple. The equipment of these rooms was scarce. Each room was furnished in the same way. There was a simple wardrobe, a veneered table, plastic chairs, and an iron bed. There was no sofa or curtains. None of the rooms were pre-equipped with a fridge, an oven, a basin, or a lavatory. The bathrooms and kitchens were communal. The corridors were noisy and smelly - they smelled of a mixture of disinfectants and the odours from the kitchens. No place inside the whole building provided residents with some comfort and privacy.

The areas surrounding the asylum facility had been industrial areas even before World War II. There used to be industrial halls and also an airport. But in the first half of the 1940s, as Poland came to be

occupied by Nazi Germany, the neighbourhood became the site of a large concentration camp and local communities were extinguished. After the disruptions of World War II, and with the advent of Soviet-backed socialism and Stalin's industrialisation drive, industrialisation and modernisation returned to the city. As a part of the state's economic planning, several large factories were built and the neighbourhood was further urbanised. Under communism, these factories used to provide working opportunities for local inhabitants and immigrants from other parts of Poland and also Ukraine. But when socialism fell, most of them went bankrupt. During the 1990s and in the following decade, some industrial halls and buildings gradually became dilapidated. Others were transformed into workshops, second-hand shops, and car services.

Walking the streets of the neighbourhood in 2007 and 2008, I could see some signs of new prosperity. For instance, there were a few brand new supermarkets and shopping malls. Some blocks of flats had also been reconstructed. From time to time, I noticed an expensive car on the streets. Nonetheless, I made a note in my diary that what really seem to thrive in the neighbourhood are small liquor stores (Pl. *alkohole*). I could see that there were always customers coming to these shops. In other words, there may have been some signs of the economic prosperity stimulated maybe by the accession of Poland to the European Union. Yet, the urban neighbourhood remained predominantly an area of severe socio-economic deprivation.

Figure 3 - Hotel Pumis (at the back) and three blocks of flats built during World War II for the purpose of accommodating concentration camp guards

A couple of weeks after my arrival in the field, I received the permission to conduct the research. During the first couple of months of fieldwork I tried to map the field and familiarise myself with different actors, meanings, and relationships.

I soon learned that the number of refugees living in Hotel Pumis exceeded the hotel's capacity. In the autumn of 2007, Poland was about to join the Schengen Zone. Many Chechens and Ingushes feared that it would be even more difficult to escape to the European Union later, so the influx escalated and Hotel Pumis provided shelter for more than two hundred and twenty people. As well as Hotel Pumis, there was

another asylum centre in the countryside. Other three hundred people inhabited this facility. Besides, there were several dozen families who had been granted either asylum or a tolerated stay permit and lived elsewhere, in Christian sanctuaries, in rented accommodation, or as homeless people in parks.

The refugee group in the whole city amounted to around six hundred people. Talking to refugees, I found that most of them had fled from the towns and villages in Chechnya, Ingushetia, or the Northern Dagestan.[4] Only a few refugees I met had immigrated to Poland alone: most of them were accompanied by their spouses, children, or other relatives. Another thing I could not overlook was the fact that the refugees whom I encountered seemed to be interconnected through networks of kinship, friendship, and reciprocity. Many refugees had previous experiences of displacement. They had usually spent some time in the refugee camps of Ingushetia.

Some of these people fled from the rural areas of the North Caucasus, others from the refugee camps in Ingushetia, and others from Grozny. Several refugees I talked to had been in Poland before but emigrated from there to Western Europe. Once in Western Europe, they were deported back to Poland as they were subject to EU regulations, which stipulate that asylum is to be applied for, and granted, at the first point of entry. Most of refugees had finished either elementary or high school. There were several university graduates. Before they immigrated to Poland, some had worked in state institutions. Others had been freedom fighters. Most of refugees, however, had not had any

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[4] In Northern Dagestan, the area between Chechnya and Caspian Sea, there are settlements inhabited by ethnic Chechens.

long-term jobs. They had sustained themselves by turning their houses and lands into small family farms, through seasonal jobs and trade, and humanitarian support.

All of them had in common the fact that the post-socialist Russo-Chechen Wars had dramatically affected their lives. I met many refugees whose houses had been bombed. Many had lost their closest relatives. Many parents feared for their children's safety - after the second war, in the North Caucasus, it was common for young men to be targeted by the state security services. Many younger refugees, on the other hand, were concerned about their parents' fate, their poverty, and their health. There were refugees who had been wounded during the wars. Others had been imprisoned and tortured after 1999. Conditions in prison were beyond any national or international law. For instance, I met a man who had spent several months living in a hole dug into the ground. Some women had been raped—I did not learn many details about the women's past because, due to my own gendered identity, it was difficult for me to talk to the women openly without male supervision.

From the discussions with the refugees, I learned that most of them hesitated to stay in Poland for a long time. To some, Poland was too 'Slavic' or 'socialist' and reminded them of the conditions in Russia. Others wanted to leave for economic, social, and family reasons. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, or Sweden, they thought, would have better economic opportunities for them and their children. Besides, many had relatives and friends living in other EU countries. However, the inhabitants of the accommodation centre were legally deprived of their right to seek asylum in the other EU countries. Moreover, asylum seekers were not allowed to work in Poland. Apart

from free accommodation, they were only entitled to three meals per day and a small sum of money: every adult was entitled to seventy Zlotys per month and those with school-aged children were entitled to two hundred and seventy Zlotys per month.[5] In Poland, some worked illegally. Others, unable to escape from traumatic memories, spent most of their time inside their rooms.

The thing that all refugees whom I met in the field shared in common was the fact that their lives had been deeply marked by the post-socialist Russo-Chechen Wars, the complex and chaotic ethno-nationalist, military, and communal violence unleashed in the North Caucasus after the dissolution of the USSR as well as by the political terror that accompanied the restoration of the Russian order in the region after 1999. Writing about turbulent historical moments in post-colonial India, similar to the Russo-Chechen wars in their violent nature, Veena Das sees them as 'critical events', enormous disruptions in the public world capable of radically changing traditional categories and of bringing new forms into daily life (Das, 1996, p. 6). Drawing inspiration from this study, I propose to depict the Russo-Chechen Wars as such critical events.

In social anthropology, a growing number of ethnographic studies explore, in various different ways, sudden eruptions of violence in public and communal worlds (Daniel, 1996; Das, 2007; Das V. , Kleinman, Lock, & Reynolds, 2001; Das, Kleinman, Ramphele, & Reynolds, 2000; Jackson, 2002; Kwon, 2008; Loizos, 1981; Skultans,

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[5] In 2008, one zloty was equal to approximately twenty British pennies. A loaf of bread cost 1.50 zlotys, butter 3.50 zlotys, 1 litre of milk 2.50 zlotys, 1kg of sugar 2.50 zlotys, 1kg of potatoes 1 zloty, 1 yogurt 1.50 zlotys, a box of tea 10 zlotys, 1kg of bananas 4 zlotys.

1998). Instead of describing and analysing these dramatic historical events as such, these studies concern themselves with how the violence is 'actualised' in a sense that it is both produced and consumed by the subjects and, last but not least, with how the ordinary people affected by violence, attempt to make sense of or re-create the world damaged or destroyed. Based on my reading of anthropological-ethnographic research among the Chechen-Ingush refugees who had fled from the North Caucasus because of the conflict, I elaborate on this approach: this thesis is an ethnographic analysis of the complex transactions between subjectivity, violence, and everyday life.

But social anthropology also offers different approaches to the understanding of refugee migrant subjectivity or identity. Some scholars share the view that what is nowadays considered by academics, intellectuals, politicians, and/or humanitarian workers as the universal human condition of traumatising loss and change may in fact be seen as an idea that has been created and nurtured by the institutions that are responsible for refugees. These scholars propose that researchers should pay attention to the way in which this notion is produced and enacted through various discursive and institutional domains (De Genova, 2002; De Genova & Peutz, 2010; Fassin, 2012; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010; Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Jansen, 2006; 2007; Malkki, 1995; 1996).

In this thesis, I have decided to follow also this approach. Building upon research conducted in Polish archives and libraries as well as on fieldwork data collected during the initial period of my research, the first part of the thesis outlines the way in which 'refugee' identity-experience has been constructed in the post-socialist Poland through asylum-immigration policies of the national-Polish and the

supranational-European states. I also consider how this construction, or notion, manifested itself in the daily life of people from the asylum centre: this knowledge will later help me to explore how the ambivalent asylum-immigration policies framed and shaped the lived experiences of the Chechen-Ingush refugees.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Violent Disruptions, Asylum, and Everyday Life

At a cul-de-sac, midway between the centre of a historical city near the eastern border of Poland and the industrial areas on the city's outskirts, there is a shabby block of flats constructed, like most such buildings in Central-Eastern Europe, out of concrete panels. Large letters inscribed on the northern wall of the block spell out the name 'HOTEL PUMIS'. No tourist or business traveller seeks accommodation in this neighbourhood, which locals have nicknamed as the 'Bronx'. This place provides shelter to travellers of another kind; those who are not allowed to move freely across territorial-national boundaries. Near the main entrance, there is a small metallic plate, which says in Polish, English, and Russian languages: 'Centre for Aliens Applying for Refugee Status.'

The four-storey building casts a shadow on the muddy front yard, protecting a man and a group of children who play with toy daggers and rifles against the sunlight. The man's eyes are fixed on a house on the opposite side of the street. From time to time, the man rebukes the children, in a guttural voice, for being too noisy. Most of the time, however, he remains obsessed with the house: it perhaps evokes memories of his own home, which he had lost. After a while, a woman carrying two full shopping bags and dressed in a flowery skirt, upper garment and a scarf passes the bench and enters the building. The woman heads to a small and barely equipped room. She puts the bags

on the floor and takes a broom into her hands. She works without rest. This daily routine helps her not to think about her brother, who was arrested in the North Caucasus and has been missing since; or about her grandmother, who had become too frail to live without any support, and whom she had to abandon because her husband was persecuted and had to flee Chechnya.

Refugee Identity

In this section, I introduce Chechen-Ingush refugees and the form of identities and relationships I encountered while living in the asylum centre. In order to do so, I draw a comparison with Frances Pine's ethnographic study of *Górale* (Pine, 1999; 2000) and with Michael Steward's ethnographic study of Hungarian Gypsies (Stewart, 1997; 1999). At the end, I outline a theoretical and methodological approach, which, I suggest, may contribute to the understanding of the way in which the refugees' identities were formed.

The Inside and the Outside

In her ethnographic studies of *Górale*, Frances Pine (1999; 2000) writes about the identities of these peasants in the Carpathian mountains, about how they were structured alongside different social and economic worlds: the world inside and the world outside their villages and rural communities. In the context of daily village life, Pine argues, *Górale* valued self-sufficiency, collective morality, and strong reciprocal bonds between families and houses. The inside of the *Górale* community is considered to be the opposite of the outside world, the

world of the market and migration, where *Górale* did not act as peasants incorporated into a very local economy but rather as skilful individual labourers and traders. In a similar manner, Michael Stewart, who conducted research in a Hungarian town inhabited by extremely poor *Romani* groups in the 1980s, shows that Gypsies divided the world into inside and outside of the ghetto. According to Steward, this was related to the way the town perceived the Gypsy settlement as dirty, uncivilised, and barbaric. In response to this view, Stewart explains, Gypsies publicly called themselves brothers. Being sensitive to the dishonesty and hypocrisy of the majority, Stewart's Gypsies also purposely dressed in particular kinds of clothes and performed other cultural practices, which clearly distinguished them from *Gadžos*, who constituted the majority of the population in the town (Stewart, 1997, pp. 27-49). It seems to me that Chechen-Ingush refugees were similar to both the *Górale* studied by Frances Pine and the Hungarian Gypsies studied by Michael Steward. The identities of Chechen-Ingush refugees were also framed alongside two different worlds: the world inside Hotel Pumis, which they saw as their own autonomous territory, and the 'dangerous and immoral' world outside of the asylum centre.

Soon after I started doing fieldwork I accidentally became a witness to a conflict between some of the refugees and the asylum accommodation centre administrator over the presence of Polish and Ukrainian speaking strangers in the area of the building. These strangers were workers who were hired to repair a damaged road in the neighbourhood. Since the company that hired the workers did not provide lavatories for them, their foreman had made a deal with the building administrator that allowed his men to use the communal lavatories in Hotel Pumis. In the hot summer weather, the hard-

working men often entered the building without T-shirts. This triggered a strong feeling of discontent among the refugees. I was surprised when I saw one male refugee rushing into the administrator's office and yelling that she must 'immediately stop half-naked strangers from using their lavatories.' The man seemed to be furious with the administrator-bureaucrat. He said that if no action were taken, he would call the media and tell the whole world that Poland was not meeting Chechen rights to have proper, clean and acceptable accommodation.

Another similar incident happened when two local women wanted to use the public phone, which was installed at the entrance of the hotel, between the private and communal sphere and the public world. When they entered Hotel Pumis, the women paid no attention to several Chechen men who were standing nearby. The men felt insulted by this lack of respect. One of them told the women that they were 'bitches' and they were not allowed to use the phone whenever they wanted to. The women began to protest loudly about the men's behaviour. This further increased the tension. The men grabbed the women and forcibly removed them from the asylum centre. It was impossible to enter the asylum centre without noticing the refugee men. I soon learned that I was expected to greet every man and shake everyone's hand whenever I visited the hotel. Some would invite me as a guest for a tea (Ru. *zakhodi v gost'i*) and if I refused the men felt, or at least pretended to be, insulted.

In Poland, many refugees worked illegally. They harvested, worked in construction and at the bazaars. The men often travelled to distant places in Poland for work, staying there for days or even weeks. Women, on the other hand, usually overwhelmed by housework and

childcare, would travel only to other parts of the city or to the surrounding countryside. It is, of course, difficult to draw a clear line between male and female work. At work, refugees were often confronted with racist comments and behaviour. They had to constantly negotiate their rights and needs. In the asylum centre, they knew other refugees would help their relatives if needed. Refugee women, for instance, helped each other, either reciprocally or for a small sum of money, with childcare.

In front of the entrance of Hotel Pumis, there was a bench, which was often occupied by some of the men. Refugee women rarely sat there. Before anyone entered the building, it was necessary to register with the security guard. But the most important thing was to wish refugees a good day (Chech. *de dik doila*), to shake everyone's hand and to ask whether everything at home was fine, how their wives and sons were doing, or whether they needed anything. It was necessary to spend a while with the men. If a stranger overlooked these men, this would probably result in a skirmish. But if one paid attention to the refugee men, it became very easy to access almost every inhabitant of the asylum centre. Refugees often talked to each other in the corridors. They frequently visited each other in their private rooms. Everyone was glad to invite a guest to drink tea.[6]

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[6] It should be noted here that, with regards to Chechens and Ingushes elsewhere in Europe, I did not encounter a distinction between inside and outside worlds. In September 2008, I went to visit a particular Chechen family in Paris. This family, a mother and her two sons, used to live in the asylum centre where I did my research. In December 2007, however, they emigrated from Poland to France. Even though the mother applied for asylum in France again, she was luckily not deported back to the EU member state where she submitted her first asylum application. Instead, the French authorities decided to take her asylum application into consideration.

Lovzar

The analogy between *Górale* and Chechen-Ingush refugees can be developed in many interesting ways. For instance, in *Kinship, gender and work in socialist and post-socialist rural Poland* Pine (2000) looks at a particular wedding that she attended in the 1990s, after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Pine conceptualises wedding as a significant ritual event that in the context of the daily village life reflects and reinforces the ideologies of kinship, gender, and generation that underpin house and community identity and social personhood. By describing the wedding she attended, Pine untangles the changing roles of *Górale* house in the context of larger political and socio-economic transformations during post-socialism: her argument is that even though it became less relevant as the centre for the 'correct' moral order of family, gender, and generation, yet *Górale* house remained at the core of *Górale* identities both in terms of political economy and ritual metaphor. It seems to me that the Chechen-Ingush temporary households in Hotel Pumis, like in the case of the peasants from the Carpathian mountains, may be perceived as the centre for the moral order for family, gender, and generation.

In Paris, this family lived in a single en-suite room of a budget hotel situated in a quiet street, within walking distance from Brochant metro station. When I arrived to this place, it was very easy for me to enter the building. First, I called the elder son. I told him that I was standing in front of the entrance doors. He came downstairs and he said to the receptionist that I was a family friend. I registered at the hotel as a visitor. Then, I went to the fourth floor with him, passing through the empty corridors, closed doors, and rooms inhabited, I was told later, by refugees from Armenia and Africa. I entered room 405. My hosts were expecting me. A couple of minutes later, a man whom I did not know entered the room. He was introduced to me: and I was told he belonged to the family.

During fieldwork, I participated in similar 'ritual events.' In what follows, I provide an ethnography of a particular ritual at which I was a guest, a celebration organised a father in his thirties on the occasion of the birth of his child. The child was the man's second son. After he returned from the hospital, he told me that he would like to celebrate this big event properly, in the way people in the North Caucasus do. I offered to help with the organisation of the event and the man agreed. The first thing he explained to me was that the event should welcome everyone who visited the communal room in the asylum centre, where the celebration was to be held. I asked him whether he would have invited people if his wife had given birth to a girl. His response was that he would have not, since, in Chechnya, the birth of a girl is usually celebrated privately.

First, we went to the third floor, where we entered a room and the father had a friendly talk with a man who lived together with his wife, her sister, and the children there. After we left the room, he explained to me that the man belonged to *Umarovy* and that for this reason, everyone in the household were his relatives. After, we visited another room. Who lived in this room was a particular man, his wife, their children, and another young man, who was a relative of the man who organised the celebration. The young man belonged to the father's *teip*. He thus personally invited all these people who lived in the household to the celebration.

There was another reason why the father visited all these people. As he was expected to provide food and drinks for guests, the celebration would cost him money. It was common for every household-family who lived in the asylum centre to contribute with a small sum of

money to events such as this.[7] However, close kin usually provided most financial support. Despite the fact that the father certainly had the power to decide how the money would be spent, the money was not given directly to him but to a woman, in this case his wife's friend, as the man's wife was still in hospital. It was the woman who collected the money, went to the supermarket, and, together with a few other refugee women, took care of the catering. The father took care of the guests.

At the celebration, the guests danced *lovzar*, a traditional dance known throughout the North Caucasus region. In this dance many people stand in a circle and clap their hands in rhythm with the accordion and drums, while a couple of dancers, a man and a woman, sway and twirl in the middle. The people from the North Caucasus believe that *lovzar* is a form of communication in which every gesture, move, and look has its own meaning and a dance that helps dancers to reveal what they feel and who they are in public. Lovzar is wonderfully described by Milana Terloeva, a Chechen writer, in her book *Dancing on Ruins. A Chechen Youth*.

In the communal room, the circle was formed spontaneously soon after the first guests came. First, children played their games in the middle of the circle. Soon, an adult man jumped in and the 'serious'

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[7] If the money were not spent as it was expected, the community acted. One of the mothers who lived in the asylum centre lost one of her children. After the death, her relatives, who lived in Belgium, sent her money so she could mourn properly the loss of her child. Many refugees, who lived in the asylum centre, also financially contributed. However, the woman's husband was an alcoholic. He stole the money and later abandoned her. After the man stole the money, the refugee community looked after the mother. When her husband was found, he was judged by the other men and later, brutally beaten.

dance began. Initially, the man danced alone. Only after a little while, an authoritative hand gesture invited one of the women to join the dance. The couple spent a couple of minutes dancing together. Afterwards, the woman returned to the circle. The man followed her soon after. Another man jumped into the middle of the crowd and selected another female partner. The guests continued dancing in this way over the following hour and a half.

The way in which women danced the *lovzar* was very different from the way in which men performed it. While dancing in the middle, each female dancer was rather reserved. They did look in a straight direction, moving like ballerinas. At times I had the impression that the female dancers hovered one inch above the ground. Unlike the women, each man danced in fast steps. The men often fell to their knees and quickly stood up again. Whenever the female accompanied them, men's performance became even more exuberant: they skittered quickly, shaking their bodies and waving their hands wildly. One of the men even turned a somersault.

The men and women who were in the circle also presented themselves distinctively. According to the rules women must stand separately from men. This rule was strictly respected. There was also a particular man who held a stick and, gently but firmly, hit everyone who could possibly transgress the boundary of the circle. Also, from time to time, a male dancer invited a woman, who was much older than him, to the dance. Nonetheless, the dance was never initiated by a woman inviting a man. Perhaps the most important rule was that the male dancer should never touch the woman. Whenever this was about to happen, the crowd, disturbed and at the same time excited, started to shout loudly: '*Assa! Assa!*'

Shared Things and Identity

But Chechen-Ingush refugees may be further compared also to the marginalised Gypsies who lived for the moment described by Michael Steward (1997; 1999). These groups understood the household to be rather a source of oppression, due to its permanent nature and the hierarchies associated with long-term responsibilities and commitments. They thus refused the idea that the household was the place where the true moral substance of their identities resided. To illustrate my point, in the following lines, I show the meanings attributed to the variety of things owned, used, and shared by the refugees.

Refugees had access to a variety of things. For instance, they had electric ovens, fridges, washing machines, or furniture, which had been provided by the state. Everyone, who was officially registered as a resident of the asylum centre, had the right to use these things. Other things such as clothes, food, cigarettes, computers, televisions, cars, and also money were either bought or distributed to refugees. These were seen as personal or family possessions. Even if the owners of these things were able to claim property rights against the others and the others generally accepted this, there was a certain expectation among refugees that personal and family possessions may be accessed and used also by the wider community.

Some of the things, which were often claimed by others in the community, were for instance clothes, food, or cigarettes. Similarly, I was often given food, conserves, milk, cheese, or tea. When giving me food, refugees often stressed that, as we were friends (Chech. *dottagh*),

they felt obliged to give these items to me. But other valuable possessions such as TVs, mobile phones, or Hi-Fi equipment also circulated among the refugees. For instance, I once noticed that a Hi-Fi system, which had belonged to a particular man, appeared once in another room. The previous owner of the stereo, as everyone knew, was about to leave for Paris. Knowing that he was going to leave, another person often visited and talked to the man. In the end the Hi-Fi system became his, though he would give it away to a friend after a couple of months.

Ideas about sharing were also applied, to some extent, to money. For instance, one particular man, father of three children, lent 300 Euros to another man who lived in the asylum centre. Before he immigrated to Poland, the lender had not known the person who borrowed the money. The lender, like most refugees, economically struggled. He did not have any stable source of income. He had to soon leave the asylum centre. It was very likely that the borrower would not be able to return the money soon. But when the father borrowed the money to the other man, the gesture was recognized and appreciated by other Chechens who then referred to him as 'a proper man' (Chech. *dik stag*). He improved his social status by giving things away.

Chechen families, households, and individuals generally acknowledged and respected others' right to own and use personal and family possessions. Despite the fact that many had their own sources of income, and this income was usually distributed inside the household, and that the household was usually the first place where refugees searched for financial help in times of acute need, personal and family possessions were still expected to be shared with the whole refugee community. Many refugees often expressed publicly their willingness to

share their personal possessions with other refugees. Sentences such as 'you look depressed, do you want me to give you something?' were often used in daily conversations.

That some refugees hid their possessions further emphasised that sharing was something widely expected by members of the community. For instance, I was once asked by one of my Chechen friends, whether he could use my passport to get money from his relatives who lived in France. His relatives wanted to send him money via Western Union and he did not have a valid ID. Without my passport he would have not been able to collect the money. We went to the bank, took the money out, and bought cigarettes. When we returned to the asylum centre we saw another group of refugee men. When my friend noticed the men, he asked me not to tell them that he had the money and that he had bought cigarettes. He explained that if the men found out, they would want them and, since he was younger than them, he would not be to refuse.

Those who had had accumulated more than others were supposed to share with others in need. Everyone was well aware of the others' actual economic situation. I observed that people knew who did and did not work every week, or how much others might have earned during that day. I mentioned once that I didn't have enough money. I was told that I didn't need to worry about this and that others would help me if I were in financial difficulties. One of the things which astonished me soon after I had arrived to Hotel Pumis was an overwhelming lack of privacy. Coming from middle-class settings, I had assumed that households will be separated from the public sphere. However, seeing the others as their own people, some refugees were able to enter many private rooms without knocking. Simultaneously,

however, refugees privately complained about other people who lived in the asylum centre. According to them, communal life was too demanding in social and economic terms. I was often told that other members in the asylum centre were, in fact, horrible. Many refugees dreamt of living elsewhere in the city.

It is known that anthropologists are interested in the study of property but, unlike neo-liberal economists, they are not primarily concerned with the twofold relation between person and material object. Instead, they understand things as tools which help them to better understand the way social relationships are structured (Hann C. , 1998; Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann, The Properties of Property, 2006; Myers, 1997). If things can reveal the way in which social relationships are organised, with regard to Chechen-Ingush refugees and their relation to things we may think of certain form of shared communal identity beyond the realm of a household.

The Male-Centred Rhetoric

In the following, I provide another analogy between Gypsies and the Chechen-Ingush refugees. Michael Steward writes that what underpinned a shared identity, which went beyond the sphere of the household in the Gypsy communities he studied, was a specific male-centred rhetoric: Gypsies, as Steward explains, called themselves 'brothers' (Stewart, 1997, pp. 50-60). With regard to Chechen-Ingush refugees in the asylum centre and elsewhere in the city, such male-centred rhetoric was also apparent: refugees referred to themselves either as brothers (Chech. *vezharij*) or simply as 'our people' (Chech. *Nakh*).

Refugees explained to me that the Chechen-Ingush nation is undergoing a great crisis nowadays. On one hand, this crisis has existed for centuries. *Vainakhs* have been fighting with Russian who occupied their homeland for more than three hundred years. Every fifty years, I was told, Russians attempted to annihilate *Vainakhs*. On the other hand, however, even in the past, during Yermolov's era, Russians had never managed to split the *Vainakh* community. In 1996, Chechens won. But in the 1999 Putin took his revenge. Every Chechen and Ingush man under the age of twelve is considered to be a bandit or terrorist nowadays. In the distant past, *Vainakhs* had been able to hide in the mountains. Today, however, Russians have jet planes, helicopters, bombs, and rackets. Nowadays, *Vainakh* homeland is a desert. There is no safe place, no home. Some Chechens and Ingushes collaborate with Russians, whereas others flee to Europe. In the past, this never happened.

Thus, refugees felt that they need to unite in their fight against this existential and moral crisis. The *Vainakh*, I was told, have always been a cultural nation. The *Vainakh* are free-minded and never subordinate to any formal authority. Every *nakh* ruled only over oneself. Meanwhile, *Vainakh* perceived each other as comrades (Chech. *kunak*). The *Vainakh* used to be like fingers: one finger alone could not do anything but five fingers were strong. I was told that, today, many Chechens and Ingushes are forgetting these old values and moralities and, as a result, they need to be protected. Chechens-Ingushes in Hotel Pumis don't drink any alcohol. They never steal from each other. They behave respectfully. They help each other. The younger member of a family and community always respects elders. No man is allowed to touch a woman if they are not married. Every Chechen and Ingush woman is

obliged to give birth to as many children as possible. Only in this way, they explained, their dying nation may have a future.

Refugees who particularly identified themselves with this narrative were men. For instance, there was a group of Chechen men that were relatively young and always dressed appropriately. They prayed five times per day. They celebrated all the important secular and religious feasts. These men also considered themselves as the protectors of the community's moral universe. I once told one of these men that I liked how welcoming and hospitable Chechens and Ingushes are. Obviously pleased with my words, he responded that hospitality is the substance of Chechen culture. He also noted that not everyone in Hotel Pumis was good. Like everywhere else, he said, there were also a few bad people among the refugees. He explained how 'the people' (Chech. *nakh*) had previously expelled others, who do not behave appropriately, from the community.

Chechen-Ingush Refugees as the 'Lilies of the Field'?

What unites Michael Steward's and Frances Pine's ethnography as well as most ethnographies in the book *Lilies of the Field: Marginal People Who Live For the Moment* (Day, Papataxiarchis, & Steward, 1999) is the fact that they theorise about the way individuals and communities maintain a meaningful life and articulate their identities against the backdrop of long-term socio-economic and political marginalisation. Stewart, for instance, emphasises that Gypsies had moved across the abstract boundary between the inside and outside for centuries—before socialism they provided cheap labour for Hungarian peasants and after the World War II they had to do the worst low-skilled jobs

in a centrally planned economy (Stewart, 1997, p. 26). His argument is that Gypsies saw themselves as equals and brothers since this gave them a sense of meaningful and satisfactory belonging in a context of continuous and humiliating exclusion.

Chechen-Ingush refugees were different from the cases discussed in 'Lilies of the Field' because they had been uprooted from their political and socio-economic settings. Though their lives in exile share similarities with Carpathian Peasants or Gypsies, Chechens and Ingushes started to migrate en masse to Poland after the eruption of the Second War in the 1999. By the time I did fieldwork, their collective experience of the outside world in Poland was still very recent and not older more than eight years. Hence, while I remain sympathetic to these works, in this doctoral thesis I intend to take an approach to the study of the processes that underpin Chechen-Ingush refugee identity, which differs from that of the above-mentioned scholarship. Firstly, I focus on the events that had uprooted the refugees, the Russo-Chechen Wars. What I also consider is the specific socio-economic and political context of the refugees' lives.

In social anthropology, there is a growing number of ethnographic studies based on long-term fieldwork which explore in different ways the world of the individuals and communities who had been exposed to different losses and traumas of military, political, or communal violence (Das, 2007; 1990; Jackson, 2002; Kanapathipillai, 1990; Kovats-Bernat, 2014; Kwon, 2008; Mehta & Chatterji, 2001; Perera, 2001; Reynolds, 2000; Ross, 2001; Scheper-Hughes, 1992; Skultans, 1998; Srinivasan, 1990; Todeschini, 2001) In *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, Veena Das (2007) examines the violence originating in the context of 20th century India, the Partition of India

and the 1984 communal riots triggered by the assassination of Indira Ghandi. She develops her account of the events in connection to the experiences of people affected by and involved in these conflicts. Following Das, I propose that we may learn about how refugee identities were formed by exploring the way in which past war and communal violence become, in specific socio-economic settings, part of the everyday life of refugees, or 'folded itself into the recesses of the ordinary' (Das, 2007, p. 1).

In social anthropology, there is also a growing number of studies who consider, again in various ways, refugee, migrant, or sufferer identity to be a construction constituted through different institutional-political practices and discourses (Andrijasevic, 2010; De Genova, 2002; Fassin, 2012; Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Jansen, 2006; Rajaram Kumar, 2002; Szczepanikova, 2010; 2010b). In this thesis, I look at the problem of refugee experience, or identity, also from this perspective. In my study, I engage with the way in which the idea of the 'refugee' has historically been constructed in Poland and explore how this construction existed in the context of the daily life in Hotel Pumis. In the second part of the thesis, I will consider how select processes implicated in the construction of a 'refugee' in Poland framed the Chechen-Ingush refugees lived experiences.

Literature Review

The themes of violence, disruption, suffering, and recovery as well as the problem of different institutional, legal, and discursive frameworks, which create the 'subject' and may frame also his or her experience and voice are recurring themes in social anthropology and related

academic disciplines. The following section is an overview of and commentary on some of the studies I find particularly relevant. The main aim of this section is to discuss my research in a way that primarily considers established theories and methods that deal with the issue at hand.

Individual Time, Family Time, and Historical Time

The problem of how large historical events affect and change individual and family identities has been addressed by historians (Braudel, 1980; Hareven, 1982) Tamara Hareven, a social historian, offers us a fascinating insight into the process of industrialisation in the USA. In her book *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, she refuses to accept the conventional explanation that industrialisation, a massive change in the public world, completely destroyed the traditional three-generational family model. Hareven, analysed the life stories narrated by workers of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company in the Manchester of America and studied the career files held by the company, in order to explore under what historical circumstances families were able to influence their work relationships and if such influence was weak, or non-existent. To examine the problem, the social historian introduces concepts of individual time, family time, and historical time. She explores the process of synchronisation of these different temporalities.

I mention Hareven here because she puts forward a compelling theory and method related to the problem of individuals, families, and communities being affected by radical change in the public world. Her

ideas certainly are relevant to this dissertation. They may be used for thinking abstractly about the interrelation between the turbulences in the public world in the post-socialist North Caucasus and refugees' individual and family life trajectories. However, whereas Hareven takes a holistic approach to her study, I am inclined to think about the problem of dramatic sudden violent change from the perspective of the subject. In other words, this PhD thesis is primarily about the First and the Second Chechen-Russian Wars and about the injustice and human dramas, which nowadays occur in the European asylum centres. I do not, however, provide an extensive explanatory account of how the violence happened.

Subjectivity, Traumatic Loss and Change

In this thesis, I frequently use the terms 'subjectivity,' 'experience,' 'disrupted subjectivity,' and 'disrupted temporality.' Hence, in the following I discuss the literature that is primarily concerned with this issue. In social anthropology, an increasing number of studies pay attention to the various appearances of human subjectivity, to the way in which subjectivity is formed in different societies, or to the way in which it is re-shaped in the context of contemporary global turbulences in political economy and social life. It is common that human subjectivity is researched in relation to the problem of violence and social suffering (Biehl, Good, & Kleinman, 2007; Jackson, 2002; Das, Kleinman, Ramphele, & Reynolds, 2000). What I take from these studies is a definition of subjectivity. In particular, I understand human experience in terms of different emotional and temporal spaces, consciousness, or beliefs. By using the term human experience, I

broadly refer to affective states and processes of inner life (Biehl, Good, & Kleinman, 2007, p. 6). As some of these authors such as Michael Jackson (1998; 2002) who prefers to use the term 'intersubjectivity', I also strongly agree with the idea that human experience should not be considered as isolated from the outside but rather as a bridge between the inner-subjective and the outer worlds. While I accept these understandings, I think, it is necessary to clarify in more detail how human experience is made and how subjectivity becomes disrupted in relation to the exploration of the experiences of Chechen-Ingush refugees.

Addressing the problem of how subjectivity is made, in the introductory chapter to *Life and Words* (2007, p. 4), Veena Das writes:

> Let us take Wittgenstein's statement that "the subject does not belong to the world; rather it is the limit of the world." In interpreting this statement several scholars have suggested that the relation of the subject to the world is like that of the eye to the visual field—the eye is not itself in the visual field that it defines. Without going into a sustained defence of my interpretation at this point, I suggest that in thinking of the subject as constituting the limit of the world, Wittgenstein is proposing that the experience of being a subject is the experience of a limit. The world is not invented by me (as the cliché goes), but then how do I make the world mine? How am I, as a subject, implicated in experience, for I take it that there is no pregiven subject to whom experience happens or on whom experience can be predicated? It is Wittgenstein's thought that the subject is the *condition* of experience. Given that he considers the human form of life as one complicated enough to

have language, the question might also be put as one of taking responsibility for language. If the subject is also the boundary of the world, there is clearly no particular point in the course of my life that I can locate as the point at which my subjectivity emerges.

I have presented Das' quote here because to me her words are a point of departure for thinking about human subjectivity in general and the experiences of Chechen-Ingush refugees in particular. I take from Das' critical examination of Wittgenstein that human experience emerges out of the constant interaction between the subject and the world; that human subjectivity may be seen as the limit, or boundary, of that world; and that human subjectivity is a process of living and making sense of a world which is never closed or accomplished.

The problem of subjectivity and disruption has been compellingly discussed by John Berger, the brilliant English critical theorist, novelist and poet. In *A Seventh Man. The Story of a Migrant Worker in Europe*, Berger thinks about subjectivity in relation to the individual awareness of a lifetime. He says that under normal circumstances time is felt as a circle, rotating around-within the person. According to Berger, the circle is at any moment filled with past, present, and future. Under normal circumstances, within the circle, the past consists of freestanding memories and the future of hopes for and fears of what is to come. The present, then, enters self-consciousness as it happens, while the past and the future then start relating to it. Under standard circumstances, as Berger says, the three elements merge within the subject and form the intentionality of the person's action at a given moment. But intentionality-continuity can only be formed if the elements constituting the subjective past and future are free, unfixed.

Berger contends that what is capable of changing the continuous awareness of one's lifetime, to fix the subject with the past, are various external circumstances, disruptions. To illustrate this point, in his book, he uses an example of bereavement. If one loses someone close to them, one feels as if life has ended. Grief is the stillness of death. The bereaved thinks back on a life before loss, hoping to be the same as before the loss. But, as Berger clarifies, what the bereaved foretells is only death. The past is disconnected from the future, which has become the present. The bereaved has nothing to live for now.[8]

In *A Seventh Man*, Berger uses this conception for delineating the inner experiences of labour migrants from marginal areas in Europe who, in the 1970s, moved for work to centres of industrial capitalist production. But the ideas about disrupted temporality that Berger eloquently described, closely resonate also with other studies in the social sciences (Bury, 1982; Kleinman, 1988; Marris, 1974).

Bury and Kleinman are medical sociologists-anthropologists interested in the experiences of individuals affected by chronic illness. They both recognise that chronic illness is a phenomenon, which has the power to separate individual expectations from the real outcome and the self from society. To label the experiences of chronically ill people, Michael Burry has introduced the term 'biographical disruption.' Peter Marris, in his ground-breaking study *Loss and Change* (1974) pays attention to disruptive exterior circumstances like slum clearance or bereavement. Marris acknowledges that what subjects of these dramatic events have

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[8] In the last two paragraphs, I have worked with the part of John Berger's text published in John Berger and Jean Mohr: *A Seventh Man. The Story of a Migrant Worker in Europe* by Granta Books on the pages 171-179.

in common is the acute feelings of anxiety, confusion, restlessness, and despair they experience. The sociologist argues that such feelings emerge because the subject is confronted with the need to preserve that part of his identity, which has been lost - he uses the term 'conservative impulse' to label the process (Marris, 1974, p. 5). I propose that this conception of disrupted subjectivity can also be used for understanding the inner worlds of Chechen-Ingush refugees who, because of war, had lost close persons or relatives and fled their homes.

Valentine E. Daniel (1996) has elaborated another theoretical view on the problem of disrupted subjectivity. In order to theorise human experience, Daniel turns to Pierce's discourse on semiotics, highlighting the notion that the field of human experience can be divided at least into three categories: vague and diffuse subjective disposition towards the external world; a unique event or fact sensed by the subject; and a tendency to reason, to generalise and follow a habit. Having divided human experiences into these three domains, the possible, the actual and the general, he discusses how human experience is formed. In particular, the anthropologist writes that every event or object that confronts human senses is also consumed by the subject. This consumption, as he says, is domain of both the possible and the general (Daniel, 1996, pp. 104-105). I find this perspective interesting because it acknowledges the above-mentioned theoretical model and adds certain phenomenological aspects to the discussion.

Daniel goes on to say that even though there is no experience that can be defined in terms of some of the three categories, there are certain kinds of experiences where one category or another strongly dominates. The anthropologist emphasises that one of those

experiences is the experience of violence. According to Daniel, violence, if it happens dramatically, causes the subject to become completely overwhelmed by the event. According to the anthropologist, it is this organic fusion with the event witnessed, which later contributes to the vague disposition towards the external world—which 'hangs over like a fog of which neither the beginning nor the end can be fathomed' (Daniel, 1996, p. 105). In other words, Daniel maintains that the subject of violence may later be confronted with the painful repetition of trauma in which he or she is fixed to the past and disconnected from the present because of what the disruption has taken away from him or her or what the subject had seen.

The same idea appears also in Veda Skultans' study (1998). Focusing on the memories and the fragmentary lives of victims of Stalinist terror in post-Soviet Latvia, the medical anthropologist writes about the phenomenon of the fusion between experience and representation. Skultans emphasises that the victims of terror often claimed they were unable to describe their past to someone who had not experienced something similar. She also says that while narrating their lives victims frequently changed to the present tense. According to Skultans, these statements signified the synthesis of the witness and the act witnessed which remains central to the lived world of the victim (Skultans, 1998, p. 19). I find these studies illuminating since they lead me to consider Chechen-Ingush experiences not only in relation to loss and change and the interruption of structures of meaning but also in relation to how subjects were pushed, because of the extremely violent and turbulent nature of the Russo-Chechen wars, towards the edge of human experience. Skultan's study inspires me to think about various past moments related to the wars which remained deeply inscribed in

the form of traumatic memory to the refugees' ongoing experiences and lives.

Disrupted Life and Words

In their studies, both Marris and Kleinman also highlight another side of a disrupted subjectivity-temporality that is not elaborated in such detail by John Berger. In particular, Kleinman emphasises that severe illness not only disrupts human life but also has the power to concentrate human experience and clarify the central conditions of living as well (Kleinman, 1988, p. xiii). In a similar manner, Marris writes about the process of subjective reconciliation after the person had been suddenly separated from the structures of meaning (Marris, 1974, p. 29). In other words, scholars show that besides memories restricting the individual's capacity to re-join the present, the domain of disrupted subjectivity also contains the urgent need to adjust to a new situation in which the future and the present become available again. In the above-mentioned studies, it appears that subjective re-integration did not happen because of changes in the external circumstances that disrupted the life of the subject. These are part of the past and they are irrevocable. Instead, re-integration occurs when the subject gradually accepts loss as part of his or her ongoing life. How can we locate and study this process?

In social anthropology and related fields, scholars generally agree that the process of (inter-)subjective psychological reintegration triggered by traumatic loss is imprinted in the sufferers' narratives and testimonies as well as in the process of (story-)telling itself (Arendt,

1958; Das, 2007; Jackson, 2002; Kleinman, 1988; Marris, 1974; Portelli, 1991; Skultans, 1998).

Writing about the victims of Stalinist terror, Vieda Skultans (1998) focuses on Latvian victims' narratives and their testimonies of disruption. She highlights the fact that these biographies were usually extensive and full of metaphors, full of dense cultural encoding. She examines how victims drew upon the available socio-cultural resources creatively, as they attempted to restore the meaning of their discontinuous lives. In a similar way to her, Arthur Kleinman's study of the experiences of the chronically ill (Kleinman, 1988) is based on the analysis of illness narratives. In his analysis of bereavement, Peter Marris mentions the fact that mourning customs and rituals play a crucial role in the process of reconciliation between the bereaved, his or her ongoing life and their painful loss (Marris, 1974, pp. 29-32).

Describing the experiences of Chechen-Ingush refugees, I have found particularly useful the works of Das (2007; 1987) and Skultans (1998). In what follows I examine them in more detail.

Discussing the interrelation between disrupted subjectivity and narrative, Skultans explains that sudden violent disruption may be perceived as being essentially characterised by the rupture of language. She goes on and explains that the same phenomenon is likely to be followed by an emergence of a new kind of language, which allows the sufferers to re-establish a sense of meaning and continuity in their lives.

Referring to the Latvian victims of Stalin's terror, she writes:

> Latvian narratives belie Adorno's claim, 'after Auschwitz, no poetry.' Although narratives constantly revert to the act of

witnessing, their form and construction undermine claims to immediacy. Narrative form reveals the cultural resources upon which people draw in order to restore meaning to lives. The process of restoring meaning has a metaphorical and poetic dimension. In this context the traditional sociological relationship of cultural resources to individuals is reversed. Instead of individuals being enlisted by ideology or of society reproducing itself by disseminating its core concepts and values amongst its members, narrative grants a more radical role to individuals in shaping their ideas. Like the autobiographer, the narrator imposes a design on her life and this offers scope for creativity. The victims of history may reverse their status and devise strategies for wresting personal victories, however small, from history (Skultans, 1998, p. 19).

Das (2007; 1987), similarly, considers the interrelation between words and disrupted subjectivity. In *Life and Words*, she analyses the experiences of the people affected by the Partition of India and the 1984 communal riots, focusing on the sufferers' utterances. Das acknowledges that violent disruption, if it happens dramatically, continually impinges on the experience of the victim and in their everyday life. By describing the sufferers' words, she grasps the way in which traumatic loss is accepted by the sufferer and 'descends onto the ordinary.' On one hand, her ethnography reveals the important role of available cultural resources, especially the particular socio-cultural norms that dominate Indian patriarchal society, in the process. On the other hand, it also recognises that sufferers' testimonies gain their meaning or function in the process of the recovery in the context of the everyday life.

Veena Das shares Skultans' conception of narrative or life story to a certain extent. The thing that distinguishes Das' approach from Skultans', as far as I understand her text, is that she proposes to analyse sufferers' testimonies while they remain rooted in the everyday life. She explains that it is from these fragile and uncertain everyday moments that a new language and a new meaning is constructed, and trauma and loss are integrated into ongoing relationships (Das, 2007, pp. 6-9). For such testimonies, which derive their meaning from the socio-cultural context and are animated by the life-world, Das uses the term 'voice.'

Refugee 'Experience': Institutional Practices and Discourses

This thesis, as I have indicated in my discussion of the literature, conceptualises the experiences of Chechen-Ingush refugees in relation to the disruption of wider structures of meaning and to the organic fusion with some of the turbulent disruptions witnessed which both remain in the form of traumatic loss attached to refugees' ongoing experiences and lives. In this dissertation, I do not describe refugees' mourning rituals and mourning laments. Despite the fact that the disruptions I will consider in the next chapters sometimes involved the death of a person close to the sufferer, they happened usually longer time ago and often in a way that usually contradicted ideas of what constitutes a normal death. Hence, standard mourning customs were not applied in Hotel Pumis. My research confirmed that refugees in Poland did not mourn in a traditional way. Yet, most felt an urgent need to tell what had happened to them. I shall describe the refugees' voices as I recorded them over the course of my fieldwork. I shall

consider the interrelation between what was said and the larger socio-cultural settings. I also take into account the way in which the meaning of their utterances was nurtured by their life-world. By describing refugees' voices, I shall capture the way in which traumatic loss was integrated into ongoing everyday life.[9] However, in social anthropology there exists also another possible approach to refugee experience that does not theorise the phenomenon primarily in terms of loss and trauma.

The scholar who has developed this approach, a critique of the writings on the experiences of refugees undergoing trauma, is an anthropologist Liisa Malkki (1992; 1995; 1995b; 1996; 2002). Based on Malkki's fieldwork among victims of the Rwandan genocide, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Malkki, 1995b) is a book that compares the experiences of Hutu refugees who had fled to a Tanzanian metropolis with the refugees who had immigrated to the countryside. In this seminal study, Malkki demonstrates that the identities of the refugees who lived in the rural camp were underpinned by a mythical narrative through which they collectively identified themselves as Hutu, whereas the identities of urban refugees were formed in reaction to the necessities, practicalities, and regularities of city life. The purpose of this study is to argue that refugee subjectivity is not explicable in terms of disruption

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[9] In my understanding of everyday life, I build upon Henri Lefebvre (2005). In this thesis I tend to perceive everyday life as the domain where all life occurs and all socio-economic and political processes take place in fragmented form. In the third volume of the *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre extensively discusses the transformations in everyday life in relation to capitalism (Lefebvre, 2005, pp. 653-842). Here, I think, I take a different path: I describe what happens with the subject and also with the world around him or her after everyday life becomes dominated, or colonised, by violence.

to subjective temporality because what refugees experience in different places and times is very specific and primarily determined by the actual, or lived, political, socio-economic and historical context (Malkki, 1995b, pp. 15-16).

In her early study *National Geographic: The Rooting of People and the 'Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees* (1992), Malkki provides a plausible explanation of why refugee subjectivity is nowadays commonly defined in relation to the concept of loss of and change. Here she considers common literary, artistic and scholarly representations of refugeesness. She identifies a connection between these representations and a powerful, influential, and dominant nationalist way of thinking that equates peoples and cultures with national soils (Malkki, 1992, p. 31). In *National Geographic*, Malkki challenges established concepts and definitions (Loizos, 1981; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Colson, 2004), arguing that refugee subjectivity is nowadays typically seen by scholars, intellectuals, and ordinary people as something pathological, abnormal, or even immoral because it is in direct contradiction to western 'sedentarist metaphysics' (Malkki, 1992, p. 31). In her later studies (1995; 1996), Malkki attempts to explain how the conception that links refugee experience with trauma and loss becomes globally known. In the study called *Refugees and Exile: From Refugee Studies to the National Order of Things* (1995), she connects the birth of a refugee as an epistemic object with the social and political conditions in western Europe shortly after World War II as well as with the political response to these conditions. Exploring further how an universal 'refugee' was constituted, she examines different institutional and discursive domains such as international refugee law, documentation of refugeesness produced by UN, or literary studies. In

Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization (1996) then, Malkki pays attention to the characteristic forms taken by humanitarian interventions that deal with refugees, persuading us that the notion of universal refugee identity is necessary for the international humanitarian community which uses in order to reproduce itself.

Some scholars have criticised Malkki's approach to refugee experience for being too relativistic (Colson, 2003, pp. 2-3). My own research among Chechen-Ingush refugees may be seen as a case study, which confirms that refugee experience may be theorised in terms of loss and change. Malkki's ideas about refugee experience, loss and trauma may appear to be too radical. Yet, over the past fifteen years, her work inspired some anthropologists to think more about the way in which various institutional-political practices construct the figure of a sufferer, illegal immigrant, or refugee as well as to consider how these frameworks enter the spheres of human experience and everyday life (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Fassin, 2012; Jansen, 2006; 2007; De Genova, 2002).

In *Empire of Trauma: An Equiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (2009) Rechtman and Fassin eloquently describe how the understanding of suffering and trauma has been formed by the political and professional discourse on the subject over the past century. In *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*, Fassin explores the way in which 'experiences' of Palestinian refugees were constructed by humanitarian intervention (Fassin, 2012, pp. 200-222). Stef Jansen, then, uses Malkki's ideas for his critical examination and explanation of both the refugee experiences and the foreign-imposed refugee policies in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. Jansen argues that refugees lived their fragmentary

lives against the backdrop of a double rupture caused by the war and displacement, and by the fact that they were forced by international humanitarian intervention to re-establish their lives in the insecure locations affected by turbulent post-socialist transformations (Jansen, 2006; 2007). In *Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability in Everyday Life*, Nicholas de Genova (2002) thinks about the socio-political process of illegalisation of immigrants from the Latin America in the USA.

I have found this approach inspiring since it led me to pay particular attention to the wider political settings for Chechen-Ingush 'bereavement.' In particular, in this thesis I shall provide also an overview of the way in which the notion of 'refugee' was constituted in the context of the larger socio-political and economic transformations in Poland and Central-Eastern Europe. I will consider the collapse of the socialist-communist state, the post-socialist transformations, and the enclosure of the eastern Polish border connected to the 2004 accession of Poland to the European Union and the 2007 implementation of the Schengen Agreement. Furthermore, my ambition in this thesis is not only to historicise the construction of the 'refugee' in Poland but also to grasp, through my ethnography, the way in which institutional and legal frameworks existed in the context of the everyday life of the asylum facility where I conducted the fieldwork.

Research Methodology

This thesis is the outcome of my almost decade-long interest in the issues of uprootedness, violence, refugee subjectivity, and the experiences of refugees who try to re-establish their lives in post-socialist countries in Central-Eastern Europe. Below, I provide an

account of the different stages of the project. My aim is to discuss how my interest in these problems was formed, how the first research project was designed, how ethnographic data was gathered and ethnographic-anthropological knowledge accumulated, and how this thesis was assembled. Let me start by introducing the original research project.

The First Research Proposal

This dissertation began between September 2006 and March 2007, or perhaps even the year before, as a doctoral project aimed at studying refugee experiences in the post-socialist Central-Eastern Europe from an anthropological perspective. My nationality is Slovak. In 2005, as a fresh graduate I took part in a project coordinated by UNHCR, the aim of which was to research, in relation to the accession of Slovakia to the European Union and the changes in national immigration policies, the level of integration of refugees in the Slovak Republic. As an independent researcher affiliated to the official research team, I was able to visit facilities in Zvolen, Rimavská Sobota, and Košice, cities in the central and eastern parts of the country. Refugees-asylum holders from Afghanistan, Iraq, DR Congo, Iran, and from the North Caucasus usually resided in these facilities. I interviewed a couple of dozens of refugees and I was staggered by the precarious living conditions in the asylum facilities. In 2005, I already tried to define the problem in terms of ethnographic-anthropological research the conditions I saw in the Slovak facilities led my steps to Liisa Malkki's ideas about the role of the socio-economic, political and historical context in constituting refugee experience. Between 2005 and 2006, I worked on a research

proposal - the research proposal was aimed at the exploration of the experiences of Chechen refugees in Poland, which was accepted by Goldsmiths, University of London.

I became interested in refugees in Poland mainly for one particular reason. According to the official statistics produced by the Polish Office for Foreigners (Pl. *Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców*),[10] the inflow of refugees to Poland started increasing massively in 2000 and, between 2000 and 2006, more than forty three thousand people applied for asylum in the country. The documents and statistics also showed that approximately ninety percent of all asylum seekers registered by the Polish authorities were holders of a Russian passport. It was almost certain that these refugees had fled from the North Caucasus. In the summer of 2006, I travelled to Poland. I did some research in the library of the Polish Office for Foreigner in Warszawa. I also briefly visited several asylum accommodation facilities in Eastern Poland and, indeed, I could see that asylum seekers who spoke both Russian and *Vainakh* languages exclusively inhabited these facilities. In other Central-Eastern European countries, asylum facilities were very diverse places in cultural and linguistic terms. In Poland, I became attracted by the possibility of studying a group who speak the same language and of doing single-sited research at the same time.

In the autumn of 2006 I enrolled on the MRes/PhD programme in the Department of Anthropology of Goldsmiths College. There, I participated in an excellent course in anthropological research methods. Under the guidance of my main supervisor, I started

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[10] I work with my copies of the office's internal documents. But nowadays the data can be found on the website http://www.udsc.gov.pl/

exploring the anthropological literature on the subject. It was at Goldsmiths that I discovered writers who made a lasting impact on me: John Berger's *Seventh Man*, Peter Loizos' *The Heart Grown Bitter*, a seminal study about the experiences of the villagers who in 1974 escaped from western Cyprus in the face of the advancing Turkish army, or Peter Marris' *Loss and Change*. But I had not completely abandoned the approach represented by Liisa Malkki's work. I could not forget the conditions of Slovak asylum centres. At that time, the socio-economic precariousness in the asylum facilities in Central-Eastern Europe appeared to be to me the main problem shaping refugees' experiences. The transformations of the national asylum policies in relation to the accession of Poland to the European Union also interested me greatly. I also paid attention to the fact that the region which makes the territories of today's eastern Poland, western Belarus, western Ukraine, and south-western Lithuania known in Poland by the name of *Kresy*, the Polish word for borderlands, witnessed numerous border re-drawings, violent conflicts and mass displacements in the past. In the region where most Polish asylum centres were located, anthropologists write about the way in which the turbulent violent past remains imprinted in the collective memory (Hann C. M., 1985; Buzalka, 2008). I became curious about the way the turbulent past is reflected on the contemporary Polish management of forced migration flows and whether it affected refugees' lived experiences somehow.

In the spring of 2007, I studied numerous documents, reports, and books about the North Caucasus, mostly about the Russo-Chechen conflict. I visited Poland again. I did a brief period of research in the library again and went to the asylum centre where I planned to do

fieldwork. I presented the research proposal publicly several times. In the end, I decided to carry out a single-sited and in-depth ethnographic study of the experiences of refugees, who started arriving in Poland after the 2000, as a consequence of the wars and terror in the North Caucasus. I worked both with the concept of loss and change and with Malkki's relativist-constructivist concept of refugee experience. In particular, in my research proposal, I asked the following research questions: when the predictable and meaningful world is lost because of war and forced displacement, how do those affected by this loss rebuild their lives and re-establish their sense of continuity and meaningful life on a new place? And how does the specific local historical, political, and socio-economic context relate to the refugee experience? Does it influence in some way?

Their Work to Cry. My Work to Listen

At the beginning of fieldwork, I had a clear idea of how I wanted to search for the answers to my research questions. From previous experience, I knew that the systems for providing social assistance to asylum seekers in Central-Eastern Europe do not fulfil most of the real daily needs of refugees. I wanted to work with refugees as a researcher who could assist them with various translations and negotiations with officials, doctors etc. I hoped that my availability in the field would enable me to build relationships of trust and that this would facilitate my participant observation and the semi-formal and informal interviews I planned to carry out. I did not take into account, however, that the conditions in the field would be far from 'normal.' I did not anticipate, since I was not able to imagine what it meant, the extent of the way in

which the war and communal violence defined the experiences of the refugees. I started doing the fieldwork in extreme conditions and my research methods in the field gradually changed. I found myself engaging with a methodology, in which, as Veena Das discusses, 'the researcher's role is to listen whereas the research subject's role is to cry' (1990, p. 345).

After several weeks, I got permission to conduct the research in Poland. On one hand, I was allowed to enter select asylum facilities at anytime. On the other, the permission did not allow me to live directly in the asylum centres. Hence, I found myself a studio apartment (Pl. *kawalerka*) within walking distance from Hotel Pumis, I visited the refugees and also some of them started visiting me. Several refugees became close to me and became my close friends.

First, I befriended a man in his fifties. This man already knew what it meant to be a refugee. During the first war, his house had been bombed. As the second war started, he fled to Ingushetia. In 2007, he fled to the European Union in order to give a better future to his three sons. Later, I befriended a few teenagers. One of them was one of the man's sons. Another was an eighteen-year old man whose father had died. He had arrived to Poland together with his brother and mother who, again, wanted to secure a better future for her children. Also, I met a woman who had witnessed the atrocities of war, who had been abandoned by her close relatives, and whose child suffered from leukaemia. In January 2008, I was introduced to a man who used to be a freedom fighter and who was several times imprisoned and brutally tortured. I think it is important to state at this point that, in order to protect research participants, I have changed their real names and given them fictitious identities.

Anthropologists who have done their fieldwork in contexts similar to mine emphasise that if one does long-term participatory research in a difficult field and if they are emphatic, the researcher might be unable to maintain the distance with their interlocutors. The barriers between the semi-detached observer and the subject observed may break (Das, 1984; Behar, 1996; Skultans, 1998). In November 2007, I started to spend whole days with my new refugee friends. I had to deal with the fact that their lives were badly affected by the wars. I said before that my plan had been to assist refugees in certain practical ways. After I settled in the field I began to do this. I helped them to fill out various forms. I translated their testimonies to doctors. I drove them in my car to various places. I helped them to enrol their children in the local schools. However, my daily interactions with refugees soon stopped being underpinned by my planned attempts to gather particular kinds of data. I could not escape my feelings of empathy for the people. It seemed to me that their daily struggles and suffering became much more important than my research project. My attempts to help them started to drive most of the decisions and moves I made in the field.

By January 2008, I already learned to speak actively the Russian language actively, in the way Chechens use it, and I started to understand fragments of the daily conversations led in the Chechen-*Vainakh* language. I became fully confronted by the fact that my friends but also many others shared a strong need to tell the story of what had happened to them. I started to understand fully that many refugees welcomed my presence as a researcher. But they did not expect me to ask them my own questions. Instead, they wanted their own stories and daily struggles to be heard and recorded. Refugees needed someone who was willing to listen to them, ideally a listener who could

make their testimonies and lives and their suffering public. I started facing an increasing dilemma in relation to my research method. On one hand, there was the theory I had read which led me to classify the phenomena I witnessed and analytically describe them in terms of the anthropological concepts in my research proposal. On the other hand, I could not ignore what many refugees wanted, for me to record the very empirical details of their own individual stories and daily struggles.

In January 2008, I intuitively decided to start describing refugees' lives and to record their stories by asking them almost no questions. I let my interactions with the refugees be guided primarily by the flows and rhythms of the everyday. I let my inquiry into the refugees' experience be informed primarily by refugees' interpretations. Being empathic with the research 'subjects' as well as sympathetic to their need to tell their stories to me, I resigned from my ambition to be a semi-detached participant observer who writes ethnography as if he or she had control over the field. Instead, I was driven to another method close to the anthropology of violence and consisting in letting research subjects and the community take control of the researcher, who agrees to become the space on which respondents' own knowledge inscribes itself (Das, 1984).

I would like to note at this point that I faced increasing anxieties related to the choices I had made in the field. I had reasons for following the method. It was as if the refugees' experiences were exposed to me. I felt that I understood the refugees and that I needed to record my knowledge. On the other hand, I was concerned with the fact that I stopped framing the field in a way that would have enabled me to respond to the original research question linked to the already-mentioned concepts and theories. In April 2008 I attended our Marie

Curie anthropological workshop at Max Planck Institute in Halle where I presented some data from my ongoing research. I was criticised for writing an ethnography, which is focused on mere description of day-to-day events as well as for the fact that my fieldwork trajectory seems to be driven by nothing except empathy. In 2008, I did not have a clear response to the critique raised during the workshop.

Suffering, Pain, and Anthropological Knowledge

If I had received that critique today, I think I would have been better able to justify the change in my research methods. I would have argued that listening to sufferers' stories and letting them shape my trajectory in the field is recognised by scholars (Kleinman, 1988; Scarry, 1985; Das, 2007) to be the method for doing anthropological fieldwork in extreme conditions. According to Elaine Scarry, human suffering is incommunicable but empathy is the most human thing we can do in relation to the sufferer. Arthur Kleinman in his book *Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing and the Human Condition* describes how, as a medic, he realised that he could get an impression of the experiences of the chronically ill by exposing himself to their pain (Kleinman, 1988, pp. xi-xii). The anthropologist who has thought-provokingly described this method by means of calling upon Wittgenstein's words is Veena Das (2007, pp. 39-41). Let me quote Das' discourse on the possibilities of the imagination of the other's pain.

 Veena Das writes:

> 'The first scene is from Wittgenstein's *Blue and Brown Books* on the question of how my pain may reside in another body:

In order to see that it is conceivable that one person should have pain in another person's body, one must examine what sorts of facts we call criteria for a pain being in a certain place. . . . Suppose I feel a pain which on the evidence of the pain alone, e.g. with closed eyes, I should call a pain in my left hand. Someone asks me to touch the painful spot with my right hand. I do so and looking around perceive that I am touching my neighbor's hand. . . . This would be pain felt in another's body.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 49.

In this movement between bodies, the sentence "I am in pain" becomes the conduit through which I may move out of the inexpressible privacy and suffocation of my pain. This does not mean that I am understood. Wittgenstein uses the route of a philosophical grammar to say that this is not an indicative statement, although it may have the formal appearance of one. It is the beginning of a language game. Pain in this rendering is not that inexpressible something that destroys communication or marks an exit from one's existence in language. Instead, it makes a claim on the other—asking for acknowledgment that may be given or denied. In either case, it is not a referential statement that is pointing to an inner object. What is fascinating for me is that in drawing the scene of the pathos of pain, Wittgenstein creates language as the bodying forth of words. Where is my pain? In touching you to point out the location of that pain, has my pointing finger—there it is—found your body, which my pain (our pain) can inhabit, at least for that moment when I close my

eyes and touch your hand? And if the language for the inexpressibility of pain is always falling short of my need for its plenitude, then is this not the sense of disappointment that human beings have with themselves and the language that is given to them? But also, does the whole task of becoming human, even of becoming perversely human, not involve a response (even if this is rage) to the sense of loss when language seems to fail? Wittgenstein's example of my pain inhabiting your body seems to me to suggest either the intuition that the representation of shared pain exists in the imagination but cannot be translated into concrete ways that could be put into the world—in which case, one would say that language is hooked rather inadequately to the world of pain—or, alternately, that the experience of pain cries out for this response of the possibility that my pain could reside in your body and that the philosophical grammar of pain is an answer to that call. If I might be allowed, I would like to draw out the meaning of my repeated (and even compulsive) reliance on Wittgenstein by braiding my words with those of Cavell. In generously agreeing to augment my reflections on pain, Cavell offered what to me was a philosophical friendship in which he was able to hear what I was stuttering to say. I quote:

> This seems to me a place Veena Das finds company in work of mine, especially that on Wittgenstein. So, I will testify to my conviction in two moments in which she finds her ground: first, in her appeal to her own experience (e.g., "In my own experience the question of how good death and bad death is to be defined by the act of witnessing is a more complicated one"), an appeal in

her writing that I unfailingly place confidence in and am grateful for; second, in her use of Wittgenstein's example of "feeling pain in the body of another," a passage that no one, to my knowledge, has put to more creative, nor sounder, use. I take Wittgenstein's fantasy in that passage as a working out of Descartes's sense that my soul and my body, while necessarily distinct, are not merely contingently connected. I am necessarily the owner of my pain, yet the fact that it is always located in my body is not necessary. This is what Wittgenstein wishes to show— that it is conceivable that I locate it in another's body. That this does not in fact, or literally, happen in our lives means that the fact of our separateness is something that I have to conceive, a task of imagination—that to know your pain I cannot locate it as I locate mine, but I must let it happen to me. My knowledge of you marks me; it is something that I experience, yet I am not present to it. . . . My knowledge of myself is something I find, as on a successful quest; my knowledge of others, of their separateness from me, is something that finds me. . . . And it seems reasonable to me, and illuminating, to speak of that reception of impression as my lending my body to the other's experience. The plainest manifestation of this responsiveness may be taken to be its effect on a body of writing.

Stanley Cavell, "Comments on Veena Das's Essay 'Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain,'" in Kleinman et al., Social Suffering, 93–99.

With regard to my own research, the course of the events caused me to remain in close contact with the refugees whom I met in Hotel Pumis until the end of fieldwork. Between January and April 2008, I spend most of the time with the father who had brought his sons to Europe and also with his sons and their friends. I kept describing refugees' experiences and everyday life mostly from the perspective of this family. Between March and August 2008, I intensively worked with the former freedom fighter who had been tortured. This refugee was a skilled writer. We agreed to write a diary. It was not me but he who wrote it. My work was to ensure that his diary was translated into Czech and published on a web site.[11] We also gave the diary to German film producers so they could make a documentary about this man.[12] Between January and August 2008, I occasionally visited the woman whose child was ill. Also, I visited around 40 refugees' households and I recorded 55 life testimonies narrated by people whom I knew. In September 2008, I travelled to Paris in order to see the mother-widow and her sons, who migrated from Poland to France in December 2007. I returned to Poland in October 2008. After my return, I spent some more time with refugees in Hotel Pumis, visited several other asylum centres in Poland and talked to the refugees there. I think that the relationships I had with the people whom I encountered in the field allowed me to get an impression about their pain and suffering and, now, I feel the necessity to write about it.

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[11] http://www.migraceonline.cz/cz/e-knihovna/assalam-alejkum-evropo-denik-ingusskeho-uprchlika

[12] The documentary directed by Kerstin Nicking is called 'Nowhere in Europe'.

The Vulnerable Writer

In the previous parts of this chapter, I have stated that in this thesis I attempt to write about Chechen-Ingush experiences, about their suffering and pain. Here I discuss the process of writing about knowledge I accumulated while living with refugees and listening to their utterances and life stories. It took me a very long time to write this PhD thesis. I returned to my home institute in January 2009 but I finished the first manuscript only in December 2014. Here, I would like thus to ask the following question: is it possible for a researcher to get a feeling of sufferers' experiences, to imagine the other's pain, and if so, how can one write an account of the experiences of such people? How does an anthropologist write about a field where loss and trauma was an inseparable part of the everyday life?

When I returned to my home institute in January 2009, I carried the burden of the painful stories I heard and the damaged lives I witnessed. It is well known that soldiers who return from war zones are likely to face difficulties in adjusting to a so-called normality. The war can continue in the soldier's mind. They may feel that their colleagues, friends, and relatives don't grasp what they had gone through. Soldiers may feel the necessity to tell their experiences to their close ones. They may also feel that they are not understood. In my own experience, an anthropologist who returns from a fieldsite dominated by pain and suffering may experience something similar to these soldiers. After I returned to London, my fieldwork did not end. It continued in my mind. What is more, a couple of months after I returned from the field some of my Chechen friends were killed, whereas others strangely disappeared.

When I returned, I started working on the ethnography. I did not have problems writing about the field. I had a feeling that my colleagues should be more interested in the people I had befriended. Thus, I felt the urgent need to write about them. I obsessively wrote hundreds of pages with various descriptions and observations. The products of my work were unsatisfactory to me. Unlike the texts written by my colleagues, where ethnography was clearly interconnected with theory and merged into complete chapters and the chapters into complete theses, my own writings were overwhelmed by detail. I was initially unable to interconnect my descriptions with larger ideas and concepts. I was unable to relate my problems with what I had witnessed and encountered in the field.[13] In the field, I was directly confronted with violence and I still vividly remember the shock.

The following year and a half, I did not complete the thesis. My relatively secure life, when I had some savings and a scholarship that paid my fees had disappeared. I had to leave London. I returned to Slovakia. Going back helped me to re-discover old friendships. I reunited with my family. I started teaching at the local anthropological institute and this gave me a sense of new belonging. I had to support myself and pay fees in London while having only a minimal Slovak

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[13] In the field, war violence confronted me not only in the form of vivid memories but also in the form of very vivid images, representations. As I was trying to know refugees during the initial weeks of the fieldwork, they typically showed me pictures and videos of the wars, which they had in their computers and mobile phones. Refugees showed me these videos on various occasions: when we were eating or drinking tea together. Often, the children were also watching. On many occasions, it was them who showed me the videos. Initially, I could hardly cope with the fact that violence was suddenly all around me. Later, I got used to these images. I could watch them as if the violence was something ordinary, like the refugees did. However, during the whole course of fieldwork I suffered from sleeping problems and asthma.

'salary.' I was disconnected from the London academic community. From time to time, I had the feeling that my home institute had betrayed me. I thought that the institute should have done more to help me to understand my field. On other occasions, I blamed myself for the fact that I had perhaps failed during the crucial stages of the project.

The fact that I did not complete the thesis in time may have had a bad impact on both my professional and private life, but slowly allowed me to better understand what had happened in the field. After my return, I started to work intensively again on the ethnography. I started to selectively study the anthropological literature on violence, which provided larger ideas that helped me to think through my ethnography.[14] I started to write regularly again. Slowly, I started to create pieces of work, which I hope were more explanatory than the previous ones. But what accelerated the construction of this thesis as nothing before was the unexpected death of a member of my family. One day in August 2013, I got a phone call and, after a very short moment on the phone, everything in my life changed completely. After this moment, I started to feel that I could understand my Chechen friends and also the anthropological theory about loss and trauma. I hope what I have done since that moment is clearer.

In her book *The Vulnerable Observer*, Ruth Behar (1996) calls upon a method in which the emphatic anthropologist-ethnographer thinks and

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[14] After I returned from the field, I was struck by how difficult writing about disturbing knowledge passed on to me by my respondents was. Whenever I wrote something, I found I was not satisfied with what I had written. Facing a loss of confidence, I searched for support in the works of other authors and scholars. But it was Das' *Life and Words*, which constantly remained on my table.

writes about the field dominated by loss and trauma, through their personal experiences of loss and suffering. I found this book illuminating because, I think, it was the method discussed by Behar which helped me to go back and back again over the very long period of writing of this thesis and to place my fieldwork experience properly and meaningfully on the paper. There were several disruptions in my own life, which confronted me upon returning from the field and which deepened my own understanding of the problem I try to discuss in this study.

Outline of the Thesis

After re-writing the draft many times, in the end I have decided, in line with the two approaches to refugee experience mentioned before, to divide this doctoral thesis into two parts that consist of seven analytical chapters and the conclusion. In the first part of the thesis I provide an insight into the way in which the figure of the 'refugee' has been constituted in Poland through different institutional-political practices and discourses and in the context of the larger political and socio-economic transformations. Meanwhile, I also describe this construction, as it existed in the context of the everyday life of the people whom I encountered in the asylum centre. The second part of the thesis, then, is primarily concerned with two critical events, namely the two Russo-Chechen Wars, which remained attached to the Chechen-Ingush refugees' experiences and lives in the form of numerous losses and traumatic memories. Through my ethnographic material, I explore what happens with subjects and their world when trauma and loss are being integrated into everyday life. Let me provide a detailed account of the content of the chapters.

Part I

Chapter Two

Building upon archival research conducted in the archives of the Polish Office for Foreigners and in other Polish libraries, in Chapter Two I historicise the problem of 'refugee' experience in Poland. I present 'refugee' identity as a political construction which evolved over the post-socialist years from liberal and welcoming attitudes towards refugees to a context in which strict standards for forced migration management were applied to control and discipline Chechen-Ingush exodus to the European Union. In the first years after the fall of communism, liberal attitudes towards immigrants can be connected to the ambitions of Central-Eastern European societies to become part of the 'western' world. In the first decade of 21st century, the standardisation of asylum policies and formalisation and professionalization of institutional practices, as I suggest, can be explained by the latest territorial expansion of the European Union.

Chapter Three

In this chapter, I ask how this political-legal framework saturated the daily life of the Polish asylum accommodation facilities at the time of my fieldwork. Focusing on particular documents distributed to asylum seekers in Hotel Pumis, I identify rational-bureaucratic aspect of refugee 'identity' in the daily life of the asylum centre. Meanwhile, focusing on the same documents, I link refugee 'identity' in the making with: (a) the way in which low-level bureaucrats mistrusted the law and

often merely performed their daily duties; (b) with the refugees' suspicion of the law due to their previous experiences of the law in Russia; (c) with the refugees' active participation and support of the law (d) with numerous informal and illegal practices. In Chapter Three, I depict the construction of a 'refugee' as a process fluctuating between different rational/bureaucratic and informal and irrational forms.

Part II

Chapter Four

Untangling the problem of how Chechen-Ingush men formed their identities, Chapter Four focuses on the voice of one particular refugee man. Having considered the man's pain mostly in terms of a forcible disconnection from characteristic social-communal and family settings, in this chapter I explore the way in which the subject, with the help of available socio-cultural resources, created a new, different vision of how the world could be re-inhabited. I also discuss the way in which this conception became consonant with the way in which a 'refugee' identity was constituted in Poland. I argue that the formation of a characteristic masculine identity in relation to Chechen-Ingush refugees in Poland could be explained through the transactions between past dramatic war moments and their integration, at the subjective level, within specific political-legal settings, into everyday life.

Chapter Five

In Chapter Five, then, I question the formation of the domain of the 'inside.' Refugees considered Hotel Pumis to be their own autonomous territory, which was pitted against the dangerous and immoral outside world, the neighbourhood where the asylum centre was situated. To tackle this problem, I focus again on disrupted refugee subjectivities. This chapter acknowledges that despite the fact that subjects found a way to voice their pain and suffering of the past, losses and traumas did not completely disappear from their daily lives. Many refugee men felt emasculated by the event of their displacement. As I argue, most refugee men felt women undermined their new conceptions of the world and reminded them of their losses and traumas. Bearing this in mind, in Chapter Five, I explore how refugee men preserved a sense of masculinity, as they managed their narratives about women in different private, communal, and public spaces. My suggestion is that the existence of an inside and outside domain in Hotel Pumis may be related to men's attempts to enact their versions-conceptions of the self and the world against a backdrop of dissonant voices and realities.

Chapter Six

Having identified certain characteristic bereavement patterns, which resonated through the daily life in Hotel Pumis, in Chapter Six I ask how refugee women made sense of the world destroyed by violence. To do so I considered the voice of one particular woman, and I work closely with Veena Das' (1990; 2007) ethnographies of violence and womanhood in post-colonial India, since many aspects of the female refugee world were indeed inaccessible to me. Thinking about female experiences and analysing them through the lens of Das' ethnographies,

I highlight that refugee women, many of whom were not supported by the Polish asylum law, strongly relied upon mutual support to re-create their experiences. Furthermore, I acknowledge that many women had to defend their own visions of truth against agents who were more powerful than them, such as their husbands or other refugee men. In this chapter, I defend the view that the 'bereavement' process of refugee females was similar to men's in so far as it was attached in subordinate position to the bereavement of the men.

Chapter Seven

In this chapter, I address the problem of why some men, especially older men who are parents, identified themselves less through the public-communal domain and more with the medium of household. I start by acknowledging that most refugees suffered not only because their individual lives had been disrupted but also because the Russo-Chechen wars had thwarted the process of transmission between generations. Using the voice of one particular father who had migrated to Poland with his three sons, I explore how the subject re-made his world with the help of patrilinear and patriarchal kinship norms, which make the father's life predominantly oriented to his male descendants. Furthermore, I describe the way in which fathers protected the lives of their children, covering memories of destruction of family with silence and imposing their new visions of 'truth' upon their descendants. I suggest that to some men the household was a significant centre, where they created new identities as fathers, because the individual efforts to give a new sense to the world were combined with a

universal human need to pass their knowledge, moral values, and skills to the next generation.

Chapter Eight

In the last chapter, I focus on how 'bereavement' patterns as they dominated the worlds of refugee children. Locating the impact of the Russo-Chechen Wars on children's experiences, I emphasise that children had an intimate connection not only to the violence of war but also to the so-called 'violence of everyday life.' Defining child's subjectivity in terms of the curiosity about the nature of the world and linking these children's cognitive needs with the affective needs, I then grasp how the adults did not show the children some way how to communicate the suffering as well as how the children, who were confronted with their parents' silences and neuroses, themselves struggled with making a sense of the world and the future. In the last part of the chapter, I describe the way in which youngsters kept the violence and chaos of their world at distance through the practice of boxing. I argue that as regards the Chechen-Ingush children and adolescents the 'bereavement' was, because of all the violence that had defined and surrounded them as well as because of the overall lack of moral compass, particularly perplexed and complicated process.

Part I: A Refugee 'Experience'

Chapter Two

Institutions, Discourses, and the Construction of a 'Refugee' Identity in Post-Socialist Poland

According to Liisa Malkki, the notion or concept of a universal refugee identity is globally constructed today in a variety of discursive and institutional domains. The UN, UNHCR and some other international organisations produce specific legislation and documentation about refugees. Non-governmental organisations, which tend to present refugees as a speechless, helpless, and disempowered mass, develop their own programmes, often speaking on behalf of the subjects of humanitarian intervention. Finally, forced migration and displacement studies conceptualise refugeesness as a research problem, and make it an object of their study (Malkki, 1995; 1996). Alice Szczepanikova, a sociologist-anthropologist, who has researched the construction of refugeesness and displacement in the post-socialist Czech Republic, agrees with Malkki on the role that international law and global discourses and practices play in the constitution of a homogenous refugee identity. However, she emphasises that, in Europe, the actual formulation and implementation of international asylum laws are embedded in historical-political processes which have underpinned the development of the idea of a nation state (Szczepanikova, 2010). She also takes into account the real existing strategies, dreams, and hopes of the people who struggle to make a living while being labelled as refugees. In this chapter, I analyse how a 'refugee' identity is created in

Europe, drawing inspiration from and contributing to the knowledge provided by the above-mentioned scholars.

Bearing in mind the larger historical, political, and socio-economic settings in this region, other scholars have demonstrated that discourses, practices, and policies on immigrants and refugees have developed in specific ways in Central-Eastern Europe (Laczko, 2001; Nygård & Stacher, 2001; Wallace, 2001; Wallace, Sidorenko, & Chmouliar). The scholar who conducted a compelling study on the problem of how institutional and discursive practices constituted a 'refugee' identity in the Czech Republic after the fall of socialism is, as already mentioned, Alice Szczepanikova (2013; 2010; 2010b). Szczepanikova's research is particularly relevant to this chapter, for it enables me to think about the parallels between the construction of a 'refugee' in the Czech Republic and in Poland. I try to address the following question: if the existence of a refugee identity is defined not only by the loss and trauma which underpins refugee experience but also by the outcomes of specific institutional practices, policies, and discourses, how was the notion of a 'refugee' constructed in Poland, where the idea about a homogenous culture, the strict control over territorial boundaries and the acquisition of citizenship were intrinsic to the formation of the nation state? How has such an identity been created in the context of the larger socio-economic and political transformations that the country has undergone?

In order to answer these questions, I draw from the research I conducted in the archive of the Polish Office for Foreigners in Warszawa and in the Villa de Decius Library and the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków. I examine national asylum laws, statistics, and local literature on the refugee problem as well as the strategies and routes

of people classified as refugees, and outline the construction of the 'refugee' in Poland as a dynamic institutional and political-legal process. During the post-socialist period, such a construction evolved from one dominated by welcoming policies and attitudes towards immigrants to one characterised by strict attempts to manage and control the exodus of the Chechen-Ingush refugees to the European Union. One could relate early welcoming attitudes towards immigrants to an ambition of becoming a part of the 'western' world shared by a large part of Polish society after communism. In the first decade of 21st century, the standardisation of asylum policies, and the formalisation and professionalization of institutional practices, as I suggest, could be attributed to the latest territorial expansion of the European Union.

The Refugees and the Cold War

In the following lines, I look at the construction of 'refugee' identity in Poland from a historical perspective. I begin by depicting the migration flows and policies in communist Poland (1945-1989) in the context of the political tensions in the bipolar world divided between Western and Eastern Bloc.

During the socialist period, Poland was a country, which predominantly produced refugees at specific critical moments. Various statistics estimate that, soon after World War II, around 3.5 million ethnic Germans, 500,000 Ukrainians and 40,000 Belarusians were either resettled or fled from Poland. In 1968, the Polish political crisis, which involved the student and intellectual protest against the communist government, in some ways connected to the Prague Spring of 1968, resulted in thousands people, many of them Jewish, leaving the country.

In 1980, the independent trade union Solidarity (Pl. *Solidarność)* was formed, but was banned under Martial Law in December 1981. Large anti-government protest resulted in another wave of migrants fleeing the country usually towards the west. Emigration from Poland continued during the second half of the 1980s, when the East Bloc was already slowly disintegrating. According to Stola, the number of people who emigrated from Poland between 1948 and 1989 exceeds 1.9 million. Their main destination was West Germany (Stola, 2001, p. 176). It is known that many Poles who immigrated to the countries on the western side of the Iron Curtain between the 1960s and 1990s became asylum seekers and most of them were allowed to stay. In the context of the geo-political divisions and tensions during the Cold War, Western state institutions usually granted asylum to Eastern European immigrants.

During socialism, there were also refugees coming into Poland. Materials documenting these refugee flows were absent from the archive of the Office for Foreigners. Prior to 1989 this office did not exist. Nonetheless, Beata Samoraj (2007) has documented refugees' flows and the response of Polish institutions to them before the fall of the Iron Curtain. According to Samoraj, the communist state assisted people escaping violence from South-Eastern Europe and the post-colonial world during this period. In the 1950s, for instance, Polish authorities offered protection to Greeks and Macedonians fleeing the Greek Civil War. In the following decades, Polish authorities protected refugees from Lebanon, Palestine, Turkey-Kurdistan, Iraq, Ethiopia, or Sudan. Nonetheless, the People's Republic of Poland was not a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention, which defines the legal obligations of states towards refugees. The political institution

responsible for refugees was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Pl. *Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych*). Humanitarian assistance was provided by the Polish Red Cross (Pl. *Polski Czerwony Krzyż*). Significantly, Samoraj claims, one of the reasons why Polish authorities did not sign the convention was because they considered the possibility of offering asylum to refugees from other countries of the Eastern Bloc inappropriate (2007, p. 31).

In her study, Szczepanikova acknowledges that asylum is a very political issue. Referring to the situation in Czechoslovakia before 1989, she writes that, during the Cold War, refugee policy was used by politicians and governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain to maintain foreign policies and highlight the wrongs of the other ideological opponent (Szczepanikova, 2010, pp. 3-4). The outcomes of my enquiry into the problem or refugeesness in Poland during the Cold War closely resonate with her findings. It seems that the Polish government and other authorities, like their Western counterparts, brought asylum into play not only to secure refugees' protection and fulfil their human needs but also to declare moral superiority over their ideological opponent.

The 'Refugee' and Post-Socialist Transformations

With the fall of socialism, numerous primary sites of employment and production, such as factories, cooperatives, or collectives, collapsed. Border controls weakened and Polish society underwent a complicated and, in many aspects, painful process of transition from socialism to the ideal model represented by Western liberal democracy (Buchowski, 2007; Pine, 1998; 2002). Frances Pine, who has conducted research in

Poland for more than thirty years, explained to me in a personal conversation that she remembered how, in the early 1990s, the Polish government tried to distance itself from previous oppressive rulings to care about ordinary citizens. Jacek Kuroń, the minister of labour and social policy, introduced the unemployment benefit in the face of the Balcerowicz Plan, a Draconian shock therapy for the transformation of the country after communism. In these years, there was a general concern from the top about the welfare of ordinary people who had lost their livelihoods and their homes. The concern, as Frances explained to me, began to disappear in the late 1990s, when a language about entitlement and the deserving and undeserving poor, and scroungers gradually emerged. Nevertheless, she did not remember that this kind of language would have dominated the public life in the early 1990s. Having said this, in the next section I trace an array of different institutional and public domains within which Polish 'refugee' discourses were constituted after the 1989. My materials indicate that the establishment of mechanisms to manage forced migration in post-socialist Poland in the first half of the 1990s was a process dominated by a certain openness, generosity towards and curiosity about refugees.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, an increasing amount of refugees started to arrive in Poland. According to my inquiries into the issue, the first large group of 'post-socialist' immigrants-refugees came in 1990. This group consisted of around one thousand people who had fled from the Arab world. They did not want to settle in Poland but travelled through post-socialist Europe in order to get to Scandinavia, most often to Sweden. These people did not have Swedish visas and, since Poland was not classified by United Nations as a 'dangerous' country anymore, Swedish immigration authorities deported them back

to Poland. In 1990, there were not any refugee-asylum accommodation facilities in Central-Eastern Europe. A temporary asylum centre was quickly built in order to take care of deportees from Sweden. This asylum centre was situated in *Świnoujście*, a seaport on the Baltic Sea.

Official refugee statistics do not include the exact number of refugees in *Świnoujście*. Existing statistics only document the number and nationality of refugees-asylum seekers in Poland from 1992. Statistic evidence provides some material for reflection on the migration flows on the territory of Poland in the first half of the 1990s. However, it is almost certain that migration flows through in Poland soon after the fall of the Iron Curtain were much more complex than the image that such official statistics provide.

Nationality	1992	1993	1994	1995
AFGHANISTAN	3	5	7	73
ARMENIA	44	78	257	151
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	137	554	37	14
IRAQ	30	9	34	57
RUSSIA	24	7	28	85
ROMANIA	6	---	1	11
SRI LANKA	---	---	1	60
OTHER	324	169	172	394
Total number of asylum seekers	568	822	537	845

Figure 4 - Number and nationality of asylum seekers in Poland between 1992 and 1995. Source: Polish Office for Foreigners.

To elaborate on the last point, scholars have persuasively argued that, as a part of post-socialist Central-Eastern Europe, Poland should not be automatically taken for a 'typical' country of immigration, comparable to the liberal democratic countries in Western Europe in the first half of the 1990s. Instead, scholars argue, the area of Central-Eastern

Europe should be understood as a 'buffer zone' conjoining its neighbours to the east and to the west economically, politically and socially (Wallace, Sidorenko, & Chmouliar, 1997). I could identify the argument of the buffer zone when carrying out my own research. In the archives, I found a few reports that were published by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the 1990s. The central theme of these reports was that most asylum seekers do not stay in Poland but use the country as a transit space on the route to countries in western and northern Europe.

When the very first refugees appeared in post-socialist Poland, they found themselves in a legal limbo, as national laws did not recognise then who was and who was not a refugee. Polish parliament ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention only in 1991, in reaction to the increasing number of stateless persons on Polish territory and in response to increasing pressure from the international political community. Interestingly, Szczepanikova claims that, when the Czechoslovak MPs gathered to ratify the 1951 Geneva Convention in 1990, there was certain excitement in parliament.[15] A large part of the newly established political elite, Sczepanikova explains, had been anti-communist dissidents themselves and hence felt a strong sense of obligation to protect refugees (Szczepanikova, 2010, pp. 4-5). With regard to Polish MP's, they gave asylum seekers the right to have access to public health services, educational services, and social benefits. In other words, Polish parliament acknowledged that the rights of refugees were, in some respects, equal to the rights of Polish

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[15] Like Poland, CSSR was not a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention

citizens. Further, the number of refugees granted asylum in Poland shortly after socialism was relatively high. According to the statistics, between 1992 and 1995 Polish authorities granted 632 people refugee status and 994 asylum procedures were interrupted, in most cases because the authorities had lost contact with the applicant. In short, it seems that, like in Czechoslovakia, large sections of both the Polish elite and wider society felt a sense of obligation towards refugees because of their previous negative experiences of socialism.

In the early 1990s, also the legislation and institutional and technological infrastructure to receive refugees did not exist. The institution that took responsibility for assisting deportees from Sweden was the Ministry of Health and Social Care (Pl. *Ministerstwo Zdrowia i Opieki Społecznej*). In 1991, political responsibility for refugees was given to the Ministry of Interior Affairs (Pl. *Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych*). In 1992, the first regular asylum reception and accommodation centre designed according to international western standards, *Dębak-Podkowa Leśna*, was opened on the site of a former military base near Warszawa. I do not have extensive data documenting the experience of asylum policies in Poland in the first half of the 1990s but, interestingly, when I was in Poland I had a chance to talk to an immigrant of Armenian nationality who had spent some time in Dębak in 1994. Born in Nagorno-Karabakh, this man arrived in Poland in 1988. Later, he applied for asylum since he could not return because of the war. This man told me that when he applied for asylum there was not a requirement to stay in the asylum centre. On the contrary, I was told, after a couple of weeks he was released and continued in the business he had begun.

In the mid-1990s, the first local scholars and researchers started to visit the Polish asylum centres. In 1995 and 1996, psychologist Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska and sociologist Ewa Nowicka conducted research in four asylum facilities. The outcomes of their research were published in 1998 in a book which translates as 'Guests and Hosts: The Problem of Cultural Adaptation in Refugee Camps and in Local Communities' (Pl. *Goście i gospodarze: problem adaptacji kulturowej w obozach dla uchodźców oraz otaczających je społecznościach lokalnych*). Researchers perceived themselves as pioneers. In this book they write that the main purpose of their research was to find out what was actually happening in the newly established asylum centres. Another piece of research was conducted in Dębak by a collective hired by Amnesty International (AI). These researchers interviewed several asylum seekers from Kosovo, Sri Lanka, Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia, Somalia, and Bosnia. The results of this project were published in 1998 in a book which translates as 'Refugees Speak' (Pl. *Uchodźcy mówią*). What caught my attention while reading this book was that its authors did not define themselves as professionals that treated refugees as objects of their inquiry. Rather than being full of researchers' observations, points, and analyses, this wonderful book contains refugees' own paintings, narratives, letters, and poems.

To conclude, in the first half of the 1990s, Polish authorities did not seem to keep a particularly tight control over asylum seekers. Instead, it seems, they were more concerned with refugees' human rights and needs. One possible explanation for this may be that the political climate in the early 1990s could influence also the way refugees were treated. Another possible explanation can be found in Szczepanikova's study, which broadly shows that the first half of the 1990s was in

Czechoslovakia, and later in the Czech Republic, a period characterised by welcoming attitudes towards refugees. According to Szczepanikova, the formation of the Czech asylum system, which was created immediately after socialism ended, was underpinned not only by the actual need to manage forced migration flows and protect refugees but also by the larger task of building a new post-socialist society and national identity. She also explains that asylum in the post-socialist Czech Republic was a 'ticket to the world of civilised nations' (Szczepanikova, 2010, pp. 4-6). Given the similarities between the Czech and Polish contexts, Szczepanikova's explanation may account also for the liberal qualities of the Polish asylum system in the early 1990s.

The Tightening of Asylum Policies

In *Patterns of Migration in Central Europe*, Wallace (2001) persuasively argues that it is still reasonable to conceptualise the region of Central-Eastern Europe as a buffer zone during the second half of the 1990s. Firstly, she thinks of this region in terms of the economic buffer between east and west. Further, she thinks of it as a migration buffer consituted by labour migrants and refugees who had been excluded from the labour markets and asyum systems in Western Europe (Wallace, 2001, pp. 77-78). Last, Wallace, importantly, considers this region as an institutional buffer in which institutions, policies and laws are built with the help of European donations and according to western models, and in which the political and economic reform is nurtured by the Central-Eastern European states' desire to join the European Union (Wallace, 2001, pp. 76-78). The results of my own archival

research indicate that the costiution of the institutional buffer meant, in relation to refugees, the gradual enclosure of a newly built asylum system.

The first signs of enclosure of the Polish asylum system appeared in 1993. As Poland agreed to respect the international legal standards for the management of forced migration, the so-called 'readmission agreements' were also signed. The purpose of these agreements was to facilitate the return of refugees who had applied for asylum in Poland, crossed the external Polish border, and stayed on in the territory of another 'safe' country. Poland signed readmission agreements with the Schengen Area member states as well as with most other countries in Europe. Initially, the effect of these agreements was rather weak, as the agreements did not prevent most refugees from using Poland as a transit area. But soon Poland came under pressure from the Schengen Area where asylum systems had already tightened. The country that particularly exerted pressure on Poland was neighbouring Germany. In 1993, Polish authorities signed a new separate readmission contract with Germany in which they committed themselves to accept deportees and to inform them properly about the possibilities and obligations related to asylum in Poland.

In order to meet the conditions for EU membership, in the second half of the 1990s, Poland committed itself to integrate 'European-western' legal standards concerning anti-corruption and equal opportunities laws, antidiscrimination measures, etc. As a part of the process, in 1997, Polish parliament ratified a new Polish Aliens' Law (Pl. *Ustawa z dnia 25 czerwca 1997 r. o cudzoziemcach*). The Aliens' Law laid down 'the principles and conditions governing the entry into, transit through, residence in, and departure from the territory of the Republic of

Poland as it applied to aliens as well as to the agencies with jurisdiction over these matters.' The law clarified institutional responsibilities towards refugees. It also paid particular attention, for instance, to the process of documenting an applicant's identity by means of photographs and fingerprints, exposing them to surveillance techniques, which had existed also under socialism in relation to Polish citizens. This law was amended in 2001 in order to bring the Polish asylum system even closer to EU standards. Substantial financial help sourced from Phare Horizontal Programme facilitated this.

In the context of a clearly formulated ambition to join the European Union, the act was integrated into national law, emphasising asylum seekers' rights and obligations. The nature of these changes and developments was immediately reflected on the national asylum statistics. First of all, in the second half of the 1990s, the number of asylum seekers registered with Polish authorities grew substantially: each year there were more than three thousand asylum applications. It is known that refugees-migrants registered with Polish authorities in the second half of the 1990s arrived in the country usually through the Balkans or through the area of the former Soviet Union. What the growing number of immigrants registered with the Polish asylum system indicates is that to them the only option they had for entering and staying in the country was to apply for asylum. If they had not applied for asylum they would have been, in accordance with the new asylum regulations, probably deported.

Nationality	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
AFGHANISTAN	488	638	335	577	301
ARMENIA	354	482	1007	888	844
IRAQ	359	200	130	47	30
RUSSIA	63	50	52	125	1182
ROMANIA	13	26	12	214	907
SRI LANKA	630	881	641	93	44
OTHER	1276	1303	1246	1117	1354
Total number of asylum seekers	3210	3580	3423	3061	4662

Figure 5 - Number and nationality of asylum seekers in Poland between 1996 and 2000. Source: Polish Office for Foreigners.

Despite the fact that in the second half of the 1990s the number of people labelled as asylum seekers in Poland substantially grew, the number of people who were granted full Convention status remained very low each year. The low number of those granted refugee statuses might indicate that most refugees still hoped to go onwards to western and northern Europe. Yet, other numbers show that, increasingly, refugees had their asylum applications rejected in Poland - refugees might have wanted to stay but asylum policies, which had become stricter, did not allow them to do so.

The Polish ambition to integrate into the EU prompted changes to national law and penetrated other domains within the national asylum system. In the second half of the 1990s, the existing asylum infrastructure was further developed. The capacity of the central reception centre was extended. Moreover, new accommodation

centres in Łomża, Łuków, Lublin, and Smoszewo were opened.[16] In the asylum centres, the asylum seekers got access to basic medical and social care. They could also sign up for Polish language courses. These services were provided by the state in accordance to the new laws. In order to give refugees access to humanitarian support, state authorities co-operated with newly established NGO's such as *Polska Akcja Humanitarna.* In 2001, a new office which fell under the Ministry of Interior Affairs and which became the institution primarily responsible for asylum matters in Poland, namely the Office for Repatriation and Foreigners (Pl. *Urząd do Spraw Repatriacji i Cudzoziemców*), was established. The purpose was to adjust the national asylum system and the management of forced migration to western-European standards.[17]

The nature of the transformation of the Polish asylum system in the second half of the 1990s was reflected on local scholarly thinking about refugees at the time. In the second half of the 1990s and later on, an increasing number of reports and scholarly works about the problem of refugees and forced migration were published in Poland. Interestingly, one of the books was written by political scientist Agnieszka Florczak. The book which translates as 'The Refugees in Poland: in between Humanitarianism and Pragmatism' (Pl. *Uchodźcy w Polsce między humanitaryzmem a pragmatyzmem*) was based upon research conducted several years before and published in 2003. Here, the author does not present an abstract argument but describes, in a very detailed manner, the way in which the Polish asylum system

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[16] Professional expertise and financial help from the European Union facilitated the development of the infrastructure.

[17] Later, the office was renamed 'The Office for Foreigners' (Pl. *Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców*)

developed. After studying documents and analysing her finds, Florczak recognised that there was a tension rising between the principle of human rights protection and the need to effectively manage forced migration inside the Polish asylum system.

In the early 1990s, the newly emerging Polish asylum system, as I explained earlier, reflected the attitudes that prevailed in Polish society at the time. Immediately after the fall of socialism, in Poland, people still believed in the importance of the welfare state and in the need for citizenship rights and entitlements. In line with these attitudes, and possibly with the hopes of a large fraction of Polish society to built a new democratic-liberal society according to Western models, the asylum system in Poland was, as my research revealed, characterised by certain liberalism. However, later on, in the second half of the 1990s, capitalism in Poland developed in full force and ideas about the value of the welfare state started to shift. As the transformation of Poland began along the lines of an economic, institutional, and migration buffer zone, the national asylum system became more complex and its openness slowly disappeared.

The 'Refugee' and the Accession of Poland to the European Union

In one of her studies, Malkki (2002) argues that in a context of contemporary political and socio-economic global upheaval, where commodities, capital, and ideas-representation can freely move across borders but labour cannot, refugee law, asylum centres, humanitarian programs, and the study and documentation of refugeesness have become devices of power used for disciplining the movement of certain

people across territories and borders by sovereign states (Malkki, 2002, pp. 353-354). Malkki's suggestion seems to closely resonate with the nature of the formation of the asylum system in post-socialist Poland and with the type of transformation that such system underwent when Poland was accepted into the exclusive territorial political community of the European Union in 2004. More to the point, the development of the national asylum system at the time of the accession of Poland to the European Union was dominated by a paradox. As my archival research indicates, Poland's integration into Europe further fuelled political violence against refugees in Poland but the whole process also made the asylum system more compatible with international law, increasing national asylum standards.

The accession of the new member states was conditioned by the implementation of numerous EU directives and regulations related specifically to asylum. Perhaps the best-known EU regulation, which had to be integrated into asylum systems of new member states, was the Council Regulation EC No. 343/2003, the notorious Dublin II. This regulation is famous because it prescribes that it is the first EU member state that the asylum seeker has registered with that is responsible to decide on each asylum application. There were many other EU directives such as those regulating the establishment and functioning of the so-called European Dactyloscopy (EURODAC). European Dactyloscopy is an electronic database of all asylum applicants in the European Union. It enables state officials to determine quickly whether an asylum applicant has previously claimed asylum in some other EU member state. If they have, this tool also allows them to quickly and effectively deport asylum seekers to the EU member state they previously came from. Another EU regulation is the Council Regulation

(EC) 2007/2004. This regulation establishes FRONTEX (Fr. *Frontières extérieures*), a EU agency whose mission is to assist EU member states in implementing EU rules on external border controls. This agency is regularly criticised by UNHCR for discriminating refugees and blocking their efforts to access asylum protection. Perhaps in order to declare their commitment to the EU, Poland agreed for this EU agency to have its headquarters in Warszawa.

The new law, Act of June 13 2003 (Pl. *Ustawa z dnia 13 czerwca 2003 r. o cudzoziemcach*),[18] established the basis for the harmonisation of the Polish asylum system with EU standards. This law, as well as the amendment of the act in 2007, laid down the principles, conditions, and procedures for granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland. On one hand, if one reads this act it is possible to find numerous examples of the tendency of the state to exclude asylum seekers from full citizenship rights. For instance, Chapter 2 Article 37 states that every foreigner, who has applied for refugee status, is obliged to 'deposit his or her passport with the President of the Office; and to stay on the territory of Poland until the final decision on their refugee status has been reached.' Chapter 6 Article 87 prescribes that every asylum seeker who has attempted to cross Polish borders illegally can be detained and placed in a guarded centre. Chapter 5 defines the type of assistance that should be given to refugees and Article 71 specifies that everyone be entitled to pocket money and basic social services.

Act of June 13 2003 may be implicated in generating political violence against immigrants. Nonetheless, it simultaneously contains numerous

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[18] Here, I work with the official English translation of the act

paragraphs, which increased the asylum standards nationally. A good example is the way in which those who drafted the law paid attention to the so-called 'family unity principle.' According to Act of June 13 2003, the asylum procedure is initiated upon the application for asylum of the foreigner who, after submitting the application in person, becomes an applicant (Pol. *wnioskodawca*). However, according to the law not everyone becomes an applicant since some refugees are expected to submit the application on behalf of others. To be more precise, Article 23 prescribes that every applicant may submit an application 'on behalf of minor children accompanying the foreigner, on condition that they are not married and that they are dependent on such foreigner.' According to Article 25, the applicant may submit an application on behalf of a 'spouse, dependant on him/her and minor children of such spouse, provided that they are not married and with consent of the spouse expressed in writing.' Reproducing a very western view on primary relationships, Act of June 13 2003 secures that the family unity is strictly respected.

In the first decade of the new millennium, new accommodation centres in Czerwony Bór, Góra Kalwaria, Radom, Niemce, Biała Podlaska, Białystok, Warszawa, and elsewhere were opened. Most of these accommodation centres were located in various marginal places such as fields, forests, or urban neighbourhoods suffering from socio-economic deprivation. The centres were former military bases, prisons, or hotels which had been declared bankrupt and no visitor, even if he or she was in a close relationship with the residents, was allowed to enter the building without permission. The Office for Foreigners also administered several prisons and detention centres. One of them, the Guarded and Arrest Centre for the Purpose of Expulsion, was in

Przemyśl. Among the refugees who were imprisoned there were those who had illegally emigrated from Poland to another EU country and who had been deported back to Poland under Dublin II regulations. Technologies and other infrastructure protecting the eastern Polish territorial border had been increased and modernised.

In line with the contradictory logic, inhabitants of the asylum centres could claim many rights. Every refugee was entitled to three meals per day, social benefits, and unpaid accommodation during the whole course of the asylum procedure. After 2004, the Polish Office for Foreigners administered around twenty asylum accommodation facilities. None of these facilities were truly closed in the sense that the refugees were not allowed to leave the building. When I was in Poland, everyone who applied for asylum was first re-directed to Dębak, the reception centre (Pl. *Ośrodek recepcyjny*) and from there the person was reassigned to one of the regular asylum accommodation facilities. I observed that Polish authorities strictly adhered to the principle that the nuclear family has a right to stay and live together. However, if they were asked to do so, the authorities usually allowed distant relatives as well as friends to go and live in the same accommodation centre.

In the first decade of the new century, local scholarship on the subject became as complex and sophisticated as never before. In the archive, there were dozens of new reports, articles, analyses, and studies examining various aspects of the 'refugee problem.' One of the studies I quoted before in this thesis was called – the translations is mine - 'Bus Stop Poland: Analysis of the Programmes Aimed to Integrate the Refugees' (Pl. *Przystanek Polska: analiza programów integracyjnych dla uchodźców*). This study was published in 2007. Founded by the European Social Fund, it contained six highly professional reports,

which only examined the lives of refugees who had been awarded either the status of tolerated person or the status of refugee.

Statistics also became very sophisticated and complex. Unlike previous studies, these statistics categorised refugees in a precise way according to their age, gender, and nationality, and provided numerous other interesting details. For instance, the following graph shows clearly how refugees that held a Russian passport quickly outnumbered asylum seekers from elsewhere in 2001, as the Second Chechen-Russian War turned into an anti-terrorist operation.
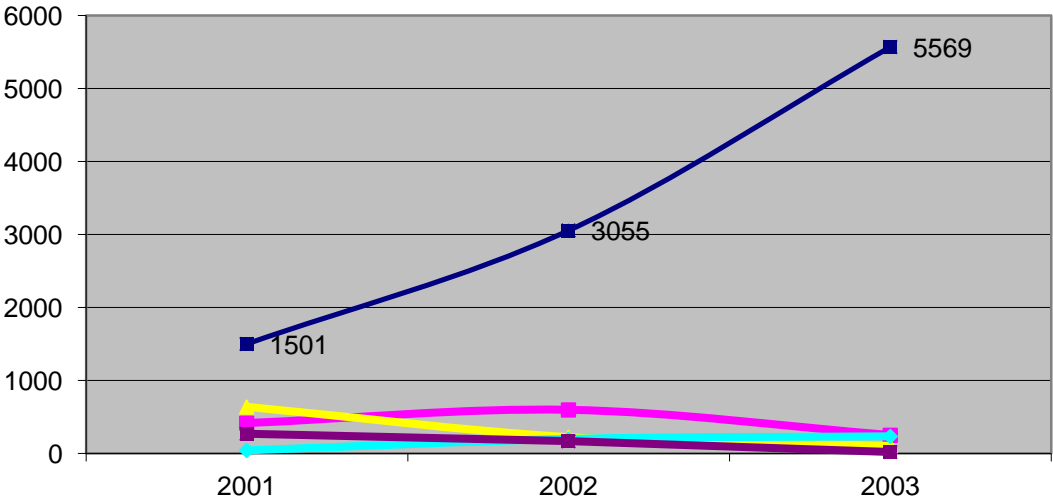
Figure 6 - Comparison of the number of Russian-Chechen asylum seekers in Poland, marked with the blue line, with the asylum seekers from countries such as Armenia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan or Iraq. Source: Polish Office for Foreigners.

A different graph shows that approximately ninety percent of all asylum seekers in Poland between 2004 and 2008 were already holders of a Russian passport. Most refugees came from the North Caucasus, after the declaration of a war on terror in the region.

Nationality/Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Russian Federation	7.183	6.246	6.405	9.239	7.760
Other	896	604	688	809	757
Total	8.079	6.860	7.093	10.048	8.517

Figure 7 - Asylum applications in Poland between 2004 and 2008. Source: Polish Office for Foreigners.

Other statistics show that between 2006 and 2008 almost 7.000 asylum seekers were not granted full convention status and instead were given a tolerated stay status or other form of subsidiary protection. A plausible explanation for this is provided by Lydia Morris. In her book, Morris recognises that the project of the European Union is mostly based upon the ambition to create an internal EU market for capital, commodities, labour, and services (Morris, 2002, pp. 11-13). Furthermore, she acknowledges that this ambition has evolved within the larger context of a contemporary unprecedented global movement of capital, commodities, ideas, and people (Morris, 2002, pp. 1-2), different nationalist legacies and also international law protecting, for instance, the concept of the universal human rights (Morris, 2002, pp. 4-6). According to Morris, this generated what she calls a 'cluster of contradictions' in which the logic of *laissez-faire* stands against welfare protectionism, the demands for cheap labour against migration regulations, or the national interests against transnational and international obligations. The sociologist explains that complex political tensions can be hardly grasped by some single political dynamics. Yet, as Morris emphasises, the fact that the tensions exist is confirmed by various new statuses, each with varying degree of political rights, which are well represented for instance by the figure of the third country national (Morris, 2002, pp. 5-6).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the institutional-political processes, which create the figure of the 'refugee' in Poland, quickly evolved over the post-socialist period. First dominated by rather liberal attitudes and policies, they turned later into a strict, sophisticated, and complex regime where standardised mechanisms for the management of forced migration became used to secure refugees' human rights and, meanwhile, control movement people from outside the external EU borders. I have demonstrated that this framework may be seen as part of larger political transformations related to the collapse of the socialist state, the integration of the Central-Eastern Europe into the 'European-western' world and the 2004 accession of Poland to the European Union.

There is also one other moment I wish to emphasise here. When I was in Poland, there were around twenty regular asylum accommodation centres, if I don't include so-called 'closed facilities' or prisons. Except one particular complex nicknamed by bureaucrats 'the colourful camp' because a minority that had not fled from the North Caucasus resided there all asylum facilities were inhabited only by Chechen or Ingush refugees.[19] Inside Hotel Pumis, for instance, the majority of rooms were inhabited by three or more people who perceived themselves as close relatives. Also, many in this asylum centre had known each other before they immigrated to Poland. Because Poland was already a

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[19] I was told that the authorities did not allow asylum seekers from the other parts of the world to live in the asylum centres inhabited by Chechen-Ingush refugees in order to prevent racially motivated conflicts.

Schengen state, it was relatively easy for some to migrate illegally to France, Belgium, or elsewhere in the EU. It was more difficult however to apply for asylum there, since they were registered as asylum seekers in Poland.[20] In the time of my fieldwork, refugee law together with other standardised mechanisms for the management of forced migration were used to secure fundamental human rights and control the Chechen-Ingush exodus to Poland and to the European Union.

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[20] Yet only a fraction of my respondents stayed in Poland after I left: some moved illegally to Western Europe, others returned back to Russia.

Chapter Three

'Refugee' Identity and Daily Life in Hotel Pumis

In Chapter Two, I identified the construction of a 'refugee' identity in Poland as the institutional and political-legal framework evolved, by 2008, into a system where standardised mechanisms for the management of forced migration were pragmatically and professionally used to secure refugees' fundamental human rights and needs, and mostly to control and discipline the Chechen-Ingush exodus to Poland and the European Union. I have situated the formation of a 'refugee' identity within the larger transformation processes of the collapse of the communist state, the transition from communism to liberalism and capitalism, and the 2004 accession of Poland to the European Union. While in the previous chapter I provided a historical outline of 'refugee' identity in Poland, in this chapter I shall attempt to grasp this construction, as it existed in the Polish-European asylum accommodation centre where I did the fieldwork. In order to do so, I focus on the relation between sovereignty and the bare life of a man 'who may be killed and yet not sacrificed' (Agamben, 1998, p. 12).

In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* Giorgio Agamben (1998) theorises about the capacity of sovereign power to transgress the boundaries between law and lawlessness in relation to (modern) refugees. Like other scholars (Bauman, 1990; Malkki, 1992), the philosopher recognises that refugees are typically seen as a disturbing element by contemporary nation states. Their uprootedness and indeterminacy break the links between nativity and political belonging,

between man and citizen. Hence, as Agamben explains, today, protection to refugees is principally provided by states and by humanitarian and international organisations affiliated to them. This excludes refugees from citizenship and defines them as mere objects of state and humanitarian interventions - i.e. limits them to bare life of Roman *Homo Sacer* (Agamben, 1998, pp. 77-79). Other anthropologists have developed further Agamben's ideas in numerous interesting ways. Drawing upon his own research of undocumented migration from Latin America to the USA, Nicholas De Genova asks us to pay attention to the way in which migrant's undesirability is legally constructed through sovereign power, limiting the freedom of movement for certain categories of people (De Genova, 2010). In *From Exception to Excess. Detention and Deportation across the Mediterranean Space*, Rutvica Andrijasevic (2010) provides a thought-provoking view on the asylum centres on the external EU borders. She does not define asylum centres as the manifestations of sovereignty per se but considers them to be centres for regulation of transit migration where the accession to the national and supranational-European markets is determined in relation to deportation. In *Building Fortress Europe. The Polish-Ukrainian Frontier*, Karolina Follis (2012) examines the processes of 'rebordering' in Central-Eastern Europe, the opening of internal and the closing of external EU borders in Central-Eastern Europe in the first decade of this century. In this chapter, I elaborate upon these studies. The question I ask is, how was 'refugee' identity constituted, or enacted, in the daily life of Hotel Pumis between 2007 and 2009? What did the process of re-bordering look like in the Polish asylum facilities?

In order to explore this problem, I work with a method developed by anthropologists who have studied various states of emergency in the

post-colonial south Asia (Tarlo, Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi, 2003; Spencer, 2007, pp. 96-117; Das, 2004; 2007, pp. 162-183). Acknowledging that the boundaries between bureaucratic forms and the other forms of sociality may be unclear in the context of the daily ordinary life, these anthropologists pay attention to various documents. These anthropologists conceptualise official documents as the materialisation of the state, for the fact that state power is commonly instituted through the production of written or printed documents. They also perceive official documents as the marker of state's ambiguity, as every written document can be interpreted in many ways. The researchers explore what the documents say the people should be doing and what the people in reality say and do. Each scholar have identified considerable discrepancies between the two and these differences served them as the empirical grounds for their original accounts of what sovereignty is as well as how it operates in the context of daily life.

Drawing upon the above-mentioned method, in this chapter I focus on particular document that was implicated in constituting the 'refugee' identity in Poland in the time of my research. Firstly, by describing what the document itself prescribed, I consider the construction of 'refugee' identity in terms of the abstract regulations and rules encompassed by the asylum law. Secondly, I examine what low-level bureaucrats and refugees said and did in relation to the document. As regards the bureaucrats, I show that they rather mistrusted the law and in the daily routines they often performed their work duties. The Chechen-Ingush refugees, then, were due to their previous experiences with the law in North Caucasus paranoid about the law. Yet, they actively participated in the process of distribution of the documents, driven by their hopes

for a better life and their attempts to make their daily struggles a bit easier. Describing the understandings and actions of both the refugees and low-level bureaucrats, in this chapter I formulate an argument that, situated in the context of daily life in Hotel Pumis, the construction of 'refugee' identity, or the process of rebordering, may be identified as a 'pendulum' moving between different rational-legal and irrational-illegal forms whose movement is nurtured by the ambiguity of the law.

Sovereignty, Bare Life, and Ethnographic Research

Let me start by introducing in more detail the studies that, as I explained earlier, inspired, in theoretical and methodological terms, my exploration into the conditions under which the legal-political construction of a 'refugee' saturates the daily life of the Polish asylum accommodation facilities. In his early work (1998), Agamben, the prominent philosopher, challenges Foucault's theory of governmentality (Foucault, 1991), claiming that the basis of the modern state are not the techniques of power developed in Western Europe in the 18th century but the ability of sovereign power to break the interconnections between the categories of a citizen and of a man. By re-examining classical sources as well as referring to the works of Walter Benjamin (1978) and Schmitt (1996), Agamben attempts to persuade his reader that the very principle of modern sovereignty lies in its capacity to unchain itself from the law it represents.[21] It should be

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[21] During the first half of the 1920s, Carl Schmitt, who would become a member of the Nazi party later in his life, published his book *Die Diktatur* in which he examines the political system of the Weimar Republic, praising the dictatorial competences of the president of the Reich. This book was later reflected in his study called *Der Begriff des Politischen*. Scholars acknowledge that Schmitt drew

noted here that this concept is not only relevant when thinking, in abstract terms about the political violence inflicted upon Chechen-Ingush senses and bodies in Poland. It is also useful when thinking about the violence inflected in the post-Soviet region of the North Caucasus. Anthropologist Mantas Kvedaravicius has researched the experience of the law and lawlessness in the post-socialist region of the North Caucasus (2008; 2013). Through a close of reading of his work, I am personally inclined to the understanding that the Russo-Chechen Wars were part of much larger state of emergency, which comprised twenty years of dramatic and turbulent transformations in the post-socialist North Caucasus.

In another publication, Agamben (2003) writes the history of what he calls a 'state of exception.' In this book, he locates the capacity of sovereign power to transgress the boundary between law and lawlessness in the legal systems of contemporary modern nation states in Western Europe and in the USA. Furthermore, by highlighting the ancient roots of political violence, he reveals that sovereignty has been able to transgress the rule of law for centuries. His insights offer a valid method for the study of political violence. This method, however, tends to depict the problem as mere ancient legacy and barely provides methodological clues to grasp the problem ethnographically. Anthropologists such as those mentioned above, who studied various states of emergency in post-colonial south Asia, have provided methodological insights into the ethnographic study of state violence

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much of his inspiration from Walter Benjamin. The German Jewish philosopher, of course, was not a supporter of the far right and, unlike Schmitt, he was not directly interested in the Weimar political system. Instead, he was interested in revolutionary violence.

(Tarlo, Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi, 2003; Das, 2007, pp. 162-183; Das, 2004; Spencer, 2007, pp. 96-117).

Starting with Agamben's premise that the foundations of sovereignty lay on the capacity of sovereign power to unchain itself from the law it represents, in *The Signature of the State: The Paradox of Illegibility*, Veena Das (2007, pp. 162-183) explores the state power as it was embedded in the violence in a low-income neighbourhood of Northern India during and after the communal riots of 1984. The neighbourhood was located on the 'margins of the state' (Das & Poole, 2004) where the capacity of the sovereign power to unchain itself from the law is well visible. Das uses documents as important tools to address her research problem. For the anthropologist, documents facilitate particular forms of governance and, since they exist in written form, they simultaneously suggest the possibility of forgery and imitation, and mimic representations of the state's power (Das, 2007, pp. 163 - 164). With this understanding, Das ethnographically demonstrates that, in this low-income neighbourhood, the state manifested in the rules and regulations embodied in the law; in various representations and performances of such rules in rumours, gossip, or mockery; and as a resource for rights and justice, despite the fact that ordinary people often connected the law to danger and uncertainty. Building upon her ethnographic material, she argues that, in this low-income neighbourhood, the Indian state may be defined as a form of regulation which oscillated between what she terms 'rational and magical forms of beings.' Das prefers the term 'magic of the state' instead of 'the fiction of the state' since magic has consequences in real life while the powers that underpin it remain hazy (Das, 2007, pp. 162-163).

In the ground-breaking work *Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Dehli*, Emma Tarlo (2003) investigates the Indian national emergency declared by Indira Ghandi in 1975. It is generally known that the state of emergency in India suspended many of the civil liberties of citizens in the lower strata of society. This allowed state elites to initiate various social experiments such as the so-called 'family planning programme,' aimed at solving the problem of urban poverty through the clearance and sterilisation of slum populations. Reconstructing the way in which such political violence is brought into the framework of everyday life, Tarlo examines the type of documentation that bureaucrats, who worked in the shantytown, produced about the sterilisation programme and the housing legalisation. Tarlo combines her analysis of the archive, which she accidentally found while doing fieldwork in the slums of Delhi during the 1990s, with the study of the life stories of victims and those who took part in the violence.

Having studied narratives and archival documents, Tarlo states that, in order to meet quotas, bureaucrats, who did not know what political elites required from them and who feared they would lose their jobs, legalised housing only if they were given a sterilisation certificate. This, Tarlo observes, was not strictly legal. Furthermore, Tarlo explains that, in fear of losing their houses, some wealthier members of the community began to persuade the poor to take part in the sterilisation programme. In such a way, they bought certificates that they could hand to bureaucrats to secure their homes - what mattered was the sterilisation certificate itself and not the name of the person who was sterilised. Bureaucrats recorded and documented the process as if no irregularities or illegal procedures were taking place.

Veena Das' study was particularly illuminating to me, as it helped me to apprehend what the political was in Hotel Pumis. I have also found Tarlo's study inspiring, since it helped me to better understand the conditions under which sovereignty can saturate daily life in the Polish asylum accommodation facilities.

The Document

Having introduced the studies that helped me to think about my own fieldwork and to organise my ethnographic material, I now turn to the analysis of the construction of a 'refugee' identity as it happened in the daily life of Hotel Pumis. I explore local manifestations of the re-bordering project by focusing on a particular document, which constituted an important part of the asylum process. Let me start by describing the document itself.

The document I am interested in is called 'Temporary Certificate of Foreigner's Identity' (Pol. *Tymczasowe zaświadczenie tożsamości cudzoziemca*). According to Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland, this document confirms the identity of a person, to whom it was issued and entitles such person and minor children, whose data have been entered therein, to stay on the territory of the Republic of Poland. The Temporary Certificate of Foreigner's Identity has two versions. Immediately after someone applies for asylum—which usually happens at the territorial border between Poland and Belarus or Ukraine—the person is given a provisional identity certificate. The provisional certificate is valid for one month. After settling in the asylum centre every asylum seeker is supposed to apply for another certificate

immediately. The second document is valid for six months. At the time of fieldwork, it was common for the holder of this certificate to emigrate from Poland to Western Europe illegally. At the same time, there was a regulation that required holders of regular certificates to renew their permits personally every month.

In the previous chapter, I explained that, as a part of the accession of Poland to the EU, Act of 13 June 2003 facilitated a form of sophisticated political violence against immigrants and increased asylum standards in Poland. As the description of the document shows, the rules and regulations of the asylum law have an important presence in the asylum centre, marking the lives of refugees.

The Low-level Bureaucrats

In this section, I focus specifically on state employees. While doing fieldwork, I was in touch with many state employees: a teacher, a psychologist, a doctor, or a maintenance man. The person who was responsible for the distribution and re-validation of certificates was the administrator of the asylum centre. In Hotel Pumis, a communicative woman in her early forties held the position of the administrator. An employee of the Poland's Office for Foreigners, this woman worked with the Chechen-Ingush refugees for many years. The asylum centre administrator was expected to act as mediator between white-collar bureaucrats in Warszawa and asylum seekers. Her office was inside Hotel Pumis. Let me describe how her practice and understandings were enmeshed with the life of these certificates.

The Mistrust in the Law

The following subsection describes how low-level bureaucrats whom I met in the field understood the document. My research has shown that low-level bureaucrats mistrusted the process of distributing identity certificates, since they were aware that most refugees were unable to or did not want to re-build their lives in Poland and perceived the country as a transit area.

I met the administrator for the first time in August 2007. I regularly visited her office on the ground floor, when I was negotiating my access to the Polish asylum centre. The office was bigger and better equipped than other rooms. There was a large working desk, a computer, and a comfortable chair. On the desk, there was a large pile of various documents and files. When I visited her office on one occasion, the administrator told the following narrative, which seemed to replicate the language of the law.

> The asylum centre administrator: After someone applies for asylum, either at the border or within the territory of Poland, police registers the person. Police gives the immigrant an ID card. This card must be later renewed. The card includes a photograph of the applicant, his or her name and surname, and the names of his or her children and spouse. Later, the applicant is transported to the central reception centre, to Dębak. They stay there for a couple of weeks. But this time could be prolonged. The applicant could also stay there for a couple of months. After this, they are transferred to one of the asylum accommodation centres.

Once registered by the police, officials judge the applicant's motives and reliability. Every case is given a particular number. From time to time, refugees complain about the fact that they are given these numbers. Numbers make them think that they are treated as if they were in some concentration camp. But numbers are important for us because refugees often change their names. And this is confusing.

The applicant should be informed about the decision made on their asylum application after six months. The Office for Foreigners sends the letter to me and I give it to the applicant. If the decision is not made within the period of six months, the Office for Foreigners sends an official letter explaining why this has happened. The reasons for the delay usually are a lot of work or some document or information missing.

If the asylum application is refused, the applicant has a right to raise an objection and their case must be opened again. If no objection is made, the immigrant must leave the territory of Poland within a period of two weeks. If they don't leave voluntarily, they can be deported. Most applicants, however, are given the status of tolerated stay *(Pl. Pobyt tolerowany)* nowadays. This status gives them the right to work. But, unlike refugee status *(Pl. status uchodźcy),* it does not give immigrants the right to unpaid accommodation and social benefits.

Every immigrant who has been given the status of tolerated stay must leave the accommodation centre within a period of three months. In terms of benefits, the status of tolerated stay is worse than the status the applicant already has. Many refugees

raise an objection to this kind of decision. After raising the objection the whole process starts from scratch and they are allowed to live in the asylum centres.

In the next couple of months, however, the communication between the low-level bureaucrat and me became more informal and I learned that her own understanding of these political dictums differs from the official narrative. She told me, in her own words, that 'refugees in Poland live in abnormal conditions.' She perceived the appalling socio-economic conditions in asylum centres and the precariousness and poverty that dominated the daily life of communities who lived near the asylum facilities as abnormal: 'Look at this neighbourhood. This place is a pure ghetto. No one would have been able to start a new life here.'

The bureaucrat was also confronted with the fact that Chechens-Ingushes think mostly about different times and places. On one particular occasion, she compared asylum seekers to Gypsies. She continued: 'They don't want to stay here anyway. They want to go to the west. They idealise what the west is. And if they emigrate there they are disappointed.' A couple of days later, she criticised refugees for not being able to detach themselves from the past.

> The asylum centre administrator: 'Older (refugees) are especially unable to forget what had happened to them in Chechnya. They live in the past. Here, they don't have any motivation. They don't want to learn the language. They are not interested in the libraries and museums. They isolate themselves from local life. Later, they have problems finding a job because they don't speak our language.'

Bureaucratic Performance

Low-level bureaucrats distrusted the law as they were confronted with the precarious difficult reality of daily life in a Polish low-income neighbourhood and with the situation of refugees. A question thus emerges in relation to how they performed their work duties in such situation. My research indicates that they attempted to enact the rules and regulations of the asylum law against these dissonant realities. This is, they opted to perform the law.

In October 2007, I had another discussion with the administrator. Poland was about to enter the Schangen zone and each asylum centre was overcrowded for this reason. The bureaucrat complained that, though there were no free places for newcomers, she expected seventy new refugees to come to Hotel Pumis. While we were talking, a Chechen woman entered the office. The woman introduced herself and said that she had just arrived from the central reception centre. She then asked the bureaucrat if she could apply for the certificate. The bureaucrat instructed the woman to fill out several forms and explained to her that she would receive benefits and unpaid accommodation. Witnessing the scene, I realised that there is a discrepancy between what the bureaucrat thinks and knows about the law and how she implements it. Though she registered the woman as a refugee in Poland in accordance to the requirements of the law she was confident that, by January 2008, after border controls between Poland and Germany disappeared, the woman would not be in Poland anymore.

I did not confront the administrator with questions about such dissonance between what she does and what she thinks, but I discussed this problem with some other bureaucrats later on. For example, I once talked to an employee of the local job centre who was responsible for assisting refugees who had received a tolerated stay permit. His work consisted of scheduling regular meetings with refugees in order to discuss the way in which they looked for a job - participation in these meetings was a condition for refugees to receive their benefits. This bureaucrat was extremely honest with me about what he did. He told me that everyone knew that his clients would sooner or later migrate from Poland. He said that there was an unspoken consensus between him and his clients, as he pretends to help them to find a job while they pretend to be interested in meeting him.

Weak Bureaucrats

Studying the Indian state of emergency, Tarlo explains that political violence became actualised when pressure was suddenly applied from above. Being exposed to the high expectations of the state and afraid of losing their jobs, employees of the state, who could not clearly distinguish what was legal from what was not, often fulfilled orders and motivated themselves to show the local poor the way to the sterilisation. With regard to Polish low-level bureaucrats, there was also certain top-down pressure applied on them at the time of my fieldwork. Due to the accession of Poland to the EU and the Schengen zone, state employees were expected to be extremely strict in relation to the asylum law, even if many refugees often disobeyed the law. In

what follows, I will describe how low-level bureaucrats coped with this situation.

One of the examples that shows that many refugees disobeyed the law was the fact that, even though in Hotel Pumis there was a security service until evening, the order was maintained primarily by refugees themselves. Refugees developed, with the help of traditional norms, their own strategies for maintaining the order. Refugees' own rules stipulated that no one who lives in Hotel Pumis could drink alcohol, that no one could smoke while being inside the building, or that no woman could wear a short skirt. They stated that refugees must behave like 'good orderly people' (Ru. '*porjadochnyj ljud*'). Others would judge those who did not respect the rules. It often happened that meetings ended with violence. If the person - usually a man - refused to follow collective mandates he could be beaten in the backyard.

Refugees maintained the order through communal meetings (Ru. *sobranie*). Only men attended these, as they did not allow Chechen women to publicly discuss communal matters. While participating on meetings, men either stood or sat in a circle, which showed respect for each other. Meetings always began and finished with a prayer. At the meetings, refugees talked about the official rules and regulations from time to time. Mostly, however, they discussed issues related to the rules that had been created by refugees themselves. It seemed that the meetings were inspired by the tradition of *Vainakh* tribal sessions (Chech. *mekh khel*). I inquired whether there was an equivalent of these meetings in contemporary Chechnya but they responded that there are not meetings of this kind.

Even though in public no one openly opposed the way in which the order was maintained, my refugee friends often complained privately to me about the fact that they had to subordinate to norms that other refugees had invented. For instance, a man once told me that he had been trying to escape from this. The thing I wish to emphasise here is that communal meetings existed not only because refugees wanted them but also because the administrator of the asylum centre supported them. For the administrator, meetings represented the way in which to communicate her working duties to refugees. She encouraged them to regularly meet, allowing them to use the communal room in Hotel Pumis for this purpose.

In Hotel Pumis, communal violence was very common. To give but one example, one evening in the early spring of 2008, Adam, a Chechen refugee, returned to the temporary home from work. He passed the porter, but he was not able to continue to his rooms because several refugee men stopped him. The men were waiting for him. They had been informed that Adam had visited the pub before he came to Hotel Pumis. The leader of the group approached him, asking whether he was aware that 'our people' (Chech. *nakh*) had declared a prohibition on drinking alcohol and smoking in the area of the asylum centre. The leader insisted that Adam must be tested for alcohol. Adam refused to be tested. After the leader of the group gave a sign to the other men, they took Adam to the back yard where he was brutally beaten.

The following day, Adam visited the administrator in her office so he could officially report that he had been ruthlessly beaten. The bureaucrat emphatically received Adam's complains. She informed him that he had the right to report the incident. However, she added that he should take into consideration that an official letter of complaint

might not solve things, as Chechens did things their own way and might not respect police authority if there is a conflict among them. She suggested another solution to the problem. She advised Adam to apply to be transferred to a different asylum centre and promised him to make sure that the application would be quickly approved. Adam agreed but, paradoxically, after he moved away his troubles did not stop.

The leader called him for some reason and Adam was very rude and vulgar on the phone. Insulted, the leader threw his mobile phone against the wall and exclaimed that the 'sinner' was going to regret his words painfully. Soon after the leader made this proclamation, about thirty men were ready to go with him. I also became, unknowingly, an accessory to the mob. Since the men did not have enough cars, four of them visited me and told me that they urgently need me to drive them somewhere. I tried to find out what was going on but nobody told me. When we were about to reach the destination, a mobile phone rang. One of the men picked up the phone and briefly talked to someone. He asked whether everyone was leaving then and if 'the dog got what he has deserved.' Soon after, he gave an order and said: 'Everything has been solved. We can go back now.'

It may be fruitful, I think, to compare my ethnography with Emma Tarlo's here. In her study, Tarlo demonstrates that the pressures of the Indian state of emergency forced the community to take an active part in the atrocities committed and generated cruel bureaucrats who supported illegal practices in their attempts to protect their jobs. In my own ethnography, I have shown that the administrator indirectly supported communal trials. She overlooked the fact that refugees used violence to maintain the order in the asylum centre. In short, my

research has shown that, in an asylum centre situated on an external EU border, where who can and who can not access national and supranational-European markets is decided, top-down pressure generated weak bureaucrats, who tolerated illegalities so they could easily perform their work duties.

Refugees and the Law

The exploration of the construction of a 'refugee' identity would have been incomplete without considering how refugees relate to these certificates. Unlike Veena Das (2007, p. 167), in this chapter I delineate a boundary between state employees and refugees, since there was an obvious difference between the two groups. Whereas state employees were responsible for the distribution of certificates and for providing various other services for refugees, asylum seekers were supposed to go through these bureaucratic procedures. Yet, in the end, I shall demonstrate that the understanding and practices of refugees supplemented those of state bureaucrats during the asylum process.

Conspiracies and Paranoia

In the following lines, I describe how Chechen-Ingush refugees understood documents through the lens of their previous experiences of the law in Russia and the North Caucasus. I show that many refugees were extremely sensitive or even paranoid about the law in Poland.

In a paper given at the 2008 EASA conference, Mantas Kvedaravicius (2008), a Cambridge PhD candidate who did anthropological fieldwork

in the North Caucasus after the 1999 war, presented original and thought-provoking ideas about the transformation of Chechnya after the fall of socialism. There is a prevailing view in the literature on the North Caucasus that relates the extremely violent and turbulent nature of the post-socialist transformation to the sudden withdrawal of the rule of law in the region (Derluguian, 2004; Rigi, 2007; Tishkov, 1997).[22] Opposing this view, Kvedaravicius referred to the example of the infamous Chechen prison *Chernakozovo*. According to him, Russian forces opened the concentration camp in 1999. The camp, however, had been formally classified as a detention centre for individuals detained for vagrancy and begging in legal terms. Kvedaravicius emphasised that, in post-socialist Chechnya, violence was placed within the legal system and served the interests of the state especially after the 1999

In his presentation, Kvedaravicius also gave us a unique insight into the everyday experience of the law in the North Caucasus after the war. He spoke about everyday experience of the law through the telling a

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[22] For instance, Jakob Rigi (2007) has labelled the chaos and violence in post-socialist Chechnya 'the chaotic mode of domination.' His study is based upon the premise formulated by Derluguian (2004, pp. 104-128), which argues that the rapid socialist modernisation and industrialisation under Stalin ultimately transgressed ethnic and religious boundaries in the USSR and established the basis of a modern society. The modernisation process subsequently generated tensions between socialist elites from the economic and political centre of Moscow and the newly established peripheral elites over the access to and re-distribution of resources. Rigi develops this explanation further. He acknowledges that, as the crisis of the Soviet Union progressed societal tensions escalated over the course of the 1980s, and highlights the fact that after the fall of the Soviet empire violence erupted in peripheral areas of the Soviet Union such as the North Caucasus. Rigi's argument is that the post-socialist transformation in the North Caucasus was so violent and turbulent because, after socialism, elites had completely lost the structural base of their power. Hence, according to the author, they started to use violence, money, and social networks cynically in order to maintain their economic interests and govern the ordinary population.

story of a cadet at the Law Enforcement Academy in Chechnya. The story began by describing how the cadet once woke up from an uneasy dream, which changed his life dramatically. While the cadet slept, Kvedaracicious explained, he spoke critically about his commanding officers. He criticised them for not reminding cadets about their daily prayer or their Islamic dress code. Some of the cadet's colleagues recorded him talking in his sleep. The video later triggered a set of events during which commanding officers accused the cadet of being a Wahhabi. He was then expelled from the school - Wahhabism is a religious practice associated with Chechen rebels. Paradoxically, as Kvedaravicious explained, officers were probably closer to the rebels than to the poor cadet since, after the 1999, law enforcement agents were usually former freedom fighters that had changed sides.

Through the telling of the story, the anthropologist intended to demonstrate that twenty years of turbulent transformations in Chechnya generated a specific sense of reality, at the level of human experience, which was dominated by paranoia and bizarre conspiracies. I also recorded this phenomenon, as I was trying to grasp the experiences of Chechen-Ingush refugees. In the asylum centre where I did the fieldwork, numerous rumours and conspiracies circulated. For instance, soon after I started living with refugees I revealed that I had been in Moscow studying Russian language and conversation. A couple of days later, I found out that there were rumours about me, which said that I was a Russian spy. Later, I befriended some of the refugees. During the private talks I had with my friends, they constantly reminded me that, among refugees, there are also 'bad people' who secretly collect information and give it to *Kadyrovtsy* and to the FSB - unlike the cadet that Kvedaravicius spoke about, Chechens in Poland

had escaped the oppressive Kafkaesque regime of the country and could thus be openly critical about it.

In December 2007, one of the refugees, a former freedom fighter who was known as a silent loner, disappeared. There was evidence that he had emigrated illegally from Poland to Germany. Nonetheless, conspiracies soon emerged, stating that some strangers, who allegedly put drugs into his tea after he had fallen asleep, had kidnapped the man, locked him in the back of the car, and transported him back to Russia. On a different occasion, I witnessed an incident related to the visit of a Chechen man to the asylum centre. This man announced that he was a historian associated to University of Moscow, and he had been invited to Warszawa in order to give a talk about ancient *Vainakh* settlements. He explained to around thirty residents of Hotel Pumis, who had gathered in the communal room, that he decided to visit his own people, as he had heard a lot about the Chechen-Ingush diaspora in Poland. Some refugees, however, did not trust this man. They accused him of being Kadyrov's spy. The man defended himself by saying that he supported neither Kadyrov nor Maskhadov and that he just wanted to show them his new book. Refugees, however, forced him to leave the building.

Previous experiences of the law in Chechnya and Ingushetia, in Russia, had a significant impact on the way refugees understood and talked about Polish documents. To illustrate this point, I heard asylum seekers complaining about the process of distribution of the certificates many times. According to their complaints, bureaucrats only wanted refugees to register with them because this gave them access to European grants and donations. In reality, they argued, bureaucrats were not interested in them. They gave allegedly bad food to them. They also

put pork and chemicals into their meals. A man once told me that the administrator of the asylum centre was a close relative of the director of the Office for Foreigners. She was presumably a member of some obscure bureaucratic clan who was in charge of all Polish asylum accommodation centres. This clan, as I was told, collected personal data about refugees and sold them on to Russians.

One of my Chechen friends, for instance, once took my mobile phone and dialled some strange number. The mobile phone gave a loud beep. I later tried to investigate the number and I found out that it had to do with the settings of my mobile phone. Nonetheless, the man insisted on the fact that the beep meant police monitored my phone. He told me that he had been given the code by other Chechens, and that many refugees have their phones hacked. In short, because of their previous experiences of violence in post-socialist Chechnya, refugees' understandings of the political in Poland were mostly affected by a sense of paranoia and conspiracy - of course, it is possible that part of these stories about the Polish-European law might have been true and enough to keep rumours churning out.

Rights and Protection

In this section, I continue to describe how refugees acted in relation to the distribution of documents. Describing these places, I show that despite the fact that there were numerous rumours and conspiracies about what the Polish and European law was, some refugees kept addressing the same law in order to make human rights claims and demand support and protection. Yet, their daily survival relied also upon many informal-illegal activities.

The place where most refugees from Hotel Pumis applied for the document-certificate for the first time was the Polish-Belarusian territorial border. Most of the refugees whom I knew had been unable to travel to the EU by plane— even if they possessed a passport allowing them to travel abroad (Ru. *zagranpassport*) it was impossible for them to get a EU visa.[23] Hence, most of them used land transport. They firstly travelled to Moscow where they took the train to the Belarusian Brest. While doing the fieldwork, I met only a very few who had crossed this border illegally.[24] After arriving in this city, near the Polish border, most of people I knew took the local connection to Terespol, in Poland. After they arrived in Poland, they had only one option if they wanted to avoid the deportation: they had to apply for asylum.

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[23] In Russia there are two types of passports. The first type, an internal passport, is roughly equivalent to a national identity card. This document is officially only valid within the limits of the Russian Federation. A Russian international passport, then, is legally required if travelling abroad.

[24] I do not want to claim here that there were nearly no illegal crossings of the border. What I want to stress here is that while doing fieldwork I spent most of the time with the asylum seekers who lived in Hotel Pumis. I did not participate in the lives of migrants who had immigrated to Poland illegally. From what my Chechen friends told me, I just know that the illegal crossing of the external EU border was a risky and dangerous enterprise since this border had sophisticated protection against illegal migrants. Overcoming technological and military protection, as I learned, typically meant hiding in the forests and fields, swimming across rivers, or trusting human traffickers.

As far as I know, the militarisation and securisation of the border between Poland and Belarus and Ukraine caused human tragedies. In September 2007, for instance, a woman from Grozny and her children wanted to make their way into Austria, where the woman had a brother. While in Ukraine, she paid human traffickers to smuggle her and her four children through *Bieszczady*, a wild natural area, into Poland. Traffickers took the family to the forest and showed them where Poland was. The woman got lost and the family wandered helplessly around the forest for several days. In the end, only the mother and her eldest son survived . The other three children died of hypothermia.

Some refugees were active in renewing their documents after they had been accommodated in asylum facilities. Firstly, some Chechens and Ingushes did not want to have problems with the police. Police often controlled refugees and feared that, if they were unable to prove their identity, they could be imprisoned and also deported from the country.[25] Secondly, there were many Chechens-Ingushes who needed medical care. Physical and mental wounds were very common among refugees and certificates gave them access to medical treatment. Other reasons were more economic. Refugees claimed certificates because they provided access to benefits, including free housing and food. They were also a proof of residence, which enabled immigrants to receive letters and packages from their relatives who lived abroad.

Moreover, many asylum seekers often worked illegally, even in Germany or France, and used the Polish asylum centre, for instance, merely as shelter for their relatives. Interestingly, other Polish documents besides identity certificates gained value in the context of an underground economy. There were many refugees who wanted to emigrate from Poland to other countries but were unable to do legally because they had applied for asylum in Poland. I heard about refugees who had bought a fake document confirming that Polish authorities were unable to protect the holder of the certificate. They then travelled to France or Belgium, hoping that after showing their certificates and confirmations to authorities there, they would be allowed to apply for asylum.

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[25] The possibility of the deportation particularly threatened former Chechen freedom fighters, who knew exactly the day when they had to renew their certificates.

The Blurred Boundary between the Law and Lawlessness

Writing about the community, which lived in the urban neighbourhood at the time of the emergency, Tarlo demonstrates that wealthier members developed certain survival strategies in fear of losing their houses. Many of them paid the poor for their sterilisation certificates. Tarlo argues that, even if the primary function of these strategies was to resist the law, in the end they become the backbone of political violence. In relation to Chechen-Ingush refugees, they were also familiar with the state's top-down pressure. Most of them experienced such pressure at the territorial border between Poland and Belarus where they had no other option but to apply for asylum in Poland. I talked to some refugees about what had happened at the border and their response was that they 'surrendered' (Ru. *sdavat'sja*) to the Poles there. After they settled in asylum centres, they kept being exposed to this pressure. However, it was not as high as it was for low-level bureaucrats – what indicates this is for instance the fact that they were allowed to do maintain the order in their own way. Nonetheless, my research has shown that, even though they were not exposed to a situation similar to that Tarlo writes, the informal and illegal practices and strategies they maintained in their daily lives also constituted the backbone of the political violence.

This could be observed in relation to the person refugees elected as leader whose power, it seems to me, was directly linked to the low-level bureaucrats' weakness. Chechens and Ingushes called their leader either *stareshina*—senior man—or *predsedatel*—chairman. These are not Chechen but Russian terms. The first word refers to traditional authority, whereas the second term evokes legal authority. I enquired about the origins of the leadership and refugees told me that there is

no equivalent to either *predsedatel* or *stareshina* in today's Chechnya. This authority, instead, emerged from the need to negotiate communal matters with Polish bureaucrats. In real life, the leader had the power to speak on behalf of all refugees when negotiating with state authorities. Also, he had power over the lives of Chechens and Ingushes who lived not only in the asylum centre but also in other parts of the city. Significantly, the person who introduced me to the *Vainakh* leader was the administrator.

The Big Man, the Great Man

I can clearly see the similarities between the authority of this leader and the authority that Veena Das describes (Das, 2007, pp. 175-177), which emerged from the needs of the community in the margins of the state in Delhi to negotiate various matters with local bureaucrats. Let me thus untangle the identity and authority of the Chechen leader.

Aslanbek, the Chechen leader, was born in 1980, in a small village in western Chechnya. He had lived in this village for most of his whole life. He was born into a very poor family. His mother died when he was only four years old. His father became a labour migrant. He often travelled to Kazakhstan for work, leaving the boy and his brothers and sisters alone at home. Aslanbek was his eldest son so, because the father was absent, he became responsible for the household. As a child, he had to collect waste, metal, bottles, and old paper in order to be able to feed his younger siblings. Because of this, he only completed four classes at elementary school.

When he was twenty-three years old, Aslanbek married a woman. His wife belonged to *Kuloy teip*, to his clan. Soon, his woman gave him two

sons. The family resided in Aslanbek's parental house. By the time Aslanbek married, however, his father had found another woman, married her, and had three children with her. After the second Russian-Chechen war, the police started persecuting Aslanbek and his father and siblings because he had been indirectly involved in the Chechen rebellion. So, he fled to Europe, taking his wife and children with him. In Poland, the family was re-settled in Hotel Pumis.

While low-level bureaucrats in Poland generally acknowledged Aslanbek to be the leader, it was refugees who elected him. As far as I know, what predestined him to become *predsedatel* was his skill at dealing with the problems beyond the law. For instance, once he acted very promptly and bravely after some racketeers had threatened one particular Chechen family who rented a flat in the city. The racketeers forced the family to pay them to be able to keep the flat, leading Aslanbek to quickly organise a group of refugee men who met the Mafia and threatened them. In the end, the racketeers left the family alone. Alanbek was also able to protect refugees from local street gangs who lived in the neighbourhood.

But there were also other personal characteristics, which predestined Aslanbek to become the leader. Aslanbek was very religious. The others knew that Aslanbek was a responsible husband and father. He never drank alcohol. He would never steal anything - refugees saw him as the moral authority that could represent them all well. As far as I know, Aslanbek also agreed to become *stareshina* because he hoped that state authorities would later acknowledge what he had done. He hoped they would help him with his application for, or grant him, asylum and help him and his family with housing. But this, of course, did

not happen. He was given a tolerated stay permit and later he had to leave the asylum centre.

In order to theorise the authority of the community leader in Delhi, Das consults anthropological studies about non-state societies in Indonesia and labels the mediator the 'big man.' What separates the big man from the great man in anthropology is the root of his power: a great man's authority relies mostly upon warfare and ritual, while a big man's power is based upon his individual skills and capabilities to control material resources (Godelier, 1986; Godelier & Strathern, 1991).[26] Das borrows the concept of the big man in order to define the roots of the mediator's authority, which emerged from the man's individual skills in forging communal matters and which suppressed the authority of the traditional leader who also lived in the neighbourhood. Aslanbek, it seems to me, was both a big man and a great man, because his authority relied on his individual skills to negotiate with state authorities and his capacity to solve things went beyond the law.

Conclusion

Working closely with the theories and methods developed by anthropologists who studied different states of emergency in the Indian subcontinent (Das, 2004; Das, 2007, pp. 162-183; Tarlo, Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi, 2003; Spencer, 2007), in this chapter I have scrutinised by means of ethnographic analysis the

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[26] Anthropologists know that the difference between a great man and a big man is not definite: the big man's power partly relies also upon the strategies which could be rather affiliated with the great man and vice versa.

political-legal framework constituting a 'refugee' in Poland in the daily life in the Polish asylum centre between 2007 and 2009. I have defined this research problem in terms of the 're-bordering' of the European Union. Drawing upon her multi-sited ethnographic research conducted in Poland at the time of the 2004 accession of the new member states to the European Union, Follis (2012) compellingly describes the process of re-bordering in Poland: by introducing us to the public discourses on immigration and the lived worlds of the non-EU immigrants and Polish border guards and bureaucrats she guides us through different forms of regulating access to a common EU market and citizenship. Follis shows how larger political transformations shaped the actions of low-level bureaucrats and security guards as well as the strategies and meanings that non-EU immigrants developed in reaction to these changes. I find her study very interesting since it describes the political in the same region and more or less at the same time as my own ethnography.

In relation to my ethnographic study of daily life in Hotel Pumis, I have described re-bordering as a process, which fluctuated between rational-bureaucratic and non-buraucratic informal and illegal forms. The rational-bureaucratic were the regulations and rules embodied in the asylum law. With regard to non-bureaucratic forms, I have identified low-level performances of bureaucrats and their daily duties and refugees' illegal and informal daily practices. In other words, I have identified a certain kind of agency, which connected low-level bureaucrats and refugees. I hope I have sufficiently explained that this agency is often informal and illegal but essentially rational. Even if it can be seen in some cases as response or resistance, or opposite to the rule of law, from a broader perspective, it can be paradoxically

identified as the backbone of sovereign power. Such power effectively penetrates daily life in the asylum centre, and manages, regulates, and disciplines the migration transit at the external EU borders.

In the previous part of the thesis I have spoken about refugee identity, or experience, in terms of the institutional and political discourses and practices about refugee immigrants which, complex in their structure, are capable of creating a certain kind of subject. In Chapter One I explained that, while conducting the fieldwork, I reached a point in which the barrier between semi-detached ethnographer and observer and the interlocutors or refugees were broken down. During fieldwork, I let myself be carried by refugees' narratives, by their urgent need to tell what had happened to them, and to make their stories public. I let myself be guided by the empathy I felt with the subjects I encountered. I felt the necessity to assist my new friends in their daily struggles. I accepted that I didn't have the control over the field or that I was not there only to collect data relevant to answer my research question. The field and the people I met took control over me. As I explained in an earlier chapter, I became a 'sheet of paper' on which refugees inscribed their experiences, their suffering, and their pain. As a result, the time that I spent living with and listening to refugees, together with the post-fieldwork years that I spent trying to comprehend and write about the field through my own personal experience of loss and the reading of other ethnographies of violence convinced me that the experience of Chechen-Ingush refugees in Poland can be defined, as other scholars have done (Loizos, 1981; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Colson, 2003; 2004), in relation to disruption, loss, and change.

Part II: The Chechen-Russian Wars and Refugees' Experiences in Exile

Chapter Four

The Gendered Subject: The Experiences of the Men-Husbands

Chapter One depicted a form of identity close to Chechen-Ingush men. In particular, I mentioned that some men, especially the younger ones who lived with their wives, their children and their closest blood relatives in Hotel Pumis often saw themselves as heads of their temporary households. It is especially in relation to this group of refugees that one may think of a form of communal identity which goes beyond the idea of household. Like Steward's Gypsies, Chechen-Ingush men often referred to each other as brothers (Chech. *vasha*) in public. Men vied for honour and prestige in public. They presented themselves as members of a community built upon ideas of mutual support, respect, the sharing of the resources, and on morality (concerned with issues of alcoholism and theft for example). How was this kind of identity formed in Hotel Pumis? Untangling this problem, this chapter is concerned with how traumatising loss may change the subject and how such subject, whose temporality has been disrupted, may create new ways in which to inhabit the world.

The problem of how violence penetrates the inner world of communities and how their members cope with different kinds of violent disruptions has been addressed by other ethnographic studies. Describing the devastating consequences of violence, other authors recognise that the trust in the intergenerational, intergender, or communal relationships that had underpinned the flow of the everyday

life was destroyed and replaced by cynicism and sense of betrayal in the context they study (Reynolds, 2000; Kanapathipillai, 1990; Das, 2000; 2007, pp. 59-78). Anthropological studies also demonstrate that such devastating 'poisonous' knowledge of the world may be transgressed by the subject setting up new ways and norms through which the world can be inhabited again (Scheper-Hughes, 1992; Skultans, 1998; Das, 2000; 2007, pp. 59-78). Other scholars focus on the way in which different political-legal frameworks may either engage with or suppress such subjective process of violence becoming integrated into the everyday life (Todeschini, 2001; Das, 2007, pp. 18-37). Aiming to contribute to these studies, in this chapter I focus on the following problems: (a) how was the domain of Chechen-Ingush subjectivity modified by the Russo-Chechen Wars and the displacement of people? (b) how did subjects make the sense of the world and re-make their lives in the context of traumatising losses? (c) how did institutional and political-legal labels penetrate and shape the process of recovery?

In the introductory chapter to *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Das, 2007, pp. 3-4), Veena Das makes a reference to Marylin Strathern's study (1995) on the issues of complexity and scale in anthropology. Strathern's influential study, as it is known, discusses the way in which we may learn about abstract complex problems such as kinship from studying connections and relations between persons. Das takes from Strathern the idea that concrete relations may be perceived as holograms of abstract larger issues - she considers this to be applicable to the relation between the subject and the world. Das also shares Strathern's idea that the description of concrete persons and relations is an essential component of any ethnography, as it enlarges the field of our vision and allows us to assign the scale to

social patterns. In line with Das and Strathern, I understand concrete relations between Chechen-Ingush refugees and the world as a shadow of larger issues, or patterns, which overwhelmed the daily life of these subjects after the wars and their displacement. Secondly, by referring to concrete people whom I encountered in the field I attempt to establish a horizon where, through the anthropologist's eyes, I locate these patterns or issues, as they are embedded in concrete relationships between subjects and their world.

Describing the voice of Akhmad, a refugee who had accepted me as one of their own, this chapter examines the interrelation between the subject and the world. In this chapter, like in the following ones, the voice has a concrete identity. Nonetheless, I understand that it is a part of the consonant larger voice of the Chechen-Ingush refugee community in this part of Poland. Having considered the subject's pain and suffering in relation to the forced disconnection from social, communal, and family settings, in this chapter I grasp the way in which the subject, with the help of socio-cultural resources, creates a new way of inhabiting the world around him. I will also describe the way in which this conception of the world became consonant with the political-legal construction of the refugee in Poland and their making of a 'refugee' identity. My argument is that the formation of a gendered identity and subjectivity may be explicable through the complex transactions that occur between past dramatic war moments and present ways of integrating such violent disruptions at the subjective level, within specific political-legal settings, into the everyday life.

Chechen-Ingush 'No-Return Mentality'

Hilary Pilkington (1998) uses the expression 'no-return mentality' to label the experiences of post-Soviet refugees, internally displaced people (IDP) uprooted in Russia in the 1990s as the communist state collapsed. According to the sociologist, the no-return mentality consisted of a couple of elements. The first was an awareness that the clock cannot and would not be turned back to what it was—the IDP's not only 'mourned' the loss of their houses and jobs but also struggled with the economic conditions, which did not enable them to start anew again. The second element was a fear of social and ethnic isolation. Pilkington explains that the places where they came from had been depopulated of ethnic Russians. Those that had hoped to return were afraid that there would not be a community that accepts them (Pilkington, 1998, p. 127). Drawing from conversations I had with refugees, I would suggest that the idea of a no-return mentality could also be applied, though with important variations, to the experiences of most Chechens and Ingushes whom I met in the field.

Many Chechen-Ingush adults looked back nostalgically to the pre-war period. This is not to say that most of them praised life in the Soviet Union uncritically. Scholarship on the region stresses that the lives of Chechens and Ingushes, an ethnic community which Russian and Soviet states had absorbed, were in many aspects marginalised under communist USSR (Derluguian, 2004; Gammer, 2006; Khizrieva & Reyna, 2011). Indeed, while many adult Chechens and Ingushes wish to return to pre-war times, they also complained to me that, under communism, they did not have practically any access to well-paid jobs in the North Caucasian oil industry, or that state authorities prioritised Soviet citizens of Russian, Ossetian, or Ukrainian nationalities when

distributing accommodation - under communism, flats were administered by the state.

Yet, most Chechens-Ingush adults perceived the period before the Russo-Chechen Wars as the 'normal period' (Ru. *vse normal'nym bylo*) and the period after to be the chaotic time (Ru. *bespredel; besporjadki nachalis'*). My own image of Chechen and Ingush daily life under communism was constructed through the conversations I had with refugees. This image bears similarities with Frances Pine's description of the *Górale* in Poland (Pine, 1996; 1999). Pine explains that, in response to 'outside' marginalisation, *Górale* praised ideas of kinship, reciprocity, communal-collective morality, and hard work. These ideas constituted the emotional core of their identities. Being uprooted in a similar setting to the *Górale*'s, many refugees remembered pre-war and communist times and praised that time because, in their view, there used to be order or they could travel all across the USSR for work. Nonetheless, they were especially nostalgic about their family and communal living.

According to scholars who write about the region (Jaimoukha, 2005; Souleimanov, 2007, pp. 17-41), a complex set of norms and customs regulated family and communal living in the North Caucasus. With regard to the family (Chech. *do'zal, tsa*), each individual has particular rights and responsibilities. The person with the greatest authority and power over other family members is, according to the norms, one of the eldest members, either a father (Chech. *da*) or a grandfather (Chech. *den da*). Children may sometimes disobey their grandmother (Chech. *de nana*) and their mother (Chech. *nana*) but they must never disobey the father or husband (Chech. *majra*), who is responsible for his wife's wellbeing as well as for his sons' education. The norms

prescribe that the eldest son has responsibilities over his younger brothers and that every brother must protect his unmarried sisters. The youngest son, then, is allowed to marry but he is not allowed to leave the house after marriage under any circumstances. Even though every son is expected to assist his parents, it is the youngest son who is expected to stay with them after they grow old (Jaimoukha, 2005, pp. 87-88). Communal relationships are also regulated. For instance, every man is expected to act as an honourable free person who never surrenders to an intrusive force, and who is always ready to sacrifice himself for a righteous cause (Souleimanov, 2007, pp. 30-34). But he is also expected to obey an etiquette based on self-restraint and respect for the individual in order not to harm communal harmony (Souleimanov, 2007, pp. 35-37).[27]

In contrast to these ideals, Chechen-Ingush refugees in Poland had been dispossessed and displaced. They had lost their homes (Chech. *tsa*) and places that connected them to their ancestors. On the one hand, during their exile, most of them were accompanied by some of their relatives, usually their spouses and children. It was not easy for parents to take care of those who depended on them. On the other, they had abandoned other relatives such as parents and siblings - at the time of my research, in the North Caucasus, ordinary people lived in poverty and it was common for perpetrators of violence, paramilitary

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[27] To give an example of the importance of dominant-traditional norms in the context of everyday life, let me mention a story, which made its way to the world media. During the Utøya massacre in Norway two Chechen acted according to the *Vainakh* norms. After teenage boys saw Breivik killing the children, they called their father. Instead of instructing his sons to hide from the mad terrorist, the father told them to stay calm, help the other children, and to try to stop the madman if possible. Indeed, the teenagers tried to stop the terrorist by throwing stones at him, risking their own lives. Later, they helped other survivors to find a place to hide.

units, secret police, or the army, to terrorise the relatives of a person who was persecuted and had gone missing. Instead of fighting the enemy, Russian occupants and Chechen traitors had escaped from the fight. There was also a sense of betrayal among refugees because those who had expelled them from their houses and, in some cases, tortured them were themselves *Vainakhs*, people who belonged to their own ethnic community. As a result, Chechen-Ingush refugees often suppressed the idea of going back. Many had lost hope in returning home.

The reader might get the impression that I romanticise the problem of refugees' displacement and neglect, for instance, the disruption that forced migration caused on individual ambitions and life plans. I have no intention to deny this aspect of Chechen and Ingush men's suffering. On the contrary, I think that in some cases it is possible to say that since it had disconnected subjects from the hierarchical family and their communal settings, their uprooting was also a liberating experience. My own knowledge of refugees' experiences leads me to think about this disruption primarily in collective-family and communal terms.

Akhmad's Fragmentary Life

Akhmad lived in Hotel Pumis between October 2007 and December 2008. Like many other refugee men, he shared a private room with other members of his nuclear family, with his spouse and a four-year old son. Besides his wife and his child, there were also a few of Akhmad's other kinsmen. His uncle and his two brothers-in-law also lived with him in the asylum centre. However, they were only there for a short time. His closest blood relatives, his siblings, two brothers, and

two sisters, remained in the North Caucasus. As far as I know, Akhmad was in touch with his brothers. As his sisters had married, their family ties were, in line with patrilineal kinship norms, no longer very strong. During his time in Poland, he mostly communicated with his wife, his child, and me. Interestingly, Akhmad was one of the refugees who succeeded in creating a strong and coherent narrative about his fragmentary life.[28] In the following, I present Akhmad's first-person testimony of his life and I enrich specific parts of his biography with some information the narrator had shared with me in the course of our communication over nine months. I do this with the aim of untangling the no-return mentality as it manifested through this man's experience.

Akhmad belonged to a younger-middle generation of refugees. He was born in 1968 to an Ingush couple, a man and a woman who had suffered a lot under the Stalinist regime. He grew up in poverty. His parents struggled economically after they had returned from a period of forced exile in Kazakhstan and were not allowed to re-settle in the place they had lived before their displacement. Akhmad's mother and father were caring parents. The father taught his son to be a responsible, strong, just, and competitive individual who should never surrender to any oppression or intrusion, he taught him to be *Vainakh* in the traditional sense of the word. The mother loved her son and trusted in him. She helped him to become a self-confident person. The

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[28] I interviewed Akhmad about his life in July 2008, when I already knew him well. The coherence of his biography surprised me. When we met for the interview, we went outside, as he was reluctant to talk about certain episodes of his life in front of his wife. He talked about his life and I asked almost no questions for over two hours.

socialist education system influenced and formed young Akhmad. Growing up in a multi-ethnic region part of the USSR, in primary school he became attracted by the idea of proletarian internationalism. Later, he studied at high school, and specialised in wood industries. Following his father's footsteps, he became a woodcarver. He also registered as an external student of Russian literature and philology at university.

As he explained to me:

> My mother was two years old when she lost her parents. Her mother died and her father was sent to prison. Later, he was shot dead by the Cheka.[29] My father only knew his mother. When he was three years old, his father was also shot. Cheka again... When my parents were young, there was a strong Bolshevik repression. Chechen and Ingush villages were overtaken by Bolsheviks. If they found someone who had at least some authority over the others, who was able to give orders to other people, such a person was immediately killed...

> My grandparents were simple people. Their crime was that they had authority over other villagers. You know, in Ingushetia there was a group of people respected by the whole nation at that time. They were similar to the mafia in Sicily. Anyone could approach them with queries and questions. And they would give them advice and make decisions. They served the nation. Bolsheviks feared this. If they saw that people had respect for someone, such person was immediately killed.

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[29] Cheka (Ru. *Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya)* was the first state security organization of the Soviet state established during the 1917 Revolution.

My father was born in T., a village in today's North Ossetia. The Ingush name of the village is M. When my parents were in Kazakhstan, this village was colonised by Ossetians. Including the house, which belonged to my father. By the time the wars started, I was able to go to this place and see the house. It was still occupied by an Ossetian family. My father wanted to buy the house from them. But they did not want to sell it back to him.

My mother's village is R., a settlement in today's North Ossetia. The same old story again. Her relatives were not allowed to return to their house after they had returned from Kazakhstan. After Chechens and Ingushes started to return from exile - almost everyone returned because we are different from Russians, in the sense that we are strongly attached to our land and houses. Many were not even allowed to leave the trains. The Russian and Ossetian police were waiting for them. They beat them, loaded them into the cars, and deported them back to Russia. But we kept returning to our villages again and again...

My parents had very hard lives. My father was a carpenter. I remember his hands. They were huge and full of calluses. It would have been impossible to scan his fingerprints like the border police did to me. His fingers were glossy because of the hard work. My mother was *kolkhoznik*. She worked in a chicken farm. Both of my parents used to spend long hours at work. The hard labour did not earn them any fortune. But they could afford food and clothing. They also enabled me to study.

I am extremely grateful to my parents for what they had given me. If there is something good inside me, it has come from my

parents. I remember how they lived. I remember what kind of decisions they made whenever they faced some difficult situations. And, what is most important, I remember how they trusted me. Whenever I face some problem and must make some decision now, I always opt for what my heart says. It often happens that this option is more difficult than the other, though.

My father had a calm silent personality. Before I was born, he had been in prison. While he was in Kazakhstan, he killed a Russian commandant. Because he was in prison, he married when he already was an older man. When I was a child, more Russians than us (the Ingush) lived in our village. We were all pioneers. The internationalism. The brotherhood of nations. In the school, I was exposed to all this propaganda. And I really trusted these ideas! I liked my pioneer uniform. I believed that I was a part of something big and important. But whenever I started talking about school at home, my father sternly looked at me and said that I must never believe in the state and that I must never trust any Russian. I usually asked why, trying to explain that I have many good friends among the Russians. He usually replied: 'The time will come when you will understand. Now just don't trust the state. Never believe in it!'

My parents told me many stories about their childhood, about the hardship in Kazakhstan, about the displacement, about the freezing winter which hit them when they were forcibly expelled from their homes. I liked them telling the stories to me. I have never been to Kazakhstan but I feel as if I was intimately connected with this land. I visited Kazakhstan via my father's and mother's hearts.

It is possible to think about the existence of interconnections between private and public life in relation to Akhmad's first twenty two years. In later years, as his life story revealed, these connections were very different. Unlike most Chechen refugees, Akhmad had been witness not to two but to three wars. In 1992, he became involved in the East Prigorodny Conflict, a brief but violent ethnic war between the Ingush inhabitants of the Republic of North Ossetia, Alania, and the Ossetian paramilitary forces. Let me show how Akhmad himself talked about his first experience of violent disruption - I would like to highlight the fragmented character of the narrative since it reflects precisely what I am trying discuss here.

> Akhmad: I witnessed war for the first time in my life when I was twenty-three years old. The years before the war, I was a student at a high school specialised in wood industries. I studied there just to keep my mother happy. I did not even attend any of the student parties. After I left school, I registered at university. I enrolled on a Russian language course. I became an external student because I had to work, I had to financially help my mother. So after I left high school I started to work immediately…
>
> I used to have an interesting job. I was a woodcarver, like my father. This job was very good in terms of salary. Having this job, I planned to create something big. I wanted to write a book about wood carving. I wanted to make serious sculptures. These used to be my professional plans. As for my private life, I used to think about marriage. I wanted to establish a family. I wanted to have a son as soon as possible, as I wanted to be still able to help him when he grew up.

Twenty-three years is an age that makes a man feel special. When I was twenty-three, I used to think that the world belonged to me. I used to think that all I need to do is just to make my way. When I was twenty-three years old, the relations between Ingushes and Ossetins were getting tenser. Many secretly started buying arms. Arms suddenly started to be extremely expensive. The war erupted… After two weeks, the war was over. The Ingushes fought against two hundred thousand soldiers, namely the Don Division, Special Forces, and various other units. And I talk only about the Russian soldiers. I don't count the Ossetins.

Until the very last moment (pause) Do you understand?! I knew that the war was coming, but until the very last moment I did not want to believe that the war was really going to erupt. Even after the war had started (he makes a long pause). Do you know that feeling when you are looking at something that is happening but you don't want to accept that it is real? Even after the war started, I thought that what I saw was not reality but a bad dream. I saw people who used to greet themselves, who used to talk to each other (pause). Of course, these people were not close friends (long pause) But how is it possible that such people did such horrible things?!

The armed conflict resulted in the defeat and expulsion of ethnic Ingushes from North Ossetia. After it ended, Akhmad abandoned his girlfriend, interrupted his studies and career, and fled with his parents and siblings to Ingushetia, where he became a refugee without any job or property. These losses made him change as a person. Before the war, he wanted to marry, to have a son, and to establish his own

household quickly. After the war, he was unable to identify himself with what he had planned. From time to time, he returned to his previous life plans. But then he always rejected them, considering them nonsense. Why should he build a house? Perhaps another war was about to come. The house would be lost again. Perhaps he would be killed and his wife would have to bring up his children alone.

Soon the First Chechen-Russian War erupted. Akhmad fought in this war and would also fight in the Second Chechen-Russian War later. It should be noted here that he provided almost no details of either what he did or of what had happened to him during the wars in his life story. Many parts of his experience of the wars were almost completely absent in his biography, they were covered with silence.

> Akhmad: Soon after my return, the First Chechen War erupted. When the war erupted, we still lived in S., near the border with Chechnya. I could see the Russian planes and helicopters bombing B. Therefore, I could not remain neutral. I knew very well what was going on in Chechnya. I knew there were civilians and not just soldiers dying there. It is always like this in any war. Civilians suffer the most. Fighters know how to adapt to war. They know what war is, they are familiar with the rules of the game. They know how to protect themselves, how to make underground bunkers. Civilians don't know how to survive war.

> I was in Bamut, in Starij Achhole, in Jandig-Kotar. I was in Grozny. I was not the only one. There were hundreds of Ingushes like me. We were not in a state of euphoria. The reason why I was in Chechnya is much simpler. Imagine you are at home and you are about to pray. And you are supposed to

thank the God for protecting your family, people, and nation. Imagine that, a few kilometres away, there are people dying. I would have not been ever able to pray to God if I had not help my brothers...

After the First Chechen War ended, there was just chaos. Soon, the Second Chechen War begun. It was autumn. The weather was cold. Russians like to start wars before winter. They don't want to give their opponents the chance to prepare themselves for the winter war. When the second war started, I went to Bamut, together with my brothers in arms. We knew our friends were there, but we did not know where exactly. We came on foot. It was very dangerous. There was a real threat of the snipers. When we came to Bamut it was evening. We did not have any arms. We did not know where the Chechen and Russian posts were. Luckily, we found ours.

I spent three days in Bamut. After this, someone decided that we should go to Grozny. It was an order. All freedom fighters were supposed to leave the mountains and relocate to Grozny. We were told that it was Maskhadov who gave the order to move all fighters to the capital and to beat the Russians there. I had the impression that this order was very stupid. So I went home instead. I also told the guys that to go to Grozny was a bad idea. Some of them agreed with me, others thought that I was scared. But the truth is that, later, fighters were surrounded by Russians in Grozny. They suffered heavy losses.

During the wars, as I learned from our discussions on different occasions, Akhmad was lightly wounded several times. He lost many

friends and brothers-in-arms. What is more, soon after the first war started, Akhmad's father died. A couple of years later his mother also passed away and in the wake of all these family tragedies one of his brothers became an alcoholic - *Vainakh* norms say that alcoholism is morally wrong and if someone is an alcoholic this casts shame on the whole family. According to what he told me on different occasions, when the wars started he was no longer shocked by death and blood he saw. He had somehow got used to it since, as he put it, 'violence circulates inside *Vainakh* veins.' He could not fully comprehend how, even though the USA, the European Union, and the United Nations knew about the genocide in Chechnya, no one did anything to stop it.

As a result, he stopped believing in all the good things he had read about in books. He stopped being an idealist. Feeling that Chechens and Ingushes had been betrayed by what he considered to be the civilised part of the world, he became a cynic. After open fighting ended and Russian rule was re-established in Chechnya, the former freedom fighter attempted to go back to normality. He found a job. In 2004, he married an Ingush woman. Soon, his wife gave birth to his first child, a son.

However, troubles in his life did not end. The house where he lived was raided by the secret police because of his past affiliation with the anti-Russian resistance. In the account below, Akhmad describes the first raid on his house at dawn - I preserve the fractured character of his narrative, as it is relevant to the problem I am trying to discuss here:

> Akhmad: After the second war ended I found a job. But my troubles continued. Because of my past, the police carried a raid

in my house. They arrived in the early morning. I clearly remember my wife screaming (pause). She woke up and looked out of the window. There were a lot of men. All of them wore masks, all of them carried arms. They climbed over the wall and broke the main doors. My wife yelled: 'Soldiers!' I was sleeping. It was five o'clock in the morning. I was undressed when they broke in. They shouted: 'lay down and put your hands on your head!' Then, they searched the house. I asked who they were and what they were looking for. But they began to beat me.

The worst thing that happened was that I was helpless. My wife was nearby and she was half-naked as well (silence). And there were soldiers around. Some of them saw my wife undressed (his voice trembles with anger). That was the most humiliating experience of my life! I am a man but I got the sense that my life isn't worth much.

Soldiers carried out a thorough search of the house. They photographed us, our house, the garden, and also the car. They also photographed the street, which was nearby. Then, they covered my eyes with a bag and forced me to enter their car. They drove me I don't know where. It took them three hours to drive me to that place. Certainly, they did not want me knowing where we were heading. That day I realised that it was not only Russians but also our own who do these things. I heard Russian but also *Nakh* language (he half-whispered. I know it was very painful for him that not only Russians but also his own people had tortured him)

They did not ask me many questions about my past. Saying mostly nothing, they just beat me. Then, they rested only to start beating me again. It would have been easier if they asked me more questions; if they gave me some tasks to do... I was also tortured with electricity. They attached cables to my fingers and placed my legs into water. They had a small engine; and after they turned it on I was hit by electricity. This does not kill but it is very painful. I spent two days in that chamber. Later, I was not beaten anymore. I was left alone in the room. The third day someone entered the chamber and covered my eyes with the bag. After this, he drove me back to S.

After I was tortured, I started feeling bad. Very bad. I suffered from strong headaches. Even though I did not suffer from any physical pain, I was not able to coordinate my body. It was as if I were drunk. You know, I have always liked the fact that I am able to control my body. I like when I have the feeling that my hands and legs listen to me. But after I was tortured, it often happened that while entering my room I hit the doors. I had never experienced this before, even if I used to drink from time to time.

I said to my wife that I felt bad. I wanted to sleep. I don't remember what happened next. I was just told that I had been in delirium. Even though I was awake, I was half asleep. I interacted with people around. I answered their questions. I was able to recognise my relatives. But every time I ate, I was not able to put food into my mouth. My body did not listen to me. I was told that I was able to understand what others said. From time to time, I went for a walk. I talked to relatives and guests. But I

don't remember anything. My behaviour was as if I were on drugs. My relatives even took me to hospital and doctors said that I must be drug addict. But I have never taken any drugs.

After the first raid, Akhmad was arrested, interrogated, and tortured several times. Police wanted him to co-operate with them and provide them with information about the freedom fighters he knew. Akhmad did not want his son to realise one day that his father was a collaborator - in the North Caucasian socio-cultural setting righteousness and the issue of personal and family honour are taken very seriously - so he refused. Soon, the police interfered with his boss and Akhmad lost his job. The secret police who investigated him also became more brutal in their approach. Police overtly threatened him saying that he could be killed. Akhmad was aware that this threat was very real. In post-war Chechnya and Ingushetia, people commonly disappeared without any notice. In 2007, he eventually fled from Russia to the European Union.

In Poland, Akhmad was confronted with the full scale of his loss. Firstly, he could not get over his past experience of the wars completely. He had seen blood spilled and violence committed. He had nearly been killed and he had probably also killed - I never asked him directly but I understood this from what he told me during our long conversations. He wanted to forget what he had seen and done. But how could he? These unsettling memories made him feel as if he had no skin. Secondly, the loss of his parents, especially of his mother, was still very painful for him. The raid in his house was, however, an event that seemed particularly hard to deal with for him due to its immediacy. Let me try to explain in more detail how raid had ruptured Akhmad's experience. In the context of Chechen-Ingush patriarchal society, there

is a socio-cultural construction of manhood which depicts an adult senior man as a patriarch who has unlimited power and authority at home and over the lives of other household members. The unexpected raid was to suddenly disrupt the links between the subject and the socio-cultural context dominated by this and other similar norms. As Akhmad put it, the raid came as a shock which made him realise that at home he was nobody. The fact that he had failed to protect himself and his wife and child at home made him feel deeply ashamed. Also he had been tortured and nearly killed. In the exile, he felt angry that no one was punished, that state authorities did nothing or no one took revenge on the kidnappers, especially as of them were part the his own *Nakh* people. In the rest of the chapter I explore, following Akhmad's narrative, how he made sense of a world destroyed by the Russo-Chechen Wars.

The Role of the Asylum Law

How can this violence, which affected Akhmad but also other refugees, be addressed by means of ethnography? Tackling a similar problem, Veena Das (2007) suggests:

> These are complicated pictures of what it is to make and remake a world, bringing into question the pictures of totalities, parts, fragments, and boundaries that we may have. These pictures are tied up with questions of what it is to write an ethnography of violence—one that is not seen as bearing an objective witness to the events as much as trying to locate the subject through the experience of such limits (Das, 2007, pp. 4-5).

In the second part of the chapter I follow Das'ss suggestion. I show that the Polish asylum law somehow helped many men-husbands like Akhmad to distance themselves from their disturbing memories of violence.

In Chapter Two I explained that every asylum procedure in Poland is initiated upon an application submitted by the immigrant. Furthermore, I wrote that according to Act of June 2003 every applicant automatically submits the application on behalf of his accompanying minor children-dependants and may also submit an application on behalf of his or her spouse if they agree to it. I was not given the chance to visit a police station where applications are submitted and initial asylum hearings are held. But I talked to refugees about this and learned that the Polish police strictly adhered to the principle that one of the parents always submits the asylum application on behalf of her or his children. I found out that, whenever police detained a married couple, always asked one of them if they wanted to be the applicant. In Hotel Pumis most applicants were the men-husbands.

Becoming applicants gave men-husbands several exclusive rights. Firstly, applicants were entitled to sign the housing contract on behalf of those who depended on him. Secondly, they had the right to negotiate asylum on behalf of other non-applicants with state authorities - the only way for a spouse to initiate independent communication with the authorities was to withdraw her consent and to submit a new application for asylum. Last, applicants gained access to the social benefits to which their dependants were entitled. It was explained in previous parts of the thesis that every asylum seeker was provided with a small sum of money. They were entitled to pocket money for personal expenses but also to money to pay for education. Refugees

who were given de jure the largest sum were children. Nonetheless, the person who had access to the totality of the sum were applicants.

To provide an example that illustrates how the asylum law assisted refugee men-applicants in their attempts to overcome loss, I will describe next the type of items they could afford to buy with an access to such allowance. I want to focus here on the cars that were often parked in front of the asylum accommodation centre and which had either Polish, German, or, sometimes, no registration plates. I found out that refugees had bought these cars either from local or from other refugees-entrepreneurs who imported used cars from Germany. Most cars were more than fifteen years old. Many were BMWs, Volvos, or Mercedes: the Chechen men preferred these prestigious marks. Occasionally, car owners made remarks about my Opel Corsa and they were amused when they saw me coming to Hotel Pumis on my bike. The ownership of a big luxurious car was a matter of prestige.

Mohmad, an owner of one of these cars, did not drive his old BMW to travel, for instance, to the supermarket. Like most refugees he could not afford the petrol. Instead, he used his car so he could make very short journeys around the neighbourhood and back to the asylum centre. Whenever he was approaching Hotel Pumis, Mohamad drove slowly. Maybe he wanted other refugees to see him. Or perhaps he wanted to prolong his driving time. After parking the car, he usually opened the bonnet and looked at the engine. Often, he ordered some of his sons to polish the car. The other car owners sometimes made jokes about the way they bought the cars. For instance, I once heard a funny story that retold how one day the director of the central reception could not find free parking space when he arrived at work because Chechen cars were occupying them all. Refugees joked that

this was the reason why he decided to cut the benefits distributed to asylum seekers.

Figure 8 – Refugees' cars parked in front of Hotel Pumis.

Interestingly, in her study about Indian society after the Partition (Das, 2007, pp. 18-37), Veena Das focuses on a legal category similar to that of an applicant. The Indian authorities created the category of 'abducted person' due to the urgent need to protect thousands of victims of sexual and reproductive violence during the Partition, from the kin who tended to see abducted women and their children as impure. According to Das, this legal category and the discourse behind it were anchored on a traditional imagery haunting Muslim-Hindu relations, which contends that social disorder is equal to sexual disorder. She argues convincingly that when state authorities applied

this new social category, they redefined the social contract, allowing men to dominate the public domain again, as they placed abducted women and children under patriarchal authority. With these measures, Das explains, Indian authorities unintentionally changed the relation between social and sexual contracts, as the state charged men with an obligation to accept and protect abducted women and their children.

Das' study offers an interesting model, which helps me to think about the way Polish authorities determined the way Chechen men-husband dealt with the ruptures. Similar to the Indian case, the legal category of the applicant was introduced to classify Chechens in Poland, as a part of extraordinary measures undertaken by the Polish authorities. Like the Indian legal category of the abducted person, this legal category defined refugee subjects as heads of their current households and nuclear families in both socio-economic and political terms. Das' argument proves that the extraordinary measures applied in the context of the state of exception in India created the conditions to transform the state after Partition into strongly masculine nation. I hope I have demonstrated that the act of becoming an applicant, officially, enabled most of refugee men-husbands to deal actively with traumatic loss. Enabling men to provide for their families and acquire a certain status again, this legal category facilitated a symbolic return to what the subject perceived as their ideal gender and kinship identity.

Speaking for Death of Relationships

The story does not end here. Akhmad's enormous attempts to re-establish meaning and continuity to his life were apparent also in his voice, in our discussions, in his stories, and in occasional utterances. In

Life and Words, Veena Das emphasises that voice-utterances appear because the subject, having been pushed to the limit, feels an urgent need to talk about his or her experiences. This act confirms the uniqueness of the human being in the face of disturbing knowledge about the world (Das, 2007, pp. 55-63). Let me describe Akhmad's utterances.

I met Akhmad in January 2008. We were introduced to each other by one of my Chechen friends. I was introduced to Akhmad as someone who is interested in Chechen experiences of war in the North Caucasus, while he was introduced to me as someone who knows intimately about the topic. When I met him in Poland, Akhmad was forty years old. Yet, his hair was already grey. His teeth were irrevocably damaged and his eyes gave the impression that he was chronically tired. He bore scars on both of his wrists. He once told me that he had accidentally wounded himself while doing carpentry but I was not really convinced. He once showed me his Russian ID card. The card was issued in the 1998. The photograph of the holder depicted Akhmad as a still strong, self-confident, and healthy man.

After we met for the first time, we had a discussion in which Akhmad made a distinction between Chechens and Ingushes and Europeans like me. He believed that people who had not experienced war like me were not able to understand fully his past experience since they had not lived anything similar to what he had been through. As he described in the following excerpt from a conversation:

> A: I like Poland. It is all right here. The place I have migrated
> from is very dangerous. Imagine you are at home. You sit there.
> You may be innocent. But you are in constant fear. You are in

fear because somebody can call the police and tell them that you used to be a freedom fighter. Police in my country shoot firstly and only ask questions afterwards. Life is hard in the place I come from. There is corruption. Unlike in Chechnya and Ingushetia, here police are decent. Unless you have done something wrong they let you be. But in my country there is no law. Police can harm or even kill you anytime. Police may put drugs in your pocket and then ask for a bribe. If you don't pay you may be sent to prison. You Europeans cannot understand this. I realised that you cannot understand what life in today's Chechnya and Ingushetia is about soon after I arrived. You have not experienced any harsh times. I know that there used to be a strange regime here in Poland. But the regime was not as bad as that one I have experienced. This is the reason why you cannot understand.

M: Do victims know who secret agents are?

A: If someone finds out that someone else is a secret agent, he would be killed. You know, vendetta. Europeans and westerners don't know what is going on in the North Caucasus today.

Another refugee, a former freedom fighter who had escaped from a Russian prison, expressed the same feelings as Akhmad's when describing what pain is. Even though everyone is capable of absorbing enormous and unimaginable pain, the refugee said, we also have our limits. However, he continued, I was unable to fully understand this since I had not experienced such limits. Another man who had been tortured and nearly killed compared the communication between him and me to the communication between someone who had experienced

acute hunger and someone who had never been hungry in his life. He declared that he was reluctant to discuss his experience of the wars and torture with someone who had not seen war. According to him, they would not be able to understand what he was saying:

> No one can understand my life, neither Slovak nor Pole… No human who has not experienced something similar can understand me. I don't like to speak with you about the wars. I don't want to lose my words (Ru. *'ne hochu zrja svoe slovo terjat'*). No one who has not experienced what I did can understand me.

These phrases resonate with Skultan's observation about the perplexities of doing anthropological fieldwork in extreme situations. According to Skultans, narrative often stands between the anthropologist and the respondent's experience of the past in ordinary circumstances. While under normal circumstances, narrative is likely to appear as a 'natural' medium of communication, which opens the gate to the respondent's past, Skultans explains that, in extreme situations, it becomes something different. Finding an appropriate language to communicate past experiences of terror and violence, which are close to every narrator, becomes something difficult to accomplish (Skultans, 1998, p. 19). Victims of terror and violence, Skultans contends, are likely to claim that they are unable to describe what they experienced in the past to someone who has not experienced something similar. According to Skultans, these statements emerge because the sufferer's story is felt to have fused organically with the turbulent events described (Skultans, 1998, p. 19).

Akhmad saw me as a person who was not capable of understanding, because I had not witnessed anything similar to what he had gone

through. Nonetheless, I kept visiting him yet over the course of the following weeks. We continued in our discussions and I was able also to record utterances, which reflected his attempts to re-establish a sense of meaning and continuity.

The place where Akhmad discussed his life with me was usually his room in Hotel Pumis. I avoided visiting the room early, knowing that he, unlike his wife, who woke up early every day and prepared breakfast for her husband and child, usually slept at least until 9 a.m.[30] Whenever I entered his room, Akhmad welcomed me and acted as if he were the host and I his honoured guest. In keeping with the *Vainakh* tradition he always offered me a seat, which was far away from the entrance, so that I was not able to leave easily. He always asked me whether I was hungry or thirsty and commanded his wife, a woman in her early thirties, assiduous in her domestic duties, to pour us tea. The discussion began only after his wife, who never joined us at the table, served tea and sometimes also food.

The first months after we met our conversations consisted mostly of me listening to Akhmad reiterating the violence he endured, especially the raid in his house. In a characteristic manner, he made use of the cultural paradigms, norms and valued which, paradoxically, had made him ashamed and angry. In order to come to terms with the humiliating raid that took place at dawn in his house, Akhmad repeatedly said:

> Do you understand, Michal? My house was visited by guests! The guests were strange. They were as rich as if they had built their own castles and had paid an army to protect their sons while the

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[30] He slept longer in the morning because he often could not sleep at night.

> rest of us had nothing to eat. They offered me money. They
> wanted to buy my house.

At other occasions, Akhmad repeatedly said:

> So now I am here. It is hard. But every Nakh man must make his
> way...

Discussing why voice is likely to emerge from a violent rupture, in *Life and Words*, Das analyses Western literary interpretations of the figure of Antigone (Das, 2007, pp. 55-63). It is known that some literary works imagine Antigone as the figure that represents a conflict between the laws of the state and the laws of kinship, as she tries to protect the honour of her brother, who has been identified as a criminal by the law of Creon. Antigone is especially famous for her speech. According to the story, she gave the speech that broke Creon's law, as she faced the tomb in which she would be buried alive. Her loyalty to her brother was more important than obeying the laws of the state.

Thinking about the origins of the speech given by Antigone, Das refers to Hegel's interpretation of the myth, which suggests that Antigone's speech symbolises the conflict between the morality and discourses of the family and those of the state. She also refers to Lacan, who views the speech of Antigone as the speech of a person who has been moved towards the limits of experience, where there is a division into what can be obliterated and what must survive. There is a connection between such transgression and the emergence of a voice, which affirms uniqueness of a human being. Having introduced both authors, Das is reluctant to follow a Hegelian approach in favour of Lacan. She perceives Antigone as a person whose life had been forced into a zone

between two deaths and she believes that her speech emerges precisely from this transgression.

In *Life and Words*, Das attempts to illuminate why Antigone felt important to confirm her relations with the brother identified by the state as criminal. Firstly, she introduces Lacan's stance on this issue. According to Das, Lacan explains that Antigone did not subordinate to the immediate needs but defended her brother since her knowledge about the state and society was too terrible to behold. Thus she felt that it was important to recreate the uniqueness of being by pointing at the criminality of the law. Das also acknowledges that the problem may be more complex. She locates similar tendencies for women to build upon and separate themselves from gendered divisions in Indian mourning laments, explaining that these laments help the subject to re-inhabit the world destroyed by rupture.

Based on my participation in Akhmad's daily life, I understand that these utterances, or this kind of voice, emerged because of the urgent need felt by the subject to 'speak for the death of relationships' (Das, 2007, p. 60), the unexpected, humiliating dawn raid on his house carried also by the people who belonged to his own community.

Short Phrases Full of Metaphors

Many scholars have emphasised the crucial role that metaphor plays in communicating past experiences of violence and terror (Das, 2007; Daniel, 1996; McAllister, 2013; Skultans, 1998). Describing the narratives of Latvian victims of Stalinist terror, Skultans emphasises that the process of restoring meaning supports creativity (Skultans, 1998, p.

19). According to Veena Das, then, it is the cultural context and the lifeworld of the victim of violence which prompts the subject to come to terms with the rupture they underwent and to impose a new design on his or her life. As Das writes:

> It appears to me that filling out the repertoire to which each fragment points allow us to construct meaning from the lifeworld rather than from the abstract notions of structural semantic. I am obviously aware that the rules of structural semantics render the meaning of utterances as linguistic entities, but these remain disembodied utterances. The introduction of the subject as the maker of this speech necessitates an introduction of context, not only linguistic context but also lifeworld as context (Das, 2007, p. 65).

Whilst I provided Akhmad's lifeworld as a context in the previous parts of the chapter, in this section I return to his sentences, his short phrases full of metaphors and analyse how they are culturally encoded. I aim to grasp the way in which the subject attempted to integrate the trauma and loss into his ongoing life-relationships by drawing upon the cultural resources he was familiar with.

Coming to terms with the dawn raid on his house, Akhmad, as I explained in the previous section, on several occasions said: 'My house was visited by guests! ...They offered me money. They wanted to buy the house from me....'

Here, his words evoke the idea of North Caucasian hospitality that is perhaps the most important aspect of the *Vainakh* traditional ethic

(Chech. *Nokhchalla*) and customary law (Chech. *Adat*).[31] *Vainakh* norms for instance prescribe that every host must provide food, a bed and, if necessary, also protection for their guest. Every *Vainakh* house should have a room prepared for the visitor, which is in the best part of the house and no family member is allowed to inhabit it permanently. There should always be someone at home who is ready to take off the visitor's coat. A visitor cannot be neither insulted nor attacked - this, however, does not mean that the guest cannot be kidnapped and held for ransom or even killed after leaving the house. Also, no host is allowed to ask his guest about the purpose of his visit during the first three days of his stay and the longer the guest stays the more he must be treated with respect. Every host is obliged to even sacrifice his own life for his guest - if he did not do so no one would respect him.

Traditional *Vainakh* ethic and customary law dictates that every guest (Chech. *h'asha*) is considered to be a privileged member of the host's household. However, traditional norms do not regulate only the host's relation to the guest but also the guest's attitude toward the host. Perhaps the most important rule, which regulates the guest's relation to the host, is one that forbids any monetary payment for the hospitality that is received. This means that a guest is allowed to bring and give presents to the host's children. But he is not allowed to offer any money to the host since that would be perceived as a great insult to the patriarch as well as to the rest of his family.

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[31] It has already been said that English accounts of political economy and social and cultural life in the North Caucasus were provided by Emil Souleimanov (2007, pp. 17-41) and Amjad Jaimoukha (2005). Very good discussion of the issue can be found also in the works of Moshe Gammer (2006, pp. 2-7), Anna Zelkina (2000, pp. 9-25), Georgi Derluguian (2004), or Irdisov and Reyna (in press).

In order to come to terms with the fact that some of the perpetrators of the raid and torture were *Nakh*, Akhmad's own people, he said on more occasions: 'The guests were strange. They were as rich as if they had built their own castles and had paid an army to protect their sons while the rest of us had nothing to eat.'

Vainakh norms prescribe that Chechens and Ingushes should refuse socio-economic hierarchies, except the traditional forms of the lowest unit, which is the patriarchal family (Chech. *dozal*), or the house (Chech. *tsa*); the unit of the clan (Chech. *teip*) and the village (Chech. *aul*); and the unit of tribal union (Chech. *tuqum*) formed by more *Vainakh* clans or villages and where societal matters are discussed at tribal and clan councils (Chech. *Qel*). Elders who are responsible for solving problems according to the rules of customary law form the latter tribal and clan councils.[32] Ordinary Chechens and Ingushes

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[32] According to Souleimanov, the traditional political system was gradually formed between the 15th and 18th centuries due to a particular situation connected to property rights. The highland economy was based upon pastoralism and peasantry and while the mountain communities recognised individual ownership of the livestock, the dominant part of the land was collectively owned and used. Souleimanov believes that the overall absence of individual land ownership and tenure did not allow for the emergence and full development of a political and socio-economic system resembling feudalism and instead of the hierarchical class principle, the highlanders became differentiated by a territorial clan principle (see) (Souleimanov, 2007, pp. 20-21).

Other studies of political economy and social life in the modern and post-modern North Caucasus pay attention to the way in which the traditional political and socio-economic system was transformed by Russian colonisation (Gammer, 2006), the introduction of the Muslim Sufi mystical order to the highlander communities (Zelkina, 2000), the arrival of modern industries structured mostly around the oil and the introduction of the principle of waged labour (Khizrieva & Reyna, 2011), or socialist-communist ideology and modernity (Derluguian, 2004),

Another scholar, Alexei Kudriavtsev, discusses the influence of traditional ideas on the life of today's North Caucasus (Kudriavtsev, 2004). He argues that the idea of tribal democracy has influenced the local process of transition from socialism. According to Kudriavtsev, the Chechen

commonly believe that they should be equal to each other - if someone benefits, like in the case of the *Nakh* who carried out the raid in Akhmad's house, from working for the state or police, this might be interpreted as something abnormal, unnatural, and disrupting in the Chechen-Ingush cultural context.

In order to formulate his life after the ruptures, Akhmad repeatedly said: 'but every *Vainakh* must make his own way'

This sentence is a reference to the *Vainakh* construction of masculinity which is closely linked to the rejection of any authority except those traditionally considered *Vainakh*. This prominent *Vainakh* construction links manhood with love for freedom. Popular myths compare Chechens and Ingushes to wolves. The norm dictates that a proper Chechen and Ingush must always follow his own will; that he must compete with other men and if he fails it is only his own fault; that he must vie for respect and prestige; that he must always protect those who are weaker; and that as an individual he alone is responsible for his own wellbeing and for the wellbeing of others who depend on him. *Vainakh* men must under no circumstances be always active. They must act properly and honourably. Otherwise they lose their face (Chech. *yakh*).[33]

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nationalist movement perceived western liberalism to be the ideal political model for the independent Chechen state. However, the members of this movement also often evoked and insisted on the importance of traditional Chechen councils and customary law (Kudriavtsev, 2004, pp. 360-361)

[33] Attempting to communicate the disturbing fact that he had witnessed violence, Akhmad also repeatedly stressed that 'he had got used to it since violence circulates inside Vainakh veins.' I think this is another example, which illustrates how the available socio-cultural resources nurtured the process of subjective re-integration after the violence.

Yakh is an adjective derived from the word for face (Chech. *yukh*) and it describes certain personal qualities. *Yakh* means to be competitive but also to have respect for others, particularly for the weak. *Yakh* applies to everyone who sacrifices himself for what he believes is a good thing; or who would rather die than lose his honour. The opposite of *yakh* is a coward, anyone who lets others control him; who is not able to differentiate between good and evil; who is immoral (c.f.) (Souleimanov, 2007, pp. 30-34).

By exploring Akhmad'a voice, words, short phrases, utterances which emerged from the everyday life, I have explored the ways in which this man attempted to make sense of his world damaged by critical events of enormous intensity and scale. As violent ruptures shattered social settings, as my ethnography has shown, previous meanings did not stop being relevant to the subjects. Instead, some norms, for Akhmad, the norms of kinship and community, had to be transgressed. Akhmad and others also drew intensively from other norms, like those of masculinity and individualism, in their attempts to constitute the boundaries of different regions of the self and sociality disrupted by the violence they experienced.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an ethnographic insight into the experience of a refugee, whose life had been violently disrupted in multiple ways, and his struggle to accept loss and violence as a part of his ordinary life. In my view, a plausible way in which we may think generally about the violence which affected Akhmad and other Chechen-Ingush men in particular, is to consider that these subjects

had been, because of the violent turbulences they witnessed in the public world, radically separated from the characteristic social-communal and family settings, dominated by patriarchal, patrilineal, and masculine norms in the North Caucasus. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that these norms were not completely mapped upon the subject. As the social context suddenly changed, the subject drew extensively intensively from the available cultural resources in his attempt to find an alternative definition for his transformed life.

There were a few Chechen men-husbands, who seemed to have failed in coming to terms with what they had experienced. Some of them kept destroying the facilities inside their temporary households. Others kept injuring themselves. For example, one of the men caused himself a serious injury when he intentionally hit his head against the wall. Fortunately, no one committed suicide while I was in the field. But I heard about several cases of suicide which happened in some of the other asylum centres in Eastern Poland. Generally, it can be said that all men struggled with creating boundaries between their past and present. I hope focusing on one particular voice rising from the male's world has highlighted how this occurs.

This chapter has shown that what helped some men/husbands who had experienced war, abandoned most of their relatives, and left their homes in order to save themselves and their closest ones to deal with traumatic loss were the familiar *Vainakh* dominant socio-cultural conceptions of manhood and masculinity. In other words, the subjects affiliated themselves with select *Vainakh* norms of masculinity in order to re-connect the past with the future. Furthermore, this chapter has indicated that the political context lubricated the process of integration

of traumatic loss into everyday life, as the asylum law reinforced some men's roles and positions as heads of their households in Poland.

Chapter Five

Violence and Masculinity as Performance

Considering the view that the violence of the Chechen-Russian wars that dominated the experiences of Chechen-Ingush refugees may be explored by focusing on the way in which subjects made sense of their world, Chapter Four opened a window into refugee subjectivity. I have demonstrated the way in which traumatising losses were integrated - within the specific political-legal context - into the everyday life, was implicated in generating a kind of gendered masculine identity. In the introductory chapter, then, I mentioned the existence of two different domains in Hotel Pumis, the inside - the asylum accommodation centre that refugees, especially men, considered their own autonomous territory—which was pitted against the dangerous and immoral outside - the neighbourhood where Hotel Pumis was situated. In this shorter chapter, my ambition is to shed some light on the way in which this division between the inside and the outside could be constituted. Here I recognise that unlike Steward's Gypsies (Stewart, 1997; 1999) or Pine's *Górale* (Pine, 1999) Chechen-Ingush refugees in Poland were not confronted with marginalising outside forces over the past few hundred of years. Hence, I tackle this issue focusing again on the problem of disrupted subjectivity.

Scholarship on violence stresses in different ways that, even if individuals, groups, and communities establish ways to come to terms with terror and violence, memories of dramatic violent events keep penetrating their daily life (Daniel, 1996; Skultans, 1998; Perera, 2001;

Kwon, 2008; Das, 2007). Questioning how persons, social groups, and communities fragmented by violence heal with time, or whether they are capable of doing so, other ethnographies focus on the competition or tension between the different versions of 'truth' replicated in the conflicting narratives of actors and witnesses - whether victims or perpetrators - of violence (Ross, 2001; Woodward, 2000; Das, 2007, pp. 79-94). Other ethnographers explore the ways in which men, whose sense of masculinity had been assaulted or challenged, attempt to hold on to masculine power (Gilsenan, 1996; Bourgois, 2003). This chapter contributes mostly to these scholarly works.

Scrutinising Akhmad's voice, in what follows, I show that past traumas and losses were evoked in the context of daily life in the asylum centre, for instance when a male refugee was unable to take care of his dependants, his wife, and children in social and economic terms. Refugee men like Akhmad experienced loss and trauma in terms of shame - as they had been forcibly and unwillingly expelled from their houses or centres of patriarchal identity - and this made them feel emasculated. In the second part of the chapter, I explore in more detail the way in which refugee men preserved a sense of masculinity, managing narratives about women in different private, communal, and public spaces. I argue that the existence of the inside and outside domains in Hotel Pumis can be explained through the men's attempts to enact their versions and conceptions of the self and the world against a backdrop of dissonant voices and realities.

The Presence of the Past

The presence of the past is a phenomenon frequently mentioned in writings on the anthropology of violence (Daniel, 1996; Das, 2007). Referring both to the victims of the Partition of India and the victims of the 1984 communal riots, Veena Das uses the term 'feeling of pastness' to describe the phenomenon. She writes: 'although the Partition was of the past if seen through homogeneous units of measurable time, its continued presence in people's lives was apparent in story, gesture, and conversation. Though of the past, it did not have a feeling of pastness about it. Such questions did not pose any dilemmas at the time of my work with survivors of 1984, for the presence of violence and its immediacy was palpable through every sense - seeing, hearing, smelling, touching' (Das, 2007, pp. 97-98). Referring to the aftermath of the Sri Lankan Civil War, Daniel writes about the experience 'overburdened with the present, a present 'under (traumatic) erasure,' be smudged before the ink on the page is dry' (Daniel, 1996, p. 107). The presence of the past was the phenomenon, which reverberated through the daily life of Hotel Pumis as well.

I once talked to one man about his experience of the war. I asked him if he could tell me more about the harsh times. His response was that many of his friends were killed and others just disappeared. However, he could not finish his answer because his voice started to tremble uncontrollably. Instead of speaking, he started imitating the sounds of the war. 'Thuduu thuduu' was the sound of a large machine gun. 'Bou bou bou bou bou' was the sound of shelling. 'Ouuuu euuuu' was a sound of an air strike. For a moment, I could not continue our conversation, as these sounds seemed as real as those of an actual war. Akhmad, like many other refugees who had been tortured, complained

about having problems with his memory from time to time. He told me, on several occasions, that his brain became sick after he was beaten and that he would need not a psychologist but a brain surgeon to recover from it. To give another example, I knew a silent man who had been in Grozny during the wars. Whenever we shook hands, I could feel his body was totally stiff, as if it had frozen back in time.

In previous parts of the thesis, I have demonstrated that Chechen-Ingush men-husbands were reasonably successful at accepting destruction and violence as a part of the everyday life. However, this does not mean that the past ruptures and traumatising memories completely stopped penetrating refugee men's present lives.

Struggling with Shame

Even though Akhmad found a way to talk about the enormous disruption attached to his past, violence did not disappear from his ordinary life. Let me provide an example showing the way in which this man kept struggling with loss and trauma.

Life as a Performance

In *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in Arab Society*, Gilsenan writes about a characteristic rhetoric close to Lebanese men that 'life is a calculated performance, aesthetic elaboration of form, artifice, and downright lies behind which one has to look for the true interests and aims of the others' (Gilsenan, 1996, p. 64). I have observed rhetoric of this kind in the context of Akhmad's daily life.

As I befriended Akhmad, in spring of 2008, I began to notice that the way in which he spoke to his wife was somehow artificial. On the one hand, he never abused her verbally. He was grateful to her because she had left her own mother and grandparents, whom she loved, to accompany her husband into exile. He respected her because she had acted properly as a *Vainakh* woman. On the other, whenever he talked to her, at least in my presence, he expressed himself prudently, quietly, and authoritatively. Despite appreciating his spouse for staying with him, he often communicated with her as if to merely command her to do things. If his wife contradicted him - this happened from time to time - he raised his voice.[34]

The dialogical relationship between him and me also gradually changed. Firstly, the way in which he started speaking to me was interesting. Whenever I talked he never interrupted me. Instead, he patiently and politely waited until I finished talking. Often, he would wait a bit more as if wanting to ensure that he gave me enough time. Only after this he would start to speak again. Sometimes, he did not finish the story he was telling and, instead of getting to the point, he smiled silently as if he had a secret he wanted to keep to himself.

Furthermore, whenever I was in the room and his wife was around, he spoke less often about his past traumatic experiences and more about other themes. On these occasions, Akhmad talked to me about *Vainakh* traditions. He educated me about Chechen and Ingush culture.

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[34] His authoritative voice can also be observed in relation to the administration of money in the household. While Akhmad allowed his wife to decide over household finances, it was him who had the final word. He once spent all the money he had earned on a present for his wife, a second-hand mobile phone.

He also often privately criticised the other refugees. He presented them as being lazy and irresponsible; he complained that the children stole from the local shops; he blamed their parents for letting them do so; and he often insisted that, unlike him, many of Chechens were not 'real' refugees since they had come to Poland only to claim social benefits.

Several times we went for a walk in the city centre and, as his wife was not around, he talked about different topics. For instance, he liked to talk about the other women he had been with. He was nostalgic for his first girlfriend. He also talked about violence. But instead of struggling with finding the right expression for what he had witnessed, he educated me on the dangers of the world we all live in. As we walked the streets, he told me that passers-by live in an illusion about their careers, life plans, and families. The world, which otherwise seems to be secure, can turn into a nightmare in a split second.[35]

After several months of visiting Akhmad regularly, when I already knew this man reasonably well, I was able to record another kind of voice, which is, in my opinion, similar to one described by Michael Gilsenan. While Gilsenan connects the rhetoric he writes about with the way in which men produced and sustained relations of dominance and subordination in rural Lebanon, in the rhetoric/voice that I recoded Akhmad, as far as I know, attempted to keep violence at a distance and separated from his present life.

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[35] Though he still referred indirectly to his own past experience.

The Shift to Pathological 'Mourning'

Akhmad's voice started to change at the beginning of the summer of 2008, as Akhmad's wife, Fatima, was about to give a birth to another child. In the summer, Akhmad realised that the family would probably not be able to travel back home since their newborn child would not have a Russian passport. It was very likely that his wife's parents would not meet the child - Fatima was strongly attached to her mother and grandparents.[36] Moreover, Fatima's grandfather was becoming increasing frail. It was very likely that she would not see him again. Akhmad was also increasingly worried about the future of his children. Knowing what it means to be a refugee in the European Union, he was afraid that he would not be able to secure a good education for them, that he would not be able to help them in any way in their lives.

In the summer of 2008, Akhmad's voice became different again. He seemed increasingly depressed. Sometimes, he would become angry with me for no apparent reason. Speaking as if his testimony was ghostwritten, he once revealed that whenever he looked at me he often thought he was living in a dream. He pointed at the difference between his eyes and my eyes, between the way in which he sees the world and I see it. He said that I should not try to help him in any way since he knows best what is wrong with him. Later, he privately told me that he thought he hated his wife and son. He also said that from time to time he wanted to spit in their faces.

A couple of days later, he stopped communicating with his family completely. His wife told me that whenever I was not with him he sat and silently stared out the window. Later, he visited the director of the

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[36] Fatima's father left her mother when she was a child.

asylum centre and demanded that she withdrew his application for asylum. I found out that he wanted to return to the North Caucasus and to commit an act of revenge - to kill policemen, soldiers, or traitors. The next day, however, he changed his mind and his wife went to the office again and asked the administrator to destroy the form. He told Fatima that he had become tired of everything (Ru. *'ja ustal uz od vsjego etogo'*). I was afraid that he would commit suicide.

As his new child was about to be born, Akhmad communicated less with his relatives and me and when he spoke his words sounded strange. I had the impression that his words were filled with hatred and ghostwritten. Veena Das identifies a similar kind of voice when she discusses what happens if the process of violence that unfolds into the ordinary life of the victim is blocked, and the sufferer remains absent from his or her experience (Das, 2007, pp. 101-107). My explanation is that the change in Akhmad's voice was a mark of such pathological bereavement and triggered by a change in the family's situation causing that the subject was unable to sustain the boundaries between the past and the present he had created with a great effort.

Struggling with Shame: Concluding Remarks

This example, I hope, has demonstrated the fragile boundaries between the past and the present. Men-husbands felt particularly challenged by the presence of relatives such as their wives, who usually accompanied them into the exile and depended on them. In *Our Work to Cry: Your Work to Listen*, Veena Das introduces us to the experiences of male survivors of the riots, explaining how they felt guilty and ashamed because the only way they were able to survive was by emasculating

themselves or betraying persons close to them during the riots (Das, 1990, pp. 385-386). In my view, Chechen-Ingush men like Akhmad, felt ashamed and emasculated, as he had been forcefully expelled from their houses and were unable to take care of women in socio-economic terms. Most refugee families were poor and strongly dependent on state support and charity. This undermined their conceptions of the self, painfully reminding them that they had failed as patriarchs.

Misogyny

In what follows, I describe in more detail the way in which refugee men like Akhmad attempted to manage narratives about the self and women in different public, communal, and private spaces. I aim to depict the way in which the imaginary boundary between the inside and the outside was constituted. The men I write about here lived in Hotel Pumis. Only a few of these young and middle-aged men had immigrated to Poland alone. Most of these men lived with other members of their nuclear families, their wives, and children. Moreover, many of them could meet with other relatives and friends on a day-to-day basis. These people were also in Poland and were often accommodated directly in Hotel Pumis. What I identify while describing their narratives/voices in these different places is different forms of misogyny.

Domestic Violence against Women

Let me describe the violence against women by discussing the 'narrative management' conducted by refugee men inside the households. One of things that characterised Chechen men/husbands was that they usually shared a private room in Hotel Pumis with their wives and children. Whenever I visited these rooms, I was always welcomed by the senior man. If he was not at home, the person who welcomed me was usually some of his sons and if no man was at home, I was usually told that I should visit the household later. When I visited different families, I did not discuss things with women. Women were usually involved in doing the cooking or in childcare. They never accompanied my male host and me at the table.

When I was with my male hosts in the presence of their wives, men/husbands often spoke loudly so the women could hear them talk about certain themes. Men often spoke about their working life in Poland. Many of them worked illegally, usually in construction. They liked to emphasise that they were hard-workers, that, unlike their Polish counterparts, they did not need a lunch break and that they were much better and faster workers than the locals. Another topic many liked to talk about was women. My hosts frequently queried me about my previous girlfriends and whether I intended to marry soon. Many of them often talked about their Polish fiancés. Unlike, for instance, Akhmad, they talked about their fiancés in front of their wives - whenever they did so, their spouses were, as I could see, strongly affected by their husbands' words. However, they behaved as if nothing happened.

In his stunning study of the crack economy of East Harlem, Philippe Bourgois (2003) introduces us to the everyday lives of marginalised Puerto Rican immigrant men. Bourgois acknowledges that former patriarchal heads of households had been transformed into economic failures by their emigration to the USA and that their sense of masculinity was further assaulted by the numerous crises in the political economy. He demonstrates that, because of their experiences of migration, men acted violently against each other and mostly against women, explaining that this violence reflected their attempts to hold on to the atavistic power their ancestors used to have. In one particular part of his book (Bourgois, 2003, pp. 217-222), Bourgois gives an account of the way in which this male identity crisis turned into domestic violence that deeply affected family relationships. During my fieldwork with Chechen-Ingush refugees, I came across a type of domestic violence generated by refugee men which was, in many aspects, similar to the violence Bourgois describes. Nonetheless, in the Chechen-Ingush case, this violence was often verbal rather than physical.

Communal Violence against Women

In this section, I describe one of the communal meetings, whose purpose was already discussed in Chapter 3, in order to examine the narratives about woman circulate in the communal sphere. In this meeting, refugees discussed the case of one particular female Chechen refugee who stayed at Hotel Pumis. This woman was married but her husband had abandoned her and their three small daughters. In Poland, the woman had started seeing another Chechen man and everyone

soon found out about the affair, since she had to ask other women to watch her children every time the couple met.

Knowing about this non-marital relationship, the leader and a few other men caught the couple together and ordered them to come to the communal room. There, they accused them of breaking the accepted moral code. The woman tried to defend herself. She said that her private life should not concern the men and that they should not try to dictate how she ought to behave. The men contradicted her. She was told that she was not allowed to do what she wanted while she lived under the same roof as them. Then, they passed judgement on the woman and her lover. The men ordered the woman to end the relationship immediately, whereas her lover was sentenced to physical punishment.

I was with Akhmad when the man was being beaten in the backyard. We could both hear the sounds of the violence and the man crying out in pain. I asked Akhmad what he thought about the beating. I knew he did not like the communal trials so it surprised me that he said that the men were doing the right thing. He explained to me that the men cared about the woman but more about her children, who would be badly affected in the future by the fact that their mother had a non-marital relationship.

In another part of his book, Bourgois grasps the way in which masculine identity crisis harmed communal relationships among Puerto Rican immigrants, writing about gang rapes (Bourgois, 2003, pp. 205-212). In relation to the refugee community, there was violence against women but this violence was, again, different to that described by the sociologist. I heard that some women had been raped before they fled

the North Caucasus but I never heard about a refugee raping another refugee. Of course, this does not mean that sexual abuse did not exist in the Polish asylum facilities. It shows, however, that it was not part of daily accounts. In the context of communal life, physical violence against women was rather invisible. It was publicly seen and represented as refugee men strictly disciplining refugee women's lives and sexuality.

In Search of Respect on the Workplace

All work refugee men-husbands, who lived in Hotel Pumis, did was illegal. The conditions were precarious. For instance, one man was hired to harvest cabbage. His workplace was a field near Warsaw. Being an illegal migrant, he was only allowed to work during nights, so an inspection would not spot him. In the end, his employer did not pay him all the money he had promised and of course, the illegal worker could not call police. As far as I know, most refugee men were humiliated by the conditions they encountered at work and also on the streets. Even my closest friends did not want me to accompany them to their workplaces because they were ashamed.

Nonetheless, I once accompanied Akhmad and a few other men to their temporary workplace, which was a farm in the countryside. The farmer drove us to a place nearby, an old wooden barn, and told us that he needed to dismantle it. He would pay each of us thirty Euros. We finished by 6 p. m. Exhausted, we called the farmer on his cell phone to come. After he arrived, he announced that he expected us to put all the barn pieces on a tractor that was nearby. Though we were extremely exhausted, nobody protested. When we arrived back at the

farm, it was already late evening. The farmer stopped in front of the farm, his wife opened the gate and we drove into the yard. The farmer parked the tractor, and disappeared into the house, while we waited outside, waiting for our money.

After a while, the farmer's wife approached us and said: 'and who is going to unload all that stuff? Will you?!' I saw my co-workers were very angry. The woman told us that if we did not unload the tractor she would pay us only fifteen Euros instead of thirty. We had an argument. In the end, one of the men retorted: 'So, dear lady, you can keep your damn money, we are leaving right now!' On the way back, Akhmad told me: 'our women would have never raised their voice to us. They understand how hard it is to be a man! To be a man means to give the last piece of your bread to a friend in need, it means to treat yourself responsibly, and to behave in a way others respect you. It is difficult to be like this.'

Elsewhere in is study, Bourgois takes us to the world of office corridors, where immigrants dreamed of being part of a world, which was foreign to them. He shows that, feeling insulted by the fact that most low-level supervisors were women, immigrants referred to them as whores and bitches and frequently made judgemental and sexist remarks about their bodies (Bourgois, 2003, pp. 143-152). A very similar kind of misogyny was performed on Polish city streets. Like Bourgois' immigrants, Chechen men frequently called other women they met on the street or at work whores (Ru. *suka*; Pol. *kurva*). It should be noted here, however, that these words were usually used to label local Polish women and were never directed at the women who belonged to the refugee community.

Misogyny: Concluding Thoughts

All in all, the concept of violent masculinity, as Bourgois understands it, is certainly relevant in order to think about the relation between Chechen and Ingush refugee men and women. There are also certain nuances. In my opinion, the nuances were related to the fact that most Chechen-Ingush men struggled to hold on to the atavistic power that had disintegrated and to protect the fragile identity they had created in response to traumatic losses. Masculine gendered violence was thus less about physical coercion and more an integral part of narrative accounts of relations between men and women. In the specific socio-economic and political setting of Hotel Pumis, these narratives contributed to creating imaginary boundaries between the refugee men and 'their' women and between the men and the 'other' women outside of the community.

Conclusion

Akhmad's life had been deeply marked by the post-socialist Chechen-Russian Wars and by the terror, deprivation and sheer violence that accompanied them. As a result, he lived his life against the backdrop of multiple events that had disrupted his life: the loss of his home and job, the deaths in the family and in the circle of close friends, the dawn raid on his house and, of course, the forced displacement. Many of these disruptions had been dramatic and unexpected and they continued to impinge on the form of traumatic memory that underpinned his life. Despite the fact that he was able to use some images and strategies to communicate his suffering, this chapter has demonstrated that

Akhmad's experience remained very unsettled. When Akhmad felt strong, he was able to talk about trauma and loss and also to separate it from his ongoing relationships. But the disturbing past did not completely disappear from Akhmad's life. As we have seen, the changes in the family situation turned his mourning process into something pathological - the fragile connections between him and the present were disrupted and the past again overwhelmed his experience.

I hope that this and the previous chapter draw some interesting parallels between my ethnography and *Our Work to Cry: Your Work to Listen* (Das, 1990). Das' seminal ethnographic study gives us a fascinating insight into the experiences of the members of the Sikh-Indian community, who attempted to re-establish the sense of meaning and continuity disrupted by the 1984 riots. Describing how the process of violence becomes a part of everyday life, mostly from the perspective of women living within the patrilineal and patriarchal families and community, Das identifies particular bereavement patterns, which dominated the daily life of the Sikh community. Like Das, in the previous two chapters I have identified characteristic 'bereavement' patterns, which resonated through the daily life of Hotel Pumis.

It would be misleading, however, to present these 'bereavement' patterns as a part of a larger linear trajectory dominating the everyday life of the whole refugee group, which leads the group from the disruptive moment to their recovery. Somewhere in the initial pages of my fieldwork diary, I wrote that the everyday life of Hotel Pumis reminds me a train or bus station: some refugees were leaving the asylum centre and others were arriving to it every day. The Chechen-Ingush community was very unsettled, on the move. Different aspects of the 'bereavement' process - the attempts to make sense of their

world, the presence of the past, or the efforts to protect one version of the 'truth' against others - were simultaneously present in the context of refugees' everyday life.[37]

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[37] There were also a few Chechen families who lived in rented accommodation located in other parts of the city. It is possible that 'bereavement' patterns there were different because they lived in a context slightly different from that of Hotel Pumis.

Chapter Six

Refugee Women and the Echoes of the Russo-Chechen Wars

In the previous two chapters, I opened a window into the subjective worlds of Chechen-Ingush refugees in Poland. Scrutinising Akhmad's voice, I have identified certain 'bereavement' patterns related to traumatic loss and to how loss is integrated, within specific settings, into everyday life. In previous parts of the thesis, I have looked at the problem from the perspective of the Chechen-Ingush men. One might now wonder about the experience of refugee women in the same community. If the main outcome of the previous chapter was the fact that I have identified characteristic 'bereavement' patterns, which prevail among refugees, is it then possible to examine women's experiences and recognise the same patterns as those identified in men? Or was there something particular about the way loss becomes part of the female world and their everyday life in Hotel Pumis? In order to tackle this problem, I introduce the voice of one particular woman in her thirties, here called Khazida. I consider her voice to be a reflection of larger complex relationships between the subject and the world. It is also part of the voices of a distinct group of refugee women, whose lives was affected by war and displacement. Here, I think of adult women. Some of them shared their rooms with their husbands and children in Hotel Pumis. Others lived on their own with their children - sometimes only some of them.

Khazida, one of the few refugee women whom I regularly talk to, was born in 1975. Unlike many other female refugees, she migrated to Poland with no husband or father. She was alone with her two daughters. After she applied for asylum - it was her who became the applicant - bureaucrats allowed her to choose the asylum centre where she wanted to go. She had several options but she chose Hotel Pumis, despite the fact that she had been warned that there was no free room. The reason why she wanted to go to this asylum centre was that her distant relative, a widow from Dagestan who Khazida called her aunt, lived there. During the first couple of months, Khazida shared the room with her aunt. She slept on the floor. Later, her aunt and her sons emigrated illegally from Poland to France and Khazida took her aunt's room. As far as I know, Khazida was not in touch with neither her parents nor her former husband. Her parents were divorced, each of them now married to someone else. The father of Khazida's children was allegedly in Moscow. He lived with another woman. Khazida's brother, who was in exile in France, occasionally helped her. In the asylum centre, there were a few other women without their husbands. My concern about the men's possible reaction prevented me from trying to visit them regularly. I was aware that it was inappropriate for me to participate in their lives. With Khazida the situation was different. I was able to visit her household often since one of her daughters was seriously ill and, from time to time, I drove her and her mother to the hospital.[38]

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[38] After eleven months in the asylum centre, Khazida was granted a tolerated stay permit. She had to leave the temporary home. After that I lost contact with her.

How did Khazida make sense of the world destroyed by violence? Was she able to do so? How did she protect her versions of the 'truth' against the backdrop of other possible voices? Here, I face a difficult task. While I recognise how relevant to this thesis these questions are, I am also aware that, to a large extent, my own gendered identity stopped me from accessing the inner lives of many refugee women. It is not that female refugees would not talk to a male anthropologist. On the contrary, after I asked them, many women were keen to talk about their precarious fragmentary lives. However, nearly all women talked to me either in the presence of their husbands or only if the husbands or other relatives/family authority knew about our conversation. Furthermore, as a male, I did not have access to most everyday situations when women spontaneously talked. As far as I know, most of these situations which, as I explained before, gave utterances their meaning, usually occurred when women helped each other with domestic work or when they privately negotiated various issues with those closest to them. It was very difficult for me, a male anthropologist, to regularly take part in these activities.

There are ethnographic studies which investigate how sudden, unexpected ruptures in the public world affect female bereavement (Todeschini, 2001; Ross, 2001; Das, 1990; 2007). In her account of widowhood and female vulnerability in post-colonial India (Das, 2007, pp. 63-74), Veena Das explores the problem of violence and womanhood in social-communal and family settings that are very similar to those I write about here. In her work, Das describes the way in which women, whose life had been destroyed by the violent Partition of India, may find a manner of speaking that allows this loss and poisonous knowledge about the world to descend into the

ordinary. In her ethnographic portrait of the maternal lamentation of a woman, whose son died during the 1984 riots (Das, 1990, pp. 346-362; 2007, pp. 184-193), Das shows how female bereavement may turn pathological. In her chapter *Boundaries, Violence and the Work of Time* (Das, 2007, pp. 79-94), she provides a compelling insight into the way in which women, who had been subject to violence and found a way how to voice this experience, maintained their versions of 'truth' against the background of other domineering scripts within a patriarchal family and society. In this chapter, I elaborate upon these studies in a way that is slightly different from previous chapters. I draw from Das' ethnographies with the aim to better comprehend the experiences of Chechen-Ingush women, which were, to some extent, inaccessible to me.

To do so, in Chapter Six, I intersperse my own ethnographic material with my summaries and analysis of specific ethnographies written by Veena Das. Thinking about the experiences of Chechen-Ingush women through the lens of Das's ethnographies, I highlight that refugee women, many of who were not supported by the Polish asylum law in the same way as their husbands were, strongly relied upon mutual support while they attempted to re-create, as many men did, their experiences through available socio-cultural resources. Furthermore, I acknowledge that many women had to defend their own visions of truth against agents who were more powerful than them, such as their husbands or the other refugee men. Bearing this in mind, I consider that female subjects were possibly involved in what Das calls 'stalking time' or in catching the right moment which allowed subjects to impose their own visions of truth against dominating voices. In this chapter, I suggest that the 'bereavement' of female refugees could be

regarded as similar to that of men in so far as it was attached in subordinate position to the bereavement of the men.

Veena Das: Widowhood and Vulnerability

Let me start by summarising Das's ethnography about widowhood and vulnerability (Das, 2007, pp. 63-74). I find this ethnography interesting and relevant to the case of Chechen-Ingush women for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it compellingly describes how the life of a woman, who belongs to a patrilineal family and patriarchal community and society, may be disrupted. Secondly, it shows how such female subjects can transgress, with the help of other people in her social and family circles, dominant cultural paradigms and can actively consult available resources in order to reconstruct the self and their world, after violence and in the face of ongoing trauma and loss.

In this ethnography, Veena Das describes the life of a woman whose name was Asha. When the anthropologist met her, Asha was in her mid-fifties. She had married into a rich family and lived with her husband and his two sisters. Asha, Das observes, became a widow at the age of twenty, in1941. Her first husband used to be a member of a fraternally joint family. He was very close to his two elder sisters, who were both married and had brought him up after their mother's death. When Asha's husband died from illness, everyone, including Asha, was battered by grief.

During the first months after her husband's death, Das goes on, Asha got great support from her conjugal relatives. She continued to live in her husband's elder brother's household. Asha was particularly grief-

stricken since she was childless so her former's husband's younger sister gave her one of her own sons. Das observes that, at that time in India, these arrangements were regular within kinship groups and they represented a possible way in which women assisted each other if they faced an emotional-psychological crisis.

The household where the widow lived after her husband's death was in Lahore. Later, when the violent Partition took place, Asha's conjugal family lost everything and some of its members were killed. As Asha's blood relatives had settled in a town near the new border, on the Indian side, she escaped with her adopted son to her relatives' home. Soon, her conjugal relatives also began to arrive to the new India. They settled in different places near the border. Initially, Asha decided to stay with her adopted son in her father's household.

While her father and mother accepted the re-unification with their daughter and were supportive of her decision, Asha's brother and his wife saw the presence of the widow and her adopted son as a burden. Facing the brother's negative attitude towards her, Asha acknowledged the support and love she had been given by her conjugal relatives, especially by her husband's younger sister. For Asha, as Das explains, recognising the possibility of betrayal within her own family was another great disruption..

According to Das, the time after the Partition was very difficult time for Asha. Thinking that her place was with her conjugal family, the widow rejoined them. Nonetheless, after the Partition Asha's conjugal relatives faced great financial difficulties and some also turned against the widow. They started to blame her for her husband's death. So, over the next four years she kept moving between the house of her

original family and that of her conjugal family. Later, she remarried and had two children.

Nonetheless, she could not forget her brother's attitude and the connection with her conjugal relatives. After the Partition, Asha became a person defined primarily by the patriarchal cultural norms of widowhood. Das explains that this was clearly visible in Asha's words. According to Das, Asha would say, as the right occasion arose: 'A daughter's food is never heavy on her parents, but how long will one's parents live? When even two pieces of bread are experienced as heavy by one's own brother, then it is better to keep one's honor - make one's peace - and to live where one was destined to live' (Das, 2007, p. 65).

Khazida: The Family Betrayal

Since they had lived through the Chechen-Russian Wars, Chechen women were, like other refugees, familiar with a 'no-return mentality.' They lived their lives against the backdrop of numerous disruptions, such as the loss of a relative or friend, the loss of a home, or the loss of property. Some of these disruptions were extreme in the sense that they brought subjects to the limits of human experience. Let me locate these ruptures within Khazida's experience. I propose looking at the ruptures in Khazida's life in a way that considers that the subject had been separated from the social context and cultural norms, which put women under the protection of either their natal or conjugal family

and, simultaneously, assign them a subordinate position within their household.[39]

Khazida suffered because she had witnessed horrible things during the wars and because some people who had been close to her were either killed or passed away. In her life testimony, she mentioned the death of a close friend. She did not mention, however, the death of her maternal grandmother: Khazida's maternal grandmother was the person who brought her up. As Khazida told me on a different occasion, she died during the second war from a heart attack.

When I interviewed Khazida about her life, she said:

> During the first war, I was pregnant. I felt very bad. I could not go to the hospital. It was late in the evening and no one was allowed to be on the streets (Ru. *komendantskij chas*). I felt that I really needed to go to the hospital. Otherwise I would die. The time was 10 p.m. The streets were dark. There were ruins everywhere. There were snipers. My husband did not want to risk death. He called a taxi. But the taxi driver was afraid too. He said that we could be killed. So I had to endure the pain. I had to wait until the morning (…)
>
> I used to have a close friend. She was Russian. Her name was Galija. After the disorder begun, I told her that she should hide inside our house. But she did not come. She just sent me a note

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[39] For instance, norms prescribe that brothers and father must protect every daughter and that daughters must strictly respect the male members of her blood family. According to the norms, after she marries, the woman depends on her husband's family. Furthermore, she becomes responsible for educating her daughters. She is also expected to obey all members of her conjugal family and she must keep the family house neat and clean.

saying that she would arrive together with her father. Later I was told that she was killed. She was burned alive. Her father survived. It was he who told me that she was killed by Chechen bandits. They all hid somewhere with Russian and Chechen civilians. They found themselves trapped between Russian soldiers and Chechen fighters. And Galja helped the Chechens. She fed them. But soon they left only to be replaced by others. And the new ones were bandits. They started raping the women. It was them who set fire to the house. Galija's father survived and he told me that. He cried all the time. Soon, he also died (…)

It was also very dangerous during the second war. I was even scared to go to the balcony. People on their balconies were hit by snipers. But I had nothing to eat. I had to go out from time to time. Otherwise I would have starved to death. Once I walked home. I returned from the market when heavy shelling begun. I started screaming. But nobody heard me anyway. Luckily, someone approached me and showed me some place where I could hide. There were many people. And the shelter was hit by a bomb. We could not escape from the place. I spent three days there. I had nothing to eat. There was some old man with us. He told us that it is possible to eat a dead body if there is no other option. But we did not do so. We were saved (…)

After the wars Chechens started killing each other (Ru. *drug druga ubivaet*). In Grozny, I once heard some man calling for help. Help me, help me! It was at night. Everybody was afraid. So he stayed as he was, on the street. Soon, I heard him asking only for water. And then, silence. The next morning he was dead. It

appeared that someone stabbed him. Nowadays some Chechens wear uniforms and others don't like them. For instance, my ex-husband used to have a friend. He had been a freedom fighter. Once he left his home and he never returned. He disappeared. Or, one man whom I knew was killed. He used to have blonde hair. Someone killed him because he thought he was Russian.

Another disruption that Khazida experienced was connected to the way in which her close relatives behaved during and after the wars. Khazida's aunt spoke to me about these events. According to her account, Khazida's problems begun after she married, when she was twenty years old. Soon after her marriage, she moved into a house, which belonged to her husband's parents. It was there that she witnessed war atrocities. After the wars, her husband found another woman and divorced her. Khazida moved to a flat in Grozny - she was able to stay there, since the flat was empty and in ruins. She was not allowed to take all her children when she moved. In the North Caucasus, there is a family norm which affiliates sons primarily to their father. In line with this norm her husband had taken their son away from her. This hit her hardly

A couple of years later, the aunt went on, Khazida had to leave the flat because of her unclear property rights. Facing the prospect of homelessness in the poverty-stricken North Caucasus, she tried to contact each of her parents several times. In the Chechen socio-cultural setting, there is a rule, which prescribes that families must support women until they marry. After they marry it is the duty of their conjugal family to support them. Another norm says that socio-economic connections between a woman and their blood family should be renewed if the daughter faces problems in marriage and misfortune.

Khazida expected her parents to acknowledge their residual obligations towards her. In the event, however, no one showed any interest in Khazida. Feeling betrayed by her natal family, and guilty for the failure of her marriage and the loss of her son, she left Chechnya for Poland.

When interviewing her about her life, Khazida did not talk about this. It was likely that this was still very painful for her. She mentioned her children and parents and the way in which she was dispossessed and displaced:

> K: In Chechnya, there is nothing good for me. Besides my daughters, I have also a son. I gave birth to four children. One of them died. The other one is in Russia. My daughters are here. My parents are divorced (from her words, I could see that she is ambivalent about her parents). My grandmother brought me up. But she passed away. I have a brother. He is in France. Russians want him. He used to be a freedom fighter. He changed his surname and fled to Poland. He received a tolerated stay permit. After this, he fled to France but French officials refused his asylum application. They found out about Poland. So in France, he is an illegal (inmigrant). But he cannot return (…)

> M: So why did you leave Chechnya?

> K:'I used to own a flat in Grozny. I was forced to move out. Now I own nothing. I am homeless. I own the documents which say that I own the flat, but I cannot enter my property. It is occupied by somebody else. Nowadays it is possible to do this. It is all just about power. If someone has good contacts, he could make all documents you need. It is easy to claim that such documents are real because during the wars bureaucracy

disappeared. My documents are stamped with a symbol of a wolf. Once I was visited by some people and they told me that I need other documents which are stamped with a symbol of an eagle. They said that my documents are not valid.

Khazida's Life: Becoming the Mother of Daughters

In the following lines, I shall explore how Khazida made sense of the world that had been destroyed by a family betrayal. Here I find Das' ethnography particularly useful. In line with Das, I discuss the idea that Chechen-Ingush women could paradoxically search for a new meaning and sense of continuity within the socio-cultural world that had subjugated and failed them in the first place. I also highlight that as their social setting dramatically changed, refugee women intensively helped each other in their attempts to cope with the tremendous losses they had experienced and to give new meanings to their lives.

After Khazida arrived in Poland in October 2007, she faced a crisis. As a result, the disruptions to her life appeared to be in direct contradiction to the dominant female construction prevalent in Chechen-Ingush patriarchal society. This view links a woman's life to a male world through her father or her husband. Visiting regularly the household where Khazida and her daughters firstly lived, I could see Khazida becoming anxious and confused. Over the course of the first months after their arrival, Khazida frequently changed her opinions and attitudes. Once she wanted to go back to Chechnya in order to re-unite with her husband. A couple of days later, then, she considered either staying in Poland or travelling to France in order to be with her brother.

She once said:

> I would like to go to France. But I am afraid that they will send me back. Also I don't want to travel because of my children. I am afraid of travelling. I don't know what I can expect from the change. I would like to learn Polish. But I don't speak with Poles too often. A couple of months ago, I spent some time in hospital. I learned a few Polish phrases there. I also watched Polish television.

Immediately after her arrival, however, Khazida was integrated into the community of refugee women. The female community economically supported each other across households. The women assisted each other with childcare and they also organised themselves to collect the groceries that were distributed to refugees in order to sell them at the bazaar. It is very likely that refugee women also supported each other verbally in their attempts to find meaning in their transformed family roles.[40]

Not only did these women accept Khazida as part of this network but also possibly encouraged her to remember the Chechen-Ingush belief-norm, which states that if their sons and husbands are missing it is possible for women to find continuity in their daughters' lives. Being recognised by the female community as the mother of daughters, Khazida overcame her crisis soon after her arrival in Poland. Her daughters gave new meaning to her 'Polish' life, as I could see from the way she cared about them.

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[40] I am unable to provide ethnographic material about these processes since, as I said before, I did not have regular access to most activities at which the female voice arose.

Six months after her arrival in Poland, I met Khazida at the local bazaar and I recorded a voice, which indicated that she had already come to terms with past ruptures. I was shopping for vegetables one day, when I noticed her standing aside and selling butter, yoghurt, canned sardines, and flour - goods that were distributed to the refugees in the asylum centre. Speaking to me, she implied that the past is the past and she must live in the present and the future.

She said:

> Before I arrived here, I had never been abroad. I had never even been to Moscow. The first time that I saw Moscow was when I travelled to Poland. It is hard for me to be here alone with my daughters. Sometimes I think about my family. But in Chechnya we have a saying that if a daughter leaves the family house the parents' backs become straight.

Veena Das: Maternal Lamentation

In this section, I summarise again specific parts of Das's ethnography. I focus on is her account of maternal lamentation of a Sikh female survivor of the 1984 communal riots (Das, 1990, pp. 346-362; 2007, pp. 184-193). This ethnography retells the story of a woman, whose husband and sons rioters had killed, but who had managed to save her life and that of her two daughters. As the riots erupted, her husband and sons hid in a house, which was burned to the ground while people were still inside. The text is very disturbing. It informs us about this woman's life in the period between the communal riots and her death. Unable to cope with the death of her two sons, the woman committed

suicide. This ethnography is about failed grief and mourning. I find it thought-provoking, as it shows how a female subject, who is a part of a patrilineal family and patriarchal community, fails to accept traumatic loss as a part of her ongoing life.

According to Das, soon after the riots the woman struggled with the painful realisation that her own children had died, especially since many other children had survived the riots. She stoically accepted the death of her husband. As Das explains, however, she had problems accepting the fact that most mothers had managed to save their own children and she had failed to do so. She believed that one of her cousins might have contributed to her sons' death. She thought that it was him who, in fear for his own life, revealed her husband's hiding place to the rioters.

During the initial stages of mourning, Das explains, the woman tended to blame her elder daughter for the tragedy. When the riots erupted, the woman sent her elder daughter to her take her sons from the place where they hid with their father. Her husband, however, sent their daughter back, saying that the mother would not be able to protect their sons alone. The woman also blamed her dead husband and elder son. She thought that they should have surrendered instead of hiding . The woman's words also indicated that, soon after the riots, she started to accept loss as a part of her daily life.

Das explains that what helped this woman was that her own mother went to help at home. After her arrival, the mother created the appropriate circumstances that imitated the relation between a mother and a child. She washed her daughter. She took care of her. She fed her. The mother protected her daughter, who was now widowed, so

she would not harm herself. The local female community also mourned her losses collectively and attempted to re-direct the woman's life towards her daughters' future.

Nonetheless, everything changed after the widow's father-in-law, her dead husband's father, moved to the house to provide for the woman and proclaimed that it was his responsibility to secure that the widow was not left without any male protection.[41] Das explains that the father-in-law was deeply affected by the tragedy. There was no doubt about his sincere intentions to help his daughter-in-law to recover from the state of the sorrow that paralysed her. Nonetheless, his presence inside the house also sent another message: that the life of his daughter-in-law could only be meaningful if attached to the conjugal family - implying that a woman's life constructed alongside female connections and relatives is not worthwhile.

In short, Das argues that men, who belonged to her conjugal family and their community, 'de-created' the woman, eliminating the possibility to re-establish herself as a mother of her daughters after the disruptive event. As the father-in-law moved into her house, everyone who remained around the woman spoke the patriarchal voice and the women's life became a statement against the dominant norms, which defined her life only meaningful as a mother of sons. It was then that the woman ultimately laid the final blame on herself.

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[41] Since it was inappropriate for the woman's mother to stay in the house that belonged to the woman's conjugal family, the woman's mother left after the father-in-law's arrival.

Economic Hardship and the Complications of Female 'Bereavement'

Even though it did not end up in a tragedy similar to the case Das describes, the process through which refugees accept dramatic changes in their lives was, as I already explained in the previous chapter, also rather perplexed and complicated. The background of refugee women in Hotel Pumis was diverse. Some women lived only with some of their children because they were widows or had been abandoned by their husbands. Other remarried. Other had arrived with their husbands. It is possible that Das's explanation about the way in which female bereavement can be blocked is applicable to some of these cases. It seems to me, however, that what affected the 'mourning' process of many women, including Khazida's, was their prevailing economic hardship.

Khazida, like most Chechen women and families, faced the problem of making ends meet. The selling of goods at the bazaar earned her between forty to seventy zlotys per month. In addition to this, she had access to social benefits, unpaid accommodation, and food. Yet, despite the fact that she had this income, she constantly faced financial difficulties due to her daughter's illness. Khazida's sense of insecurity increased when she saw the daily struggles of people who had to leave the asylum centre because state authorities had made a decision about their asylum cases.[42]

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[42] Most of these refugees had been granted a tolerated stay permit (Pl. *Pobyt tolerowany*). According to the statistics published by the Polish Office for Foreigners, the number of refugees who had been granted asylum between the 2006 and 2008 was 890. The number of refugees who had been granted tolerated stay permits was 6442. The thing that characterised these refugees was that they had lost their right to unpaid accommodation. Unlike refugees to whom the state granted asylum,

It has been said before that, after several months in the asylum centre, Khazida's voice had already become that of a head of the household, responsible for the lives of the daughters. I could see she increasingly cared about her daughters. It was important for her to provide them with enough food. She tried to secure good medical care for them and she once told me that they were her only reason to be alive. Yet, as I already knew her well, I could not help but notice that this woman was also becoming ambivalent about her daughters. Sometimes, she became angry with them for no apparent reason. On a couple of occasions, I saw her slapping her daughters. She once told me that she was very tired of having maternal responsibilities.

In the summer of 2008, when she faced the prospect of leaving the asylum centre - and losing the security of having a house and the protection of the female community - I saw that Khazida increasingly struggled with her most traumatic memories. For instance, I was once in her room when one of her children left and after a while she returned and knocked on the door. I could see Khazida become scared. I asked her what had happened. She told me that during the wars she had witnessed soldiers breaking into her neighbours' house and shooting some of them. Since then, she got scared whenever somebody unexpectedly knocked on the door. In her mind, the war was still very present.

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they did not have access to integration programmes that Polish state and by the European Union funded. They were exposed to neo-liberal policies, which expressed that to find housing is the problem of the immigrant. But, since most refugees with a tolerated stay permit had no source of regular income, they were unable to pay rent and, consequently, they became even more dependent on the informal economy, transnational networks, and on local charities.

Veena Das: Violence and the Work of Time

In the following, I summarise Das's ethnography, which constitutes the body of the chapter called *Boundaries, Violence and the Work of Time* (Das, 2007, pp. 79-94). In this chapter, Das acknowledges that even if the victims of violence find a way to distance themselves from past ruptures these did not disappear but remained underpinning social relationships. Through her ethnography Das shows how a female subject, part of a patrilineal family and a patriarchal society, may defend her own version of her family 'truth' against the agents-narrators who are more powerful than her by means of 'stalking time.'

In this ethnography, Veena Das tells the story of a woman who had been abducted during the turbulent partition of India. Since both of her parents died during the upheaval, this woman came to live firstly with her maternal cousin after the Partition. However, the cousin was not able to carry the new burden and economic responsibility for the new household member. Hence, he soon arranged a wedding for the woman. He found her a husband who was much older than her and who was a distant relative. In order to protect the woman, he had not told the husband that the bride to be had been raped.

Nonetheless, Das explains that the woman faced hardship after she had married. Her husband became suspicious that, in the past, his wife had had a Muslim lover. He thought that his distant relatives had tricked him. He did not openly talk about his suspicion, except the times when he was drunk. Silence kept harming the relation between him and his wife. The mother-in-law, who was also suspicious of his wife's past supported her son in the quarrel.

Later, Das goes on to recount, the husband and mother's anger turned into resentment against the first-born son. According to Das, the son did not face open aggression from his father. The father was merely indifferent to him. After the son grew up, he wanted to study but the father ignored his ambitions and efforts. With the support of his mother and of his own determination, the son completed his studies - despite the fact that his father wanted him to work at his shop.

Upon completing his studies, Das says, the son wanted to marry. A colonel approached him to marry one of his daughters, who was a graduate like him. The son wanted an educated bride and he wanted to marry this girl. However, his father opposed his decision. He wanted him to marry someone from a house who would bring him wealth - the bride was from a rather poor family, which was not able to provide a big dowry.

Since the patriarch opposed the marriage, the son's mother together with her maternal cousin, who supported the boy's decision to marry the girl, arranged a meeting, which other respectable kin and the recalcitrant father attended. In the meeting they agreed that the family could refuse every offer.

Das writes that the woman-mother did not speak at the meeting. She silently sat on the floor and listened to the discussion. She did not lift her eyes to look at anyone, whereas her husband sat in the corner and, being put under the pressure of the public occasion, he merely nodded and mumbled that his son and wife can do whatever they wish. At first sight, the woman was passive at the meeting. Yet, given her whole life story, it was obvious that she was a person who had stalked time and who had seized the right moment to impose her own interpretations

and visions of her family truth against relatives who were more powerful than her.

Stalking Time

Das's ethnography is interesting since it makes one imagine Chechen-Ingush women as stalkers of time, who shadow the flow of time in order to catch the right moments. These moments allow them to impose their own views and interpretations against those maintained by more powerful actors, who certainly were the refugee men. Let me go back Khazida's story and her voice to further illustrate this point.

I met Khazida in December 2007, when I was with Sultan, an adult teenager who had arrived to Poland with his brother and mother and with who I used to spend a lot of time. As I befriended Sultan, I asked him whether he could teach me conversational Chechen. He recommended me to talk to his mother. I started visiting the room where his mother lived. His mother was Khazida's aunt. Soon, I also met Khazida, who was usually was present when I came around their room. Sultan and her mother were keen to interact with me during the first months. In the context of the presence of other household authorities, however, Khazida was rather silent - she started communicating me when she became head of the household after her aunt and sons left for France.

In the summer of 2008, I saw Khazida with other refugees and journalists in one of the city parks. The people who met here were refugees who had been granted tolerated stay permits and who had not migrated from Poland back to Russia or moved on to France,

Belgium, Germany, Sweden, or Norway. Some of these refugees had been saved from homelessness. For instance, there was a Catholic sanctuary for single mothers in the city where I did the fieldwork and women and children were allowed to go there. No adult man, however, even if closely related to the women, was allowed to enter the building. Partly as a result of this restriction, the husbands of most of these women had become homeless and settled in the nearby park. For this reason, social workers and journalists regularly visited the park. Some refugees saw this as an opportunity to publicly campaign for their rights and the improvement of their living conditions in Poland.[43]

Interestingly, the way in which Khazida campaigned was different from how other married refugee women acted. Other women in the park found a concrete construction, which was reminiscent of a kitchen table. When the journalists came, they silently performed their domestic duties. They brought food to the 'table' and served it to men who spoke alone on behalf of their relatives.[44] They also brought children with them so journalist could see how men spent time with their children. If one bears Das' ethnography in mind, it may appear that a woman's silence was not a marker of passivity or subordination in various situations. Maybe there were various tensions inside their

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[43] Refugees were generally very unsatisfied because Polish authorities did not allow them to migrate legally from Poland to the European Union. They did not provide them with much real financial support.

[44] In the Chechen socio-cultural context, norms allow women to be publicly active. According to Souleimanov, this is because Chechen communities adopted Islam only two centuries ago (Souleimanov, 2007, p. 37). Yet, norms don't allow women to publicly act on behalf of men. Men would commonly understand this as a great shame.

families related to past and present violence, and silence was a strategy developed to protect their interpretations and to escape the narratives that men or other members of their families-households had assigned to them.

Unlike them, Khazida, now a single mother of her daughters and head of the household, used this opportunity to verbally manipulate journalists in an attempt to keep her children secure and protected. It should be noted here, however, that she did not perceive herself as an emancipated woman campaigning for her rights - though she certainly was - but as a woman whose life was primarily defined by her relationship to the men in her community.

As she expressed to me:

> Look at our men here. What kind of life is this? Their backs are not straight! They had not been before the bomb raids!

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to outline how traumatic loss becomes a part of everyday life and how it existed within the world of female refugees. As a male researcher, I did not have access to many realms of the lives of Chechen-Ingush women. I have approached the problem in the light of relevant ethnographies written by Veena Das, an anthropologist and expert on the problem of violence and womanhood in post-colonial India. Later, I have outlined the voice of one particular woman, thinking about bereavement patterns, as they dominated her experience and, possibly, that of Chechen-Ingush women in general.

I have explained that violence had affected Chechen-Ingush refugees in a way that it separated them from their social context and characteristic norms. For some women these norms were contradictory. On the one hand, they put female subjects under the protection of either natal or her conjugal family. On the other hand, they always assigned them a subordinate position within the household. Yet, I have suggested that, if one looks at Khazida's voice one can observe that, like refugee men, women heavily relied upon the norms of North Caucasian culture in an effort to come to terms with their experiences of loss.

While the cultural concepts the refugees were familiar with provided a model of how the world damaged by violence can be re-inhabited for everyone, the Chechen-Ingush women, perhaps more than the men many of whom had been identified by the Polish asylum law as the heads of their current households, relied upon the mutual support while making a sense of their lives. It seems to me that mutual assistance was an important support element in their process of 'bereavement' and recovery of Chechen-Ingush women. In this chapter, I have also identified certain pathologies in such 'bereavement' process and related them to economic hardship. Last, I have discussed the way in which the process of binding time possibly assisted some women to maintain their visions of themselves against a backdrop of more powerful dissonant voices.

Chapter Seven

Between Generations: Fathers of Sons

In Chapter Four and Five, I discussed the way in which the refugee men, who had to deal with the fact that their lives had been violently interrupted, affiliated themselves tightly, with the help of the Polish asylum law, with particular *Vainakh* norms of masculinity. I have also focused on the way in which these men protected their vision of 'truth' by controlling narratives about women in different private, communal, and public places. I have also explored how a specific masculine gendered identity, characterised by the way refugees saw themselves as brothers (Chech. *vezharij*) or 'our people' (Chech. *Nakh*) is constituted. However, while I was in the field I observed also different versions, or aspects, of a masculine subjectivity. These men typically hoped that they would be able to keep their children-sons away from guns. Furthermore, these men usually hoped that they would be able to set an example for their children-sons and to provide them with an opportunity to attend schools in Europe. They wish for their male descendants to be educated in the future. They hoped to stop them becoming 'stupid persons' who do bad things (Ru. *duraki, svolochi*) and instead helped them to be 'civilised' (Ru. *civilizovannye*) and 'cultured' (Ru. *kul'turnye*) people who know how to take care of themselves in economic terms, who represent the family and who make sure their parents have all their needs satisfied when they grow old. Most adult Chechen-Ingush men had these hopes, which coexisted with other visions of themselves and the world. But these hopes were more

prominent in some specific groups of refugees, especially among those men who belonged to a middle or older generation. It was these older men who were less oriented towards the public-communal sphere and more towards the household. A question thus may arise as to how some men, especially older men-parents, developed their disrupted lives less in the public-communal domain and more in the medium of the household?

Tackling this problem, in the following I continue to provide an insight into the experiences of the temporary residents of Hotel Pumis. I will be using the voice of another refugee called Rezvan in this chapter. This man was fifty years old. He had sharp facial features, a large nose and grey hair. He liked to dress elegantly - among the very few things he had taken into exile were a golden watch, a heavy fur coat, a Caucasian hat, and several pairs of shoes made of leather. Rezvan had immigrated to Poland together with his three sons. Mairbek, the eldest son, was sixteen. Mairudy, the second son, was fourteen and the youngest son, Usman, was eleven years old. Rezvan was married- his wife worked as a nurse. Apart from his sons he had also three daughters with his wife. The female part of his nuclear family stayed at home whilst the father made a plan for his sons. Before his departure Rezvan decided that he must make something meaningful out the experience of fleeing his country. He told his sons that they would travel to Europe to give them the opportunity to train in boxing and become sport champions (Ru. *zdelat ikh muzhcinami i chempionami*). His sons liked this sport, so he secretly hoped that regular training would keep them away from violence and help them to find a goal in their lives.

In anthropology, transmission between generations is commonly understood to be a process of transferring shared values, moralities, world-views, skills, or taken-for-granted models of behaviour from one generation to the other. Anthropologists believe that the desire to transmit belongs among human universals. It is acknowledged that intergenerational transmission is channelled through various institutions such as schools or peer groups. Nonetheless, kinship also plays a very important role in this process (Bertaux & Thompson, 1993). Drawing upon these understandings, scholarship on post-socialism frequently emphasises, in various different ways, that the rupture triggered by sudden and unexpected rupture in the public world and subsequent rapid and turbulent changes in political economies and social life, should be seen as located not only between the past and present but also between the lived worlds of socialist and post-socialist generations (Pilkington, 1997; Vitebsky, 2002; Pine, 2002; forthcoming). In the anthropology of violence, there is a number of studies concerned with the means through which trauma may be transmitted from one generation to the next (Argenti & Schramm, 2010; Dickson-Gómez, 2002). The ethnographic content of this chapter contributes to these domains of scholarship.

I start by acknowledging that most refugees suffered not only because their individual lives had been disrupted - in ways which have already been discussed in preceding chapters - but also because the Russo-Chechen wars had thwarted the process of transmission between generations. Describing Rezvan's voice, I grasp the way in which the subject re-created a sense of the world destroyed by violence with the help of patrilinear and patriarchal kinship norms, which make his life as father predominantly oriented to his sons. Furthermore, I describe

how fathers protect the identity of their offspring by covering his memories of destruction with silence and imposing his own vision of a familial 'truth' upon his sons. I suggest that to some men the household was a significant centre, where they created new identities as fathers, because the individual efforts to give a new sense to the world were combined with a universal human need to pass their knowledge, moral values, and skills to the next generation.

The Lost Post-Socialist Generations

Let me begin by introducing a forthcoming study by Frances Pine (forthcoming). Set in Lublin, a Polish city situated near the border with Ukraine, and on the edge of the European Union, the study goes back to the decade of 1970, highlighting a paradox, which relates to the existence of an economy of shortages and the widespread hostility to the communist state. Even though under socialism all jobs were officially allocated to everyone, in practice, most economic opportunities, both in the state sector and in the informal sector, were distributed through the private informal domain. The private informal domain served, despite being classed by the official ideology as anti-socialist and bourgeois, as a source of trust. Since under socialism most jobs were distributed thought networks of friends, relatives, and acquaintances, a more senior generation, according to the anthropologist, acted as doorkeepers, who provided economic opportunities for their children. This allowed them to effectively pass their own skills, moralities, and values on to the younger generation-these included notions about the real value of labour, which the

communist state had promoted and ordinary citizens had internalised it.

As the iron curtain fell, the established work avenues and connections that had facilitated intergenerational transmission in Lublin, Pine explains, were closed. Socialist ideology suddenly vanished and, in Poland, was soon replaced by capitalist dogmas of market exchange and possessive individualism. A quick disappearance of primary sites of work and production, factories, cooperatives, and collectives accompanied this transformation. The gap, Pine writes, was partly filled with informal work sites only to be later replenished with the highly mobile, flexible, and information-based capitalism, leaving an older generation, who still supported their children emotionally and financially and vice versa, either in fear of losing their jobs or unemployed. People who were better able to adapt to the new conditions of the new political economy were, according to Pine, those ones who had no memories of working under communism, the younger generation.

In her draft, Pine introduces us the experiences of men and women in their 50s and 60s whom she met in Lublin, Eastern Poland, between 2003 and 2006. According to the anthropologist, people who were now part of a senior generation associated progress and civilised modernity with the 1970s. Although the 'Gierek period' was, in reality, characterised by acute shortages and great dissatisfaction with the government, Pine explains that older people whom she met in the field three decades later selectively recollected that services were good, everyone was employed, and work standards were high. But this is not the end of the story. Many elder Polish women and men felt the necessity to pass what they had learned from their parents to their

children. They were generally unable to do so because younger generations, who refused parental values, had already attempted to build their lives in a different world.

Later on in her study, Pine introduces us also the experiences of the younger generation. Doing so, she mentions an important feature of flexible capitalism, the non-existence of life-long job. What shaped younger generation's public lives, as Pine explains, was moving backwards and forwards between different short-term jobs, localities, and social networks. On the one hand, Pine stresses that flexible capitalism did not completely interrupt the relations between this generation and the senior generation. Some younger Poles, she observes, were supported by their parents, whereas others were economically active and supported themselves and their close relatives. On the other hand, she explains that because of the fact that the younger generation had partly adjusted their lives to the new economic regime, they were forced to refuse or reject parental values and ideologies.

Disconnected Refugee Generations

In the Chechen-Ingush context, my enquiries into the problem point at a different scenario. In the 1960s and 1970s many ordinary Chechens and Ingushes were evicted from political life and effectively excluded from lucrative parts of the state economy. Intergenerational transmission then was probably not maintained through sites of employment and production and was instead carried forward in the private informal domain under late communism in the USSR. In the second half of the 1990s and especially in the first decade of the 21st

century, as violence took the form of political terror, the process of intergenerational transmission performed in the private informal domain, as the result of my inquiries indicate, was disrupted.

In Chapter Four, I discussed that the official structures under later communism in the USSR failed to secure the moral and political allegiance of most ordinary *Vainakhs*. In the 1960s and in the 1970s, according to Khirzieva and Reina (2011), well-paid jobs in the North Caucasian oil industry were reserved primarily for employees and workers of Russian, Cossack, Ossetian, Armenian or Ukrainian nationalities - due to prevailing prejudices and despite the fact that the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic had been restored and those forcibly displaced to Kazakhstan had returned. As I learned from refugees' life stories, in the 1960s and 1970s, many Chechens and Ingushes did not live in the multi-ethnic city of Grozny but in the countryside. The older generation usually worked in the least profitable and insecure branch of the centralised economy, in kolkhozes. The younger generation had to seek economic opportunities mostly in the informal sector. Moreover, in the same period, since most young Chechen and Ingush families did not have flats, which should have been distributed officially to all, younger men often travelled to other parts of the USSR as labour migrants.

It seems that, in the context of this socio-economic marginalisation, the private informal domain was, for ordinary Chechens and Ingushes, a sphere of practical kinship, traditional morality, and family, community and ethnic solidarity positioned largely against official structures under late communism in the USSR. It is very likely that such domestic realm played a crucial role in the process of intergenerational transmission. When talking about the socialist past refugees often invoked the

tradition of mutual assistance within the *Vainakh* ethnic community (Chech. *belkhi*).[45] Refugees often talked about how, under late socialism, they had to work in order to help their parents economically, how their parents supported their studies, or how their parents and also other elderly traditional authorities, taught them about who they were and the differences between Chechens-Ingushes and Russians.

As the grand narrative of progress disappeared from public life in the early 1990s, the importance of the private sphere possibly increased. After the fall of communism, the project of liberalisation in Chechnya became overwhelmed by nationalist and tribal ideologies (Kudriavtsev, 2004). After Dudayev declared Chechnya as an independent state, the economy was based on subsidised agriculture. Oil industries collapsed and unemployment and corruption became rampant (Rigi, 2007, pp. 47-48). My Chechen friends told me that, initially, there was euphoria about these changes among ordinary people. Many even returned from Russia to be a direct part of history as it unfolded. As the economy rapidly declined, however, this shared excitement soon evaporated. As I learned from the informal conversations I had refugees, a large part of ordinary Chechens-Ingushes, who were extremely affected by the turbulent transformations, struggled to survive economically. Some tried to renew their migrant socio-economic networks but most borders were soon closed. According to my research, trade, irregular

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[45] According to Jaimoukha, this complex tradition of mutual help emerged as a result of the difficult life conditions in the mountains. In the past, whenever someone suffered or needed hard job done all neighbours would gather in order to help (Jaimoukha, 2005, p. 93)

labour, farming, or domestic oil production sustained ordinary *Vainakhs* in the early 1990s.[46]

Nonetheless, everything changed after the wars erupted. It seems that different generations remained economically interconnected with each other. In the second half of the 1990s ordinary Chechens-Ingushes were usually unemployed and often participated in warfare. After 1999, a substantial proportion of their income consisted of pensions, humanitarian aid, and child benefits - as Russian rule returned to Chechnya, many households started to receive state benefits. On the other hand, mundane life in Chechnya and also Ingushetia became simply too dangerous. Members of local ethnic communities betrayed and gave each other up to Kadyrovites and police. Police and paramilitary units raided many houses. Young men, who could get easily attracted to war ideologies, became targets, leaving their parents fearing for their future - during our conversations some parents often used the phrase 'they don't let us live' (Ru. *ne pozvoljajut nam zhit*') to explain how they felt.

The Life of Rezvan

In this subsection I elaborate further on the idea of 'no-return mentality' and describe this complex disruption as it dominated Rezvan's experience. Here I acknowledge that many refugees experienced pain not only because their individual temporalities had

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[46] In North Caucasus, there are rich oil resources. After the centrally planned economy dissolved, some people started to drilling for oil in their gardens and in the cellars they started to produce fuel. Some told me that the domestic oil production was very risky: the gas that leaked from the canisters explored from time to time.

been disrupted in multiple ways but also because violence had interfered with their intergenerational forms of transmission. One can learn, through Rezvan's life story, that this man had a hard life under communism and that he was confronted a rupture of enormous intensity and scale after the dissolution of the USSR.

I interviewed Rezvan about in August 2008, when I had got to know him well. When we began our interview, Rezvan went back to the decade of the 1950s. He told me he was born in Chechnya only a couple of months after his parents were allowed to return from Kazakhstan. Even though his parents were allowed to go back, Rezvan stressed, neither of them settled in his or her parental home. One of the houses had been totally dilapidated. Someone else, presumably Russian immigrants, had inhabited the other. He and his family spent several years searching for a place to live and work.

> I remember my childhood. I was born in 1958. My family had just returned from Kazakhstan. I don't personally remember these moments but I know this because my parents told me. I was born in 1958. My mother was twenty-six years old when I was born. In 1944, when she was deported to Kazakhstan, she was just a little girl. In Kazakhstan, she met my father and they married. I have one older brother and one older sister. I am the third child. I was a big child. I had about five kilos in weight. And my mother gave birth not in some hospital but at home (…)

> When I was a child, times were hard for my family. My mother was ill because we were displaced. And the state assigned her only sixteen roubles per month. Can you imagine how we used to live? When I was a child, a loaf of bread cost twenty-five

kopecks, one kilogram of sugar cost one rouble and one kilogram of meat cost three roubles. What I remember from my childhood is mostly my empty stomach! And my father (…) You know, Russians had stolen our houses! We had to wander around the North Caucasus in order to find a place to live. After Chechens arrived from Kazakhstan, Russians were everywhere. And they did not let us work. In Grozny, for instance, it was impossible for any Chechen to find a job. Therefore most Chechens worked in agriculture. So did my father. When I was a child, times were very hard.

After they spent two years wandering from place to place, the family settled in Achkhoy-Martan, a town located in the western part of Chechnya. The household was three-generational. Rezvan's parents, his paternal grandparents, his two sisters, and three brothers all lived in the house. But neither Rezvan's mother nor his father were permanently employed. His father became a seasonal worker - he helped to harvest corn in the kolkhozes - and his mother could not work at all because of her illness - the only money she received was a sick pay.

Growing up in these harsh conditions, Rezvan was still able to study. Despite investing most of his energy in his education, he also worked and assisted his parents with the household, which continued to economically struggle. Rezvan completed his primary education, enrolled in high school, and became a qualified worker-builder. After completing high school, however, he could not find a job in Chechnya since, as he told me, all good positions were reserved for the Russians.

Thus, as a young man, he travelled to Russia in search for work. Between 1976 and 1980, he lived near Lake Baikal. In the first half of the 1980s, he was in Moscow. During the second half of the 1980s he was in Siberia. He worked initially as a construction worker. In his own words, he 'helped to build many bridges and railroads.' Later, the Soviet army recruited him. After he left the army, it was increasingly difficult for him to find a regular job so he mostly worked illegally to survive (Ru. *chernaja rabota*). As Rezvan explained to me energetically:

> I had spent many years living in the USSR. I was in Siberia, in Ural, in Moscow! I travelled from place to place. I used to have many friends in Russia.

Interestingly, when Rezvan talked to me about this part of his life, he mentioned not only the precariousness but also the fact that he used to have a very liberal life style. He said that he used to have money and friends. He revealed that, since he had no relatives around, he spent his money as he wanted and had more sexual partners. He nostalgically smiled, as he told me this. It seemed to me that even though he was uprooted, the time he spent in Russia was perhaps the luckiest and most satisfactory part of his life.

Although Rezvan spent most of his productive years in Russia, according to him, he never decided to stay there forever. On the contrary, he often dreamt of returning to what he perceived as his homeland. In the end, he did so. In 1989, he returned to Achkhoy-Martan, where he settled and established a family. Soon after his return, his first child was born. Other children would come later. Back at home Rezvan's started to lead an ordinary and settled life.

As the Soviet Union was about to dissolve, he faced acute financial difficulties. For this reason, he was forced to emigrate from Chechnya again. He travelled to Astrakhan. He earned some money. However, his words also described how he lost all what he had earned after investing his money with a stockbroker who later went bankrupt. One can see here that turbulent changes in the public world disrupted his life.

> After the disorder began (Ru. *besporiadky nachalisj'*), life in Chechnya was cheap, so I had to try hard in order to provide for my family and myself. I started to do business as a caviar seller. Astrakhan is a very nice city. There is the Volga River. And there is a lot of caviar. And I used to own around three tons of caviar! And I sold it to businessmen from Germany, Japan, England (…)

> Even though I got a bad price for the caviar, I earned some money. I bought some shares in one particular oil and gas company. I gave all my money to a bank. It was a Russian bank, Irkutsk Bank. The bank took money from me and from many other people. And the management stole the money and disappeared. During the 1990s, this was very common. When I arrived at the place where the bank used to be there was a restaurant. The bank had disappeared. I stopped doing business. It is not possible to do business when there is no law and one cannot plan the future.

After this, the first war erupted. Rezvan and his closest relatives survived the war relatively well. In Achkhoy-Martan, the fights were not very intense during the first war. They had transformed their house into a small family farm and this helped them to survive the war.

Yet, during our interview, just when I thought he might start talking about the wars, Rezvan remained silent. I then asked him again.

> The first war was very cruel. Grachev, the Russian defence minister, proclaimed that he needed twenty-four hours in order to defeat Chechnya (slowly). And he sent in the army. The tanks, the battalions, all these soldiers burned to death (…) (at this point his narrative became inconsistent) Hundreds of dead, the tanks, the soldiers (…) Euuuu, ouuu (He imitates the sounds of the war) Oh, mama, take me away from here (he replicates the final words of a dying solider).

Rezvan's account of the war indicates that the first war came as a shock. He was not directly involved in the fighting. He was not wounded. None of his closest relatives were killed. Nonetheless, even though he witnessed the Chechen-Russian conflict from the sidelines, he saw many people dying and this, as his testimony clearly shows, had deeply affected him.

The second war was perhaps even more traumatising for Rezvan. When the second war erupted, the whole family - Rezvan, his wife and children - had to urgently flee to Ingushetia. Moreover, as they were escaping, Russian soldiers stopped them at the checkpoint, robbed them, and threatened to kill Rezvan in front of his children:

> We had to flee the house. While on the road to Ingushetia, we were stopped by Russian soldiers (his voice trembles). 'Give me that TV!' You know, I had my TV in the car because I did not want to leave it at home. And the Russian soldier asked: 'What do you have there? Show me some document which proves that the television is yours!' 'What documents? My house has been

bombed!' All my children were small. Usman was crying. And the soldier was ready to shoot him because I argued with him.

After the open fights ended, Rezvan, his wife, and children returned again to Achkhoy-Martan. He repaired his house, which had been damaged during the fights. However, he did not find his house to be a safe haven anymore. He was traumatised and, as the following excerpt from his testimony indicates, the violent turmoil had affected the relationship between him and his descendants.

> I thought a lot about whether to leave Chechnya or not. I decided to leave since in Chechnya times are harsh. There is terror. People are silent. They are afraid. They don't protest against the regime. Once, it there was some young man driving a car and some people dressed as civilians ordered him to stop. He did not stop driving and one of the men shot him death. Can you imagine? The boy was only eighteen years old (it was apparent that this incident made him think about his sons' lives and made afraid that his sons might be killed in similar way). After this happened, I decided we had to leave.

As the wars in the North Caucasus erupted, Rezvan witnessed destruction and death. He was uprooted from his home. He was nearly killed and political turmoil threatened his children. In my opinion, it is interesting to think about elderly men/fathers because it is the age group to which Rezvan belonged to. He had also arrived at a point in his life when he felt the necessity to pass down the knowledge, skills, and values he had received from his parents. Nonetheless, external circumstances made it very difficult to do so. The question thus is how did this specific refugee group make a sense of their world, given the

way violence had affected the process of transmission between generations?

The Narrow Definition of Fatherhood

In the Chechen-Ingush socio-cultural context, there is a set of norms that aim to regulate the relationship between a father and his sons in order for the father to assist his male descendants to become true men (Chech. *yakh*) and help them to become his successors. According to these norms, it is inappropriate for a man or father to interfere in womanly affairs at home, including the daughter's education. Every father is responsible, primarily, for the education of his sons. On the one hand, these norms give the father power over his sons' lives. On the other, the same norms prescribe that no father must ever oppress his sons. No Chechen or Ingush father, as the norms put it, should ever yell at his children. No father should ever hit his son in the face and should support him and treat him as if he were his equal so the son could become a smart, intelligent and active person when he grows up.[47] Meanwhile, every *Vainakh* father ought to teach his sons to behave while they are with their peers or others who do not belong to the family circle. I mention this set of norms here because as Rezvan's voice reveals and the following paragraphs shall demonstrate, this

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[47] *Vainakh* fathers approach their children's education as a game. For instance, I once visited one Chechen family and, while the father discussed various things with me, he also paid attention to his three-year old son. After a while, he ordered his wife to give his son two apples. Then, he ordered his son to give one of the apples to me. The son shared what he had with me. But soon he took the apple away from me and threw it on the floor. He pretended to be angry. He said, forgivingly, that his son was a hooligan and that he had never behaved like this while he was at home.

father turned to them in order to make sense of the world demolished by the Russo-Chechen wars.

I met Rezvan a couple of weeks after he arrived in Poland. At the beginning of November 2007, I was inside Hotel Pumis waiting for Shamil, a Chechen boxing trainer. Shamil had promised that he would take me to the gym. When he came, Shamil was not alone. Rezvan and his sons were with him. Shamil introduced us and explained that the boys were very talented sportsmen. Then, we all went to the boxing club. While Usman, Mairudy, and Mairbek sparred, Shamil and the head coach, a local man called Anji, prepared to test their skills. Rezvan sat nearby. He carefully observed what went on and seemed to listen to each word they spoke. After training ended, he came to the dressing room and loudly exclaimed so everyone could hear him:

> My sons will train here every day. They will learn boxing. But they will also learn [to speak] Polish. We will manage all documents. And we will fight for Poland. We will go to Germany. We will go to the USA. But we will always fight for Poland. We will prove that we are not bandits and barbarians! This is the future Polish champion! (he pointed at the youngest son).

Over the following months, I could hear him publicly proclaiming that his sons were not bandits and barbarians on more occasions. For instance, he repeated these words whenever the sons were in the boxing ring. He usually could not control himself when he saw his sons boxing. He often shouted at his sons' opponents: 'Can you see who we are? Who is a bandit now?' When we returned from the tournament, I

asked Rezvan what might happen after his sons become world champions. Rezvan became emotional:

> We will go further! The whole World must acknowledge us! They must see that my sons can fight but also that they are smart. They must see that we can play chess, that we are good at work.

Figure 9 - At the Boxing Tournament

Privately, while his sons were around, the father frequently emphasised that everything was possible, that one must just believe, or that his sons are much better boxers than the others who trained in the gym. Rezvan was aware that their education would be successful only if his sons wanted it. Therefore, he led them to believe that it was their own

ambition, which drove the whole Polish endeavour. The youngest son, Usman, was at the very centre of Rezvan's world was. Norms state that it is the youngest son, who stays living with his parents. Rezvan thought that Usman was a skilled student of mathematics and believed he would one day become an engineer. I once saw Rezvan giving Usman a hug while saying: 'This is my most beloved son. He will feed his parents. He will 'dress' his parents. He will take care of his father's shoes.'

Rezvan's account reveals how refugee men followed closely the patrilinear and patriarchal norms of fatherhood. One may object that these norms were also a part of the father's world before war and displacement occurred. This is certainly the case. However, these norms were a part of much larger structure or system of regulations, which ordered the relations between male subject and other members of the household and the community. It often struck me, when I was in the field, how Rezvan as well as many other Chechen-Ingush fathers were deeply attached to their sons, while often ignoring other relations. It was not unusual for men or fathers to flee the North Caucasus and take only their sons with them and away from their households. In my view and as my conversations with Rezvan suggested, it was the proximity he felt with death, his first forced displacement experience in 1999, and the event of being nearly killed in front of this family that had made Rezvan strongly adhered to the above-mentioned norms. After these intimate experiences of violence Rezvan began to ask himself acute questions. He often pondered who he and his family were in this world so he could be easily killed, or how he would live and have a future. Evoking the norms of fatherhood and

neglecting other conceptions, to my knowledge, became an important part of answering these questions.

Fatherhood and the Asylum Law

In Chapter Five I discussed the way in which the Polish asylum law - some asylum seekers were formally given more rights than the others - helped men, who became applicants, to deal with loss and trauma. In my opinion, this point may be well applied to older men who are also fathers. While the younger men could deal with loss and trauma more easily mostly because they had control over their family's finances, the older men, fathers like Rezvan were, to my knowledge, supported because they had the right to live free of charge with their dependants under one roof.

Soon after he settled in a private room that he shared with his two sons in Hotel Pumis, Rezvan, who had submitted an asylum application on behalf of the family, was formally re-confirmed as the head of his household. He soon began to control his sons' lives. Though he only had one thousand Euros, he bought a mobile phone for each of his sons so he could call them anytime. He also figured how long it took his sons to return from school, the shop, the boxing club or the city centre to the accommodation centre. Whenever one of his sons was late, he called him and ordered him to immediately return home. Once at home, Rezvan would blame him for 'making his father an unsatisfied man.' Rezvan controlled his sons and tried to provide them with examples of how to behave appropriately. For instance, he did not want his sons to drink, smoke, or do drugs. He wanted them to keep themselves occupied with something meaningful. Rezvan did not drink

and smoke. He woke up early in the morning everyday, prayed and planned the day.

In *After Kinship*, Janet Carsten links houses with kinship. She emphasises how the house connects spatial representations and everyday practices with often intimate relations among those who inhabit it. She suggests that it is the qualitative density of experiences of the private spaces that people inhabit which inspires many to assert, in different parts of the world, that kinship is made in the house as people share spaces or food (Carsten, 2004, p. 35). In my view, such an assertion can also be connected to Chechen fathers: it has been demonstrated that for Rezvan, living with his sons under one roof had reinforced the new vision he had created of the self and the world after violence.

The Presence of the Past: Parents and Fathers

Even though many fathers found a way to re-establish the boundaries between past and present, dramatic past moments of violence, like in the case of other refugees, did not completely disappear from the everyday life. In Chapter Five, I presented findings, which suggest that the presence of women reminded refugee men of their losses and made the past penetrate the present continuously. As regards the older men/fathers like Rezvan who had found the new sense of meaning in their sons' lives, the memories of the violent disruptions were stimulated especially by the presence of their sons.

Rezvan was strongly attached to the plan he had created to secure his future and that of his male descendants. He felt that he had no other alternative but to help his sons to become champions. Nonetheless, as

I will demonstrate later, his sons, like other refugee children and youngsters, struggled with the need to construct new meanings for a world destroyed by violence and some conception of what the future means to them. The discipline and controlled violence practised in the gym, as shall be discussed in the next chapter, assisted some youngsters, including Rezvan's children, in their struggles. When Rezvan saw his sons trained extremely hard at the gym, he seemed to have the impression that his male descendants identified with his plans. The oldest son, however, did not excel at boxing. He often failed to win boxing matches and Rezvan did not get the results he wanted. Besides, Rezvan had severe difficulties in providing financially for himself and his sons. Hard training required his sons to eat nutritious food. But their father could not afford it.

With all these obstacles, there was mounting tension inside the temporary household which from time to time resulted into the subject being absent of his own experience – Veena Das explains that this phenomenon is related to the process of violence becoming a part of the everyday life being blocked (Das, 2007, pp. 101-106). For instance, I once witnessed a skirmish between Rezvan and his eldest son. The days before the argument, I could see Mairbek being particularly depressed and sad. He did not go to the school. He stopped visiting the boxing club. Instead of being with his brothers and father, he preferred spending the evenings and nights walking the streets alone.[48] When, one evening, he returned to the temporary

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[48] According to Mairbek, what caused him to often escape from the household was the impudence of his younger brothers. As the eldest, he expected them to respect him, in the same manner he subordinated to the authority of his father. In fact, however, he did not see this always happening and this distracted him. As he complaint to me:

home, he began to argue with his father and immediately left again. After the incident, Rezvan, significantly, sat at the table and absently stared at the wall. After a while, he started speaking, in a way that sounded strange to me, as if his voice was ghostwritten, about blood and suffering, which had been *Vainakh* destiny for hundreds of years.

Transmitting the Trauma?

In Chapter Five I described the way in which the *Vainakh* men from Hotel Pumis, in an attempt to maintain a fragile conception of the self and the world, controlled their own narratives and verbally managed various private and public occasions by restraining themselves. My research showed that the above-mentioned practices were also related to older fathers. While younger men directed their attempts mostly towards women older men or fathers concentrated their efforts mostly around their male descendants.

Most fathers were reluctant to talk about their personal experiences of the wars in front of their children. They did not hesitate to talk to me about the wars in general terms. They often showed me the pictures and videos while the children were around, but it seemed to me they were hesitant to speak about how the wars had affected their own lives. For instance, when Rezvan started telling me his life story, no one else was in the room. When he told me the part of the story where he

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I am the oldest one! And they do not respect me. If I say one thing, they always reply ten things back. If I hit them once, they hit me ten times.

If a conflict had happened, in Chechnya he used to go to his relatives in Gudermes. In Poland, however, he had to face the conflict alone, hiding in the streets of the unfamiliar city.

replicated the sounds of the dying soldier, Usman unexpectedly entered the room. Rezvan immediately changed the topic and started telling me about Chechen hospitality. We continued our previous discussion only after Usman left the room.

One day, Rezvan fully realised that Mairbek spent more time alone or with his peers than at the gym. This increased the tension in the household, as Rezvan attempted to impose adamantly his views over the wishes of his sons. I once visited Rezvan unexpectedly and saw Usnam crying in the corner. Mairudy obediently washed the dishes, as the eldest son rushed out of the room. The patriarch yelled at them: 'You don't care about your father. I am here just because of you. And what is the reward?' After a while, he continued: 'I have had enough of you three. You don't listen to me. You have no goals. So I have decided we go home! I won't stay here one minute more.' There was enormous tension in the room. No one argued with their father. Each son looked to the ground.

A couple of hours later, as I was leaving Hotel Pumis, I saw Rezvan sitting at the bench near the main entrance. Usman was nearby and still seemed very anxious: he was punching his fist against the wall. I approached Rezvan and asked him whether he really wanted to leave. He smiled: 'Do you see Usman? Today, he will excel in the training! Then he said: 'Of course we are not leaving. We are staying!' Other fathers also pressured their children. Visiting the households, I witnessed many incidents when fathers suddenly raised their voice to their sons and sometimes also slap them on the back for no obvious reason. I once saw a father ordering his son to go to the corner and to lean his forehead against the wall. The son immediately stopped playing

and silently did what his father ordered, while the father gave me a knowing wink which seemed to suggest that he was in charge.

While in private fathers argued with their sons, in public they attempted to verbally managed various occasions which contradicted their visions of themselves and the world via restraint. For instance, Rezvan felt insulted whenever the boxing trainer criticised his sons in a way, which evoked a memory of past traumas in him. When training, Mairudy often lost control if he sparred. When this happened, Anji, the boxing coach, shouted at him: 'this is not a war zone.' At the gym, Rezvan immediately objected to what Anji had said. After everyone went to the dressing room, Rezvan threatened him, stressing that his sons could easily leave the club and go elsewhere if the coach did not change his behaviour.

Rezvan also felt insulted if the trainer undermined his own plans for his family. In March 2008, trainers arranged for boxers to compete in a tournament. A couple of days before the tournament, the head coach announced the names of those who would go to the event. None of Rezvan's sons were among them. As Anji later explained to me, the reason why he did not nominate Rezvan's sons to go to the tournament was because the club did not have any sponsor at that time and the head coach was not able to pay the fees and the travelling costs. But Rezvan was furious about the trainer's decisions. As soon as Anji announced the names, he began to argue with him, claiming that his sons were much better than the others and that the trainer was ignoring them for some reason.

> R: When do we (he and his sons) leave for the tournament?

> A: Your sons are not going!

R: Why?

A: They did not do well during training.

R: 'Are they worse than the Mongol? (another boxer's nickname) You have disappeared from my soul! We are leaving the club now!

Exploring how trauma can be transmitted from one generation to the other and describing a particular community in El Salvador, Julia Dickson-Gómez (2002) argues that, as well as illness narratives, the symptoms of neurasthenia may form the backbone of implicit transgenerational transmission of trauma in daily life, since they point to past events that cannot be voiced, to the destruction of family relationships, and unresolved helplessness and grief. In line with Dickson-Gómez, I propose that the aforementioned daily practices could be perceived as implicit mechanisms through which trauma was transmitted from one generation to the next in the context of the daily life in Hotel Pumis.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I started by introducing Frances Pine's paper on the lost Polish generations. Pine's study helped me to think about the *Vainakh* case. In particular, I have explained that despite the fact that *Vainakh* households and communities were certainly not linked to the public spheres of work and production under late communism in the USSR in a way that is similar to the case described by Frances Pine, they were crucial for the intergenerational transmission. Despite the fact that the rupture happened in a way that is different from the case described by

Frances Pine, the fall of communism in the USSR and the following eruptions of violence in the North Caucasus can be seen as events that obstructed and affected individual life trajectories and the ability to transfer skills, values, and moralities between different Chechen-Ingush generations.

Describing the 'bereavement' patterns as they resonated through the experiences of older men/fathers, I have demonstrated that there were tendencies for these subjects to closely identify themselves, with the help of the asylum law, with patrilinear and patriarchal norms of parenthood that focus the father's attention mostly on the male descendants. I have also described the way in which senior men/fathers maintained their vision of themselves and the family by managing various private and public occasions. Introducing the literature on violence and intergenerational transmission (Dickson-Gómez, 2002; Argenti & Schramm, 2010) I proposed that these practices may be considered in relation to the way trauma is implicitly transmitted from generation to generation. All in all, I hope this chapter has shed some light on the way in which the identities of some men who are parents were formed mostly in relation to the household.

Chapter Eight

Wars and Children

In previous parts of the thesis, I have explored how violence become part of everyday life from the perspective of adult men and women. A question thus arises as to what about the children - the persons at the beginning of their life paths? This refugee group had not experienced socialist modernity and the grand narrative of linear progress. One of the children, a twelve-year old boy, for instance told me that he had just heard that there used to be factories and cooperatives in Chechnya, and that people used to go there every morning for work. What this group had been through is only the fragmentation of family, community, and society during and as a result of the wars. Most of the children were half-educated. They knew how to read and write but they had not gone to school regularly because of the wars. None of them had ever been on a carefree family holidays. In Poland, children spend a lot of time playing together in the yard in front of the asylum centre and the schools. It was them who made me a part of the community soon after I arrived in Poland. They often wanted to borrow the bicycle and the mobile phone I owned. Besides, children regularly interacted with teachers, local-Polish peers, or social workers and volunteers. Children were most emotionally attached to their parents and other members of their households and families. The question I want to address here is, how did the 'bereavement' patterns manifest in the daily life of refugee adolescents and children?

There is a growing number of ethnographic studies, which focus on the way in which violence is actualised, consumed and, subsequently, also sometimes (re-)produced, in the context of children's daily lives (Bourgois, 2003, pp. 258-286; Kovats-Bernat, 2014; Seymour, 2014; Boyden & de Berry, 2004). A compelling ethnography describing how children traumatised by violence make a sense of the world has been provided by Veena Das (1990, pp. 375-384). In this last chapter, I wish to contribute to this domain of scholarship. I will draw from the voices of Mairbek and Usman, which I consider to be a reflection of larger processes and relationships between the subject and the world, and part of the consonant voices streaming from a specific group of the minor refugees.

The first part of the chapter questions the conceptual distinction between dramatic, turbulent moments of violence, and the so-called 'violence of everyday life,' in order to locate the impact of the Russo-Chechen Wars on children's experience. Defining child's subjectivity in terms of curiosity about the nature of the world and linking these children's cognitive needs to their affective needs, I then examine how adults failed to show children a way to communicate their suffering. I also analyse how children, who were confronted with their parents' silences and neuroses, struggled with making sense of their world and their future. In the last part of the chapter, I describe the way in which some minors, including Rezvan's sons, kept the violence and chaos of they witnessed at a distance by controlling violence and disciplining their bodies in the realm of the boxing ring. My ethnography suggests that for Chechen-Ingush children and adolescents 'bereavement' was a particularly perplexed and complicated process, due to all the violence

that defined and surrounded them, and due to the overall lack of a moral compass.

Critical Events, Everyday Violence and the Experience of a Child

As in previous chapters, I start by considering in more detail the way in which the Russo-Chechen Wars had penetrated Chechen-Ingush children's worlds. While in previous parts of the thesis I presented extensive parts of refugees' life stories, here, since most children had not yet created some coherent life story, I work with what I learned from informal conversations with them. I also provide my own interpretation of these children's difficult past. In the introduction to *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology* (2004) Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois think theoretically about violence, breaking the conceptual division between extreme genocide-like violence, such as the Holocaust, and the 'small' violence which silently reproduces through the structures and habitus of everyday life (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004, pp. 19-22). While Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois do so with the aim of sensitizing researchers about how protogenocidal practices can be enacted as normative behaviour by ordinary citizens, I borrow this concept to think about the characteristics of the disrupted subjectivities of refugee children in general.

Interestingly, after he arrived in Poland, Usman, an eleven-year old, became very curious about the lives of his Polish peers whom he saw in the street, in the shops, or at school. I had an impression that he intensively constantly compared his own life with the lives of others. In Chapter Four, I said that most adult Chechen-Ingush refugees looked

nostalgically to the past in a way that they distinguished between a 'normal' time before the Russo-Chechen Wars (Ru. *vse normal'nym bylo*) and an 'abnormal' period after the wars erupted (Ru. *bespredel; besporjadki nachalis'*). Children did not share such conception of the world. Observing local children in the schoolyard, Usman once told me:

> I did not have such an easygoing childhood as the children here (in Poland) have. I have only seen bad things. Here children can live how they want. But I did not live like that. I did not have so many opportunities. There were killings in Chechnya. Many normal, innocent people died.

Usman, the youngest son of Rezvan, was born when the first Russo-Chechen war ended in 1999. When the second war erupted he was still a small child. In 1999, he had to escape from home and, with his older brothers and parents, he became a refugee in Ingushetia. Unlike many other Chechen-Ingush children whose mothers, fathers, or siblings were either killed or went missing, Rezvan's sons fortunately did not lose any close relative in the conflict.[49] But a bomb hit their house and they lost it all. Usman also witnessed how the Russian soldier threatened to kill his father when the family escaped to Ingushetia. He also saw the consequences of the war: the dead corpses lying in basements or in the streets.

During the second war, which was turned into an anti-terrorist operation, Usman's life remained precarious. He continued to be

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[49] Unlike Rezvan's sons, other young Chechens and Ingushes had lost their closest relatives due to the wars and political terror and due to problems such as bad medical treatment or illnesses such as cancer. Children were also confronted with the divorce and separation of their parents.

exposed to violence, even though these events were not as dramatic. First, he lived in poverty - in post-war Chechnya many ordinary people did not have stable work and young people had almost no opportunities. He enrolled in school but he did not study continuously. Secondly, he was confronted with the fact that ordinary people were treated badly by the Russian army. After state authorities initiated the anti-terrorist operation, Usman saw *siloviki* carrying out raids in people's houses and making arrests several times. He also saw that the perpetrators of violence were often *Vainakhs* or people who belonged to their own ethnic community.

Last, Rezvan's youngest son was subjected to the authorities that ruled the household. Due to the lack of economic opportunities, the household Usman lived in had to produce various goods. The son had to help to feed animals, to harvest and to clean the house in order to make, as Usman once put it, 'his father's life a bit easier.' Besides, the youngest son was also expected to listen and respect his brothers. If he did not, as the norms stated, he could be punished - Mairudy, who had witnessed the violence and was mentally fragile because of this reason, did not miss an opportunity to beat his younger brother. All in all, children had had experienced violence in very intimate terms: they had been born in devastating and turbulent war times and had endured hardships while facing other forms of violence, the 'little' violence of everyday life (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004, pp. 19-22).

Adults' Approach to Children's Grief

In *Our Work to Cry: Your Work to Listen*, Veena Das thinks theoretically about a child's experience, analysing how the intensive curiosity about

the nature of the world relates to the need to determine what the future holds for the subject. She also emphasises that children's cognitive needs are closely interconnected with their affective needs, describing the problems of loss, trauma, and subjectivity through the own voices of children (1990, pp. 375-384). In the next part of the chapter, I elaborate upon her conceptions of child's subjectivity. In the same study, Veena Das compellingly shows that many relatives and charity workers who were in touch with the youngest survivors of the 1984 riots often misinterpreted what children experienced during the period of bereavement (Das, 1990, pp. 375-384). I find her ethnography interesting, as the results of my own research among Chechen-Ingush children indicate something similar. Adults who played important role in the youngest refugees' lives, parents but also teachers in the Polish schools, tended to overlook, possibly because they were paradoxically concerned about the children's present and future, the minor refugees' grief.

Children and their Parents

My research shows that parents were aware of the causes of the children's behaviour were connected to their 'bereavement.' Some were seemingly ignorant of their children's suffering. Yet, as far as I know, they were in fact deeply concerned about the children's lives.

An indicator of children's suffering was that many minors were affected by various sleeping disorders. For instance, I knew about a girl whose home in Grozny had been bombed and whose friends had died during the bomb raids - the neighbourhood was completely destroyed. Living in Hotel Pumis seven years later, she frequently woke up at night. In a

fascinating study of memory and experience during the Vietnam War, Heonik Kwon (2008) describes the multiple relationships that the wandering souls of the people killed in the war establish with the survivors of war atrocities. Like the victims of the Vietnam War described by Kwon, this girl was, through her memory connected to the war ghosts. She had sleeping problems because her dead friends visited her again and again.

Mairbek, the eldest son of Rezvan, also had problems sleeping. What haunted him was, as far as I know, not only that he had seen death and destruction but also that he had been separated from his girlfriend and from his mother. I once visited him. It was noon but he was still in bed. He had spent the night chatting, via text messages, with his girlfriend in Chechnya. I woke him up. He mumbled something. Then, he took my mobile phone and called his girlfriend again. I asked him about his plans for the day. But Mairbek did not react. I tried to take the phone away from him, telling him that the phone calls would cost a lot of money. He terminated the call only after his father entered the room.

Rezvan's son only seemed to think about his girlfriend in Chechnya Instead of trying to talk to him about his problems, however, Rezvan merely ordered him to go to the bathroom and to have a meal before for they went to the boxing club. At first sight, the father may seem to be ignorant of, or indifferent to, his son's suffering. However, after his son left the room he started talking about Mairbek's distress with me in private. He said that his eldest son had been apathetic since the wars and that he tries to deal with this by keeping him occupied with boxing. Later, Rezvan asked me if I could spend more time with him and make sure that he understands that his father worried and cared about him.

Children and their Teachers

It was mandatory for refugees between six and fourteen years of age to sign up for a school. Children's behaviour in the classroom could well be defined in terms of anxiety and restlessness. The problem was not that children were not smart or that they were not interested in learning. On the contrary, many refugee children liked school and many actively participated in the lectures. However, it often happened that, even if someone excelled in the classroom, they would soon - in a matter of days, hours, or even minutes - become disinterested or distracted. Due to their bereavement children were not generally doing well in the school.

The following example delineates the way in which teachers approached children's grief. I once visited a classroom, as Maribek was taking an exam, which was part of the school registration process. All prospective refugee students were expected to pass a written test, which evaluated the overall knowledge of Polish and their skills in maths. The night before, Mairbek could not sleep, so when he entered the classroom he looked exhausted and distracted. As the exam started, he wrote nothing. Seeing this, the teacher spoke to him. Mairbek remained silent when the teacher asked him if he knew the Latin alphabet. Mairbek did not react. Later, another teacher tried to save the situation. She took Mairbek aside and told him that he should not worry because the test is a mere formality and the school will accept him anyway but she wanted him to focus on the question and write something.

In short, teachers often recognised that the behaviour of Chechen-Ingush children was a problem. Some complained that refugee children did not regularly visit the classroom and, if they did, they were not sufficiently prepared for the lectures. These teachers usually blamed their parents.[50] Other teachers struggled to attract children's attention and interest and instead of trying to discuss the roots of such distress with them they asked Chechen-Ingush students to focus on their present and future. It should be noted here, however, that I did not have open long-term access to any classroom, which refugee children attended. My knowledge of the relationship between students and teachers originated through conversations with refugees and through my occasional visits to some schools.

Making Sense of the World: Refugee Children

In the following section I am concerned with how the youngest refugees made sense of the world destroyed by the wars. My finding is that some testimonies about the death and destruction were created not by the children but rather by the parents - children often replicated what their familial authorities had told them about the wars. However, it seems to me that one should not overlook or underestimate children's cognitive capabilities. Other results of my research indicate that the youngest refugees attempted to make sense of the world shattered by violence but, unlike adults who had re-configured

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[50] However, most refugees who were parents supported the idea of their children attending school. Some were driven by the idea of having their descendants educated, whereas others did not want to lose child benefits - the distribution of these benefits depended on children being a regular part of the school education.

relations between the self and the norms they had always known, children had to gather and consider information from all available resources.

Adult's Narrations that Children Reproduced

A casual visitor to Hotel Pumis would possibly get an impression that younger refugees found it particularly easy to talk about the wars. From time to time, children talked about destruction and death without any obstacles. Yet, after some time spent living with the refugees I could recognise that those parts of children's testimonies, where they easily and concretely described violence, were usually created by someone else, usually by their parents or other authorities in the family who for various reasons occasionally talked about their children's past experiences of the wars

For instance, a couple of months after I arrived to Poland I was approached by a boy who had been nicknamed by his Polish peers Migus. This boy was in great distress because of the violence he had witnessed. Migus is a common Polish surname. Though it does not have a particular meaning, it closely resembles *migać się*, a Polish verb which can be translated as to 'evade' or 'to escape:' his Polish gave him this nickname peers in the school, as it matched his impulsive behaviour, which was probably related to the bereavement. This boy once approached me and asked me whether I knew why he had escaped from home. I answered that I thought he had probably fled the war. The boy nodded his head and, in a relaxed voice, he described other concrete details. He said that the village where he lived was bombed,

that he once saw a tank destroying a car full of civilians, and that he was almost ran over by this tank.

A couple of months later I heard the boy's mother talking about the war in the same way her son had spoken to me. The mother spoke to social workers and bureaucrats responsible for refugees at a meeting held in the town hall. The meeting was called because some refugees had protested publicly against the intention to evict migrants with a tolerated stay permit from the asylum accommodation centre. After the mother heard one of the bureaucrats stating that the law gave him no other choice but to evict refugees, she made the following claim:

> Do you know why we have escaped from our homes? People are dying there! Our village was bombed. My son was almost killed by a tank!

Her son, like some other Chechen-Ingush children, spoke very openly and easily about the violence he had witnessed. His testimony appeared to be very concrete and clear. However, it is very likely that his verbal accounts were coherent not because younger refugees were capable of absorbing and rationalising the violence easier than adults, but because he replicated what his mother recounted repeatedly about the wars.

The Children's Own Conceptions

Children seemed to replicate their parents' accounts about the war. Yet, this does not mean that children themselves did not make any efforts to make sense of a world destroyed by the violence. On the contrary, children's own tremendous efforts to come to terms with

their past experiences of wars, as I demonstrate in this subsection, were an integral part of children's accounts.

For instance, there were numerous videos and photographs in Usman's mobile phone.[51] One of the videos depicted Boris Yeltsin and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev. This video showed how the two men met in order to discuss the peace treaty. It showed how Yeltsin invited Yandarbiyev to the table and how the Chechen politician and writer, who was later, in 2004, killed in exile in Qatar - allegedly by Russian spies - theatrically refused to sit next to Yeltsin and loudly demanded to sit opposite the Russian president. While showing me the video, Usman talked about it whilst evoking his memory of the wars:

> Do you see this man? (he pointed at Yeltsin) He killed many innocent people. This is my leader! (he pointed at Yandarbiyev) I am his son!

Another video downloaded from the internet and stored inside Usman's phone depicted an assassination attempt, which had taken place in the streets of some North American city. It showed two masked men jumping out of a truck and shooting people. When he showed me this video, Usman said that the masked men were *Nakh*. Then, he imitated a person who is dying, saying that the men in the video who were killed were traitors who deserved death and he started singing a Chechen song which praises Chechen freedom

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[51] As I explained in the previous chapter, some children owned mobile phones since their parents wanted to be in touch with them. Moreover, there were also computers and internet connection inside many refugee households, as this was the cheapest and most effective way to stay in contact with their relatives who lived in other parts of the world.

fighters for their strength, heroism, and endurance. Usman's narrations seemed to refer to a freedom fighters' attack he had seen.

Another child, who had also lived through the second war, dealt with his experiences through his paintings. One of the pictures the boy had created resembled of a kind of surrealist style. It depicted a crowd of dark creatures flying up above the horizon. The creatures could be dragons, but they could also be Russian helicopters. A *Vainakh* stands on the ground below the helicopters. He holds a weapon. He could be a *boievik* or a *abrek*, a half-mythical being, an avenger and bandit who lives on the margins of life and death, and who does not fully belong to our world or to the world of the dead. The myths state that *abrek* has magical powers, and that it is very difficult to catch him and defeat him. Yet, the boy's painting depicted the man inclining his head, as if knowing he was going to face an enemy he would be unable to defeat.

Another painting this boy had created depicted ancient Caucasian towers, which used to stand beyond the *Vainakh* mountainous settlements and serve as protection against the raids of the enemy clans. According to the myths, these towers were constructed through a secret method, which made them indestructible. Yet the towers painted by the boy were being destroyed by some invisible power, and were disintegrating as if made of straw. There was also an old man in the painting who sought protection under one of the collapsing towers. The myths praise old Chechen men for their wisdom, but the actions of the old man seemed absolutely pointless. He would not find any protection under the tower for the whole world is collapsing.

If one considers the informal discussions I had with different subjects or their paintings, one can observe that younger refugees attempted to

make sense of the world and to discover what the future meant to them. But unlike adult refugees, whose identities had been already firmly established before the wars, children were unable to turn back. Instead, they gathered information from the internet, TV, or from what they had heard from parents or peers to find a way to express the loss, death and destruction they knew about.

The Presence of the Past: Children

In previous parts of the chapter, I have grasped the way in which younger refugees attempted to articulate traumatic memories. Like in the case of the other Chechens and Ingushes, this is not to say that traumatising memories had completely disappeared from their inner worlds.

Here I describe one particular poster, which was up on the wall of the room where Usman lived with his father and brothers. This poster was a calendar dedicated to the anniversary of the Polish fire brigades. It depicted emergencies such as a car crash, an accident in the mountains, an ecological disaster, and a fire. This poster had been stuck on to the wall before the family moved in and the family decided to leave it there. I once noticed that someone had glued Cyrillic letters, reading 'Chechnya', onto the poster. I asked who glued the letters there and Usman raised his hand. He did not say why he did it. His father provided me with an explanation:

> Yesterday Usman looked at the poster. It reminded him of Chechnya. He thought that the war had also erupted here. Do you understand?!

Figure 10 - Poster with the letters 'Chechnya' on the upper right corner.

Other children, then, became scared whenever they had to cross the road through a pedestrian crossing. They thought that drives would not stop their cars and would kill them. It was said before that younger refugees intensively consulted all resources available to them in order to make sense of their world and determine what the future may mean to them. In Hotel Pumis, however, there one could observe also the opposite side of this process. Every event or object that confronted

younger refugees could be interpreted in terms of the loss and poisonous knowledge about the world that children shared.

Escaping Violence

In previous parts of this chapter, I have explained that younger refugees had a very intimate relation with war and everyday violence. A question thus arises, given all the violence, were the children able to actually uphold some sense of meaning and continuity in their daily lives? And if they were, how did they do it? Seeking the answer to these questions, in the rest of the chapter I follow children to their temporary households, to the streets, and, finally, to the local boxing club. Interestingly, in *Our Work to Cry: Your Work to Listen* Veena Das notes that because the riots and everyday violence became such an important part of children's lives, infants often thought that every problem they encountered naturally led to violence and that external authorities had the only solution to this problem (Das, 1990, p. 381). I mention this because something similar occurred to Chechen-Ingush children who had experienced violence intimately. In what follows, I shall show that some children and youngsters found a protection against violence in the disciplined environment of the boxing gym.

The Temporary Households and the Polish Streets

To begin with, my research has indicated that refugee could not gain a sense of meaning and continuity in the private domain or the Polish streets. Private apartments did not provide enough space for most refugee families. Youngsters often shared their private space with too

many people and usually slept on the floor.[52] Being constantly in touch with traumatised and demanding adults was also particularly exhausting for younger refugees. In the streets, refugee children and youngsters usually found it difficult to discover a meaningful way of belonging. The asylum centre was situated in a low-income neighbourhood. There were many drunkards and several street gangs, and refugee parents often taught children that they were different from Polish people who drink, skirmish, and let their daughters to be half-naked in the streets. From time to time, teenage boys even felt the need of punishing local youngsters for drinking and using vulgar language in the streets. In the end, younger refugees spent most of the time outdoors with each other. My younger refugee friends often asked me whether they could visit me, use my computer-internet, or stay overnight.

The Boxing Club

In *Body & Soul: Notes of an Apprentice Boxer* (2004), Loïc Wacquant provides us with a compelling and vivid ethnography of everyday life in the boxing gym where he did his apprenticeship in Chicago, USA. His argument is that the controlled violence of the boxing gym gave trainees, the marginalised inhabitants of a ghetto, a sort of haven and protection against the chaos, disorder, and violence in the streets. The manly discipline of the gym gave trainees a sense of a meaningful and goal-oriented life. My research among Chechen-Ingush refugees in

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[52] It is common for a Chechen-Ingush nuclear family to be a large family. Moreover, kinship led many refugees to share their private apartments with their distant relatives or friends. Despite the fact that the interior of an average private apartment in Hotel Pumis was not greater than fifteen square yards, sometimes eight or more people shared these apartments.

Poland indicated something similar. I shall show that boxing gave some youngsters, particularly Chechen-Ingush boys, a sense of meaning and continuity after the violence they had endured.

In the city where I did fieldwork, there were two boxing clubs. PACO was a half-professional club with a wealthy sponsor. Olymp, a different club, was rather modest and poor. This club was located in the same neighbourhood as the asylum accommodation centre, in a basement of a school, which had been transformed into a gym. Only one man, who was also the trainer, was in charge of Olymp. Anji sought sponsors, paid the rent, recruited new members, and trained them so they could represent the club in the ring. The majority of the members of the boxing club were teenagers.[53] Most of the boxers were between twelve and seventeen years old. Some of them were only ten years old. Younger boys - there was only one female member of the boxing club - however, did not train hard. Chechen-Ingush youngsters easily found the way into this boxing club.

As in the case Wacquant describes, boxing was linked to strong discipline. Boxing training was divided into cycles with different tournament dates. The boys were expected to train five hours per day, five days a week. The trainer required that trainees master the technique, do gymnastic work and jog to become strong. Boxers where also expected to strictly control their diet and to watch their weight. They had to eat a lot of vegetables and meat to ingest proteins, pass medical exams, and the tournament entry procedures.

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[53] There were also a few adult members of the boxing club. However, adults only occasionally attended trainings and unlike teenagers they did not train in order to participate in boxing tournaments.

Let me provide an ethnographic insight into the daily life of the gym. At the start of the training cycle, Anji called all boxers to an organisational meeting. First, he ordered all children and teenagers to stand aside. He created a separate group and asked this group to meet three times a week in order to learn the ropes. Then, the trainer turned to older boxers and said:

> Łukasz and Sławek won't train with us. Ok. There is the Chełm tournament on February ninth and tenth. This is our first goal!' 'Paulina! I want you to fall into the category of fifty four kilograms! (she protests) What do you say? This is your category! Hadzi, we need to talk about your situation (Hadzi was a Mongolian immigrant and he had problems with his boxing registration). After the last tournament, I can see four juniors are still here. Martin, Bartek, Hadzi, Łukasz. You should all go to the ring. Pavel, we will see how it goes. If you fight well you can go into the ring. And now the seniors. Sławek, Martin, Janusz. Marcin, do you want to start? You can do four rounds if you work hard. I see that you are talented. You just need to work hard! Hadzi. Fifty four kilograms, four rounds! You will fight five rounds here! Marcin. Eighty one kilograms, junior!

Then, the trainer addressed the Chechen recruits:

> Rudy! Is that your name? You should be fifty-seven kilograms in weight. You are a cadet but you will box. We will see how it work outs. But you must be fifty-seven kilograms. And you, Rebek, do you understand me? You must eat properly. Otherwise your test will be wrong again. Your blood is bad! If you don't have enough haemoglobin you cannot be strong

enough! You will lose just because you don't have enough power! [Mairbek looks at the trainer anxiously] Your haemoglobin is under ten. Normal people have twelve. But any sportsman must have a minimum of fourteen!

The trainer then turned and spoke to Rezvan who was also at the gym:

He really needs to eat properly. If he doesn't eat properly, he won't have the necessary power.

Then, he addressed all boxers again:

You must eat meat Meat and vegetables. Sausages! If you don't like sausages, make a steak for yourself! Osman, you are born in 1996. You can take it slowly.

On one hand, traumatised children had problems keeping up with the discipline of the gym. For instance, Maribek once fought with another boxer and lost. Then, he shouted that they would meet again and that he would kill him. Later, he blamed himself because he had lost - I saw him punching his hands against the wall strongly and how he injured himself. On a similar occasion, he blamed the trainer. He thought that he did not make any progress because the trainer did not train him well - the violence he had seen made him weak and unable to face the great requirements of his training.

However, the boxing trainer was particularly skilful in adjusting children to the violence of the ring and in keeping trainees focused on their training. Anji did not let younger trainees fight but cleverly prepared them for the ring, as he pretended that boxing was a game and joked with them about the fact that they might get a bloody nose. When Mairbek shouted at his opponent, the trainer said the following:

You will get your revenge on him. But it must be in the ring! I never want to hear the words you said. Boxing is a sport! We don't kill each other! This is not Chechnya!

Or, another time, the trainer said after Mairbek lost a match:

This was not your first loss. You will lose many matches! You must be aware that you had a great opponent. He is a Polish champion! Until yesterday he had won each match K.O. Now, you must learn boxing. Take it slowly.

Mairbek once told me that whenever he trained he felt well, and he did not feel depressed and anxious. He did not have headaches anymore. It seemed to me that much of the manly discipline concentrated in the boxing gym, together with the smart way in which the Anji led the children, had a certain 'therapeutic effect' on refugee boys and teenagers.

Figure 11 - In the Gym.

Conclusion

In the last part of *Our Work to Cry: Your Work to Listen*, Veena Das compellingly informs us about the way in which young Sikh survivors of the 1984 communal riots, many of who had lost their fathers during the atrocities, grieved. According to Das, younger survivors were emotionally attached to the adults they were in touch with on a daily basis. Das's point is that teachers or charity workers were solicitous about children's future though they misunderstood the children's behaviour. Mothers were familiar with the reasons for their children's distress and were very sensitive and protective of them. Nonetheless, Das explains that they did not encourage children to verbalise their pain. Thus, these grief-stricken Sikh children sourced from television,

sermons, or rumours they had heard. Children's attempts to re-make sense of what had happened to them were reflected on their paintings, or on the discussions they had with each other and with the anthropologist (Das, 1990, pp. 375-384).

For Chechen-Ingush children in Hotel Pumis, making violence part of the everyday life was also a perplexed process. In this chapter, as in the case Das describes, I have demonstrated that, despite the fact that parents and teachers - adults to whom the refugee children were attached - were concerned about their present and future, they did not show them ways to come to terms with their traumatic loss. However, I have not ignored children's own cognitive intellectual capabilities. Describing my discussions with Usman and the paintings created by another child, I have grasped the way in which younger refugees struggled to find some meaning for a world destroyed by the wars. Acknowledging that most youngsters, who had been born into a chaotic world found it difficult to uphold their conceptions of the world, I have grasped the way in which some children could keep violence at distance by engaging with other forms of controlled violence and discipline, which exist in the boxing gym.

Chapter Nine

War, Asylum, and Everyday Life: Concluding Thoughts

In this thesis I have examined the lived experience of Chechen-Ingush refugees, who fled war violence and political terror in the North Caucasus. I have investigated the way in which the bridges between the inner self and the world - which had been either severely damaged or, in some cases, almost completely destroyed by the ruptures and turbulences in the public world - were gradually re-built. I have also scrutinised the way in which these new, still fragile constructions were anxiously protected, or defended, against the same devastating forces that had hit these individuals and which occasionally manifested through the echoes of the past that shattered the foundations again and again.

The bridges between inner and outer worlds were renewed in a specific social, economic, and political landscape. I have acknowledged that subjects shared private and communal spaces with persons who struggled with similar losses and traumas. They were closely interconnected with these people through relationships of kinship, friendship, ethnicity, reciprocity, and collective morality. Furthermore, I have recognised that social persons and the community in Hotel Pumis were all confronted with the precariousness, insecurity, and poverty that dominated daily life in the Polish city and the whole region. Last but not least, I have placed particular emphasis on the fact that subjective bridges were re-constituted alongside another construction.

This domineering construction had been constituted through different political discourses about refugees and it influenced the refugees' subjective formations.

One of the main contributions of this doctoral thesis, as I thing and hope, is that it has identified certain characteristic 'bereavement' patterns associated broadly, but not absolutely, with select refugee groups. In the conclusion to this doctoral thesis, I thus recapitulate the different ways in which violence had become a part of the daily life of young men, women, older men and fathers, and adolescents and children who lived in Hotel Pumis at the time of my fieldwork, between August 2007 and December 2008

Unsettled Identities[54]

In the introduction to this thesis, I discussed the concept of disrupted subjectivity. Elaborating upon John Berger and other scholars (Marris, 1974; Kleinman, 1988), I considered human experience in terms of individual awareness of a time, which can be interrupted by various external circumstances. Devastating events such as the death of a relative, a chronic illness, an unexpected accident, a war, a sudden natural disaster, or forced migration have the capacity to change the individual awareness of time, fixing the subject to the past. If their life is disrupted, subjects are likely to feel as if their own life has ended. In their memory, subjects look back to the past repeatedly, hoping to

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[54] I understand that there are many differences among women, and among men, based on age and generation, income and class, family background, and personality. I use the idea of 'identity' to look at broad patterns of behaviour and belief, not to ascribe identical characteristics to all men and women.

revive their identity, as it existed before a violent rupture. Subjects, however, can only foretell loss and feel that their present lives are emptied of the meaning.

Disrupted subjectivity, however, has also a different side: traumatic events, as many scholars have recognised, have the great power to concentrate human experience and clarify the central conditions of living, as the subject embarks on an urgent quest to make his present and future available to him again. This subjective re-integration does not primarily happen because of changes in the 'external' world. Instead, it is the subject who finds a plausible way in which loss and trauma can be integrated into his or her life. Having analysed this process as it manifested in the life and voices of Chechen-Ingush refugees, this doctoral thesis has confirmed the knowledge already present in other ethnographies of violence (Das, 2007; 1990; Skultans, 1998). Accroding to these works, the process of integrating loss and trauma into the everyday is usually strongly framed by socio-cultural settings, or resources, which are available to the subject before and after the event, which disrupted his or her life.

As regards younger refugee men, my research showed that they felt to be uprooted from social-communal settings strongly dominated by characteristic patrilinear and patriarchal values and norms. These norms and values, as discussed earlier in the thesis, make the house and the family (Chech. *do'zal; tsa*) the centre for the *Vainakh* social, economic and moral universe. These norms assign adult men complex responsibilities, obligations, and rights in relation to parents, wife, siblings, children, distant relatives, other male, female members of the community, and ancestors. In total contrast to these norms, some men, like Akhmad, had been forcibly expelled from their own homes.

Some of the intruders who broke into his house even belonged to his own community. Other men abandoned their parents who according to the norms depend on their sons' assistance. There were, of course, many other ways in which the critical events, the Chechen-Russian wars, disrupted the men's lives. The thing that the younger men had in common was the fact that they identified the events of their uprooting and displacement as a shameful and emasculating experience.

Yet, in exile, refugee men did not give up on their cultural norms and values. Traumatising and shameful loss had let these men to actively and selectively explore socio-cultural resources close to them in order to establish a different way in which the world shattered by violence could be re-inhabited - perhaps this indicates that the human feeling of not having moral history is much worse than the feeling of shame? My research has shown that some refugees, especially younger men, had emerged from the ruptures of the past as the men who 'have a face' (Chech. *yakh*), as masculine persons who love freedom, who make their own way in the world, who vie for respect and prestige, who are ready to fight any injustice, and who always protect the weak one.

Chechen-Ingush men, as I said before, had rebuilt their disrupted lives in this way while being with other relatives and community members. Paradoxically, it was this conception of themselves and the world, which soon began to fail them again, as the presence of their own dependants reminded them of their shameful and traumatising losses. Trying to protect fragile conceptions of the self and the world, as my research indicated, these subjects engaged with views and practices characteristic of what some have termed a 'hegemonic violent masculinity' (Connell, 2005; Bourgois, 2003).

In relation to Chechen-Ingush women, my interpretation of their refugee identities closely resonates with Alice Szczepanikova's (2014; 2015) accounts. Alice Szczepanikova is a sociologist who conducted research among Chechen refugee women in Central-Eastern Europe. Building upon biographic research conducted in Poland and also in Austria and Germany, Szczepanikova concludes that the Russo-Chechen wars, together with various forms of non-military violence, reinforced domesticated forms of femininity in the Chechen context. Moreover, Szczepanikova goes on, the violence contributed to transforming traditional gender female roles. For instance, there are many Chechen women who are the breadwinners for their families nowadays. According to Szczepanikova, the transformation of gender roles made women realise their importance, empowered them, and contributed to the creation of networks of solidarity which went beyond household. Szczepanikova also emphasises that, in exile, women's abilities to fulfil their gendered responsibilities served as a significant mechanism through which they coped with loss and trauma (Szczepanikova, 2015). My research contributed to these findings.

Writing about womanhood and motherhood in the American ghetto, Philippe Bourgois compellingly demonstrates that the precariousness, hardship, poverty, and violence that dominated daily life in the ghetto had wrenched traditional gender roles. It also contributed to the fact that women were able to carve greater autonomy and individual rights for themselves against men who seemed to have failed. Since other values and meanings had not alternated sufficiently with traditional socio-economic context, women in El Barrio, as Bourgois shows, understood and framed their liberation in a way that mirrored the patriarchal model of empowerment (Bourgois, 2003, pp. 213-255). I

find Bourgois ethnography inspiring since it helps me to draw an interesting comparison between Chechen-Ingush women and the women in El Barrio. Chechen-Ingush women, as my research indicated, intensively mourned the losses and traumas related to the wars and, in their attempts to assign a new meaning to their lives, they, again, drew on norms and roles of femininity and maternity from the North Caucasus. Unlike the women in El Barrio, Chechen-Ingush women had not openly opposed men. Yet, it seems they became empowered, when attempting to protect their own conceptions of the self in the shadow of dominant masculine voices.

In Hotel Pumis, there were also men, especially the older ones, whose identities were centred less on the public-communal sphere, under the control of refugee fictitious brothers, and more on their own temporary households. In relation to these men and fathers, my research has demonstrated that this kind of identity emerged mostly from the patriarchal and patrilinear norms of parenthood at the expense of the other socio-cultural conceptions. Through these norms adult men attempted to re-establish a sense of meaning and continuity in their fragmentary lives. The ethnographic content of this thesis has grasped the way in which conceptions of the self and the world make subjects strongly attached to their children, or, to be more precise, to some of them. My ethnography has also indicated that these subjective interactions and re-creations can generate further disruptions, as parents undertake tremendous efforts to silence their losses in order to pass other values, moralities, skills and knowledge on to their sons. The silence over past losses may in fact result in the implicit transmission of the trauma between generations.

Last, in this thesis I have also grasped 'bereavement' patterns as they dominated the experiences of the persons at the beginning of their life paths. Personally, the chapter about the children exhausted me most emotionally. The lives of younger refugees had been violently disrupted and this large disruption had happened in the context of the 'little' ordinary everyday violence that had governed the subjects' lives since their earliest moments. Scholars have shown that every child needs to make sense of their world due to their need to determine what the future holds for them. It is also known that children's cognitive needs are closely linked to their affective needs. However, my ethnographic material has demonstrated that familial authorities, which were also traumatised, did not assist younger refugees in their attempts to voice their suffering. Children thus had to learn about the world and dealt with their traumas and losses mostly on their own. In my view, this is perhaps the greatest issue that requires further research. How did younger children, who had witnessed war and whose lives remained very insecure, determine their future in the context of ongoing political and socio-economic global crisis? How did their own experiences and life paths develop, given that they had grown up in a context of violence and war?

Refugee Identity as Political Construction

In the first part of the thesis, I provided also another view on refugee identity. Conceptualising refugee identity as a notion, which is constructed through a variety of discursive practices and institutional domains in Europe strongly determined by the idea of nation state I depicted 'refugee' identity as a dynamic political - legal framework. This

framework, as it was explained, evolved within larger transformation processes, such as the collapse of the communist state, the transition from communism to liberalism and capitalism, and the 2004 accession of Poland to the European Union. At the beginning, such framework was dominated by rather welcoming policies and attitudes towards immigrants. Later on, it was characterised by strict attempts to manage and control the exodus of Chechen-Ingush refugees to the European Union. In this thesis, my ambition was not only to historicise the construction of the figure of the 'refugee' in Poland but also to grasp it as it was implicated in the practices of 're-bordering' in the context of the daily life of Hotel Pumis between 2007 and 2009.

In *Forced Migration and Anthropological Response*, Elisabeth Colson (2003) is critical of Malkki's doubts on the validity of researching refugee experience defined in terms of loss and trauma. According to Colson, it is common sense that displacement has many causes, happens in different contexts and to different peoples, and brings new social environments and institutional labels. On one hand, Colson agrees with Malkki on the fact that it is illuminating to examine the historical forces that produced a 'refugee' identity in the last century. On the other hand, Colson supports the view that the uprooting and its aftermaths are structural events, which happen to human beings who have much in common - independently from their different histories. To Colson, institutional labels are interesting, but anthropology should not only focus on the labels per se but also explore the consequences they have in real life (Colson, 2003, pp. 2-3).

In this thesis, I think and hope, I have elaborated upon what Colson suggests. In my opinion, the method of distinguishing between 'refugee' experience and refugee experience in this doctoral thesis was

important, as it allowed me to demonstrate that in the context of the daily life of Hotel Pumis, institutional labels strengthened patriarchal masculine voices. Moreover, this method helped me to clearly distinguish between identities which were well explicable in terms of loss and trauma and the identities which were rather shaped by the characteristic institutional-political practices and discourses. The identity that I have particularly in mind here is that of the leader whose authority relied upon his capability to speak on behalf of all refugees and effectively negotiate communal matters with Polish bureaucrats.

Historical Timeline: North Caucasus[55]

- Before the 18th century – The North Caucasus was subject to numerous colonisations. Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, Persians, and Russians attempted to colonise the region and its population.

- Beginning of the 18th century – Communities seen as the ancestors of ethnic Chechens lived in isolated mountainous villages (Chech. *aul*). Highlanders depended on pastoralism and peasantry for their livelihood. The land was collectively owned. There was no state that organised highlanders hierarchically. They organised into extended families (Chech. *do'zal*), tribes (Chech. *teip*), and into regional tribal alliances (Chech. *tukkhum*).

- Second half of the 18th century – Tsarist Russia declared their intention to colonise the North Caucasus. It is nowadays

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[55] Sources:

Derluguian, G. M. (2004). *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*. London & New York: Verso.

Gammer, M. (2006). The *Lone Wolf and the Bear. Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule*. London: Hurst&Company.

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Khizrieva, G., & Reyna, S. P. (2011). *'Against… Domination': Oil and War in Chechnya*. In A. Behrends, S. P. Reyna, & G. Schlee (Eds.), *Crude Domination. An Anthropology of Oil.* New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books.

believed that Russians invented the term 'Chechen' in order to define the subjects of their colonial ambitions.

- 1784 – Sheik Mansur declared a holy war (Chech. *ghazawat*) on Russia. The Chechen leader attempted to unite highlanders with Sufism. His attempts were only partly successful. Most highlanders kept loyal to their customary law (Chech. *adat*) and neglected Sharia, the religious law of Islam.

- 1818 – Aleksey Yermolov, a Russian general, founded a military fortress on the Sunzha river and called it *Groznaya*. Tsarist Russia established itself in the North Caucasian lowlands. Cossacks, the protectors of the Tsar near the borders were invited to colonise the conquered territories. Highlanders resisted Russian colonisation.

- First half of the 19th century – The families, villages, and tribes, who resisted the Russian colonisation, united under the leadership of Imam Shamil. This leader subordinated highlanders to the rule of law (Chech. *nizam*). He also enforced the authority of Sufi Islam in the mountains. The last highlanders who accepted Islam were the Ingush, a group who dwelled in the western parts of the mountains.

- Second half of the 19th century – Formerly disconnected highlanders began to recognise their relatedness. United against Russian colonisation, they started to identify themselves as *Vainakh*, 'our' people.

- End of the 19th century – The lowlands experienced an economic boom stimulated by the production of oil. The North Caucasus became the Russian Wild West, attracting many

Russian-speaking immigrants. *Groznaya* was transformed into the provincial city of Grozny.

- Beginning of the 20th century – Most *Vainakh* people moved to the lowlands. They tried to establish themselves economically as peasants or waged workers but they were often marginalised. Unable to return to their previous way of life, they found themselves trapped. In Russia, Chechen became synonym with robber.

- 1920s – After the Russian Revolution, Chechens gained access to waged employment. As a result, this ethnic community became more hierarchically divided. A new national elite emerged at the top of this socio-economic hierarchy. Educated in Russian schools, the members of the national elite set up official rules for Chechen grammar and established Chechen national literature.

- 1930s – Soviet-Russian authorities opposed the Chechen national movement and implemented a policy of Russification in the North Caucasus. Despite this, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was established in 1936.

- 1942 – A part of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was occupied by Nazi Germany. The war stalled the process of modernisation of Chechnya.

- 1944 – The Stalinist regime alleged that the Chechen-Ingush ASSR co-operated with the Germans and ordered that all Chechens and Ingush must be transferred to the Kazakh steppes.

- 1957 – The Chechen-Ingush ASSR was restored after Stalin's death and under Khrushchev. Chechens and the Ingush were

rehabilitated. They were allowed to return home after thirteen years of exile.

- End of the 1950s – Chechens and the Ingush began to return to the North Caucasus. Many returnees found their houses inhabited by migrants from Russia or people and families of Ossetian nationality. By the time they returned, many houses had fallen into decay.

- 1960s – The local economy grew rapidly again with post-war socialist industrialisation and modernisation. However, after their return from Kazakhstan, most Chechens were redirected to the poor countryside. Most ethnic Chechens became badly paid kolkhoz workers.

- 1970s – Prestigious positions in the industry sector were mostly reserved for workers of Russian nationality. Most ethnic Chechens had restricted access to the flats provided to Soviet citizens. During the 1970s, the continuous socio-economic marginalisation of Chechen population resulted into the mass emigration of younger Chechen generations from the North Caucasus to the other parts of the USSR. The Chechen labour migrants had to work either half-legally or illegally there.

- 1980s – The acute economic crisis in the USSR affected the socio-economic life of the North Caucasus. At the centre of the declining empire, the economic crisis gave rise to a reformist movement (Ru. *perestroika*). In the North Caucasus, a region on the political and economic margins of the empire, the economic crisis reinforced the Chechen nationalist movement.

- 1989 – Doku Zavgayev becomes the first Chechen in history to be appointed as the First Secretary of the Chechen – Ingush ASSR. Many ordinary Chechens were still in Russia.

- 1991 – Militants close to the All-National Congress of the Chechen People efficiently dissolved the government of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR. Zavgayev fled to Russia, enabling Dzhokhar Dudayev, a Chechen nationalist, to overtake the presidency of the Republic.

- 1991 – Boris Yeltsin, the newly elected Russian president, sent troops to Grozny in an attempt to regain political control over the rebelling province. The siege was unsuccessful.

- 1992 – The Chechen-Ingush Republic was split in two parts. The Chechen part espoused its previous declaration of independence from the Russian Federation, whereas the Ingush part became a federal domain of Russia.

- 1992 – The Ossetian-Ingush conflict over the eastern parts of the Prigorodny district erupted into a brief war.

- 1991-1994 – The initial years of Chechen independence were accompanied by a severe economic downturn. Socialist kolkhozes and factories vanished.

- 1994 – The outbreak of the First Chechen War took place between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. It is estimated that up to 125,000 people lost their lives in the war. More than 500,000 people were displaced by the conflict. Most ethnic Russians who fled the area would never return to Chechnya again.

- 1994-1996 – The period of the First Chechen War meant the collapse of modern Chechen society. The centrally planned

economy had vanished. It was replaced by nationalism, tribalism, and religious fundamentalism.

- 1996 – The Russian Federation acknowledged Chechen independence de facto. After Dudayev's death— he was killed during the war—Aslan Maskhadov was elected president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

- 1996-1999 – Maskhadov failed in his attempts to rule the war-torn country. Political power was in the hands of warlords such as Ruslan Gelajev or Salman Radujev, who gained control over the local oil industry and illegal trade. Other actors that entered the political landscape of Chechnya were the Wahhabis. Led by Shamil Basayev and Ibn Al-Khattab, a mujahedeen from Jordan, they opposed not only the Russian presence in the North Caucasus but also the local Sufi religious authorities.

- 1999 – Russian troops entered the territory of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in reaction to Basayev's invasion of Dagestan. This prompted the outbreak of the Second Chechen War. It is estimated that up to 80,000 people lost their lives in the conflict. Hundreds of thousands were, again, displaced.

- 2000 – Russia re-established direct rule over formerly independent Chechnya. Separatists challenged Russian law over the course of the following four years.

- After 2000 – The war in Chechnya took the form of an anti-terrorist operation led by Russian Federal and Special Forces (Ru. *Spetsnaz*). Non-governmental organisations reported numerous human rights abuses.

- 2003 – Akhmad Kadyrov, a Suni mufti who had joined the Russian side during Second Chechen War, became the president

of Chechnya. Chechen paramilitary units, which remained loyal to the president (Ru. *Kadyrovtsy*), were legalized.

- 2004 – Ramzan Kadyrov, the son of Akhmad Kadyrov, became the president of Chechnya after his father was assassinated. Ramzan Kadyrov enforced the power of Kadyrovtsy and the Russian law in Chechnya. Many militants who joined the militia were, reportedly, former Chechen freedom fighters (Ru. *boieviki*).

- 2005 – The anti-Russian political movement was suppressed. The majority of the former Ichkerian nationalist and religious leaders, including Maskhadov, were assassinated. Some fled to other countries successfully. Only small fractions of the opposition retreated to the mountains.

- 2005 – 2008 – Kadyrov proclaimed that he would bring order and prosperity to Chechnya. He reconstructed parts of Grozny, which was, according to the UN, the most devastated capital on the planet. Moreover, military forces that were loyal to the president continued with violent operations aimed mostly against civilian population.

- 2009 – Russia officially ended the antiterrorist operation in Chechnya. Nonetheless, ordinary communities kept facing corruption, poverty, and violence.

List of Research Participants

In this section, I introduce the research participants whom I was able to meet regularly and who were willing to talk to me about their difficult precarious lives. All these people are very important to me, for the fact that I learned also from them about what it means if violence becomes a part of the ordinary life.[56]

Adam

Birth: Adam was born in Kazakhstan in 1949, the country where his parents had been forcibly displaced. The family was allowed to return back to Bamut, a village in the North Caucasus where his parents had lived before being displaced, in 1957.

Education and Work: Before the fall of the USSR, Adam worked as a soldier and later also as a policeman. He spent ten years living in various regions of Russia. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, he returned to Chechnya. He got a position in the army of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. After the Chechen-Russian wars, he earned a living as a driving instructor and a lorry driver.

Ruptures: During the Russo-Chechen wars, Adam witnessed numerous war atrocities. Later, Kadyrovites and Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation's (FSB) agents persecuted him and some of his siblings, since they had been involved in the war against Russia. Adam

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[56] As in other parts of the thesis, the names of research participants have been changed.

himself was arrested, beaten, and tortured. He fled to Poland in 2006. In Poland, his asylum application was rejected for different reasons on several occasions.

Relatives, Household, and Personal Kindred:[57] Adam told me that he had seven brothers. Even though he did not mention anything about his sisters to me, I learned he had some—Chechen men rarely spoke with me about their female siblings. Most of his siblings had fled the North Caucasus. One of his brothers lived in Austria and another brother lived in Poland. Adam was married, though his wife did not go into exile with him and stayed in Chechnya. Adam had ten children. Two of his sons, Alikhan and Salman, applied for asylum in Poland. The rest of his children, as far as I know, were in Chechnya.

In Poland, Adam lived in Hotel Pumis. He shared a room with his sons. He worked illegally. Adam was close also to Kuri, Lechi, and Akhmad – to my knowledge Akhmad shared some of his household budget with him. From time to time, Adam was financially supported by his brother, who had been granted asylum in Austria. In September 2008, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. After this, one of his sisters moved to Poland in order to take care of him.

Adam II

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[57] I use the term 'personal kindred' following Carol B. Stack's (1974) understanding of the term. In *All Our Kin*, personal kindred are defined as 'the fully activated, ego-centred network of responsible kin and all others seen as kin' (Stack, 1974, p. 30)

Birth: He was born in western Chechnya in the early 1970s.

Education and Work: After completing primary and secondary education, Adam started working in the oil industry in Grozny. Later, he started his own business. Adam was a born entrepreneur. In his own words: 'governments and regimes change from time to time. But whoever governs, I always care for myself.'

Ruptures: Adam II did not fight in any of the Russian-Chechen Wars. He just assisted the freedom fighters, who had a bunker in the nearby mountains. The freedom fighters were led by a man who was Adam's former classmate. Adam supplied them with food. Because of this help, after the second war he started to be terrorised by some members of the Russian army as well as by the pro-Russian Chechen militants. He bribed Russian commandants but this did not solve anything as the whole unit was replaced and the troubles started again. Adam escaped to the mountains but militants threatened his son. In 2005, he escaped with his wife and children to the European Union.

Adam used his entrepreneurial skills while living in exile. After his arrival, he started a new business. He created a network of people who imported used cars from Germany into Poland and Ukraine. His business was successful so Adam could afford, for instance, paying a good medical treatment for his ill wife. His success also earned him respect. The other refugees elected Adam the leader, the spokesman for the whole group (Ru. *stareshina*) – Aslanbek was successor to him. Adam may have been successful in caring for him and his dependants financially, but his asylum application was rejected several times. Adam thought this was in revenge for the fact that he had organised a protest against the poor living conditions in Polish asylum centres.

Relatives, Household, and Personal Kindred: As mentioned before, Adam was married and his wife and two children, Ramzat, a silent teenage boy, and a girl, were with him. Adam did not tell me a lot about his other relatives. I only know that some of them lived in the North Caucasus and others were elsewhere in the European Union.

In Hotel Pumis, Adam shared a private room with the other members of his nuclear family. There were also two other men, Aslan and Iljas, who apparently belonged to his personal network. Adam's wife had two brothers in Latvia and the family was in touch with them.

Aisha

Aisha was a woman in her forties. She had five children. Though I knew that she used to be married, I never met or heard about the children's father(s). I also never learned anything about her consanguineous relatives, for she never spoke about her family.

Aisha rarely talked about the past. Once, I heard her saying: 'There is nothing good in Chechnya. No one is waiting for me there'. I learned very few details about her past struggle. I could only gather that her parents were killed during the wars from various indirect references.

Aisha arrived in Poland in 2005. Two years later, she was granted asylum. When I met her, she did not live in the asylum accommodation centre anymore but in the Christian sanctuary. She relied on other refugee women when she was in need. As far as I know there was no one else, besides her children, who were closely attached to her temporary household.

Ajsyat

Ajsyat was a woman born in Chechnya in 1980.

She was married and had two children. All members of the nuclear family were in Poland.

Ajsyat arrived in Poland in 2006. When I was in the field, the family was granted a tolerated stay permit and had to leave the asylum centre. After this, they faced great adversities since finding a long-term job became impossible and the family could not afford to pay the rent of their new accommodation.

Akhmad

Akhmad was born in Grozny in 1968.

After completing secondary education, Akhmad enrolled on a course of geology. He was a student at the renowned Grozny State Oil Institute. However, he never graduated. The dissolution of the USSR and the declaration of Chechen independence disrupted his studies. Akhmad left the university as he became interested in politics and an active Dudayev supporter.

Akhmad did not like to talk to me about his experience of the wars. I could only learn from his words that he became a refugee after the outbreak of the first war. Between 1994 and 1996, he moved from one place to another in search for some security. As he put it, he and his close ones lived like Indians (Ru. *indejtsi*). He wanted to flee Chechnya

and go somewhere to Europe but felt that he did not have enough information on how to do this.

After the wars ended, Akhmad wanted stability, so he tried to find a job. First, he worked as a distribution manager for *Chechenpechat*, a press distribution company. In order to keep his job, however, he was asked to pay bribes. He could not afford to do this and he had to leave the job. Later, he became a teacher. He thought gymnastics at one of the Grozny secondary high schools. Later, he worked for the Job Centre in Grozny, where he lectured in computer skills.

Despite the fact that he had these jobs, Akhmad's life in post-war Grozny was difficult. Earning only around 12,000 roubles per month, he could not afford to own property and was forced to rent a flat. Akhmad worried also about his son's future. Using the Internet, he contacted Chechens who lived abroad. He moved to the European Union in 2007. When he arrived in Poland, he regretted not having travelled a long time before.

Akhmad married his wife in 1993. The couple had three children: Magomad, a nine-year old boy who trained to be a boxer, and two daughters. He never talked about the rest of his family to me. As far as I know, in Poland, Akhmad was not financially supported by anybody. He received social benefits and also worked illegally at the carousel park. In Hotel Pumis, Akhmad was close to Dokha's household. Even though he once told me that Dokha was his 'brother' (Chech. *vasha*) and his wife cooked food for Dokha from time to time, Akhmad generally preferred to distance himself from the other refugees.

Akhmad II

Akhmad II was born in Chechnya in 1981.

In the first half of the 1990s, he studied at an Islamic gymnasium, where his father was a teacher. In the second half of the 1990s, Akhmad joined a particular *jammat* in Dagestan. After the wars, the Russian army destroyed the *jammat*. Akhmad saved his life and escaped to the mountains. He became a freedom fighter. In the winter of 2002, he was suddenly taken ill. Unable to endure the hard life in the mountains any longer he walked to the closest village. Someone informed the police about this and Akhmad was arrested. He spent two years in prison. He was interrogated and tortured numerous times. Akhmad escaped from the prison to save his life and later moved to Russia. He changed his identity and adopted a Russian name, Sergei. He lived in an old railway carriage. One day someone told him that the FSB were looking for him to arrest him. In 2006 he fled to Poland.

Akhmad was not married. As far as I know, he did not have any children. He told me that his father never fled the North Caucasus. I also learned that he had brothers and sisters. In Poland, however, he lived alone. Instead of being with the others, he preferred long lonely walks in and around the city. Those refugees who knew about his past cared about him.

After being granted asylum, Akhmad left the asylum accommodation centre and attempted to rent. However, he could not find a job and soon got himself into debt. The main problem Akhmad faced was that he was unable to adjust to the routine of an ordinary working life. Akhmad's life was totally fragmented. He had never worked and the only thing he knew was how to use Kalashnikov or how to install a

bomb trap. The ordinariness of everyday life disturbed him: he just hoped that he might be able to start a normal life sometimes in the future.

Alikhan

Alikhan was born in Bamut, Chechnya, in 1975.

Alikhan was Adam's son. He belonged to a family which was after the second war heavily persecuted by the Chechen paramilitary forces and FSB, for their past affiliation with the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

He had many siblings. One of them, Salman, was also in Poland. The rest of them were in Chechnya, Russia, and elsewhere in the European Union. As far as I know, he had not been married and had no children.

In Poland, he shared a private room with his father and brother. He worked occasionally. Soon, he started drinking. He dated a prostitute. He beat her and his relatives were very concerned about him because of his violent behaviour. Later, he emigrated from Poland to Belgium where he had some 'brother.'

Anzor

Anzor was born in the 1960s.

Anzor was a musician. Before the dissolution of the USSR, he had worked in various parts of Russia and spent some time in Czechoslovakia and East Germany as well.

Anzor used to be married. As many other refugees, he did not explain to me what had happened to his wife. He just told me that he had lost her. Others told me that she was killed during a bomb raid. Anzor was blind and he had lost one leg.

Anzor had one son, who was also in Poland. He was nineteen years old. His son seemed to be very traumatised: on a few occasions I saw him beating local boys for no apparent reason.

The main reason why Anzor emigrated from Chechnya was his son. He son dreamt of becoming *mujahideen*. Anzor tried to avoid this by immigrating with him to Poland.

Anzor was closely affiliated with Aslanbek II and his household. They were 'relatives.' They belonged to the same *teip*.

Aptii

Aptii was born in 1985.

Mairbek and Aptii were cousins. Later, he migrated to Austria.

Arthur

Arthur was born in 1984.

He was not married. His parents lived in Chechnya. Arthur, as far as I know, was not in touch with them. He had a brother in Belgium.

When I met Arthur, he had just migrated to Poland not from Russia but from Belgium. Arthur had been in Poland before. Afterwards he moved illegally to Belgium. Later on he was deported back to Poland.

After he was released from the detention centre, he phoned Said Hasan, a distant relative - Arthur once told me about Said: 'we are one blood, Mulkhoy. We are from the same village.' Said Hasan allowed Arthur to share the room with his family. Arthur was close to Muslim, Said Hasan's eldest son.

Aslan

Aslan was born in the 1960s.

He was married and had two daughters. All his closest family was in Poland. He had also two brothers. One lived in France, the other lived in Norway.

Both brothers assisted Aslan financially. In France, one of the brothers owned a construction company. He invited Aslan to work for him. After several months in Poland, Aslan moved on to France.

Aslanbek II

Aslanbek II was born in Kazakhstan to Chechen parents in the 1980s.

He and his parents returned to Chechnya in 1993. Soon, the wars started and something terrible happened to his closest ones. He never told me about this. I just know that he had been alone since he was teenager.

Aslanbek II did not complete primary education. During the wars, he probably fought in the conflict. I knew he had been imprisoned. He had never worked on a regular basis. As he told me: 'There is no job in Chechnya nowadays. If you want to work properly, you must bribe someone.'

When I arrived in Poland, Aslanbek II had been there four years. He had lived in more asylum accommodation centres. In Poland, he also spent some time in prison. He was imprisoned because he physically attacked someone who insulted him verbally.

Aslanbek II was married. He met his wife, Toita, in Poland. She was a widow - her first husband had been killed in the war. He had two children with Toita. His wife also had a third child, a daughter, from the previous marriage. Aslanbek II took care also of her. As he explained to me: 'I had lost everything. Now I am married. I have a new family. This makes me happy.' Besides, Aslanbek II was close to Anzor. They were *vezharij*, fictitious brothers.

Even though Poland had granted him asylum, he was allowed to live in the asylum accommodation centre because his wife was there. He was often in conflict with some from the Chechen community. Aslanbek II liked to drink and other residents often saw him drunk. Because of this reason, the Chechen men had beaten him a few times.

Dikman

Dikman was born in 1955.

She used to run a small grocery shop in her native village.

Her mother and two brothers died during the wars. Having no one in Chechnya, she decided to move to Poland where she had a sister and a nephew, Ruslan II.

She shared the room with Ruslan II, his children, and his mother.

Dokha

Dokha was born in the 1970s.

He had six brothers. In 2001, one of the brothers was arrested by *siloviki* and disappeared. Nobody has heard about him since then. Dokha believes his brother was probably killed.

Dokha fought in each war. In 2002, as he attempted to return back to normality, the FSB started to persecute him. He was arrested, imprisoned, and brutally tortured. Fearing for his life, he fled to the European Union.

Dokha was married. He had children. Yet, it seemed to me, he was one of the refugees who never got the feeling of being recovered from what they had lost. I often heard him saying that he could not see any future, that his life was in the hands of God and that he did not think about tomorrow.

Fatima

Fatima was born in Karabulak, Ingushetia, in 1976.

Fatima graduated from the Pedagogical Institute of Ingushetia. After her graduation, she worked at the library for six years. Later, she took an office job.

Fatima never met her father. He left her mother when she was two years old. After their separation, Fatima stayed with her mother. She lived in her grandparent's house, together with her grandmother and grandfather.

During the wars, some of her distant relatives were killed. She witnessed how the police arrested and beat her husband, Akhmad.

In Poland, she was related to Akhmad and also to Rezvan and his household. I often saw her cooking for her husband and for Rezvan. I was told that Rezvan was a distant relative.

She missed her grandfather and her mother very much while staying in Poland. She hoped she could return to the North Caucasus as soon as possible because of this reason.

Fatima II

Fatima II was born in Grozny in 1973.

She graduated from Grozny University. She studied Russian philology. After her graduation, she worked as a teacher. She used to teach Russian language and literature.

Fatima II had witnessed the war in Grozny. Her flat was destroyed. Afterwards, she fled to Ingushetia, to a refugee camp. She could not see any future there for her and her children so she decided to migrate

to the European Union. Looking back to her past while she was already in Poland, Fatima thought that her life had been a bad dream.

Fatima II was married to Ruslan. She had three children: one boy and two daughters. Islam, the boy, was strongly traumatised by the wars. Fatima II had also one brother. Her brother had graduated from the Grozny State Oil Institute before the dissolution of the Soviet Union and had previously lived and worked in Iraq. During the wars, he was hit by shrapnel and wounded. Unlike her children, Fatima's brother was not in Poland but he lived somewhere in Russia.

Fatima arrived in Poland in 2005. She lived in the asylum accommodation centre but because she, her husband and their children were all granted a tolerated stay permit they had to leave Hotel Pumis. First, she and the children moved to the Christian sanctuary. Later on, unable to sustain themselves, her family soon migrated from Poland to Sweden.

Gelani

Gelani was born in Chernorechye, in the region of Zavodskoy, in 1978.

Gelani's grandfather had been 'a big communist.' His used to be an electrician. The grandfather used to be strongly attached to the family house. He would never leave the house, even during the war with the Germans, as Gelani explained to me. This was the reason why the grandfather stayed in the house also during the First Chechen-Russian war. At this time, Gelani decided not leave with his grandmother for Ingushetia and to stay in the house with him. They nearly died from famine.

When ethnic Russians escaped from Chechnya as the turbulences in the public world erupted in the early 1990s, one of these refugees, a colleague of Gelani's mother from work, sold her flat to his mother. Gelani lived in this flat after the second war ended. The flat was too small for the large family and it was not supplied with potable water. Moreover, after the war the new-regime bureaucrats challenged Gelani's possession right over the property and wanted him to bribe them in order to be granted the ownership of the house. This, together with the fear of his children's future, led Gelani to make the difficult decision of leaving Chechnya for Europe.

Before he fled to Poland, he worked in construction. He used to be an employee of the company *Grozvodkanal*.

Gelani was in relationship with two women. The first women stayed in Chechnya and the second one, Zulai, accompanied him to Poland. He was the father of five children. Even though Zulai was the mother of only three of them, Gelani took all children with him.

Gelani had two brothers. The first brother was fifteen years old and the second was twenty-one year old. His brothers and also his mother, who was seriously ill, lived in Chechnya. Gelani was the oldest of the brothers and was expected to take care of his mother. However, he was not able to do so and he was deeply ashamed about of this.

Gelani had also one sister - when listing his siblings, Gelani did not mention her. She lived in Grozny. She was married and had four children. Gelani's grandparents died eight years ago.

In Poland, Gelani lived in the asylum centre with his wife and children. He wanted to work but did not have proper documents. Nonetheless,

he was generally satisfied with his Polish life. He hoped to be able to provide everything for his family. He hoped to earn some money and buy a small family farm in Poland.

Hasan

Hasan was born during the 1950s.

Hasan was a graduate from the university of Grozny. He was well educated. He belonged to the former socialist Chechen elite.

In Poland, he did not live in the asylum accommodation centre but somewhere in the city centre. He lived alone. I saw him only when he visited Hotel Pumis.

 In 2006, he co-organised the protests against the living conditions in the Polish asylum accommodation facilities. After the protests, he was the only person who was granted refugee status and free housing. Some Chechens and also the local bureaucrats did not trust him after this. They thought he was corrupt.

Iljas

Iljas was born in the Grozny area in 1981.

As far as I know, Iljas had two brothers. One brother lived in other place in Poland and the the other brother lived in Norway. Iljas was married. His wife was in Poland as well. They had three children.

Iljas was a construction worker. In Chechnya, he used to work in the construction industry.

Adam II and Aslan were his personal kindred.

In Hotel Pumis, he shared a private room with his wife and children. As he worked illegally, he had enough income to buy things such as a TV and a Hi-Fi stereo system. He was very proud of this. On one hand, he knew that the place where he lived was not very good. On the other hand, he was very happy to be able to live with his wife and children and support his closest ones.

Kuri

Kuri was born in Chechnya, Nesterovskaja, in 1980.

Before the wars, Kuri's family owned 30 horses, 50 cows, and 1,500 sheep. During the wars, they lost all this property. Some of his relatives were wounded, others died during the wars.

After the wars, Kuri spent some time living and working in Grozny. Later, however, he returned to his native village. As Kuri explained to me: 'Life has always been easier in a village. Living in a city, one must have a lot of money. But living in a village, life is easier.' Kuri used to work as a herdsman whilst living in the village, among 'ours from one brigade, one teip'.

Kuri's father married four times and divorced three times. Kuri's biological mother was his father's first wife. Kuri also regarded his father's fourth wife as his mother. He had many siblings and half-siblings.

Kuri had been married twice. He divorced his first wife in 2007, two months after they were married. Later, he married Seda and had one child.

His twin brother Lechi was the only sibling who accompanied him to Poland. In Hotel Pumis, he shared a private room with his wife and child. In Poland, he was entitled to social benefits and earned other income from the illegal work. Alikhan, Akhmad, and Salman were among his personal kindred.

Kuri's grandfather, who was wounded in the conflict, was granted asylum in Belgium. Kuri wanted to go to Belgium as well.

Lechi

Lechi was born in Nesterovskaja in1980.

Malika

Malika was born in Chechnya in 1966.

She was married to *Starik* Magomad. They had five children, three boys and two girls. The oldest son was sixteen, the middle son was fourteen, and the youngest son was twelve years old.

Since 1992, Malika did not have a normal life. She witnessed the wars. The house where she lived was destroyed. She did not live as a human. Instead, she merely 'existed' (Ru. *'sushhestvovat'*). After this, she fled to Nazran, to one of the refugee camps there.

In Poland, her life was better than in the North Caucasus, since her children were not in danger.

Muslim

Muslim was born in 1988.

Muslim was Said Hasan's eldest son. In 2009, he returned to Chechnya.

Ruslan

Ruslan was born in 1970.

His wife was Fatima II. They had three children.

In Poland, Ruslan economically struggled. He could not find a job. He was not able to care properly for his family.

Ruslan II

Ruslan II was born during the 1970s.

He lived with his mother, his aunt, his wife, and his three daughters in Poland.

He once told me that he hates Chechnya. He told me that he would prefer to live in Antarctica instead of Chechnya. He did not talk about the past very often with me.

Ruslan II arrived in Poland in 2005. Here, he was granted a tolerated stay permit. Initially, he refused to accept the permit, as he wanted to

avoid losing his housing entitlement. But threatened by the deportation, he had to accept it. After moving out of Hotel Pumis, he rented a flat. He soon run into debt and had to leave it.

Salman

Salman was born in 1984.

Adam was his father. He had no children.

Salman had spent two years in the Russian army.

He did not like the fact that he had to leave Chechnya. He did not like being separated from his friends and kin. Nonetheless, he also regarded leaving Chechnya as an opportunity. He hoped to begin something new and interesting.

In Poland, his asylum application was rejected three times. He planned to leave either for Belgium or Austria as soon as possible.

Satziyta

Satziyta was born in Khasav Yurt, Dagestan, in 1962.

Satzyita had two children, Sultan and Zelim. Her husband had died of cancer.

During socialism, Satziyta used to work at Kolkhoz.

Satziyta was related to Madiina, Malik's wife, Malik and Zalin. She often talked about her cousin who lived in Lyon. Her cousin sent money to Satziyta and her sons when they were in Poland.

She decided to emigrate due to the situation of poverty in her village. She also decided to go to Europe in order to care for her elder son's health problems. The son suffered from severe asthmatic attacks and the mother hoped she could secure a good medical treatment for him in Europe.

Seda

Seda was born in 1986, in Bamut, the village destroyed during the wars.

The first war started when eight years old Seda was a child. Whereas other children elsewhere in the world had a normal life, Seda faced constant threat of instability. The first war destroyed nearly the whole village she lived in, including her parent's house. After this, the family moved to Grozny where they repaired another house. This house, however, was also destroyed by the bombs, which razed the city in 1999. Since then there has been no place that Seda considers to be her own. Together with her family, Seda has moved from one place to another place, from Grozny to Karelia in Russia.

Her mother, her paternal grandmother, and her fifteen years old brother were in Chechnya. Seda's father died of a heart attack. Seda has only one child was already born in Poland. Seda's decision to migrate from Russia was supported by her grandmother. She said to her that in order to bring up her own children safely and 'save her own life she had to go as far away as possible' from there. Seda did not want

to leave initially. She was concerned about the future of her closest ones.

In Poland, Seda was affiliated to Akhmad, Adam, and Alikhan. One of her uncles, who lived in Austria, was also in touch with her. He helped her financially.

Seid Hasan

Seid Hasan was born in Grozny in1959.

He was married to Zainab and had six children.

Starik Mohmad

Starik Mohmad was born in Kazakhstan in 1945.

During socialism, Mohmad used to be a *'biznesman'*. He used to travel all around the USSR to buy and sell scarce commodities. He had lived in Geli, a village located in the Urus Martan region. Mohmad emphasised that everyday living in the village used to be very good but that everything changed during and after the wars.

When violence erupted, some of his relatives were killed. Others scattered around the world.

Mohmad had nine brothers and seven sisters. His father married twice. One of his brothers lived in Poland. Two other brothers were in Hamburg. The others lived in Ingushetia. Mohmad, his wife, and their children fled firstly to Ingushetia. He then migrated to Poland.

Mohmad was married to Malika and they had five children. The oldest son was born in 1992 and the youngest child was born in the 2002.

Sultan

Sultan was a twenty years old man. A couple of years before he immigrated to Poland, his father had died of cancer. Sultan was not born in Chechnya but in Dagestan. He often complained about the racism against the Chechens who lived in this part of the North Caucasus.

Before he immigrated to Poland, Sultan had studied at Makhachkala University. He left university as a teacher accused him of being a Chechen terrorist.

Sultan, like the majority of his generation, had never been properly employed. The only job he had was as a caretaker.

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