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Navigating Narratives: NGO Communication Dynamics in
Migration Discourse

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Abstrakt

Diese Studie untersucht Herausforderungen und Kommunikationsstrategien von Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NROs) in Österreich in Bezug auf Migration, auch im Kontext des Ukraine-Konflikts. Es wurden insgesamt zehn leitfadengestützte Experteninterviews durchgeführt, die insgesamt zwölf vordefinierte Fragen enthielten. Die Interviews wurden zur Durchführung einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse verwendet. Die Antworten dienten zur Analyse verschiedener Ansätze, die von NROs zur Beeinflussung der öffentlichen Meinung und der Medien verwendet werden. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Nichtregierungsorganisationen bei der Definition von kommunizierten, ausgewogenen Migrationsnarrativen eine entscheidende Rolle spielen. Sie stehen jedoch vor Herausforderungen wie Ressourcenknappheit und Medienbias. Diese Arbeit unterstreicht die entscheidende Rolle der NRO bei der Gestaltung des Migrationsdiskurses und verdeutlicht die Notwendigkeit, ihre Kommunikationsstrategien kontinuierlich anzupassen, um Migrationsfragen effektiv zu beeinflussen und die Rechte von Migranten zu fördern.

Abstract

This study investigates challenges and the communication strategies of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Austria with regard to migration, including in the context of the Ukraine conflict. A total of ten semi-structured expert interviews were conducted, which included a total of twelve pre-defined questions. The interviews were used to conduct a qualitative content analysis. The answers were used to analyse different approaches used by NGOs to influence public opinion and the media. The results show that NGOs are crucial in defining communicated balanced migration narratives. However, they face challenges such as resource scarcity and media bias. This work emphasises the crucial role of NGOs in shaping the migration discourse and highlights the need to continuously adapt their communication strategies in order to effectively influence migration issues and promote migrants' rights.

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1 Introduction

NGOs work to meet refugees' basic needs, uphold their human rights, and help them integrate into new communities. The work of the NGOs spans several areas, including shelter provision, health care, education, legal assistance, and psychosocial support. They work closely with state actors, international organisations, and local communities to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated response to the 'refugee crisis'. Through their direct presence on the ground, NGOs can respond quickly to changing needs and develop flexible solutions (cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018, p.422).

However, the role of NGOs goes beyond simply supporting refugees and migrants. They play an important advocacy role, helping to raise awareness about the causes and effects of the refugee crisis. NGOs advocate for more equitable and humanitarian migration policies by influencing policymakers or initiating public campaigns. They work closely with media to promote balanced coverage of migration and break down stereotypes and prejudices (cf. Dimitrova, Heidenreich, & Georgiev, 2022, p.3).

The issues around migration have become increasingly complex and everchanging, while issues including the roles and actions of states; the dynamics of geopolitical power and domestic political affairs; shifts within societies; internal political developments; rivalry and collaboration among non-governmental organisations pressure NGOs themselves to change over time (cf. Schrover, Vosters, & Glynn, 2019, p.214). Additionally, NGOs face a range of challenges in communicating their work to the media and the general public, as they navigate complex political and cultural contexts, limited resources and changing public attitudes towards migration (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.3-7).

Effective communication is essential for NGOs, especially in addressing global issues like the refugee crisis. NGOs employ varied strategies to influence both traditional media and social media narratives. While information subsidies, such as press releases and social media content, significantly impact traditional media's coverage, their effectiveness is less pronounced in social media contexts. Instead, the prominence of NGOs in social media discussions is heavily influenced by their network positions within online communities and stakeholder-initiated engagement. NGOs specialising in refugee issues are more likely to be

central in social media conversations, thus emphasising the importance of targeted expertise and active participation in digital platforms. Moreover, NGOs need to cultivate strong relationships and encourage stakeholder engagement to effectively communicate their messages and mobilise public support (cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018, p.435-438). Through the use of various channels such as social media, events, workshops, and media partnerships, NGOs are helping to reach a wide range of stakeholders and successfully communicate their messages.

At the same time, media has significantly influenced public attitudes towards migration by frequently presenting migrants in a polarised light, often depicting them either as threats or as victims of dire circumstances. This portrayal has been shown to exploit existing uncertainties and fears related to immigration policies and the treatment of immigrants and refugees, thereby contributing to a heightened sense of crisis, irrespective of the actual situation. The framing of migration stories in the media not only reflects but also amplifies political agendas and cultural biases, thereby fostering a complex and polarised discourse on migration. Such narratives shape the public's understanding and responses to migration issues. Moreover, it underscores the persistent underrepresentation of migrant voices in the media, which further influences the public debate by limiting the perspectives presented. This one-sided media portrayal contributes to shaping a public discourse that is often misinformed and biased, thus impacting policy-making and societal attitudes towards migrants (cf. Kosho, 2016, p.88-90).

In accordance with this, NGOs, particularly those focusing on migration and refugee issues, encounter significant challenges in their communication efforts. The saturated international media environment and the complex landscape of public opinion make it difficult for these organisations to break through and effectively influence the narrative surrounding migration. NGOs must leverage their network positions within public discussions, such as on platforms like Twitter, to enhance public engagement and influence (cf. Saffer, Yang, Morehouse, & Qu, 2019, p.1708-1709).

NGOs play a critical role in shaping both global and national perspectives on migration, emphasising their unique position to impact policy and public opinion due to their operational independence from local political and economic pressures. Given these challenges, it is essential for NGOs to continuously evaluate their communication tactics, ensuring they

effectively represent the diverse experiences and perspectives of migrants and refugees, while also striving to maintain public attention amidst a plethora of competing social and political issues (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.4-5).

In this context, NGOs working on migration issues have sought to develop effective communication strategies to raise awareness, shape public opinion and advocate for the rights and needs of refugees and migrants (cf. Saffer et al., 2019, p.1709-1711).

Therefore, this master's thesis aims to explore the communication strategies of NGOs working in the field of migration. This thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of the communication challenges and strategies of NGOs working in the field of migration, and to identify possibilities for more effective communication and advocacy in this critical area.

1.1 Research Interest and Problem Definition

NGOs are said to play an important role in supporting and advocating for the rights of refugees and migrants but face a number of challenges in communicating their messages to the public and the media. This thesis will examine in depth the communication strategies, framing, and challenges of NGOs working in the field of migration. The research interest focuses on analysing the dominant messages NGOs use to try to influence public opinion, the difficulties they face in communicating with the media, and their perceptions of the role they play in shaping the public discourse on refugees.

Despite the critical role NGOs play in addressing the refugee crisis, there is still a lack of comprehensive research on their communication strategies and challenges. While some studies have focused on the role of social media and other digital platforms in NGO advocacy, there is a need for more detailed analysis of the messaging, framing, and media strategies used by NGOs in the migration context. Moreover, little is known about the specific challenges NGOs face in communicating with the media and how they perceive their role in shaping the public discourse on refugees. This study aims to fill these gaps by conducting a qualitative analysis of NGOs' communication strategies and challenges in the migration field, with the goal of providing information for policy makers and practitioners in the field.

The aim of this thesis is the question of how NGOs dealing with migration and asylum shape their communication with the outside world about refugees. The focus is to examine their

communication strategies and challenges. The study aims to find out what dominant messages NGOs try to communicate, what difficulties they face, and how NGOs perceive their own role in framing refugees. In addition, the question of how NGOs have been communicating in the context of the war in Ukraine since February 2022 will be explored.

Thus, this research interest and problem fulfil the requirements of a communication thesis as they deal with strategic and external communication as well as crisis communication. Through an in-depth analysis of the communication strategies and challenges of NGOs in the migration field, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role and influence of these organisations in addressing the refugee crisis and identify possible avenues for more effective communication and advocacy.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis will be structured as followed: chapter two will start with the relevant theoretical framework. Here, the theoretical basis for the thesis is established. Various theoretical concepts and terms that are relevant to understanding the subject of the study are addressed.

Subchapter 2.1 defines the terms surrounding migration and refugees and talks about the importance of such definitions, especially in political context. Subchapter 2.2 explains the concept of public opinion. Subchapter 2.3 gives an overview over the most important definitions of the concepts of migration and asylum. In subchapter 2.4 the term of public relations and the areas of work surrounding public relations will be discussed. The subchapters will give more detail to strategic communication of NGOs, crisis and conflict communication of NGOs, and NGO communication with the media.

Subchapter 2.5 is dedicated media usage before subchapter 2.6 explains the concept of framing. In the final subchapter 2.7 the most important theories for this work will be discussed. The theory of agenda setting, agenda building, and media dependency will be looked into.

In chapter three the first two chapters will be brought together in the formulation of research questions which then build the ground for chapter four. The fourth chapter, Method, deals with the empirical research method and the methodological approach in the thesis.

The fifth chapter, Results, presents the findings of the empirical research, and is divided into five subchapters: Subchapter 5.1 presents general results, subchapter 5.2 presents results on the dominant messages of NGOs, subchapter 5.3 presents results on communication challenges. Subchapter 5.3 then discusses media framing, before finally examining the differentiating narratives in subchapter 5.5.

The sixth chapter, Conclusions, summarises the results of the empirical research and provides a critical discussion of the findings. Subchapter 6.1 presents the summary and discussion of the results, and Subchapter 6.2 presents limitations of the work.

The questionnaire of the guided interview is attached in the appendix, as well as the category schema and the code matrix.

2 Theoretical Framework

The theory chapter of this master thesis provides the theoretical framework upon which the study of NGOs' communication and challenges in the field of migration is built. This chapter presents relevant theoretical concepts and approaches, including the current state of research, that provide an analytical framework to understand and analyse NGOs' communication practices.

The theoretical framework of this thesis includes a variety of approaches and theories from the fields of communication studies, political science, and sociology. These theories provide different perspectives and concepts to analyse NGOs' communication strategies and understand their impact on public opinion formation and policy-making processes.

2.1 Migration and Asylum

This thesis uses a variety of terms in connection with migration and asylum. While these two terms, as well as the term refugee, are often used, there is another term that should be mentioned and explained in the context of this work. This is subsidiary protection. These terms must first be defined and explained in order to provide a suitable theoretical background for this work. The focus will be on the definition according to European law on the one hand and Austrian law on the other.

A focus on both is interesting in regard to the transnational and national differences Austria is portraying. After the so called 2015-2016 crisis, the Austrian government shifted to a policy more focussed on bilateralism and multilateralism outside the EU framework, using transnational party alliances (cf. Josipovic, Rosenberger, & Segarra, 2023, p.84). This development represents a departure from the EU's main integration pathways and emphasises an independent Austrian approach to asylum issues and border management. In Austrian political discourse, the re-establishment of internal borders in the Schengen area was justified based on a specific asylum policy, which ultimately contributed to the delegitimization of the enlargement of the Schengen area in 2022. This case illustrates how Austria has shaped European governance on asylum and borders and distanced itself from the

EU's collective stance, illustrating a differentiated disintegration in the area of migration and asylum (cf. Josipovic et al., 2023, p.86-87).

In addition, besides the EU's return policy measures, which are characterised by low enforcement rates, regularisations of irregularly present migrants represent an alternative approach (cf. Hinterberger, 2023, p.356-357). Austria, like Germany and Spain, uses national regularisations and thus deviates from the EU's overarching migration management (cf. Hinterberger, 2023, p.44). These measures, which aim to tackle irregular residence by granting legal residence status, highlight the different regularisation systems that exist at national level within the EU (cf. Hinterberger, 2023, p.25-26).

In contrast to the EU, which focuses on returns, countries such as Austria have developed their own approaches to managing irregular migration. Austria has a multifaceted system for regularising residency status. However, it's crucial to differentiate between residency rights that are essential to meet these requirements and rights that exceed international and EU mandates. In essence, national residency rights are intertwined with international and EU legislation. However, some rules are about different situations within the country, based on which the residency permissions are then given (cf. Hinterberger, 2023, p.351-352).

Therefore, in the context of this work it is important to look at the transnational level of the EU and the specific regulations granted in Austria. In the following the terms "refugee", "beneficiaries of subsidiary protection", "migrants", and "asylum" including "persons entitled to asylum" will be defined.

By definition, Austria defines a "refugee" as a person who is unable or unwilling to claim the protection of their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political conviction and who, following the positive conclusion of the asylum procedure, is considered to be entitled to asylum or a recognised refugee (cf. Bundesministerium für Inneres, n.d.). In addition, the EU defines a "refugee" in a similar way, but with reference to EU directives in terms of the legal framework (cf. European Migration Network, n.d.c).

"Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection" in Austria are persons who are not granted refugee status but nevertheless have protection against deportation because their life or health is threatened in their country of origin (cf. Bundesministerium für Inneres, n.d.). In the EU context, subsidiary protection is granted to persons who are not recognised as refugees but who would nevertheless face a real risk of serious harm if they were to return to their country of origin (cf. European Migration Network, n.d.d).

With regard to "migrants", Austria distinguishes between people who move for various reasons in order to improve their living conditions and refugees, who are defined above (cf. Bundesministerium für Inneres, n.d.). The EU, on the other hand, defines "migrants" by the criteria for residence and length of stay within the EU (cf. European Migration Network, n.d.b).

In Austria, the terms "asylum" and "persons entitled to asylum" describe people who are seeking protection from persecution and are recognised after a positive asylum procedure (cf. Bundesministerium für Inneres, n.d.). In the EU context, asylum refers to protection based on the principle of non-refoulement and granted to persons who cannot seek protection in their home country under international or national refugee law (cf. European Migration Network, n.d.a).

These examples and definitions highlight the similarities and differences in approaches to migration and asylum definitions and, therefore, policy between Austria and the European Union and reflect the complexities and challenges within the EU's collective migration policy framework. In this paper, the focus is primarily on the legal definitions under Austrian law, as the focus was placed on organisations in Austria.

2.2 Non-Governmental Organisations

As the term NGO and its work are a central focus of this thesis, the definition of NGOs and the aspects of their work will be discussed below. Firstly, a general overview will be given and then the work of NGOs in the area of migration and asylum will be discussed.

The term NGO emerged in 1945 with the establishment of the United Nations. Initially, selected international NGOs were granted observer status by the UN, similar to the practice of the League of Nations. Over time, the term broadened to include organisations without observer status (cf. Schrover et al., 2019, p.191). Schrover et al. (2019) give a very broad

definition as “organisations that are not established by a government or by intergovernmental agreement, which includes non-state actors that are not included in this issue such as multinational corporations, schools and universities, political parties, churches, rebel groups, trade unions and sports clubs” (Schrover et al., 2019, p.191).

Wright (2019) defines NGOs closer as follows:

“Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not-for-profit groups, which are independent of commercial businesses and government agencies. They claim to serve various notions of the public good, including advocacy and service delivery. So the definition of an ‘NGO’ is broad, including many different kinds of organizations, such as aid agencies, human rights, indigenous, feminist and environmental lobby groups.” (Wright, 2019, p.1)

Lehman (2007, p.646-647) writes additionally that Western societies have seen an increase in government trends towards privatisation and outsourcing of tasks once undertaken by the public sector. NGOs have become increasingly important in this process, filling the resulting vacuum of accountability, and providing public services. NGOs are independent of governments and often rely on donations and voluntary labour. While the NGO sector has seen a rise in professionalism; altruism and voluntary work continue to hold value as key attributes. With this in mind, NGOs have taken on an important role in the provision of public services and in the democratic process due to their increasing professionalisation and growth in recent decades.

NGOs' roles were shaped by states' needs and intergovernmental organisations (IGO) activities post-1945. States often sought NGO support when lacking expertise and logistics. However, including NGOs challenged states' moral authority. As states became less reliant on NGOs, they marginalised them, reducing funding and excluding them from forums. IGOs, too, sometimes employed similar tactics as their power grew. While interdependent, NGOs and IGOs also competed, blurring boundaries between their work and occasionally leading to NGO absorption into government systems (cf. Schrover et al., 2019, p.197-198).

Looking at NGOs role in the political context, NGO activists and the individuals they serve are often seen as active participants in promoting different aspects of development, therefore they are actors in a political context. Voluntary efforts encompass a wide array of interests and can

be found in various organisations, from local clubs to educational institutions. While NGOs are part of the voluntary sector, what sets them apart from other voluntary groups is their employment of paid staff and their focus on securing funding for specific development goals (cf. Gosh, 2009, p.475). In broad terms, NGOs operate within a political framework defined by two main factors. First, their methods of resource mobilisation and their often close ties to social movements. These factors impact various aspects such as limitations, opportunities, and overall circumstances, ultimately influencing NGOs' capacity to promote democratisation to some degree (cf. Gosh, 2009, p.477).

NGOs possess three types of authority that enable them to influence policies and practices: expert authority, moral authority, and logistical authority. Expert authority comes from their knowledge of rules, laws, and access to data like refugee statistics. Moral authority arises from their advocacy against discrimination, protection of vulnerable groups, or claims of neutrality. Logistical authority is demonstrated through their ability to organise rapid emergency relief or mobilise people. These authorities vary depending on the NGO's size, age, and status, and are specific to the policy domain they operate in (cf. Schrover et al., 2019, p.194).

Schrover et al. (2019) look at role of NGOs in European migration management from the 1860s to the present day. In summary, the role of NGOs in European migration management has changed over time, mainly influenced by the relationship between NGOs and governmental and intergovernmental organisations (IGOs). Originally, states used NGOs for practical and social support, with these organisations having moral, technical and logistical authority. After the Cold War, NGOs expanded their field of activity to Eastern Europe, where they played a key role due to the weakness of civil society. The changes in the role of NGOs were driven by cooperation and competition both with each other and with international governmental organisations. As the power of IGOs increased, so did the importance of NGOs, which became more integrated into the governmental system, characterised by geopolitical changes, national politics and social dynamics.

It is also important to look at NGOs in the sector of migration, especially in Austria. They started emerging in the 1990s when a stronger political debate started around asylum (cf. de Jong & Ataç, 2017, p.29).

Looking at their work, de Jong & Ataç (2017) grouped Austrian civil society into different forms of work. Civil society involvement in migration issues, especially with refugees and asylum seekers, includes various groups such as social movements, NGOs and migrant organisations. There are two approaches: the 'problem-solving approach', which provides services such as counselling and accommodation and is often funded by the state, and the 'critical approach', which advocates for migrants' rights and exerts political pressure. The collaboration between state agencies and civil society organisations raises questions as to whether they are filling the gap in public services with cheaper services, which could limit the space for political activism. There are also organisations that combine both approaches by providing services and driving political change at the same time (cf. de Jong & Ataç, 2017, p.30).

This work will use a very broad definition to NGOs in accordance with Schrover et al. (2019), including non-state actors as universities. The broad framework is set in order to include other actors in this work and to obtain background information on the topic of migration and communication with the media. The approaches of Austrian NGOs in migration by de Jong & Ataç (2017) will act as additional frame to this work.

The integration of NGOs into the civil society and the public sphere enhances public engagement and social welfare. Their role in migration further exemplifies their critical function in addressing global challenges and advocating for vulnerable populations. The growing influence of NGOs reflects a shift towards more participatory forms of governance and public discourse, highlighting the essential role these organisations play in society.

2.3 Migration in the Media

The global media landscape serves as a critical context for understanding how migration is portrayed and discussed worldwide. In her work, Dimitrova (2021) identifies five key factors that characterise global media systems: political conditions, economic circumstances, technological developments, cultural norms, and journalistic practices. She notes that the interaction between these factors determines the diversity and complexity of media systems. This multifaceted approach is essential in examining how media narratives about migration are constructed and disseminated across different regions.

In Europe, the media discourse surrounding migration often takes on a notably negative tone. For example, the use of terms that are usually associated with natural disasters promotes a threatening perspective on migration. It is noted that reporting on migration-related topics varies depending on the media format. Tabloid media tend to be particularly negative, while quality newspapers report in a more differentiated way. Television news tends to portray migration and migrant women more negatively than print media. Migrant women are generally less present in the media and, when they are, are usually portrayed in a negative context (cf. Eberl, Meltzer, Heidenreich, Theorin, Lind, Berganza, Boomgaarden, Schemer, & Strömbäck, 2018, p. 9). This reflects a common pattern in the European media landscape, with reporting often focussing on negative aspects and conflicts. "Despite differences in the way immigration and migrant groups are represented in European media, we can observe common patterns" (Eberl et al., 2018, p.2). It emphasises the need to look at and analyse media reports on migration more comprehensively in order to develop a deeper understanding of the influences on public opinion. This involves including a wider range of media and conducting comparative studies (cf. Eberl et al., 2018, p.13).

Moreover, Lecheler, Matthes, and Boomgaarden (2019) highlights the growing importance of migration as "one of the decisive socio-political topics worldwide" (Lecheler et al., 2019, p.691). They point to the central role of the mass media in shaping public discourse and opinions on migration. A particular focus of the study is on the challenges and opportunities that the current refugee situation offers for media research. This emphasises the diversity and complexity of the topic of migration in the media (cf. Lecheler et al., 2019, p.692-693). The authors also point to four pressing research gaps: the lack of comparative research, geographical biases, limited methodological approaches and the lack of comprehensive theorising. In particular, they highlight the need to test cultural factors in an adequate statistical model to take due account of context (cf. Lecheler et al., 2019, p.698). These points emphasise the importance of deeper and broader research in this area.

The narrative surrounding NGOs and their role in media coverage of migration-related issues is nuanced and multifaceted. There is a double-edged nature of NGOs in media reporting. While they contribute significantly to the public awareness of humanitarian and human rights issues, they also conform to prevailing news norms, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives presented (cf. Powers, 2018, p.154-162). This dichotomy underscores the

complexities of media narratives and the need for a broader range of voices and stories in the coverage of migration.

Together, these studies paint a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities present in media coverage of migration. They highlight the need for a more holistic and nuanced approach to reporting, one that goes beyond stereotypical portrayals and seeks to understand the diverse experiences and realities of migrants.

2.4 Public Opinion

In the context of this work, it is also important to address the emergence and influence of public opinion. The aim is to show that public opinion plays an important role in the area of migration in particular and therefore also has an influence on NGOs and their communication in the area of migration and asylum. Here, particular attention will also be focused on media.

Public opinion refers to the prevailing views and attitudes within a society on specific issues or events. The media's role in shaping public opinion on migration is significant, as evidenced by a vast body of research. Historically, Walter Lippmann highlighted in his work, 'Public Opinion', how the media crafts the images that populate our minds about the larger world, particularly in realms that remain largely unseen and unknown to the average citizen. This creation of perception is particularly relevant in the context of migration, a complex and emotionally charged issue that, despite its intricacy, is frequently depicted in a simplified manner in public discourse (cf. Kosho, 2016, p.86-87).

In exploring the impact of media on migration views, it's crucial to understand that public opinions towards migrants vary significantly based on the migrants' origin. For example, migration within the EU tends to be viewed positively by European citizens, while immigration from outside the EU is often met with scepticism and apprehension (Kosho S.86). This dichotomy in perception underscores the influence of media in shaping public sentiment, as it frequently frames migration through a lens of 'us' versus 'them', promoting a mild form of cultural racism. This has been noted by scholars who point out the negative slant and division created by news media (cf. De Coninck, Vandenberghe, & Matthijs, 2019, p.135).

Moreover, media portrayal does not only affect public opinion but also impacts policy-making, especially during times of crisis. The narrative set by the media can amplify existing

uncertainties surrounding migration policies and the treatment of immigrants and refugees, portraying these groups as potential threats and fostering a crisis mentality (cf. Kosho, 2016, p.88). This phenomenon has been observed in various studies, indicating how media coverage can sway public opinion and, in turn, influence immigration policies and the societal treatment of migrants (cf. Kosho, 2016, p.90).

However, public sentiment and media portrayals can also reflect broader socio-economic conditions. Before the recent economic downturns, an improvement in employment situations in many developed countries had led to a calmer debate around labour migration and a reduction in opposition to increased immigration. Yet, economic crises can quickly shift this dynamic, reviving opposition to immigration and fostering anti-immigrant feelings, a cycle that highlights the complex interplay between economic conditions, public opinion, and media portrayal (cf. Kosho, 2016, p.86).

Despite the recognised power of the media in shaping perceptions, it is essential to acknowledge the nuanced reality of migration, a phenomenon that does not lend itself to simple solutions or purely rational decisions. As scholars like d'Haenens & Joris (2019, p.9) suggest, addressing migration challenges requires navigating a landscape filled with emotions and complexities, far beyond what media portrayals often suggest.

Finally, it is important to recognise that refugees have become a significant focus of news production, political discussions, and public concern globally. The portrayal of refugees in the media, and the subsequent public and policy responses, underscore the urgent need for informed and empathetic approaches to migration issues (cf. d'Haenens & Joris, 2019, p.9).

The media play a central role in shaping public opinion. On the one hand, reporting that portrays migrants and refugees in a negative light might lead to increased fear and hostility among the population. On the other hand, an empathetic and fact-based portrayal can lead to greater understanding and support. However, public reactions to the refugee crisis vary greatly depending on the narratives conveyed in the media and the prevailing political and social attitudes. Therefore, it is important to look at how NGOs communicate with the media and the messages they are trying to communicate, as they might be in close contact with the people that are reported on and can offer insights to issues discussed in the media from a different angle.

2.5 Public Relations

To effectively communicate their goals and maintain their legitimacy across various stakeholders, NGOs employ public relations (PR). This communication not only aids NGOs in spreading their messages worldwide but also in clearly defining their objectives and efficiently managing their messages. In three subchapters communication points will be further explored in the context of NGOs. These include strategic communication, crisis and conflict communication and general NGO communication with the media.

Communication and PR of NGOs with its stakeholders is very important, because research shows that reports on migration are often negatively framed and portray migrant women in a stereotypical way, for example as criminals. However, the portrayal can vary greatly depending on the cultural and national context. In different countries, different frames are used to report on migration, which influences public perception and reaction. Thematic frames such as threat, victim status, administrative challenges, humanitarian needs or cultural diversity can guide the interpretation of migration issues. The type of reporting strongly depends on the socio-political context of the respective country and influences how people understand and react to migration (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.5-6). This issue will be addressed further in chapter 2.7 but should give a frame as to why public relations and the communication of NGOs plays a major role today and is important to be looked at in more detail.

PR can be defined as a subsystem of the public sphere that constructs topicality and functionally contributes to the synchronisation of society by either externally observing or self-observing social reality. This differs from journalism, which is seen as a subsystem of the public sphere that focuses mainly on external observation (cf. Bieth, 2012, p.51).

PR within NGOs can be defined as strategic communication used to establish and maintain legitimacy and to achieve the organisation's objectives. It is considered crucial for NGOs to maintain and promote their legitimacy towards various stakeholders such as the media, governments, international organisations, and other civil society actors. Effective PR in this context is seen as central to the success of NGOs as it helps to create awareness of international social, political, environmental, and economic issues in global society (cf. Schwarz & Fritsch, 2014, p.162-163).

Furthermore, PR in relation to transnational NGOs can be defined as activities that use the new media to promote their causes and raise funds. These activities include promoting the organisation's image, fundraising, engaging, and interacting with the public, networking with other NGOs and providing materials for journalists. New media, defined as digital media that enable interactivity and independent information distribution, play a central role in these PR activities, especially in global mobilisation and communication across national borders (cf. Seo, Kim, & Yang et al., 2009, p.123).

In general, NGOs use PR to promote their image, raise funds, interact with the public, network with other NGOs, and provide easily accessible materials to journalists. The main tools are websites, blogs, videocasts, podcasts and wikis, with websites being considered the most important tool. PR is used strategically to advance the goals of NGOs, such as supporting specific campaigns or achieving their mission objectives. The use of these media depends on the organisational goals, efficiency, capacity, and revenue of the organisation (cf. Seo et al., 2009, p.124-125).

In line with this, NGOs use PR to work efficiently with a limited budget, to clearly define goals, messages, and target groups and to position themselves strategically. They emphasise the importance of using instruments efficiently to achieve a lot with as few resources as possible. It is particularly important for the PR of NGOs not to appear too professional to maintain a simple and modest image (cf. Bieth, 2012, p.220-224).

In addition, NGOs use PR to encourage voluntary participation at both global and local levels by communicating their messages and goals. They do this by managing and coordinating strategic communications between their headquarters and local units. NGOs rated as excellent in PR have a greater allocation of resources to PR and are more likely to consider the cultural context in their communications programmes. In addition, PR is important for NGOs to expand their role in global governance while ensuring their legitimacy (cf. Schwarz & Fritsch, 2014, p.162-167).

2.5.1 Strategic Communication of NGOs

While the introduction to this chapter has already dealt with PR and some specific strategies of NGOs in the field of PR, this subchapter will take a closer look at the strategic communication of NGOs.

Strategic communication is essential for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to effectively link their various projects, awareness-raising campaigns, and advocacy work. Through the targeted use of corporate communications, the opinion of target groups can be positively influenced in line with the organisation's objectives. A well-developed communications plan is essential to the day-to-day work of an NGO as it provides a framework for all media activities, internal and external communications, and clarity on priorities, target audiences, resources, and responsibilities. To be truly effective, NGOs need to develop a strategic perspective that goes beyond simply reacting to current events. A strategic communications plan allows resources to be used in a more targeted and considered way by identifying synergies and opportunities in different areas of work (cf. Accenture-Stiftung, School of Communication Management, International University in Germany, & The Banyan, 2009, p.123).

A key aspect of strategic communication planning involves analysing the situation, examining the current situation of the NGO, the external perception and the discrepancies between the self-image and the desired image. Based on this, the target groups are defined, which involves identifying the most important interest groups and the most effective ways to communicate with these groups. A further step is media selection and message development, which involves deciding which media channels are best suited to reach the set objectives and target groups, and which messages should be conveyed. In addition, the process includes budgeting, which requires estimating the required resources and developing a cost control plan. Implementation and monitoring involve developing action plans for key activities and regularly reviewing progress against the overarching plans. Finally, evaluation is a crucial step in which the success of the strategy is measured, and communication activities are assessed on the basis of changes in public opinion, political developments or improvements within the organisation (cf. Accenture-Stiftung et al., 2009, p.124-127).

Dumitrica (2022) defines similar steps for strategic communication in NGOs. It involves the deliberate planning, implementation and evaluation of communication measures aimed at supporting the organisation's main objectives. This process begins with the careful identification of core objectives and target audiences. NGOs develop clear messages and decide on the most effective channels and methods to reach their target audiences. Planning also includes a comprehensive analysis of the context and needs of the target groups. Once planning is complete, NGOs implement their communication strategies by disseminating information through various media, organising campaigns, holding events, and interacting with their audiences. They utilise a wide range of media and technologies to deliver their messages efficiently. Strategic communication is critical for NGOs to fulfil their missions, effectively engage their audiences and drive positive social change. By continuously adapting their communication strategies and tactics to changes in their environment or the needs of their target audiences, NGOs can increase their visibility and influence and thus achieve their overall goals more effectively (cf. Dumitrica, 2022, p.77-79).

Strategic communication is a crucial tool for NGOs in the field of migration to advance their causes. Through the targeted use of communication tactics and media, they can raise awareness, mobilise support and influence public opinion and policy decisions.

2.5.2 Crisis and Conflict Communication of NGOs

Crisis and conflict communication is a critical aspect of the strategic communication efforts of NGOs, especially in times of social, political, environmental, or economic unrest. This type of communication is crucial as it helps to minimise damage, maintain trust, and navigate the organisation through difficult times (cf. Schwarz & Diers-Lawson, 2024, p.2-3). NGOs, which are often at the centre of public attention, need to develop effective communication strategies to get their points across clearly and counter misinformation. This need becomes more urgent when NGOs are involved in scandals or operate in acute crisis situations, as media reports about these events can strongly influence the public image of the organisations (cf. Schwarz & Diers-Lawson, 2024, p.8-10).

In this context, crisis management, which aims to minimise the damage to the organisation and its stakeholders, is a central component of crisis communication. An immediate response to crisis situations, the provision of clear and accurate information and a commitment to

transparency are essential to maintain the trust and support of target audiences. NGOs must ensure that their messages reflect their values and mission to ensure consistency and build trust (cf. Schwarz & Diers-Lawson, 2024, p.5-7).

The high ethical and moral standard by which NGOs are measured emphasises the importance of public trust for their work. A loss of this trust can have lasting negative effects that can affect their ability to fundraise, recruit volunteers and fulfil their missions (cf. Schwarz & Diers-Lawson, 2024, p.12-13).

The challenges in crisis and conflict communication are particularly great in phases of high conflict intensity, where many actors compete for media attention. Here it becomes apparent that organisations that continuously provide reliable information can improve their visibility and influence in the public debate. The use of evidence-based information not only sets NGOs apart from less reliable forms of communication, but also strengthens their credibility (cf. Fröhlich & Jungblut, 2021, p.2969-2979).

Investing in the ability to collect and disseminate reliable and verifiable information is crucial to increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of NGOs in an increasingly interconnected and information-rich world. It is increasingly important that NGOs continuously evaluate and adapt their communication strategies to maximise their credibility and effectiveness in crisis and conflict communication. This is not only an essential part of their strategic communication, but also crucial to effectively communicate and achieve their goals (cf. Fröhlich & Jungblut, 2021, p.2980-2983).

2.5.3 NGO communication with the Media

NGOs have increasingly become involved in news production within the media landscape. Initially focusing on briefing the media and engaging with journalists, they have started to produce their own range of content, from articles to videos, utilising media channels to shape public opinion and influence policy (cf. Wright, 2019, p.2).

This interaction between NGOs and the media is a crucial component of NGOs' communication strategies, especially in the field of migration. These organisations depend on the media to convey their concerns and messages to a broad audience. By providing data, stories, and expertise, NGOs assist journalists in producing reports, thereby promoting well-

founded and nuanced reporting. NGOs in the migration sector use the media to highlight issues, raise awareness, and garner support for their objectives. Their communication strategies encompass press releases, press conferences, and the targeted placement of topics in the media to sway public opinion and political decision-making processes (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.2).

In their study, Thrall, Stecula, and Sweet (2014) examine the challenges faced by human rights NGOs in communicating globally. They argue that despite the proliferation of the internet and social media, the digital landscape is more challenging for many NGOs as global attention is heavily concentrated on a few large organisations. Their research shows that most NGOs do not have the necessary resources to compete effectively for attention in traditional media and social networks. The authors conclude that the Internet does not solve the problem of global communication, but rather exacerbates it, and that the chances of a successful global information campaign remain limited.

On the other hand, NGOs also need to critically assess how the media presents their messages and develop strategies to prevent misinterpretation or negative portrayals. This necessitates a deep understanding of the media landscape and the mechanisms influencing media coverage. Specifically, NGOs working in migration must tackle the unique challenge of fostering balanced reporting that accurately reflects the complexities of migration issues without advancing stigmatising or oversimplified narratives (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.4-5).

Communicating with the media is central for NGOs in the migration sector to spread their messages and effect political and social change. However, making effective use of the media requires careful planning, ethical considerations, and ongoing monitoring of the media environment to ensure that the transmitted content aligns with the intended impact (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.7-8).

Although there are indications that NGOs are becoming more visible in the media, quantifying their presence remains challenging as they are often not directly referenced. Despite efforts to tailor their content for the media, NGOs still encounter significant obstacles in publicising their material. This often demands considerable time, financial investment, and cultural understanding. As a result, larger and wealthier international NGOs tend to dominate media

spaces due to their access to resources and ability to employ professionals dedicated solely to media output (cf. Wright, 2019, p.2).

NGOs can shape the relationship between news audiences and distant subjects by influencing how events are portrayed in the news and other media formats. Future research should explore the different types of power NGOs can wield through news production (cf. Wright, 2019, p.17).

Finally, isolating the media's influence is challenging as it interplays with numerous other factors. The news production practices of NGOs are evolving rapidly, moving from simple exchange relationships to complex political economies involving social media, governments, private foundations, corporations, and other media organisations. Researchers should also consider the perspectives and experiences of those depicted in NGO journalism, as these are frequently overlooked (cf. Wright, 2019, p.18).

This communication with the media is central to this work. The way in which NGOs communicate with media of all kinds sets a focus for this work. The focus is not only on traditional media and media work, but also on digital strategies and social networks. These can also be seen as communication media.

2.6 Media Usage

NGOs, especially those in the humanitarian field, are important actors alongside the traditional media in creating their own narratives. As already explained in Chapter 2.3, there are two types of NGOs: those that focus on providing services (operational NGOs) and those that specialise in advocacy, i.e. the representation and promotion of specific causes. Many NGOs combine both approaches to effectively spread their messages and support their work on the ground. These organisations play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and policy, especially on issues such as migration, as they can operate beyond local political or economic constraints (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.3-4). This chapter will look at the media outputs NGOs can utilise to put out information to the public and other stakeholders.

Traditional media, such as newspapers, television, and radio, have played a fundamental role in shaping PR and communication strategies for decades. NGOs use traditional media to draw attention to the challenges and contributions of migrants. One example is the use of press

campaigns to highlight migrants' stories and share their human experiences. These strategies aim to create empathy and improve public understanding of the complexity of migration issues (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.9-10).

The work of NGOs in utilising media can be particularly relevant in times of crisis, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, where digital media plays an essential role in information dissemination. Tsagkroni, Alencar and Skleparis (2022) discuss the role of media and digital platforms in migration during the COVID-19 crisis and highlight how NGOs can promote support and integration through the use of these media. Another example of the use of media by NGOs is provided by the analysis of Shomron and Tirosh (2020), which deals with the communication rights of migrants and emphasises the role of NGOs in promoting these rights through traditional and digital media.

The influence of traditional media in migration communication can be significant, especially when combined with digital strategies. NGOs often evaluate the effectiveness of their media strategies by monitoring the reach and engagement of their campaigns. The evaluation can also include analysing changes in public opinion and political discourse. The analysis by Cooper, Blumell and Bunce (2021) examines the portrayal of asylum seekers in UK media and offers insights into how NGOs can influence and utilise media coverage to promote inclusive messages and combat prejudice.

The digital transformation has fundamentally changed the landscape of public relations and communication. New digital media such as social networks, blogs and podcasts offer companies and organisations new ways to connect with their target groups. NGOs are increasingly utilising digital media to draw attention to migration issues, conduct advocacy and reach their target groups. The use of digital platforms enables them to react quickly to changing situations and reach a broader public. The mediatisation and digitalisation of the economy and social processes also offer new fields of research and action in the area of migration (cf. Dimitrova et al., 2022, p.5-6).

Therefore, by using traditional media together with digital platforms, NGOs can reach a wide audience and engage both local and global communities in discussions about migration. Online organisational communication refers to the exchange between organisations and their target groups via the internet, with the use of social media playing a central role. The aim is

to form and maintain relationships based on mutual understanding and trust. In contrast to traditional PR methods, Web 2.0 platforms such as social networks enable more direct and interactive communication. This has proven to be particularly effective for NGOs, who are now better able to engage with their stakeholders and spread their messages. Core aspects of online relationships include commitment, trust and satisfaction, which can be measured through cognitive learning processes, affective reactions and resulting behaviours of the target groups. Cognitive processes relate to how well the public understands the goals and values of an organisation, while affective reactions reflect emotional attitudes towards the organisation. Resulting behaviours are actions that support the organisation's goals. These online activities strengthen the legitimacy and public image of organisations by reaching and maintaining a broader and more engaged base (cf. Rodriguez, 2016, 323-324).

Bieth (2012) is in line with this and writes, that NGOs include their own websites and social media platforms such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter (now X), and YouTube. They also use traditional tools such as press releases, press conferences and targeted approaches to journalists by telephone or email. It should be emphasised that NGOs are strongly oriented towards journalism and the everyday needs of journalists (cf. Bieth, 2012, p.227).

This use of media is an important context when looking at the strategies and communication of NGOs. Various media are used in the context of PR and communication strategies. This overview is particularly important in view of the shift towards increasingly digital media.

2.7 Framing

The concept of framing is another important concept for this work, in relation to communication and the influencing of frames in the area of migration. Here it is particularly interesting to look at how which messages are communicated in order to create certain frames.

Framing describes how actors selectively emphasise information in order to create specific horizons of meaning, whereby certain aspects are pointed to, and others neglected. The approach examines how these frames are created and changed by creators, in media content and by recipients (cf. Matthes, 2014, p.10-11). Frames select and prioritise information and thus always represent a section of a more comprehensive context. They form a coherent

argumentation framework consisting of problem definition, attribution of causes, proposed solutions, and evaluations. Frames are in competition for public interpretative sovereignty, they adapt dynamically and develop further in the debate (cf. Matthes, 2014, p.21-23).

According to Scheufele (2000) framing refers to the process by which the media and the public construct certain interpretative frameworks or "frames" for information and events. There are two types of frames: media frames, which represent the way media present and organise topics, and events to give them a certain meaning. These frames serve as routines for journalists to classify information and present it efficiently to the audience. On the other hand, there are audience frames, which are the cognitive structures that people use to understand and process information. They consist of mental clusters of ideas that guide how individuals interpret information (cf. Scheufele, 2000, p.300-302).

Framing in the context of migration describes how certain topics, concepts and problems are presented and understood in the context of migration and asylum policy. It refers to how language, rhetoric and political discourse are used to shape and influence the perception and understanding of migration (cf. de Lint & Giannacopoulos, 2013, p.629-630). Framing here is a means by which political, media and social actors steer the debate on migration by emphasising certain aspects and minimising or excluding others, thus creating a specific interpretative framework. This influences how migration issues are publicly perceived, discussed and ultimately dealt with politically (cf. de Lint & Giannacopoulos, 2013, p.623-624). This type of framing can be seen as critical, as it reduces the complexity of migration issues and steers policy in a way that supports existing power structures and neoliberal ideologies, while marginalising the rights and well-being of migrants and asylum seekers (cf. de Lint & Giannacopoulos, 2013, p.644-645).

In their study, Klein & Amis (2021) explore the effects of framing by examining a photograph but make general statements about framing in the field of migration. The European migration is a challenge for Europe's political leadership. The analysis of this crisis has shown that the framing of an issue is dynamic and can change quickly, especially through iconic photos. It was found that the emotional influence on framing in certain organisations is more long-term than instrumental effects. Even when framing priorities shift, the emotional aspects of an issue can change. These findings have important strategic implications for those seeking to bring about policy change, particularly in relation to the timing and positioning of their activities. It is

possible that the window of opportunity for action is longer than anticipated and that a frame can quickly regain importance when a subsequent event occurs (cf. Klein & Amis, 2021, p.46-47).

The fact that framing is important, especially in the field of migration, also shows that policy issues and potential solutions are often shaped by different actors, who rely more on ideational resources than on objective facts and interests. When studying migration, European scholars often discuss policy frames or policy narratives to analyse the role of ideas, beliefs, norms, and knowledge claims in migration-related issues or policymaking (cf. Pastore & Roman, 2020, p.4).

The term framing expertise refers to how certain groups add journalistic elements to their messages in order to attract attention. This is often done by emphasising personal stories or conflicting situations with clear solutions. The more a story conforms to the usual news standards, the more likely it is to attract attention. To achieve this, these groups use various means such as visual effects and persuasive language. These framing groups have different resources and operate in different environments that value these resources differently. These resources include not only financial resources, but also expertise, social capital, and reputation. The ability to institutionalise public relations also depends on these resources (cf. Ihlen, Figenschou, & Larsen, 2015, p.824).

Political authorities often have an advantage when it comes to access to the media. As official representatives, they are heard and confronted by the media. Modern governments have communications departments that adapt to the demands of the media. However, NGOs are gaining importance as news sources and use professional methods to approach the media. They use news conventions such as personalisation to attract attention and gain support. Governments often have more resources for media relations, while NGOs have fewer resources but increasingly use mainstream media conventions (cf. Ihlen et al., 2015, p.825).

Ihlen et al. (2015) found in their study that NGOs and immigration authorities interact with the media on immigration issues in different ways. NGOs often rely on individual stories to generate media interest, while immigration authorities use structured and systematic media management routines. Both sides adapt their strategies to the political climate, but face challenges in communicating their messages effectively. Immigration authorities often

emphasise the humanitarian aspects of their policies to avoid criticism, while NGOs must deal with sensationalist media coverage. Despite their different approaches, both parties share a frustration with the media's superficial coverage of immigration issues. This focus on individual stories and conflicts makes it difficult to have meaningful policy discussions and address systemic problems. Ultimately, it is clear that both NGOs and immigration authorities endeavour to defend their positions and communicate their perspectives in a complex media environment, but face different challenges (cf. Ihlen et al., 2015, p.833-834).

Framing plays a major role, firstly in terms of the placement of messages in the media and secondly through the prevailing communication of NGOs. The question that arises here is how NGOs can influence these frames in relation to migration, both consciously and unconsciously.

2.8 Theories

In this chapter, the theories that are to serve as the theoretical basis for this thesis will be discussed in more detail. These are three theories that can be localised in communication science and sociology. Firstly, agenda setting, which is then expanded with the theory of agenda building, before moving on to the theory of media dependency.

2.8.1 Agenda Setting

This paper looks at how NGOs communicate with the media, how they see their own role in framing refugees and what their biggest challenges are. One of the underlying aspects of communication here is being able to place their issues in the media and thus put their issues on the agenda of the media and thus the public. This process is particularly relevant to the topic of migration, as the way migration is portrayed in the media can strongly influence public perception and discussion of this complex and often controversial issue. With this in mind, the theory of agenda setting will now be examined in more detail.

Agenda setting refers to the process by which the media influence what the public focuses its attention on. There are two levels of agenda setting: The macroscopic level refers to the media agenda, i.e. which topics and personalities are presented as important in the media. The microscopic level relates to the audience agenda, i.e. which issues and concerns are considered important in people's minds. In addition, priming is a related concept in which the

issues emphasised by the media influence the standards by which people judge political figures or issues (cf. Scheufele, 2000, p.298-300).

"Agenda-setting offers an explanation of why information about certain issues, and not other issues, is available to the public in a democracy; how public opinion is shaped; and why certain issues are addressed through policy actions while other issues are not." (Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p.2)

The concept of agenda setting, originally formulated by Walter Lippmann, shows the complicated relationship between the media and public perception. Lippmann's findings, which preceded the formalisation of the term "agenda setting", underlined the influence of the media in shaping social perspectives. According to Lippmann's theory, individuals are not only orientated towards their immediate environment, but also towards a constructed agenda presented by the media. The presentation of events and topics by the media thus creates an agenda that has an impact on public discourse. The media's agenda naturally influences the topics that attract public attention. However, it is more of an interplay between media reports and public reception. Whilst the media undoubtedly has a significant influence on shaping the social agenda, it is up to the individual to interpret and respond to media messages. Furthermore, the prominence of certain issues in media discourse reflects and reinforces the interests and concerns of the public, creating a symbiotic relationship between media coverage and the shaping of the public agenda (cf. McCombs, 2014, p.3-5).

It is important to emphasise that the agenda not only directs what individuals think about, but also shapes the focus of their thoughts. This idea is supported by Von Gross (2008, p.282) who claims that the media constructs the frame of reference for the public.

Agenda setting can also be seen in the context of social media. Traditionally, it is understood as the ability of the media to shape the public agenda by highlighting certain issues, thereby influencing the public's attention and their perception of the importance of these issues. In the context of social media, it is the process by which social media, particularly through the release and sharing of information, influences users' perceptions of the importance of certain political issues. In the digital age, and specifically in social media such as Facebook, agenda setting is not only carried out by news organisations, but also by individual users and their networks. Information is filtered and disseminated through chance encounters in users' news

feeds, exposing users to political content that they might otherwise have avoided. In this context, agenda setting through social media can even reach people who do not actively seek out political information, especially through the phenomenon of incidental news exposure and social filtering by friends and acquaintances in their networks (cf. Feezell, 2017, p.482-484)

This definition expands the classic understanding of agenda setting by taking into account the influence of social interactions and personal networks within digital media environments. Social media can therefore fulfil an agenda-setting function by drawing attention to certain topics and thus increasing the perception of their importance among users, even among those who originally had little political interest.

Agenda setting can also be used in the area of migration and asylum. However, there are not yet many studies in this area, which is why specific case studies are used as a framework for agenda setting in migration.

In their study, Dunaway, Abrajano, & Branton (2007) analyse the role of agenda setting in migration using the example of the USA. In the context of migration, agenda setting theory is understood as the process by which media coverage influences public perception and emphasises immigration as a significant national issue in the United States. It shows that the prioritisation and frequency with which issues surrounding migration are covered in the media can influence public priorities. The public tends to prioritise those issues that receive increased media attention. As a result, coverage of migration, regardless of the population's geographic proximity to border regions, reinforces the perception of migration as one of the most pressing issues in the United States.

Agenda setting is a powerful tool that media, including social media, can use to influence public and political perceptions of migration. Through the selection of issues reported and the way they are presented, media can help to highlight certain aspects of migration and neglect others, which in turn shapes public opinion and policy-making processes. This concept therefore shows why it is so important for NGOs in the field of migration and asylum to get involved in the public discourse and try to place their messages in the media and draw the media's attention to themselves. They must address the issue of agenda setting and take it into account in their own communication.

2.8.2 Agenda Building

Agenda building, a concept adding on to that of agenda setting theory, is concerned with the efforts of organisations, particularly non-governmental organisations, to influence the media's issue agenda. While agenda setting theory emphasises the media's ability to raise the importance of certain issues in the public perception (cf. McCombs, 1977, p.90), agenda building focuses on how organisations can shape the media's agenda through strategic communication practices (cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018, p.424).

Cobb, Ross, and Ross (1976) articulate this through three foundational models: the "outside initiative model," the "mobilisation model," and the "inside access model," laying the groundwork for understanding the varying strategies an organisation, like an NGO, might employ to bring issues to public and formal agendas (cf. Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976, p.132-136).

In public relations, agenda-building theory goes beyond agenda-setting. It explores how organisations influence media coverage through strategic communication efforts, shaping public opinion and the media agenda. This involves placing materials in the media to direct its focus, utilising various PR strategies beyond traditional media interactions. Research shows how organisations use PR tactics like press releases and speeches to shape media narratives (cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018, p.423-424).

Denham (2010) expands on this by suggesting distinct categorisations such as "policy agenda building," "media agenda building," and "public agenda building," enhancing the understanding of agenda-building processes and providing NGOs with a clearer framework for targeted communication strategies (cf. Denham, 2010, p.317).

In particular, NGOs have developed specific strategies to advance their agendas in media coverage and social media. These strategies include providing information resources, taking strategic positions in networks, and promoting interaction with stakeholders. These efforts are aimed at increasing the visibility of NGOs and their causes in the public sphere. It has been found that the way NGOs provide information and build relationships influences their ability to influence the media agenda and bring their issues to the forefront (cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018, p.425).

Research has found that positioning within networks, particularly on social media, plays an important role. NGOs that occupy central positions in networks often gain greater visibility and can disseminate their messages more effectively. In addition, stakeholder engagement, especially when initiated by stakeholders themselves, has been shown to have a strong influence on media coverage and social media discussions. This type of interaction allows NGO messages to reach a wider audience and thus increase their ability to influence (cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018, p.435).

Finally, organisational characteristics play a role in determining the effectiveness of NGOs in agenda-building. NGOs that specialise in specific issues, have a longer history and have more staff tend to be more prominent in the media and social networks. These factors contribute to such organisations being seen as more trustworthy sources, thus increasing their chances of influencing the public debate (cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018, p.428-436).

The concept of agenda building provides a critical understanding of how organisations, particularly NGOs, communicate strategically to bring their issues to the forefront. The strategies that these organisations use vary depending on the medium and require careful adaptation to each context to successfully achieve their goals (cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018, p.424-425).

Agenda building reveals strategies for influencing the media and shows how not only traditional PR, but also digital media and social networks are playing an increasingly important role in the communication of messages by NGOs. It can be a guide for NGOs aiming to navigate the complex landscape of media influence and public discourse, offering insights into the various approaches and tactics that can be employed in order to bring critical issues to the forefront of public and policy agendas.

2.8.3 Media Dependency

The media system dependency theory, or short media dependency, is a theory that also expands on the concept of agenda setting. It is about the interplay between the various actors and in this case is an important part of the overall picture to understand why who communicates and how.

Media Dependency is defined by the relationships between the actors of agenda setting, i.e. the government, the media, and the public. This theory sheds light on how changes occur and what conditions invite modifications in the dependency relationships between these actors. In particular, the theory focuses on understanding how powerful actors can change conditions to promote stronger or weaker dependency relationships. Media dependence varies along three dimensions: Intensity, which is the perceived exclusivity of resources for achieving goals; Goal Scope, which is the range of goals involved in a media dependency relationship; and Reference Scope, which is the number of entities involved in a relationship. In the micro sociological context, the relationship between individuals and media is measured by the goals of understanding, both socially and personally, orientation, interaction and action, and play, socially and individually. In summary, media system dependency theory examines how the goals of individuals are dependent on the information resources of media systems and how this dependency determines the relationships between individuals and media. The theory suggests that in times of uncertainty and threat dependence increases as individuals rely more heavily on media to understand and navigate their environment (cf. Matsaganis & Payne, 2005, p.382-385).

Media dependency theory provides valuable insights into the complex interactions between media, migration, and society. It proposes that individuals and society become increasingly dependent on media for information, entertainment, and social interaction. This dependence is influenced by three factors: the importance of information, the degree of uncertainty and the availability of alternative sources of information. In the era of social media, the user is both a consumer and a producer of content, which challenges and changes traditional media roles. The model is still relevant and helpful for understanding the role of social media in society, even though the media landscape has changed (cf. Aldamen, 2023, p.4-5).

For NGOs dealing with migrants, the theory offers insights into how to develop effective communication strategies to promote migrants' integration and well-being, as reliance on media for information and social interaction can influence their adaptation to the new environment and their ability to cope with the challenges of migration (cf. Aldamen, 2023, p.23). This theory is therefore crucial for designing policies to support migrants and promote an inclusive society.

3 Research Questions

Based on the research interest and problem definition defined in chapter 1.1 and the theory presented in chapter 2, the research questions will be defined and explained in more detail. This master thesis aims to explore the communication strategies of NGOs working in migration, with a particular focus on their messaging, challenges in communication and communicating with the media and will investigate their communication in the context of the Ukraine war since February 24, 2022. Specifically, the thesis will seek to answer the following four research questions:

Q1: What are the dominant messages NGOs try to communicate on the topic of migration?

This research question aims to examine the primary messages that NGOs communicate about migration. It seeks to identify the most important issues that these NGOs prioritise and highlight in their communications. Thus, the focus here will be on what issues and points NGOs are communicating more or with particular emphasis in relation to the issue of migration.

This research question is deliberately broad and will be addressed accordingly. The aim is to gain insights into the way NGOs shape the discourse on migration. An important point here is also the question of the target group. In which context are the messages addressed, for example in relation to media or in the general context of the interview.

Q2: What are the challenges for NGOs in communicating with the media?

This research question seeks to investigate the difficulties that NGOs face when trying to communicate their messages to the media. It aims to identify the barriers that NGOs encounter when trying to get their voices heard and their perspectives represented in the media.

What challenges do they face in getting their messages across? Do they include issues such as competition with other organisations, lack of resources or expertise, media bias, and difficulties in accessing media outlets? This information can help NGOs to better understand the obstacles they face and develop strategies to overcome them, as well as inform media professionals on how to better engage with and represent the perspectives of NGOs. Overall, understanding the challenges that NGOs face in communicating with the media is important

for promoting transparency, accountability, and effective communication between NGOs and the public.

Q3: How do NGOs see their role in the media framing of refugees?

The third research question aims to investigate how NGOs perceive their role in shaping media narratives and public discourse around refugees. By answering this research question, one can gain insights into the ways in which NGOs conceptualise their role in shaping public opinion and media coverage of refugees. This can include their views on the importance of accurate and fair media representation of refugees, as well as their perspectives on the ethical considerations involved in engaging with the media on this issue. Understanding the role of NGOs in shaping media coverage of refugees can also provide insights into the broader dynamics of media representation and public discourse on this topic and help form strategies for improving media coverage of refugee issues. Answering this research question can provide important insights into the ways in which NGOs are working to promote greater awareness and understanding of refugee issues in the media and society at large.

Q4: How do NGOs communicate with the media in the context of the Ukraine war since February 24, 2022?

The last research question seeks to investigate how NGOs are communicating with the media in the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which started on February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a military invasion of Ukraine.

The question aims to understand the strategies that NGOs are using to engage with the media on this issue, including the types of messages they are conveying and the expressions they are using to get their voices heard. This research question may also examine the similarities and differences in the NGOs communicating with the media comparing different events.

Answers will provide insight into the ways in which NGOs are responding to the crisis in Ukraine and how they are working to shape public opinion and media coverage of the conflict. Overall, answering this research question is important for promoting transparency, accountability, and effective communication in the context of a complex and rapidly evolving conflict situation.

By addressing these research questions, this master thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of the communication challenges and strategies of NGOs working in migration, as well as their role in shaping public opinion and thinking. Ultimately, this research may help to further the development of more effective communication and advocacy strategies for NGOs working in migration and may contribute to a more informed and nuanced public debate on migration issues. Since this work follows a qualitative research approach, it is not necessary to formulate hypotheses.

4 Method and Research Design

This thesis follows a qualitative research approach, using guided expert interviews to collect data, and then analysing it through a qualitative content analysis. This is intended to analyse the dominant messages NGOs use to try to influence public opinion, the difficulties they face in communicating with the media, and their perceptions of the role they play in shaping the public discourse on refugees.

In conducting the research for this thesis, collaboration was established with Dr. Daniela Dimitrova. During her tenure as a visiting professor at the University of Vienna, Dr. Dimitrova helped to get contacts and select the NGOs specialising in asylum and migration. This was done in cooperation with the author of this paper to give the NGOs the opportunity to conduct the interviews in German. The summaries of the interviews were subsequently translated and forwarded to Dr. Dimitrova.

This work is strongly orientated towards the survey and evaluation method according to Kaiser (2021), who deals with the basics and implementation of qualitative expert interviews. His focus here is on political science, but the work is nevertheless very applicable to this research work, as the social science boundaries between politics and communication are blurred here. The qualitative case study investigation creates an open, interpersonal interview situation focussed on communication, through which social constructions and processes can be better understood (cf. Kaiser, 2021, pp.1-2). The interviewee is providing information (cf. Kaiser, 2021, p.5).

The selection of experts for scientific interviews poses a significant challenge. The definition and selection of experts depend crucially on the specific research interest. Researchers must proceed pragmatically and identify those individuals who are likely to have relevant information in relation to the object of investigation. Reality shows that a variety of different individuals can be considered experts, depending on the thematic focus of the study. The need to make trade-offs between expertise and likelihood of participation is also important. A person's position in the hierarchy can influence the response rate. For certain topics, people at lower hierarchical levels could therefore be the more suitable contact persons (cf. Goldberg & Hildebrandt, 2020, p.269-270).

A semi-structured expert interview is a systematic method of data collection that aims to obtain specific information that is often difficult to access. This form of interview uses a guideline to structure the survey and ensure that all relevant topics are covered. The main aim is to obtain specific, precise facts that are not available from other sources of information or are only available to a limited extent. The interview guide is used to specifically request the specialised knowledge required to answer a clearly defined and theoretically sound research question. Determining who is considered an expert and clarifying which types of knowledge can be generated through such interviews are central to this process. The expert knowledge that is recorded in semi-structured interviews is typically closely linked to a specific function or professional role (cf. Kaiser, 2021, p.41).

An expert is primarily characterised by their institutionalised ability to construct realities. On the one hand, this competence manifests itself in the position and status of the expert as well as in the knowledge attributed to them. On the other hand, an expert is defined by their specific functional knowledge, which is essential for scientific analyses. However, it should be noted that the definition of an expert is made subjectively by the researcher within the respective research context. It is rare for an individual to possess all the knowledge required to fully reconstruct a subject matter. Therefore, the researcher must decide how many experts from which areas are to be consulted to collect the necessary data (cf. Kaiser, 2021, p.44-47).

For expert interviews to be successful, it is also crucial that the researcher has comprehensive field expertise and can act as a "quasi-expert". This competence is demonstrated above all by the mastery of data collection techniques. In guided interviews, the aim is not to have the expert explain a problem and its solution, but rather to collect specific data that only the expert can provide. This data makes it possible to describe a phenomenon precisely or to name the reasons for its change (cf. Kaiser, 2021, p.45).

Ethical handling of data is essential in research. Personal information that is unintentionally collected during interviews should be removed if it is not relevant to protect privacy. The informed consent of the participants is mandatory; they must be informed about the purpose and content of the study and their explicit consent must be obtained. Confidential information must be treated as strictly confidential. Integrity and objectivity on the part of the researchers are essential to uphold the ethical standards of science and ensure the credibility of the research results (cf. Kaiser, 2021, p.54-56).

Kaiser (2021) divides the structure of the survey and evaluation into eleven phases, with five phases describing the planning and implementation of the qualitative expert interviews and six phases describing the evaluation and interpretation of the results. These phases are used below as the guiding structure of the method.

The first step is to translate the research questions into interview questions. Through the research association with Dr Dimitrova, an existing interview guide (see Appendix 9.1) was used for this thesis, which served both research objectives. This was based on Dr Dimitrova's experience from previous research. The second step is the pre-test, which is intended to test the research questions for their comprehensibility (cf. Kaiser, 2021, p.82). The interview guide already given was used in similar research by Dr Dimitrova and has therefore already been tested for its comprehensibility and usefulness.

The third step involves selecting and contacting the interview partners. People were selected on the basis of two decisive criteria. Firstly, the organisation had to be active in Austria and have a location there. However, this was not limited to purely Austrian NGOs; international organisations based in Austria were also contacted. Secondly, the organisation had to work for people on the run, migrants, or asylum seekers. The focus on the area of migration and asylum is necessary to establish a link to the NGOs' communication about refugees. In addition, other people were contacted who do not work directly in an NGO, but whose work focuses strongly on people on the run, migrants, or asylum seekers and who were therefore able to take a broader view of the topic. The people were initially selected by Dr Dimitrova, who provided a list of people who were subsequently contacted. Over a period of six months, 28 organisations and other individuals were contacted and asked for an interview.

In the next step, the interviews were conducted with ten of the 28 people contacted.

Three of the organisations are larger, internationally active NGOs, while seven of the NGOs are focused on Austria. Three of these seven NGOs are organisations that do not operate solely for the purpose of providing assistance in the area of asylum and migration but have their own department focusing on this area. All communication partners were people from the communication department of the NGO or people from the management level.

The interviews were conducted online due to the coronavirus pandemic. The interviewees were given the choice of medium. Nine interviews were conducted via Zoom, one interviewee

opted for the online platform Teams for reasons of preference. The interviewees were given the choice of conducting the interview in German or English, with all ten people opting for an interview in German. All interviews went smoothly, apart from a few internet problems.

At the beginning of the interview, the research topic was explained once again, and it was pointed out that all data collected would only be used for the purpose of this master's thesis and Dr Dimitrova's research work and that the interviewees' consent could be withdrawn at any time. It was also agreed once again that all data would be anonymised and that neither the NGO nor the names of the interviewees would be used in the work. In the next step, the interviewees were again asked verbally for their consent to the recording of the interview so that it could subsequently be transcribed. The interviews were conducted using the semi-structured guide, whereby questions that had already come up during the interview as part of other questions were not asked again. For some answers, follow-up questions were asked on interesting points or points that had not yet been elaborated on. The interviews lasted 45 minutes on average, with the shortest interview lasting 20 minutes and the longest interview lasting one hour and 17 minutes.

Following the interviews the fifth and last step of the planning and implementation was the recording of the interviews. Here, a summary of the most interesting points and statements was written down. This was mainly done to translate the interviews from German into English. The summaries of the interviews were sent to Dr Dimitrova. This was done due to the collaboration and sharing of data from this data collection.

Following Kaiser (2021), the next six steps were taken for the evaluation and interpretation of the results. First, the transcription of the results. The interviews were transcribed and anonymised. The simple transcription system according to Dresing & Pehl (2015, p.21-23) was followed for the transcripts. A total of 117 pages are available in written form. In steps two and three, the text was coded, and core statements identified. The code system was then continuously expanded and adapted after step four. In the next step, the transcripts were evaluated using a qualitative content analysis, a category scheme was created and analysed using MAXQDA and put into a code structure. This was continuously adapted and finally, in a last step, evaluated in the further course of the analysis and the results were merged and analysed with the developed theory. This work thus follows an inductive research approach.

The qualitative content analysis used in the analysis is according with Mayring (2022). This research method aims to systematically analyse material that originates from any form of communication. According to Mayring (2022), qualitative content analysis comprises several steps: First, a precise question is formulated that clearly defines the research objective. A sample of material is then determined, which includes the communication material to be analysed. This is followed by the development of a category system based on the research question, which forms the basis for the analysis. This system is then used to systematically search through the material and identify relevant content. Finally, the results are interpreted and evaluated in relation to the original research question. Mayring emphasises the importance of a rule-based and systematic approach to this process to ensure that the analysis is comprehensible and verifiable. Qualitative content analysis is therefore not only a method for analysing texts, but also a tool that makes it possible to gain deeper insights into the underlying meanings and contexts of communication. Qualitative content analysis is often carried out iteratively, whereby the category system can be adapted and refined during the analysis in order to enable a more precise and comprehensive analysis of the material (Mayring, 2022, p.15-25). The steps of this methodology are described in detail below.

First, the process begins with the definition of the material, where the data to be analysed is precisely defined. This phase is crucial as it lays the foundation for the entire analysis. Here the material is comprised of the ten interviews. In the next step, the analysis of the situation of origin, the context of the material is examined. The circumstances under which, by whom and for whom the material was produced are considered. This information is important as it helps to place the material in its socio-cultural and historical context. The formal characteristics of the material are then analysed. This involves analysing the structure and form of the material, which is essential for understanding the content and the way it is presented. The direction of the analysis determines the perspective from which the material is viewed. This could be the author's point of view, the content itself, the effect on the recipients or the socio-cultural background. This direction is determined by the specific objectives of the research. A further essential step is the theoretical differentiation of the research question, which requires a precise formulation of the research questions. These should be closely linked to the theoretical basis of the study and further concretise the

direction of the analysis. This step was taken in chapter 3, where the research questions were formulated based on the research interest and theory (Mayring, 2024, p.61).

The definition of the category system is the core of the content analysis. The categories are developed based on the theory and the material and serve as the basis for the analysis. The categories must be clearly defined, relevant and operationalisable to enable a systematic classification of the material. The definition of the units of analysis determines how the material is classified and analysed. This includes determining the coding, context, and evaluation unit, which determine the depth and scope of the analysis. The category system developed for this thesis can be found in the Appendix. After these preparations, the analysis steps follow according to the process model, in which the material is systematically worked through according to the category system. It is important to constantly review and, if necessary, adapt the category system based on the material and theoretical considerations. Finally, the results are summarised and interpreted. This phase serves to answer the research questions and to discuss the results in the context of the theory and the overall analysis. The application of the content analysis quality criteria forms the keystone of the analysis to check the reliability and validity of the results and to ensure that the analysis meets scientific standards (Mayring, 2024, p.61).

Together, these steps form the methodological framework of qualitative content analysis according to Mayring, which enables a systematic and comprehensible analysis of text material and helps to gain deeper insights into the phenomena under investigation.

5 Results

Following the presentation of the research questions in chapter 3 and the explanation of the method in chapter 4, the results of the analysis will be presented in the following chapter.

The interviews were read through carefully after transcription to gain an initial overview of the information they contained. Since the questionnaire was designed as part of another study, appropriate categories had to be created based on the information provided for the individual questions as well as the research questions. As the individual interview questions deliberately did not ask directly about the intended research questions, these categories had to be identified and named appropriately.

A category scheme was developed based on the theory and the research questions as well as the interview questions. Within the framework of this scheme, the interviews were analysed in MAXQDA and assigned to the codes. At the same time, the category scheme was inductively expanded, which meant that it was in a constant state of flux during the analysis. Codes were also divided into main categories and subcategories as required to be able to analyse individual aspects in more detail. The number of codes did not necessarily play a role here, but rather the content-related aspects. Where it made sense to create a sub-category, this was done according to information quality rather than code quantity.

The final categorisation scheme (see Table 1) was therefore created and will be discussed in more detail below.

The categorisation scheme was designed in such a way that it can answer all research questions, but also inductively includes all relevant information that arose during the interviews. Six main categories were identified, under which several subcategories could be coded. Subcategories were not created according to quantitative aspects, but in a second pass of the analysis, in which potentially recurring aspects could be identified and thus divided into subcategories. As this work follows a qualitative research approach, the number of interviews is manageable and therefore the decision was made to create objectively smaller subcategories.

Category Scheme		
Biggest Obstacles • Negative Narrative • Wording • Limited Resources • Communication with Refugee • Unpredictability • Challenges with Politics • Challenges with Media	Organisational Information • Tasks in the organisation • Position within the organisation • Collaboration and Network	Refugee Population • Demographic aspects • Divide between refugee populations
Recommendations and Reforms • Recommendations on job • Reforms • Wish for Change	Project Work • Project • Successes and Challenges • Contact with refugees	Communication and Media Work • Terms used • Portrayal of refugees • Self-perception of Role • Use of PR strategies • Media used ○ Owned media ○ Earned media

Table 1. Category Scheme.

The main categories were created based on the material and include "Biggest Obstacles", "Organisational Information", "Refugee Population", "Recommendations and Reforms". "Project Work", and "Communication and Media Work". These main categories are intended to better structure and summarise the comprehensive information from the interviews. Further sub-categories are organised under the respective main categories. Areas are listed here that repeatedly emerged from the interviews.

The "Biggest Obstacles" category in particular was singled out and divided into smaller subcategories, as this category plays a central role in answering several research questions. In contrast, the sub-category "Use of PR strategies" was not broken down more precisely despite its abundance, as although it plays an important role as a framework and background information, it does not contribute in the same way to directly answering the research

questions. The following section provides a brief overview of the individual categories and their classification.

The umbrella category "Biggest Obstacles" deals with the biggest challenges that can arise in the context of working with refugees. The subcategories highlight different aspects of these obstacles. "Negative Narrative" refers to negative connotations or prejudices that can influence the perception of a situation or group. "Wording" includes the way language is used and can be a barrier if unclear or prejudiced wording is used. "Limited Resources" refers to limited material, financial or human resources needed to accomplish tasks. "Communication with Refugee" specifies the challenges in communicating with refugees, such as language barriers or cultural differences, and is crucial for the success of integrative efforts. "Unpredictability" refers to the unpredictability of situations that makes planning and responding difficult. "Challenges with Politics" refers to political obstacles and resistance that can hinder the implementation of projects and measures. "Challenges with Media" refers to problems in dealing with the media.

"Organisational Information" refers to information relating to the structure and functioning of an organisation. The sub-categories clarify different areas of this structure. "Tasks in the Organisation" refers to the specific tasks and objectives within an organisation. "Position within the Organisation" refers to the interviewee's position within the organisational hierarchy. Understanding the position is crucial for communication. "Collaboration and Network" refers to collaboration within the organisation and with external partners.

The category "Refugee Population" covers topics relating to the demographic and social aspects of refugees. The subcategories delve deeper into these aspects, "Demographic Aspects" looks at the age, gender, origin, and other demographic factors of refugees. "Divide between Refugee Populations" describes the differences and dividing lines within different groups of refugees, for example based on nationality or religion.

"Recommendations and Reforms" focuses on suggestions and changes that can be made in certain areas of work with refugees or related structures. The subcategories specify these suggestions, "Recommendations on Job" refers to recommendations for adopting the interviewees' position to gain insight into what they themselves see as challenges in their job. "Reforms" Includes general suggestions for change that concern structural or procedural

adjustments in policy. "Wish for Change" Expresses the desire for change in areas and refers to specific or general hopes and goals that would not fall into one of the other categories.

"Project Work" deals with the planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects. "Project" refers to the specific project or programme that is being implemented. This is the basis of the project activity, while "Successes and Challenges" emphasises the successes and challenges in the project work. "Contact with Refugees" is specified here to address the work with refugees within the projects.

"Communication and Media Work" deals with the communication and media strategies of an organisation. Here, an important topic that only came up during the interviews was "Terms used". The terminology relating to refugees is coded here. "Portrayal of Refugees" deals with the portrayal of refugees in the communication of the interviewees, but also how they themselves see the portrayal and what problems they may also see here. "Self-perception of Role" Concerns the self-perception of one's own role in communication and in the media context. "Use of PR strategies" refers to the use of public relations strategies to communicate about refugees. "Media used" Distinguishes between different types of media such as "owned media" (own channels) and "earned media" (media coverage by third parties), which are used to disseminate information.

The number of codes was different for each interview, especially in relation to the role of the person and the length of the interview, whereby only 12 codes could be assigned to one interview at the end. This is due to the professional context of this person, as they are primarily active in a university context. The remaining nine interviews were assigned between 21 and 41 codes, totalling 286 codes. Several sentences or even entire sections were coded for some categories to understand the scope of what was said.

The statements and information from the interviews are now presented in the context of the four research questions, with the first subchapter providing a general overview.

5.1 General Remarks

In order to categorise the interviewees, their areas of responsibility, their projects and the refugees with whom they come into contact in their work, this chapter provides a general overview of these aspects of the interviews. As all interviews were anonymised, the projects mentioned here are divided into the 'problem-solving approach', the 'critical approach', or both, as described in chapter 2.3.

Terminology

First, in the course of the interviews, it quickly became clear that the different organisations also use different terms due to their work. This became particularly clear in the second question, which asked about refugee populations. After it was mentioned in the first interview that in the context of the work with Ukrainian displaced persons, they should also be called displaced persons due to their legal status. Here it was said "well, they are displaced persons, that is their status". In the following interviews, greater consideration was then given to which terms were used by the organisations and the question of the preferred term was also partly included in the interview. It turned out that most organisations preferred the term refugees (German "Geflüchtete") or People on the run (German "Menschen auf der Flucht"). Six of the interviewees stated that they also favoured these terms for the question.

"This generic term refugees, in our everyday language we say people with experience of flight or refugees, is not legally derived, but is also an umbrella term for people who have fled and does not say much about their legal status. In other words, not a person entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection". (Interview 9, line 2-6, translated by the author)

Another interviewee describes the debate about terminology and why it is so important to pay attention to it, as "the various terms (...) are very often not clear and more or less everything is mixed up. So, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, economic refugees, climate refugees and so on. In some cases, politicians sometimes deliberately use very vague terms to cause a bit of confusion. From our point of view, however, it is still very important to take a close look at the terms used. Because different rights and obligations are also linked to the terms" (Interview 6, line 47-54, translated by the author).

Another interviewee agrees with the consensus of the group, saying "we (...) have often spoken of people on the run, because that way you can decouple it from the legal status, (...) as soon as you mention a status, it's always difficult" (Interview 2, line 14-17, translated by the author), but also said in the next sentence "now it's about communication and not about a hearing before the Asylum Court" (Interview 2, line 17-18, translated by the author). In the context of this interview, this calls into question when this focus on certain concepts is appropriate. In legal negotiations, it is of course important to pay attention to the correct choice of words, but there is no consensus among the NGOs as to how important this is in communication.

While language is seen as an important tool in interview 6 and politicians were accused of deliberately using blurred terms here, in interview 2 the focus was taken away from communication. There is therefore a consensus that the terms refugees and people on the move are preferred in most cases. There is no legal judgement here and no specific regulations need to be observed.

Position and Tasks

The roles of the interviewees varied from organisation to organisation. However, three broad areas could be summarised. Of the ten interviewees, four were in leading positions within their organisation. These included the job titles of managing director, board member, association chairman and general secretary. Four people came from a department in the field of education and communication, i.e. education department, two from the public relations department, and head of marketing and communication. Two people were also university employees with a connection to refugees, both of whom are involved in projects with refugees. This categorisation is important to gain an insight into the areas in which the individuals normally work and the associated positions and tasks they take on.

The tasks and roles of the various people in the NGOs can be categorised into different groups: Education and research work, management and administration, literature and discourse analysis, media and public relations, project management and operational activities, and coordination and partnerships.

Educational and research work:

People in this group deal with topics such as migration, diversity, and languages in an educational context. Their tasks include the evaluation of laws, the development of educational and support measures and the preparation of research materials. They work on projects to support people with a migration background, including refugees, and are involved in the provision of education and support services. The people in this group work closely with other specialised departments to comprehensively address the needs of migrants and refugees.

Management and administration:

This group includes people who have managerial and administrative roles in their organisations. They are responsible for the entire personnel and budget infrastructure, manage the day-to-day business and represent the organisation externally. Their activities include coordination with volunteer structures, implementation of internal and external activities and general administration.

Literature and Discourse Analysis:

This group focuses on analysing the relationship between literature and social discourse, particularly in the context of migration and social inequalities. Their work includes analysing how literature influences social attitudes and discourse, and exploring the role of literature in public debate, particularly in relation to awards and media exposure.

Media and public relations:

People in this group are responsible for the communication and marketing of their organisations. Their tasks include the management of websites and social media platforms, the creation and distribution of press materials, the organisation of events and the development of information materials. They also work on educational projects and promote the integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants through public awareness-raising and educational initiatives.

Project management and operational activities:

This group includes people who deal with the practical implementation of projects and programmes. Their activities include providing legal advice, supporting single parents and people living in poverty, managing donations, and organising support services. They work closely with local communities and other organisations to aid those in need.

Coordination and partnerships:

This group includes individuals who specialise in coordinating communication activities, working with other organisations and agencies and managing partnerships. Their tasks range from promoting cooperation between different organisations to supporting authorities in emergencies. They are also responsible for communicating with the public and coordinating between different departments and external partners.

Collectively, these groups cover a wide range of tasks, from education and research efforts to administration and coordination to operational and communications activities. All those involved contribute in different ways to supporting migrants and refugees, raising awareness of their needs, and promoting integration and social cohesion.

Projects

The various projects carried out by NGOs can be categorised into several key areas: Education and training, labour market integration, psychosocial support, health, legal advice, and public relations. Each of these projects aims to improve the integration and well-being of refugees and migrants in different areas of society.

Education and training:

Various projects focus on the education and training of people with a migrant background and refugees. These include initiatives that offer compulsory school qualifications for people who have dropped out of the regular school system. These offers include preparation for the compulsory school leaving certificate and for the labour market through job application training and career guidance. Another project offers similar educational support, with a focus on skills analysis and labour market counselling to ensure successful integration into the labour market. Special attention is also paid to supporting children and young people with a

migration background. This includes projects that support young people on their path from school to work, whether through counselling in schools or special training and preparation courses. These programmes aim to give young people better opportunities on the labour market and promote their integration into society.

Labour market integration:

Projects in this area focus on preparing refugees and migrants for the labour market. This includes measures that facilitate the recognition and adaptation of professional qualifications as well as the provision of specific training and advice to improve the labour market opportunities of these groups of people. Individual support and specialised workshops help participants to find suitable employment or training.

Psychosocial support and health:

Some projects focus on psychosocial support for refugees who have experienced trauma. This includes the provision of psychological services, trauma counselling and support for parents when their children start school. In addition, there are projects that offer specific health services and psychotherapy for extremely traumatised and torture survivors, ensuring close networking between different organisations.

Legal advice and integration:

In this area, there are initiatives that offer legal advice and support for refugees and migrants. This also includes clarification of residence status and labour law as well as support with bureaucratic processes. Some projects aim to support refugee families and single parents in their search for accommodation and facilitate integration into the community.

Public relations and awareness-raising:

Projects in this area aim to promote awareness and understanding of the situation of refugees and migrants. These include initiatives that share the stories of migrant women, provide information pages, and establish quality standards for interpreters in asylum procedures. There are also projects that aim to raise public awareness through campaigns, information events and the publication of books and reports.

These projects show a broad spectrum of initiatives that aim to promote the integration and well-being of refugees and migrants in various areas of social life. They range from education and training programmes to labour market integration, psychosocial support, and legal advice. By combining these approaches, the projects make a significant contribution to improving the living conditions and opportunities of people with a migration background.

When analysing the activities, these can be assigned to two basic approaches: the problem-solving approach and the critical approach. In addition, there are organisations that combine elements of both approaches in their projects.

Problem-solving approach:

Four organisations follow this approach. These organisations focus on providing direct services such as accommodation, counselling, education, and support to meet the immediate needs of refugees and migrants. Their projects are practically oriented and offer solutions to everyday challenges, particularly in integration into education and the labour market. This approach is often state-supported and aims to achieve concrete, measurable results.

Critical Approach:

An organisation primarily opts for the Critical Approach. This method is characterised by a commitment to political change, the promotion of migrant women's rights and the pursuit of structural change in society. The focus here is on long-term goals such as influencing policy and changing public opinion.

Combination of both approaches:

Two organisations combine elements of problem-solving and the critical approach in their work. They not only offer direct support and services, but also participate in political advocacy and strive for social change. This hybrid approach enables them to achieve both individual and societal improvements.

The activities of an organisation cannot be clearly assigned to a specific approach. Although there are signs of educational initiatives, they cannot be clearly categorised under the criteria of the problem-solving approach. The work on these projects brings with it many successes and challenges. Here is a brief overview of the greatest successes and challenges of the projects and the work with refugees.

A key aspect of the work of these organisations is the individual successes they achieve. "Every person we have managed to get to compulsory education, labour market migration or even a job is a success" (Interview 10, line 260-262, translated by author), which underlines the importance of direct support for individuals. These individual success stories are particularly valuable as they directly improve the lives of those affected and open new prospects for them.

In addition to these personal achievements, political and social influence also plays a key role. "Success for us is, of course, when we see a political response, when demands and concepts are heard, which are then developed alongside us and parts of them are adopted and incorporated into laws or funding pools or federal or state funding projects" (Interview 10, line 268-272, translated by author). This commitment to political change and the ability to influence public discourse are decisive successes in the work with refugees and migrants. They show how persistent work and advocacy can bring important issues into focus and initiate social change. Another success is the networking and empowerment of former clients. "Refugees are not just objects for us, so to speak. We show them what makes Austria tick and what we are like, but we actually have employees, many of whom were our clients and are now employees, which means they also have this flight and migration in their biography. They know what they are talking about. (...) Access to us is barrier-free." (Interview 9, line 226-230, translated by author). This strategy strengthens the sense of community and enables those affected to actively participate in shaping the projects and contribute their own experiences.

Despite these successes, the organisations face considerable challenges. One of the biggest challenges concerns the sustainability of the projects. "In my opinion, the biggest failure is that the structures that have been built up are not maintained, but are then lost again, we have seen that in so many areas, (...) that is a failure of migration policy as a whole" (Interview 10, line 274-277, translated by author). This uncertainty regarding the difficulty of maintaining long-term structures are recurring problems.

Legal and bureaucratic hurdles also make the work more difficult. One relevant example is the abrupt cessation of funding due to legal changes, as described: "In 2017, the then federal government Kurz and Strache then cancelled this activity (...) because the funding was based on these pots, from one day to the next and we had to end the entire project and partially

terminate employees” (Interview 9, line 157-161, translated by author). Such unforeseen changes can severely affect the continuation of projects.

Cultural and language barriers also pose a challenge. The need to provide information in different languages is an important aspect to NGOs. “Here I would simply emphasise that it is often the language versions, i.e. the different languages, that make it challenging. In other words, publishing information quickly and keeping it up to date. Because we started out in German and English. Now, with many refugees from Ukraine, we also offer Ukrainian, so to speak. But of course it is also important to extend this to groups from Iraq and Afghanistan. To offer this information in Arabic, in Darija, in Pashto, for example. And we are working on that. But that's the big challenge here, so to speak, to have these languages, these translations. It often fails because of little things. Thank God it's possible, but often because of technical issues. That the website is also able to display the sentences well from right to left, so to speak” (Interview 6, line 115-125, translated by author). This requirement demands considerable resources and demonstrates the importance of multilingualism and cultural sensitivity.

Finally, the complexity of the target group's needs is taken into account. The diversity of needs requires a wide range of services, that are not always understood. “There are many organisations that offer a service. And they wonder why people don't come. And there is a very widespread attitude in Austria that if people don't come, they are labelled as uninterested, they don't want to take their situation into their own hands, they don't want to learn German. We always turn around, if we don't reach people, then we say, why aren't we reaching them, does our approach not fit, do the media we use not fit, do the pages on which we provide the service not fit or not. So that is also extremely important. When people come to us and know that it's not just a labour market issue, but that I can also ask questions about education, I can also get information about the school system in Austria, about educational counselling. So, I think this range also makes it easier” (Interview 9, line 249-260, translated by author). This emphasises how important it is to create a comprehensive and accessible range of services to meet the diverse requirements.

Collaboration and Network

Within the organisations, there is often close cooperation between different specialist departments. "There are colleagues in other specialist departments (...) who also do this, and we try to work together on the intersection of challenging needs and so on" (Interview 10, line 31-34, translated by author). This internal exchange is crucial to ensure a coherent and comprehensive range of support services.

However, networking goes beyond the boundaries of individual organisations and includes cooperation with other NGOs. "We are networked with many other organisations. You automatically adopt common perceptions, common concepts, common approaches. That doesn't mean that new ideas keep coming in that you hadn't thought of before, but it certainly means that you don't go in different directions with different concepts and representations of refugees" (Interview 10, line 419-424, translated by author). This external cooperation promotes uniform strategies and prevents organisations from working with different concepts and presentations.

However, organisations also face challenges when working together, especially when conflicts and opposite thinking are involved. "Another very problematic issue, I think, is this cooperation between NGOs and activists, which is often very difficult here, because instead of seeing the big picture, it often fails because of people's sensitivities or because of certain competitions or questions of definition and actually small things, where you somehow get lost in the details and then don't work together, although you actually want the same thing on the whole, but then there are also issues such as, I say now, refugees, people on the run or some other word that actually describes the same people. And then I use ten hours to define this word instead of using these ten hours to help people" (Interview 8, line 138-147, translated by author). This shows the difficulties that can arise when personal or organisation-specific interests hinder cooperation.

Despite these obstacles, there are numerous examples of successful joint actions. Organisations join forces, for example at public events. This might be a network of NGOs or a joint press statement with refugee communities. "We hold press conferences together with various refugee organisations, that we support rallies, speak at rallies, ensure that refugees are represented at such rallies and also at press conferences, for example. These are things

where we work directly with the community organisations" (Interview 7, line 65-70, translated by author). Such coordinated activities increase the visibility of the problems faced by refugees and help to create greater public and political awareness.

Contact with refugees

The various points of contact in the work with refugees described in the interviews can be divided into several main categories:

Some of the people interviewed work at a strategic or meta-level and are less directly involved with refugees. They are involved in committees, politically driven contexts or in product development and funding. Nevertheless, their decisions have a direct influence on the operational work carried out by their teams, for example in counselling and supporting refugees. "I'm on various committees and in various more politically driven contexts. In the meantime, I'm hardly involved in day-to-day consulting, but at the strategic management level, we're always dealing with innovations in the field and until these project activities are approved, in other words, from product development to clarifying the financing and then our consultants lead the activities in the operational area" (Interview 9, line 30-35, translated by author). Many interviewees describe their role in providing direct support and counselling to refugees in various life situations, from existential issues to professional integration and psychosocial support. "We have very, very strong counselling in this transition phase" (Interview 9, line 63, translated by author).

Cooperation with other organisations, community initiatives and authorities are frequently mentioned. This includes supporting rallies, holding joint press conferences, as mentioned before, and participating in networks such as integration conferences. Some individuals focus on presenting the situation of refugees to the public to raise awareness and generate support. This also includes working with the media and presenting clients' stories and successes to the outside world. "My tasks specifically with the clients in the organisation are very sporadic and very selective, let's put it that way. My work is always about presenting the stories and the organisation to the outside world. In whatever form" (Interview 5, line 24-26, translated by author).

Some interviewees emphasise the importance of cultural connectivity and individual adaptation. They show the importance of responding to the specific needs and backgrounds of refugees and promoting resilience. "We are now trying very hard to teach people resilience and also to give them the opportunity to help themselves - I think that's also very important, because otherwise it's a dependency on help " (Interview 2, line 198-200, translated by author).

To summarise, the interviews show that work with refugees takes place in a variety of ways, from direct support and advice, strategic planning, and networking to awareness-raising and public relations work. The emphasis here is on interdisciplinary cooperation, individual adaptation to the needs of refugees and the need to be resilient and adaptable on both a personal and organisational level.

Demographic of Refugees

The question about demographic aspects reflects a broad and diverse demographic landscape, which is shown in the activities and target groups of various organisations and programmes. Five of the organisations explicitly state that they cannot make any precise statements as everything is represented. The remaining statements on specific nationalities, age groups and other characteristics are briefly summarised here.

A focus mentioned several times is on young people - especially children, adolescents, and young adults up to their late 20s. This group is at the centre of many educational and integration measures, as recorded in the work areas of the educational chambers and special school projects (e.g. for Ukrainian pupils).

While some programmes are aimed specifically at younger age groups, other initiatives also include adults and families. Particular attention is paid to families with traumatic experiences, single parents and the chronically ill, who find support in certain housing projects. Despite the strong focus on younger age groups, services are also provided for adults over 30, although these are often found in other departments such as labour market or social policy areas.

The target groups of these programmes and facilities are characterised by considerable diversity in terms of nationality and origin. People from Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, Russia, and Bulgaria are frequently mentioned, but the range extends far beyond this. This diversity

is evident in the description of the target groups as well as in the movement of refugees and the "changing peaks" (Interview 4, line 45, translated by author), which over the years have ranged from regions such as Africa to Asia and the Arab world.

Another key characteristic of the demographic groups described is the experience of flight and the legal status, which ranges from asylum seekers to persons with subsidiary protection. These legal categories often determine access to services and support. The influence of crisis situations, such as the war in Ukraine, on the composition and needs of target groups is also emphasised. Such events lead to significant shifts in demographic composition and needs, such as the increase in highly qualified women from Ukraine fleeing without male accompaniment.

The work of the various organisations and programmes is characterised by adapting to changing needs and demographic shifts. This encompasses the entire spectrum of nationalities and specific groups of need, with particular attention on vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and people with health problems. The diversity of the target groups and the dynamic changes in their composition are reflected in the wide range of services on offer, which range from health counselling to special housing projects.

It can be said that the programmes and organisations described are confronted with a complex and constantly changing demographic landscape. This diversity manifests itself in different age groups, nationalities, and special needs, which are further influenced by changing crisis situations and refugee movements. Despite the wide range of challenges, efforts are being made to meet the needs of these diverse target groups by offering specific programmes and adapting to changing conditions.

5.2 Dominant Messages

This chapter will analyse the categories to answer the first research question. To get an insight into the dominant messages of NGOs the categories "Biggest Obstacles", "Recommendations on Job", "Reforms" and "Wish for Change" will be looked at and then grouped into the main topics and themes, to find the dominant messages. The research question is as follows:

Q1: What are the dominant messages NGOs try to communicate on the topic of migration?

Biggest Obstacles

In their work with refugees, the organisations face diverse and complex challenges. These can be divided into different categories, each of which presents its own difficulties.

General challenges:

A central general challenge is the balance between the resources invested and their justification. It must be made clear what society, and the individual beneficiaries gain from the projects. "The (organisation) works with the resources of the working population in Austria. So, when we fund projects, the benefits for employees in Austria must also be clear in some way" (Interview 10, line 435-437, translated by author). Furthermore, the challenge is seen in political mobilisation and awareness-raising, whereby it is difficult to "create more sensitivity for this group" due to a fight "against windmills" in an area dominated by vested interests (Interview 10, line 446-448, translated by author).

Challenges in relation to politics:

The changing circumstances and unpredictability of the political landscape pose a significant challenge. In Austria, the system is described as "conservative and resistant" to diversity (Interview 10, line 75-76, translated by author), which makes flexible and forward-looking planning difficult. There is also the problem of the long-term nature of the integration process versus the short-term logic of political action. Long-term integration work is made more difficult by the short-term orientation of political decisions. "The long-term nature of the integration process versus the short-term logic of political action" (Interview 10, line 305-306, translated by author) is an example of this dilemma.

Challenges in communicating:

Another problem is the complexity of communication. Finding the right balance between a scientific and activist approach can be difficult. "As a scientist and activist, I find it difficult to maintain a certain balance" (Interview 8, line 115-116, translated by author) illustrates this difficulty.

Challenges due to limited resources:

One obstacle that stands out is the lack of human resources. The organisations struggle with limited resources, which makes it difficult to communicate effectively and counter negative narratives. "One of the biggest obstacles is our limited human resources" (Interview 6, line 177-178, translated by author), they emphasise.

Challenges posed by negative narratives:

Finally, the challenge posed by negative narratives and discourses is highlighted. The work is made more difficult by negative perceptions and a blurred use of terms such as refugees and migrants. "The narrative that is being used about people on the run" (Interview 6, line 44-45, translated by author) shows the need for clear and differentiated communication.

These various challenges show the complexity and multi-layered nature of working with refugees. They show the need for a flexible, resource-conscious, and sensitive approach to meet both individual and social needs.

Recommendation on Job

The recommendations that the interviewees have for their successors can be categorised into different areas:

Networking and collaboration:

The importance of networking is mentioned, and it is recommended to build and maintain active networks with other organisations, as this increases the effectiveness of one's own work: "Network and use the network" (Interview 10, line 483, translated by author). This shows that greater impact can be achieved through cooperation between different partners with different expertise and experience.

Emotional handling and self-care:

Several interviews explain the importance of being able to withstand emotional stress while taking care of one's own mental health. For example, Interviewee 9 advises maintaining objectivity in an emotionally charged field of work: "to keep reminding ourselves that we have

to stay objective" (Interview 9, line 331-332, translated by author). Interviewee 8 recommends acting according to one's own convictions and respecting personal boundaries: "not to act against yourself" (Interview 8, line 441-442, translated by author).

Professionalism and further training:

The recommendations also include the importance of professional development and continuing education. Interviewee 7 emphasises professionalism and the ability to make complex concepts understandable: "that I have a proper language, that I realise a proper civil product. So really this craft, that things look neat, that it is clear language that is understandable, that supposedly breaks down such complex concepts into a few lines without denying or infantilising this complexity (...). That you have to make clear statements, that you have to position yourself clearly and that you always have to keep an eye on the different dialogue groups, because I can't just start with the journalists and politicians in the long term, I have to start with the refugee initiatives, the thousands of people who are committed to refugees in Austria, that's a very important dialogue group and I have to speak and write for them first and foremost." (Interview 7, line 478-487, translated by author). Interviewee 2 highlights the importance of constant learning and dialogue with different people: "Read a lot, understand" (Interview 2, line 613, translated by author).

Perseverance and team support:

Perseverance is seen as important in several recommendations, especially in an environment where successes can often be cancelled out by policy changes. Interviewee 6 says: "Simply having patience, because very often a lot of what you have achieved, when a new law comes in, when there is a change of government, is then changed " (Interview 6, line 299-302, translated by author). In addition, support within the team is seen as essential to get through difficult times together.

Documentation and knowledge management:

The importance of documentation and knowledge management is particularly emphasised to avoid making the same mistakes repeatedly or having to redevelop solutions. "If you don't

document it, you forget that you ever developed anything in the first place" (Interview 10, line 494, translated by author).

Adaptability and needs-orientated action:

Adaptability and responding to different situations according to need are seen as important for working with refugees. Interviewee 3 advises orienting oneself to the actual needs of the people: "that we first look at where the needs are, what is needed?" (Interview 3, line 181, translated by author).

Solutions tolerance and strategic goals:

Interviewee 4 talks about a "solutions tolerance" and the importance of not just getting lost in individual cases, but also having strategic goals in mind: "The reference to, I'll say, strategic goals" (Interview 4, line 213, translated by author).

To summarise these recommendations, successors should be resilient, well-connected, professional, adaptable, and always willing to learn to work effectively and meet both their own needs and those of the target groups.

Reforms

In the discussion on migration and asylum policy, several reform approaches were proposed in the interviews, which can be summarised in various subject areas, each with a different focus:

International and national migration policy:

A key issue is the need for a coordinated international response to migration movements. Interviewee 10 calls for an international agreement to manage migration flows and reduce the causes of flight, which would also require a reform of global economic policy. "That would of course require a different global economic policy" (Interview 10, line 510-511, translated by author). This includes recognising that migration movements occur regularly and should not be treated as exceptional situations. The acceptance and integration of diversity in all areas of society is seen as necessary to achieve long-term solutions.

Law and procedure:

The need to improve the asylum procedure and the associated legal structures is also highlighted. Interviewee 6 is in favour of equal treatment for all refugees and stresses the importance of the right to vote to ensure full integration or "no division among refugees" (Interview 6, line 327, translated by author). In addition, Interviewee 4 calls for a simplification of the law system to make it more comprehensible and efficient, which also includes an improvement in administrative processes and the selection of personnel (cf. Interview 4, line 193-202).

Labour market and social integration:

The interviews illustrate the challenges that refugees face, particularly regarding the labour market and social services. In Interview 5, the insufficient financial support, and the difficult accessibility of the labour market for refugees is discussed, which makes their integration considerably more difficult. "So, what we are really struggling with all the time is simply this story of funding, of basic care. That simply too little money is made available to the refugees to enable them to live a life where they can really cope with their opportunities and challenges in a reasonably stress-free way. It must also be said that they are not allowed to work. So, the basic provision is the only income they have. That brings me to the second point, which is that advertisers do have real access to the labour market. (...) There are so many obstacles in their way that it is still not possible in practice" (Interview 5, line 260-269, translated by author).

Participation and involvement of those affected:

The inclusion of those affected in the political and social discourse is another important aspect. Interview 1 emphasises the importance of directly involving people who are affected by decisions in the decision-making process. "Having Ukrainians at the table for all decisions that are made that affect Ukrainians" (Interview 1, line 438-439, translated by author). This is to ensure that their needs and perspectives are considered.

Solidarity and social consensus:

Finally, the importance of solidarity and a common understanding of how to deal with migration and asylum issues is taken into account. Interviewees 3 (cf. line 194-208) and 2 are in favour of a fairer distribution of resources and a consensus-based policy that not only

respects the rights of refugees, but also strengthens social cohesion, "that the state also fulfils its obligations" (Interview 2, line 600, translated by author).

Wish for Change

The wishes for change expressed in the interviews can be categorised in several ways:

Political mobilisation and sensitivity:

Interviewee 10 talks about the challenge of creating greater sensitivity for certain groups and criticises the difficulties of political mobilisation in a space characterised by different interests. "Where we could be more successful, clearly, is in political mobilisation" (Interview 10, line 445-446, translated by author). This statement illustrates the desire for more effective influence and greater consideration of minority interests in the political landscape.

Evidence-based policy and research:

Interviewee 10 wants policy decisions to be based more on research and calls for more attention to be paid to scientific evidence. "That more evidence-based policy is made" (Interview 10, line 544-545, translated by author). This accentuates the conflict between scientific rationality and political realities and the need to translate research findings into understandable and implementable policy.

Discourse and language:

Interviewee 8 underlines the importance of discourse and language. It is noted that the fear of using the wrong terms can prevent people from expressing themselves and the need to promote openness and understanding is expressed. "That the discourse or language in the media but also in our associations and by us is kept constant" (Interview 8, line 362-363, translated by author). This shows the desire for a more inclusive and less intimidating communication environment.

Media and framing:

Interviewee 5 addresses the framing of refugees in the media and wishes that media would adopt the perspectives of NGOs rather than politics. "That the media per se just look more at NGOs than at politics" (Interview 5, line 286, translated by author). This points to the desire

to improve the representation of refugees in the public sphere and to promote more humane and realistic reporting.

Legal framework and protection categories:

Interviewee 4 emphasises problems in the existing legal system, in particular the lack of categories that cover individual lack of prospects and complex reasons for refuge. "We get on people's nerves here with funny procedures and efforts, so to speak, where someone has seen a lack of perspective for themselves. Yes, that doesn't always fit into the classic, historical canon. What are the reasons for persecution for which I receive asylum or sub-protection? There are certainly veteran judges, now federal administrative judges, who say: 'Yes, we know the problem'. But we have a kind of hole in the system or in the categories where we can give answers. If they are individually persecuted, there is asylum. If they are fleeing, let's say casually, civil war, there is subsidiary protection. And then there is nothing for a long time. Then only rejections on all points. Or the humanitarian right of residence for long-term residents. But there is no category for saying: 'Yes, we have understood the individual's lack of prospects. It just doesn't fit into our existing system'" (Interview 4, line 235-245, translated by author). The desire is to adapt the legal framework so that it better reflects people's realities and offers solutions for those who are not adequately protected by the current categories.

In summary, the interviews call for more sensitivity and political mobilisation for disadvantaged groups, a stronger alignment of policy with scientific evidence, a more open and inclusive discourse, fairer and more realistic media coverage and an adaptation of the legal framework to the complexity of individual refugee stories.

Dominant Messages

Several dominant messages and central themes can be identified from the interviews, which were addressed by several people:

Political and social framework conditions:

The political and social framework conditions are seen by several interviewees as a major challenge in working with refugees. They point to how the overall political discourse and public opinion influence their work. For example, one mention: "A major obstacle is of course the

overall political discussion and debate and opinion, which is not necessarily in favour of active integration policies towards refugees" (Interview 10, line 294-296, translated by author). This shows how the general political mood influences the feasibility and acceptance of integration projects. Similarly, Interviewee 7 speaks of the "inequality of arms" (Interview 7, line 130, translated by author) and how the "hegemonic discourse" (Interview 7, line 495, translated by author) makes the work more difficult, emphasising the challenge of working in an environment dominated by prejudice and political interests.

Media landscape and framing:

Several interviewees addressed the role of the media and the difficulty of countering prevailing negative narratives. Interviewee 5 states: "The most difficult thing of all is definitely getting the issues into the media afterwards." (Interview 5, line 54-55, translated by author). This quote illustrates how the portrayal in the media and the challenges of dealing with public opinion make the work more difficult. The dissemination of certain political narratives without proper scrutiny contributes to the difficulty of communicating positive or nuanced images of migration and integration.

Communication strategies and channels:

The issue of developing and implementing effective communication strategies was also highlighted. Interviewee 6 expresses the need to make complex topics understandable: "You have to present and explain such complex topics as simply as possible" (Interview 6, line 60-61, translated by author). This points to the challenge of finding appropriate and effective ways to reach and inform the public.

Refugees' perspectives and stories:

The importance of presenting the perspectives of refugees themselves is highlighted by various people. Interviewee 6 talks about the challenge of finding people who want to share their stories: "Then of course finding the people and the people who want to tell their stories" (Interview 6, line 67-68, translated by author). This shows the importance of sharing authentic experiences to counteract stereotypes and convey a more realistic picture of the situation of refugees.

5.3 Communication challenges

To look at challenges for NGOs in communicating with the media, we will investigate the PR strategies the organisations use, the media channels they are using to communicate and the biggest obstacles they face, especially the subcategory “challenges with media”. Therefore, this chapter seeks to answer the second research question:

Q2: What are the challenges for NGOs in communicating with the media?

Media Used

This section provides an overview of the various media used by the organisations. They have already been categorised in advance into earned media and owned media. Within the distinctions, a focus is placed on traditional media and digital media.

Earned media:

In terms of traditional earned media, the explanations mainly refer to coverage and presence in traditional news media that are not directly controlled by the organisations, such as newspapers, radio, and television. This is often achieved through interactions such as sending out press releases, holding press conferences and organising public events, resulting in a media presence that is not directly controlled by the organisations. "This means that if you are a journalist and you want to report on the situation in Ukraine, Afghanistan, whatever, then we are basically your point of contact. That means we can support you with figures, data and facts, or we can put you in touch with colleagues on the ground" (Interview 6, line 197-200, translated by author). This shows how organisations try to gain attention in the traditional media by providing information and contacts.

It is also interesting to look at how stories are actively placed with journalists to bring certain topics to the front. "We are consciously doing public relations work on the topic. And we try to offer journalists stories that reflect the reality of life for refugees in Austria. Like this. And on the one hand, there are stories that we offer and on the other hand, the majority are requests from journalists who say we want to do a report on the arrival centre or we want something, we want this. So this is active media work that we do very consciously and that we also do here as part of our refugee aid programme" (Interview 3, line 104-110, translated by

author). This illustrates the proactive approach in dealing with traditional media to gain public attention.

Digital earned media is about mentions, shares and discussions about an organisation or its content on external platforms and social media that are not controlled by the organisation itself. Digital press releases and the online distribution of news play a central role here. By sending out digital press releases and providing online content, organisations can gain the attention of online platforms, blogs, and social media. This leads to content being shared, discussed, and picked up by digital news portals, increasing the organisation's digital presence and visibility. Although specific examples of digital earned media are missing in the interviews provided, it is likely that the press releases and direct contacts with journalists mentioned in the interviews also take place in digital formats, which contributes to digital earned media.

Owned media:

Traditional owned media are media formats such as print materials like newsletters or brochures, and own events that are directly controlled by the organisation. These enable organisations to communicate their messages directly and unadulterated. They do “Public relations work for various dialogue groups, in addition to journalists, our members, donors, etc., who are provided with specially prepared information. So, there is a monthly newsletter and there are information sheets on various topics, which are then available on the website” (Interview 7, line 21-25, translated by author).

Digital owned media refers to digital platforms and content that are completely under the control of the organisation, such as websites, own blogs, and social media channels. These tools allow organisations to communicate directly and interactively with their audience. As one organisation explains the use of social media and a detailed website as part of their digital media strategy: “we have accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Our website is relatively comprehensive, including online donation options” (Interview 5, line 233-235, translated by author). This demonstrates the organisation's complete control over content and direct communication with the target group.

There is also information about the increasing importance of digital media and own content such as videos: “Until a few years ago, we as the Chamber of Labour were very much in line with the classic logic of stakeholders, sending out press releases or holding press conferences,

organising events and the media picking up on this in their daily, weekly, and monthly reporting, perhaps writing articles about it and so on. Of course, there has been a significant shift in recent years because, in addition to this traditional media work, digital media work on social media is becoming stronger and is also reaching other audiences. In other words, we are making more and more use of this. (...) We now also have dedicated colleagues in our departments who take care of these media, because it is of course very time-consuming to prepare images, video material, etc. for social media" (Interview 10, line 335-352, translated by author). This is another example of direct communication with the target group using their own resources.

PR Strategies

PR strategies is about the different strategies used by the organisations to draw attention to their topics and narratives. The different approaches have been grouped by approach.

Media use and public relations:

The use of media plays a central role in the context of PR strategies. Many organisations endeavour to communicate their concerns to the public through traditional media channels or via digital platforms. The challenges here are manifold, especially when it comes to budget restrictions. One interviewee expresses this clearly: "Of course our own media, whether our newsletters or social media, are very, very strong. Either to address the target group or to bring certain content from this target group to the public so that we can raise awareness" (Interview 9, line 208-211, translated by author). This shows that despite limited resources, there is a need to be creative and utilise the available resources effectively. Another interviewee stresses the importance of direct media work: "The newspaper (...) is my public relations work for various dialogue groups" (Interview 7, line 21-22, translated by author), which underlines how traditional and new media are used in parallel to reach various target groups.

Direct communication and advocacy:

Direct communication with political decision-makers and advocacy work are key elements of the organisations' strategic communication. The interviewees underline the importance of personal contact and direct exchange: "We sometimes go where the channels to the ministry

or state administration are good. We try to achieve this through direct dialogue" (Interview 10, line 247-249, translated by author). This quote illustrates how crucial direct dialogue is for achieving political change.

Use of social media:

The use of social media is an indispensable part of modern public relations work. It enables organisations to communicate quickly and in a targeted manner and to reach a broad public: "Sometimes I also write articles, like in the Standard, and try to get a certain readership here, because I also do podcasts and so on, so that's the kind of media I use" (Interview 8, line 285-287, translated by author). This quote shows how social media and traditional media are combined to increase visibility and reach. Another interviewee emphasises how important social media is for networking and mobilisation: "You just have a thousand phone numbers, and you just call, who can we help and then you call them, and they call someone again and then you quickly have a demo and then you're already on the streets" (Interview 8, line 264-266, translated by author). The role of social networks as instruments for rapid organisation and mobilisation is prominent here.

Education and information work:

Information and education work is a key pillar of public relations work. Organisations develop materials and programmes to educate and inform their target groups: "So there's a monthly newsletter and there are information sheets on various topics, which are then available on the website, which is the third main pillar" (Interview 7, line 23-25, translated by author). This illustrates how various information channels are used to reach the public and specific target groups.

Specific communication challenges and strategies in dealing with refugees:

Communicating about and with refugees requires sensitivity and responsibility. The organisations must carefully consider how they convey stories and portray people: "Of course, it is also a challenge to present and explain such complex relationships as simply as possible" (Interview 6, line 60-61, translated by author). This quote points to the difficulty of communicating complex topics in an understandable way. Another aspect is the selection of stories: "We try to sell as few real fates and stories of refugees to the outside world as

possible" (Interview 5, line 31-32, translated by author) This shows the endeavour to preserve the privacy and dignity of the people while at the same time drawing attention to their situation.

Biggest Obstacles: Challenges with the Media

The interviews conducted as part of the research into the challenges of dealing with media and public relations in relation to migration and integration offer profound insights into the diverse issues experienced by different stakeholders. These challenges can be categorised into different key areas, each with unique difficulties and requirements.

Political and social framework conditions:

A recurring theme in the interviews is the complexity of the political and social framework conditions. As highlighted in Interview 10, the general political debate can often be hostile towards an active integration policy: "A major obstacle is of course the overall political discussion and debate and opinion, which is not necessarily in favour of an active integration policy towards refugees" (Interview 10, line 294-296, translated by author). This political atmosphere makes it considerably more difficult to mobilise support for migration and integration initiatives. The "major difficulty, this inequality of weaponry, so to speak, and not this imbalance of power between state bodies and NGOs" (Interview 7, line 130-131, translated by author) also illustrates how unequal access to power can affect the work of NGOs. Furthermore, Interview 2 describes the challenge of reaching a broader audience and finding connectivity for less popular topics, which limits the reach and effectiveness of communication efforts, as well as the problem of communicating to the target audience of refugees. "People who have just arrived in Austria cannot really be reached via the media, not even via migrant media in Austria" (Interview 2, line 257-259, translated by author).

Media landscape and framing:

The role of the media and how refugees are portrayed is another key issue. Interview 5 emphasises the difficulty of successfully getting topics into the media and fighting against the prevailing negative framing: "The most difficult thing across the board is definitely to get the topics into the media afterwards" (Interview 5, line 54-55, translated by author). This challenge is compounded by the widespread dissemination of certain political narratives

without adequate scrutiny or cross-checking. In addition, the difficulty of being heard at a political level when public opinion and certain sections of the media are opposed to integration policy.

Communication strategies and channels:

Developing effective communication strategies is another significant challenge. As outlined, there is “a challenge to present and explain such complex relationships as simply as possible. And (...), you often don't have a lot of time, of course. So, when you're working with media, 20 to 30 seconds is best. The attention span is always shorter on social media. And if you want to comment on information properly, it can be a huge challenge with a complex topic like asylum” (Interview 6, line 61-66, translated by author). Interview 2 expands on this perspective by distinguishing between mass communication and targeted communication and brings forward the challenge with slow changing media as you “classically (...) look for connectable information, stories, photos, videos and then (...) offer them to the respective journalists as intermediaries in the classic press and media work and if it suits them, it goes on, that's curated content, if you like, (...) because I have to sell it to the journalist once so that they can then take it further in the whole thing.) because I now have to sell it to the journalist so that they can then take it further in the medium in the whole thing, which means it works with a pre-band, is therefore even slower and therefore, (...) it all takes so long, because no matter which medium is still its own communication system and that has to turn slowly. And in some areas, it is certainly the case that social change and changes in social values are happening faster than the media or organisations can keep up. We see this on many levels, which is why social media is decoupling and why things like Telegram and other things are working (Interview 2, line 411-425, translated by author).

Refugees' perspectives and stories:

A key concern is presenting the stories and perspectives of refugees themselves. It is a challenge and a need to find people who are willing to share their stories to provide authentic insights and challenge stereotypes. It is important to depict a spectrum of experiences and not just present success stories to paint a more realistic picture. “Another challenge, but one that also makes it exciting, is of course finding the people who want to tell their stories. And I have (...) already had many different experiences in this regard. (...) Often, of course, you bring

people in front of the curtain, if you like, who have made it. So that means success stories. (...) And then of course there are people who say: 'Well, those are the ones who have made it. But the majority are either criminals or of course they didn't make it that far or it just doesn't show the struggle. And these are simply conscious decisions that you have to make. Because people have to be prepared to tell their story, of course" (Interview 6, line 66-80, translated by author). Furthermore, the importance of respecting and valuing the people involved and carefully considering which stories are shared is underlined. "This is precisely the area of tension in which we operate when considering whether to go out with individual stories or not. The most difficult thing across the board is definitely putting the topics in the media afterwards. (...) I have to say that as an NGO, you have to be very persistent in sticking to your own story, drumming up the realities of refugee care over and over again and the obstacles that are simply put in our way by politics. Always knowing that we can only make a limited contribution to the framing of the images in the minds of refugees or fugitives. Because in Austria and in many other countries, this is also massively characterised by politics" (Interview 5, line 53-64, translated by author). Interview 3 also states that it is important "how they talk about refugees and how they meet them. I believe that eye level is very important when dealing with refugees" (Interview 3, line 222-223, translated by author).

These detailed insights from the interviews illustrate the complex and multi-layered challenges that organisations working in the field of migration and integration must deal with. It becomes clear that successful communication and public relations work requires an in-depth examination of the political and social framework conditions, the mechanisms of the media landscape, effective communication strategies and the perspectives of the refugees themselves.

5.4 Media Framing

This chapter will now look at the framing of refugees, in particular how NGOs see their role in framing. To this end, the categories "Portrayal of Refugees" and "Self-Perception of Role" will be analysed. The underlying third research question is:

Q3: How do NGOs see their role in the media framing of refugees?

Self-Perception of Role

Interviewees described their roles differently, but with a common focus on support, representation, and influence. Some see themselves more in a supportive, coordinating role without direct contact with refugees. "So, we tend to accompany organisations that do educational work, that do counselling work, that do support work and have more indirect contact when we take part in measures and get to know the groups. But we are not the educationalists, we are not the psychologists, we are not the social workers who have direct contact with the people. Our role is more one that represents interests, that takes on self-advocacy roles for the concerns of these people and that tries to represent them in the direction of stakeholders, of politics, of business" (Interview 10, line 361-368, translated by author). Others state their active role in providing advice and direct help for refugees, as mentioned in Interview 9: "Effective for whom? It is definitely effective for those affected. The human, our intervention, counselling intervention is often in this transition phase. When refugees come to Austria, they have lost their belongings. They've lost their livelihoods, they're insecure, they're sad, they're partly - and in many cases they also get victim syndrome, so to speak. And if an organisation (...) helps them to build up new livelihoods. And if you go through the ups and downs with them during this phase, it's of course very, very effective for the person. And for us as an organisation, if we now - I mean, we're not profit-oriented, we don't offer things so that we can distribute more profit. We actually want to shape society, to think in the direction that we call good" (Interview 9, line 273-284).

However, the perception of their effectiveness varies. While some, as seen above, consider their work to be effective when it comes to direct support and the impact on individual fates, others reflect on the challenges of achieving their political and social goals. "Where we could certainly be more effective or more successful - I don't want to say more effective - where we could be more successful, of course, is in political mobilisation, where we could create more awareness for this group. But unfortunately, it's the fight against the windmills I mentioned earlier" (Interview 10, line 444-448, translated by author).

The interviewees recognise the limits and challenges of their work. This includes the fight against political and social resistance, like fighting against windmills, and the difficulties of bringing about lasting change in migration. "Of course we would like to change the narrative,

to change the reason why people need help, that's kind of this claim to a socio-political change, but on the other hand we also have to recognise that our role as a non-profit organisation is not a political one, but to somehow reduce the frictional losses that political processes cause in society as a whole and that fall into the humanitarian field with our power of action and I believe that we are effective in this, but not only effective, but also efficient. I think both are important in this case and we could be even more effective if there were more resources. That is perhaps also a problem for society as a whole. Because you can't do much more fundraising with this topic" (Interview 2, line 576-585, translated by author).

Many interviewees expressed a desire for greater effectiveness or success, particularly in political mobilisation and awareness-raising. It is recognised that the contribution of individuals and the community are important. Despite the challenges, some see their work as fundamentally effective: "Yes, definitely"(Interview 5, line 256, translated by author). These self-assessments range from cautiously optimistic to very self-confident. "Yes, I am the most efficient person I know" (Interview 1, line 429, translated by author).

Portrayal of Refugees

The interviews paint a multi-layered picture of refugees that is characterised by a variety of perspectives and challenges.

Starting with the representation and perception of refugees, one voice expresses that "it is very important to us to move away from this victim-victimisation tendency, which of course has traditionally existed and still exists in the area of refugees, towards an activating, empowering and self-controlling role" (Interview 10, line 369-372, translated by author). This reflects the desire to change the narrative and emphasise the resilience and active role of refugees in their own story. It also shows that attempts are being made to overcome certain narratives. "We are already trying to show that this cliché of the waiting, non-studying refugee who wants to live off state resources does not, of course, correspond to reality, but sometimes occurs because there are simply no other options" (Interview 10, line 385-388, translated by author), and instead highlight the real, often difficult circumstances they face.

The confrontation with paradoxes in dealing with refugees is also clearly addressed: " This paradoxical situation, on the one hand we are committed, we have signed the Geneva

Convention on Refugees, but in the same breath we call them illegal migrants who come to us and apply for asylum" (Interview 9, line 184-186, translated by author). This illustrates the discrepancy between official obligations and public rhetoric.

In the area of media representation and research, it is mentioned how important it is "that you don't speak for someone, but that you let people speak for themselves" (Interview 8, line 344-345, translated by author). This accentuates the importance of self-representation and the need to actively involve refugees in the discourse, while at the same time critically reflecting on the role of the media and one's own position as a spokesperson.

The importance of telling individual stories is underlined. "I actually see my task here as giving refugees a voice, a platform. To simply tell different stories and perspectives" (Interview 6, line 238-240, translated by author). The need for careful selection of stories is also pointed to, to present a complete and undistorted picture.

However, here the discussion about privacy and the protection of personal stories is also present. "We don't try to sell these stories to the outside world. In other words, there are always very clear strategic considerations behind whether we actually present individual stories to the outside world or not" (Interview 5, line 30-37, translated by author). This shows the need to think strategically and ethically about the portrayal of individual fates.

The public portrayal of refugees is characterised by a dichotomy between the need to communicate data and facts and the desire to also consider the emotional aspects of their stories. "There is always the question of whether someone wants to go public. Are they prepared to open themselves up a little to the home stories that the media want? (...) There is a certain shyness and it's not getting any smaller. People have become cautious. So, and if it's not necessary then not necessarily to appear in person, that's sometimes difficult when the question comes up in the existing media: 'We want to talk to someone. How is the person, the family?' Now actually in person. I always have this dilemma, so to speak. What are the figures, data, and facts on a more abstract, legal level? And then where do I go into the, yes, emotionally charged home story? Yes, it is asked for. I probably also need it for the reach. With all the risks" (Interview 4, line 149-159, translated by author). This reflects the tension between conveying information and generating empathy.

The preservation of the autonomy and dignity of refugees in the media context is emphasised. "When it comes to media coverage, we take great care to respect the refugees' right to self-determination and to protect their data and images. So, nobody is filmed, interviewed, or photographed if they don't want to be. That is very important to us and is clarified. We received Ukrainian photo consent forms very quickly, which is really fast. Because we simply know that this is important and that it needs to be clarified. And when we deal with journalists, we also see ourselves as a filter for the topics and things that are requested here. So, we answer some of them ourselves, and for some we put them in touch with refugees. But we would never simply give away these contacts" (Interview 3, line 125-133, translated by author). This underlines the endeavour to ensure a respectful and self-determined portrayal of refugees.

Finally, the role of language and public rhetoric is viewed critically: "We need to pay much more attention to the fact that language creates reality, especially in the area of refugees, and that there is a high degree of insensitivity on the part of the media, politicians and people in this country in the way they talk about refugees and how they treat them. I believe that eye level is very important when dealing with refugees" (Interview 3, line 219-223, translated by author). This accentuates how crucial the way in which refugees are spoken about is and how this influences their perception and treatment in society.

5.5 Differing Narratives

In the following analysis, the differences between different groups of refugees are analysed in detail, with a particular focus on the comparison between people from Ukraine and those from other regions. The fourth research question takes centre stage:

Q4: How do NGOs communicate with the media in the context of the Ukraine war since February 24, 2022?

Through this lens, we look at how interactions between NGOs and the media influence public perceptions and the political landscape, particularly about the treatment and rights of refugees and displaced persons. In doing so, the statements from the interviews are seen as insights into the complex dynamics of these interactions and their impact on the affected groups. By analysing these aspects, an understanding of how communication between NGOs

and the media shapes narratives, policies, and public opinion around the issue of forced migration and displacement can be established. The differences between refugees are analysed using the subcode "Divide between refugee populations". These are then categorised into meaningful groupings based on the same characteristics.

Different terms and rhetoric

The distinction in terminology between "refugees" and "displaced persons" is profound and politically charged. In the words of one interviewee: "We are now forced to communicate between refugees and displaced persons, although I always use the quotation mark because it is a very politically framed issue, so to speak, that the Ukrainians are now displaced persons and not refugees." (Interview 7, line 54-57, translated by author). This linguistic distinction not only influences public opinion, but also the way in which aid and rights are allocated.

Differences in rights

The legal status and associated rights vary greatly between different groups of refugees. One interviewee provides an illustrative example: "it has just been decided that Ukrainian refugee families in Austria can receive family allowance and childcare allowance. This was unclear for a very long time. And there were reports about it and we as (organisation), together with many other organisations, spoke out very positively about it. And it was also important for us to communicate another demand, if you like, via the media. There is a group of so-called beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. They are actually in a very similar situation to refugees or displaced Ukrainians. They have also been granted protection in Austria because they had to flee human rights violations and violence. However, the problem is that they are not entitled to family benefits and in some cases only receive basic services. And that is of course extremely difficult financially for this group of people" (Interview 6, line 203-214, translated by author). This contrasts with beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, who have similar needs but remain without appropriate support. This inequality in rights leads to significant differences in the quality of life of those affected.

Different narratives and opportunities

The stories and narratives surrounding different groups of refugees and displaced persons influence the perception and commitment of the host society. One interviewee criticised: "What we are also observing with some concern, however, is that some politicians are making a very clear distinction in their communication. And then they talk about displaced people from Ukraine as our neighbours who we have to help, in contrast to other refugees who only come here to make a nice life for themselves and don't actually need any protection. And we take a very critical view of that and also of the rights that people are given, so to speak. So, the good thing is that refugees from Ukraine have been given protection very quickly and easily, have also been given access to the labour market and have a lot of support in the form of job platforms, for example. But it is also important to us, and we are also active in this area, to ensure that other refugees from other countries can benefit from these offers in the same way" (Interview 6, line 223-233, translated by author). These different narratives and opportunities create a hierarchy of neediness and worthiness that significantly influences solidarity and support for refugees and displaced persons.

Social and demographic differences

The demographic differences between groups of refugees are striking and have far-reaching consequences. "A year ago, as I said, we tended to be dealing more with men, in the refugee sector. It's completely different now. (...) This has actually been something that has remained very constant in refugee research for a long time, that the closer the place of refuge, the higher the general level of education and capital assets, the further away, the fewer families come, but rather individuals with low financial resources. This is now changing completely in the context of Ukraine, for example. We have very highly educated people there, women with children who are not accompanied by men" (Interview 10, line 123-131, translated by author). These demographic changes not only influence integration opportunities, but also public perception and support.

Access to education and the labour market

Integration into the labour market and the education system is crucial for the long-term integration of refugees and displaced persons. The support given to Ukrainian displaced persons is exemplary: "Another example of what we are doing is that we are trying to work with the authorities, especially in the context of Ukraine, and how we can get staff, we urgently need staff because there is a large group of pupils who cannot simply be placed in existing classes. Separate classes are being opened. But they need staff. Many qualified women have now arrived who even have pedagogical expertise, who would even be interested in teaching part of their time" (Interview 10, line 231-237, translated by author). These measures stand in contrast to the challenges faced by other groups, who often do not have access to similar opportunities due to legal and bureaucratic hurdles.

6 Conclusion

In the following, research questions will be interpreted based on the listed results of the research linked to the theory before the limitations of this work are discussed and an outlook is given.

6.1 Summary and Discussion

The interviews with NGOs in the field of migration reveal a consistent use of terms such as "refugees" or "people on the run", which shows the desire for a more humane language and decoupling from legal status. This reflects the NGOs' strategic approach to framing and public perception. The roles of the interviewees cover a broad spectrum, from leadership to education and communication work, underlining the multidisciplinary nature of NGO work in the migration sector. Projects focus on education, labour market integration and psychosocial support, reflecting the problem-oriented and critical approaches and demonstrating how NGOs respond to individual needs while striving for social change. Collaboration and networking within and between organisations are key to bringing issues to the public and influencing the agenda. The demographic diversity of the target groups emphasises the need for a flexible and individual approach. Overall, the results confirm the theoretical considerations on strategic communication and agenda setting by highlighting the active role of NGOs in shaping the migration discourse and influencing policy.

In relation to the research question *"What are the dominant messages NGOs try to communicate on the topic of migration?"*, the collected data and theoretical considerations provide a comprehensive insight into the efforts and goals of NGOs. These organisations are confronted with diverse and complex challenges that shape their work with refugees. The general challenges include balancing the use of resources and justifying this to society. Focus is placed on the difficulty of political mobilisation and awareness-raising, which often resembles tilting at windmills in an environment full of established interests. The political landscape, which is described as conservative and resistant to diversity, represents another significant hurdle. This leads to a dilemma between the long-term nature of integration work and the short-term logic of political action. In communication with refugees, on the other hand, the complexity of communication is identified as a key problem, where balancing a

scientific and activist approach is a challenge. Added to this is the lack of human resources, which makes effective communication difficult and hinders the counteracting of negative narratives. The recommendations for their successors show that networking, emotional handling, professionalism, further training, perseverance, and careful knowledge management are seen as key to effective work. Adaptability and a needs-oriented approach are also emphasised to do justice to the various situations. Numerous reform approaches are proposed in the interviews, ranging from international and national migration policy to legal and procedural issues, labour market integration and social inclusion. The importance of the participation of those affected and the need for solidarity and consensus-based policies are highlighted. In the wishes for change, the challenges of political mobilisation, the importance of evidence-based policy, discourse and language, media and framing as well as the legal framework and protection categories crystallise. These elements show the need for increased sensitivity, greater inclusion of scientific findings, more open communication, fairer media coverage and an adaptation of the legal framework to the realities of refugees. To summarise, the dominant messages of the NGOs are an improved political and social framework, a critical examination of the media landscape and framing, effective communication strategies and an authentic inclusion of refugees' perspectives. These themes reflect a complex and multi-layered approach to working with refugees and stresses the need for a flexible, resource-conscious, and sensitive approach to meet both individual and societal needs. In line with theoretical considerations on strategic communication, media dependency and agenda-setting, these findings highlight the active role that NGOs seek to play in shaping public discourses and policies, despite facing significant challenges.

The research question *"What are the challenges for NGOs in communicating with the media?"* aims to understand the complex interactions between non-governmental organisations and the media landscape. The findings presented provide insight into the different media used by the organisations and shed light on the PR strategies they pursue to bring their issues and narratives to the fore. NGOs use a wide range of media, both 'earned' and 'owned', and rely on a mix of traditional and digital channels. This demonstrates their efforts to gain attention in a diverse media landscape. When working with traditional earned media such as newspapers, radio, and television, they seek to gain media exposure through press releases, press conferences and public events that are not directly controlled by the organisations. This

is in line with theoretical expectations that NGOs will use strategic communication practices to get their messages out, however the depth of their efforts and the range of media used could be seen as surprising, emphasising the need for a comprehensive and diversified media strategy. Direct communication and advocacy work are also key elements of NGOs' strategic communication. They show the importance of direct contact and exchange with media representatives and political decision-makers. This reinforces the importance of direct communication and advocacy as proposed in theory and accentuates the direct response to the challenges in media communication. The challenges of dealing with the media, particularly in an often-hostile political debate and the difficulty of communicating complex issues in an understandable way, are evident in the findings. These difficulties echo the theoretical discussions around media dependency and agenda setting by highlighting the challenges NGOs face in an often critical or indifferent media landscape. The extent to which political and social conditions influence media work may be more surprising than expected and states the need for NGOs to continually adapt and refine their communication strategies. To summarise, the results largely confirm the theoretical expectations by providing a detailed picture of the multiple challenges NGOs face in media communication. In particular, the extent to which external political and social conditions and the need for complex communication strategies influence the work of NGOs may be surprising. These findings underline the dynamic and often difficult relationships between NGOs and the media and highlight the importance of a proactive, diverse, and adaptable communication strategy.

In relation to the research question *“How do NGOs see their role in the media framing of refugees?”*, the findings and theoretical considerations presented provide a deep insight into the self-perception and actions of NGOs in this area. NGOs see themselves in a range of roles, from supporting and coordinating to advising and directly helping, reflecting the diversity of their tasks in the migration context. This wide range of self-perceptions fits with theoretical assumptions about the multifunctional nature of NGOs. However, the variance in the perception of their roles, ranging from purely representative to actively helping, could indicate the complexity of the challenges they face in the field of migration - an aspect that could be deeper and more multifaceted than expected. Assessing their effectiveness and dealing with challenges shows that NGOs recognise a high level of effectiveness in their direct impact on refugees, while at the same time experiencing challenges in political mobilisation and

awareness raising. This reflects the multifaceted challenges they face, including political and social resistance. Here, the level of self-criticism and desire for increased effectiveness may indicate that the difficulties in media framing of refugees may be greater than theory predicts. The desired change in the portrayal of refugees in the media is particularly revealing. NGOs are striving for a shift from the image of the passive victim to a more active, resilient understanding of refugees, which is in line with theoretical considerations on strategic communication and framing. This clear intention to change the media framing confirms the central role of NGOs in the process of agenda setting and framing, which is perhaps more evident than expected. Theoretically, the findings confirm that NGOs take an active role in media communication and endeavour to positively shape the narrative around refugees, which is in line with assumed strategic communication practices. However, the efforts and strategic approaches of NGOs to use their dependence on the media to put their issues on the public agenda show how critical the media portrayal of refugees is for the work of NGOs. This may go beyond what is expected and emphasises the relevance of their work in the public perception. The findings largely reflect theoretical expectations, but with the recognition that the intensity and clarity with which NGOs perceive their role in media framing, as well as the challenges they identify in political mobilisation and awareness raising, go beyond what was anticipated. These findings offer valuable insights into the complex interplay between NGOs, the media, and the portrayal of refugees.

The research question *“How do NGOs communicate with the media in the context of the Ukraine war since February 24, 2022?”* was illuminated by the analysis and interpretation of the results in various dimensions. Firstly, the analysis of the different narrative styles shows that NGOs make a clear linguistic distinction between "refugees" and "displaced persons" in their communication with the media. This differentiation, which is politically charged, influences public opinion and the allocation of assistance and rights, which in turn characterises the perception and treatment of these groups. It is shown that Ukrainians are often referred to as "displaced persons" rather than "refugees", which influences their legal status and access to assistance. Secondly, the analysis shows that the legal statuses and associated rights vary greatly between different groups. The differential treatment given to Ukrainian refugee families in terms of family allowances and childcare subsidies contrasts with other protection seekers who have similar needs but receive less support. This inequality leads

to significant differences in the quality of life of those affected. Thirdly, different narratives and stories influence the perception and commitment of the host society. The distinction between "our neighbours", the displaced people from Ukraine, and other refugees who are supposedly just looking for a better life, creates a hierarchy of need and worthiness that significantly influences solidarity and support for refugees and displaced people. Fourthly, the social and demographic differences between the refugee groups have a significant impact on integration opportunities and public perception. In particular, the shift from more male to female refugees and displaced persons with a high level of education and the associated challenges and opportunities are highlighted. Fifthly, integration into the labour market and the education system is crucial for the long-term inclusion of refugees and displaced persons. The support provided to Ukrainian IDPs, such as the establishment of separate classes and the utilisation of their educational skills, stands in stark contrast to the challenges faced by other groups. To summarise, the research question was answered by the findings in that it became clear how NGOs use their communication with the media to shape different narratives, influence policy frameworks and shape public perceptions and policies regarding the rights and needs of different refugee groups. The differences in communication can be seen in the choice of language, the allocation of rights, the narratives conveyed, social and demographic characteristics and access to education and work. These findings help to develop a deeper understanding of how the interaction between NGOs and the media influences public perceptions and the political landscape, particularly about the treatment and rights of refugees and displaced persons.

6.2 Limitations

The topic of this thesis deals with a very broad area of research that attempts to categorise the work of NGOs and their communication strategies. In general, research in this area has not yet progressed very far, for example about the communication of NGOs in social networks.

The method used for this work turned out to be suitable, but during the transcription and subsequent analysis it emerged that sometimes an interesting question on a topic was not asked or an answer from an interviewee did not answer the question at all, but the questions were nevertheless pursued further. Nevertheless, the interviewees brought up many interesting aspects that made this work exciting in many respects. The questionnaire was well

structured but adopted in the context of collaborative research. This raises the question of whether a different questionnaire might have delved deeper into the individual topics in connection with these research questions. In this version, however, the questionnaire had a great advantage, as it did not necessarily provide information on the specific research topic and the research questions investigated here, and thus answers were perhaps given more freely on the topics investigated. Nevertheless, it should always be borne in mind that with a topic as charged as migration, communication between even just two people always involves cautious answers. Here, the anonymity of the interviewees hopefully provided a protective framework and allowed free and truthful answers.

Another point to reflect on is the loss or addition of meaning due to the translation of the quotes from the interviews. While the interviews were conducted and analysed in German to provide the best understanding of the issues and topics mentioned, the results were translated for the scope of this work. It is possible for meaning to get lost in the translation, or, meaning to be added into a quote that might not have been in the original version.

The results of the study are a first step towards analysing and researching the communicative strategies of NGOs with the media. Further research, which could delve deeper into the topics of the individual points, would certainly be useful here. A look at the media or recipient side would also be exciting to see. What has also emerged in this work is the difficulty of communication between NGOs and refugees. Which channels are used and where it is difficult to reach people. This topic would also be very suitable for further research.

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9 Appendix

9.1 Interview Guide

Questions NGOs

- 1) Can you please describe your position within your organization? What are your main responsibilities and daily tasks?
- 2) How are your responsibilities/ your position in the organization related to refugee populations? Can you please elaborate?
- 3) What are the most challenging aspects of your work as it relates to the refugee population?
- 4) Can you describe the refugee population you work with in terms of nationality, gender composition, age composition and other demographics?
- 5) What are some specific projects your organization has implemented to address the needs of those populations?
 - a) Can you give me an example?
 - b) Can you describe one success and one failure of a recent project?
- 6) What would you say are some of your organization's achievements in working with refugees?
 - a) Please describe how this achievement might be contributing to overcoming an issue within your particular context.
 - b) Can you provide a specific example?
- 7) What would you say are the biggest obstacles you face in your work? Can you please provide an example?
- 8) How do you use media in your work? Can you think of a recent example?
- 9) How do you see your role when working with the refugee population? What procedures do you use to accurately portray/engage with/educate the refugees?
 - a) Would you say your colleagues here or in other organizations follow similar procedures/ have similar objectives?
 - b) Why or why not?
- 10) Overall, would you consider your work with the refugees effective? Why or why not?
- 11) What recommendations would you give to someone taking your position?
- 12) What reforms would you like to see, if any?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time!

9.2 Category Schema

Category Scheme		
Biggest Obstacles • Negative Narrative • Wording • Limited Resources • Communication with Refugee • Unpredictability • Challenges with Politics • Challenges with Media	Organisational Information • Tasks in the organisation • Position within the organisation • Collaboration and Network	Refugee Population • Demographic aspects • Divide between refugee populations
Recommendations and Reforms • Recommendations on job • Reforms • Wish for Change	Project Work • Project • Successes and Challenges • Contact with refugees	Communication and Media Work • Terms used • Portrayal of refugees • Self-perception of Role • Use of PR strategies • Media used ○ Owned media ○ Earned media

9.3 MAXQDA Code Matrix

Codesystem	I10	I9	I8	I7	I6	I5	I4	I3	I2	I1
Biggest Obstacles										
Negative Narrative										
Wording										
Limited Ressources										
Communication with Refugee										
Unpredictability										
Challenges with Politics										
Challenges with Media										
Organizational Information										
Tasks in the organisation										
Position within the organisation										
Collaboration and Network										
Refugee Population										
Demographic aspects										
Divide between refugee population										
Communication and Media Work										
Terms used										
Portrayal of refugees										
Self-perception of Role										
Use of PR strategies										
Media used										
Owned Media										
Earned Media										
Recommendations and reforms										
Reforms										
Recommendations on Job										
Wish for Change										
Project Work										
Contact with refugees										
Projects										
Successes and challenges										