Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

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Diploma Thesis

The S Word: on attitudes of Post-Communist Generations toward Socialism, Marxism, and Economic Progressivism

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The S Word: On Attitudes of Post-Communist Generations toward Socialism, Marxism, and Economic Progressivism

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Objectives of thesis

The main objective of this diploma thesis is to provide a conceptualized understanding of the attitudes of the post-communist Warsaw Pact generations toward socialism, Marxism, and the associated terminology based on their respective countries' history and cultural legacy of the communist regime tried in the 20th century. The thesis will consider whether there is a common pattern of attitudes toward socialism, Marxism, and associated terminology among the respondents in the selected sample; whether there is a discernible correlation between their attitudes to socialism and their opinions on economic progressivism, and whether the above two can be to a reasonable degree explained by the communist era legacy. Based on this, it aims to pinpoint gaps in and/or dilemmas of political self-identification of the respondents and to deal with a difficult question: in the context of a 'socialism' vs. 'capitalism' dichotomy, which one does an individual dissatisfied with late capitalism lean toward if the alternative, i.e. communism, has an ambiguous, if not destructive record in the history of their home country? The ultimate objective is to encourage a more nuanced conversation about left-wing economics in academic and executive institutions in post-communist countries by confronting the historical legacy that still permeates collective consciousness to this day.

Methodology

The theoretical framework would include an overview of the generational history of communism of the selected Warsaw Pact countries and its probable influence on their generally accepted public opinion in regard to economic, political, and social philosophies. In addition to generational history, the literature review will also touch on other key spheres that surround the discourse on socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism, namely economic theory, political science, sociolinguistics, and semantics. The conceptualization in the practical part will then be done through identifying common patterns of thinking and opinions among the convenience sample of respondents as well as the correlation between their opinions and their individual attitudes and voting behavior in regard to progressive economic reforms that predominantly align with the ideology of the left. The methodology chosen for the practical part of this thesis is thematic content analysis and narrative analysis, both done through conducting interviews with the subject group and then coding of individual responses and categorization and interpretation of common patterns (if any)

among the individual responses, if there are any. Through coding and categorization, it would then be possible to connect those with the points brought up in the theoretical part and attempt to explain connections (if any) between the two.

The proposed extent of the thesis

60 – 70 pages

Keywords

socialism, Marxism, communism, economic progressivism, Warsaw Pact, post-communist generations, generational history, communist legacy,

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Recommended information sources

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on the thesis titled “The S Word: on attitudes of Post-communist Generations toward Socialism, Marxism, and Economic Progressivism” solely by myself and that except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own. As the author of the diploma thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break copyrights of any other person.

In Prague on 31.03.2021 _____

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The S Word: on attitudes of Post-Communist Generations toward Socialism, Marxism, and Economic Progressivism

SUMMARY

The cultural and historical legacy of the communist regime has greatly shaped the political attitudes of the Eastern Bloc countries. While the legacy of communism tried in the 20th century is far from triumphant and people seem to be predominantly approving of the collapse of the regime, the turn of the 21st century has also been anchored in social movements that question the viability of the current economic system. Capitalism is now often criticized for the growing level of inequality, persistent poverty, exploitation of labor, environmental degradation, short-run profit planning, and economic instability. Exposed to both a load of information on the communist heritage and the reality of late capitalism, the post-communist generation is forced to deal with the dilemma of their political affiliation: in the context of a 'socialism' vs. 'capitalism' dichotomy, which one does one dissatisfied with late capitalism lean toward if the alternative, i.e. communism, has an ambiguous, if not destructive record in the history of their home country? Forcing to confront that dilemma welcomes a more nuanced conversation in post-communist societies, a conversation that has both academic merit and practical application in how we approach economics and politics while also acknowledging the historical legacy that still permeates collective consciousness. This thesis aims to provide a conceptualized understanding of the attitudes of the post-communist Warsaw Pact generations toward socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism, to explore the semantic confusion that surrounds the terminology in question, and to advocate for a plural approach to economic scholarship.

Key words: socialism, Marxism, communism, economic progressivism, Warsaw Pact, post-communist generations, generational history, communist legacy, semantic disputes, sociolinguistics

Slovo S: o postojích postkomunistické generace k socialismu, marxismu a ekonomickému progresivismu

SOUHRN

Kulturní a historické dědictví komunistických režimů zanechalo velký vliv na osobní politické postoje obyvatel zemí bývalého východního bloku. Zatímco odkaz komunismu, který byl vyzkoušen ve dvacátém století, zdaleka není zabarven úspěchem a zdá se, že lidé převážně souhlasí s kolapsem těchto režimů, ve stoletím jednadvacátém vidíme vzestup sociálních hnutí, které pochybují o životaschopnosti současného ekonomického systému. Kapitalismus je dnes často kritizován za neustále se rozevírající příjmové nůžky, přetrvávající chudobu, vykořisťování práce, poškozování životního prostředí, hon za výdělkem v krátkodobém horizontu a ekonomickou nestabilitu. Vystavena množstvím informací o dědictví komunismu a realitě současného kapitalismu, je dnešní postkomunistická generace donucena vyřešit dilema svého politického postavení. V kontextu dichotomie mezi socialismem a kapitalismem, kterou ideologii si vyberou ti, kteří jsou nespokojeni se současným kapitalistickým systémem, když alternativa, t.j. komunismus, má rozporuplnou, jestli ne přímo destruktivní reputaci v dějinách jejich zemí? Donucením ke konfrontaci tohoto dilematu vytváříme prostor pro vícerozměrné konverzace v postkomunistických společnostech, konverzace, které mají jak akademický přínos, tak i praktickou využitelnost na to, jak přistupovat k ekonomickým a politickým tématům, uznávajíce historické dědictví, které stále proniká kolektivním podvědomím. Tato diplomová práce si klade za cíl poskytnout koncepční pochopení postojů postkomunistické generace ze zemí Varšavské smlouvy k socialismu, marxismu a ekonomickému progresivismu, prozkoumat sémantické nejasnosti v dané terminologii a podpořit pluralitní přístup k ekonomickým studiím.

Klíčová slova: socialismus, marxismus, komunismus, ekonomický progresivismus, země Varšavské smlouvy, postkomunistické generace, generační historie, dědictví komunismu, sémantické spory, sociolingvistika.

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1. Introduction

The legacy of communism tried in the 20th century is far from triumphant. Instead of building the bright socialist society as it is described in theory and providing a solution to mass poverty and imbalanced class structure, the regime employed in the Eastern Bloc countries is most notorious for its tyranny, terror, and torture (Ebeling, 2017). Almost three decades since the collapse of communism, the term itself, together with all adjacent terminology, i.e. socialism and Marxism, is still often used as a distinct pejorative that implies an inherently negative connotation (Krause-Jackson, 2019).

Nevertheless, the turn of the 21st century has been anchored in social movements that question the viability of the current economic system--namely, capitalism (Arnason, 2018). In the United States, the left-wing ideology has become increasingly popular with Generations Y and Z (Kight, 2019). Interestingly, in Europe, where, because of strong welfare states, the characteristics of socialism are more widely exhibited than in the U.S., the support of left politics among Millenials and Gen Z is less salient (Weck, 2019). While there is a solid amount of research on why that might be, the very notion of a blanket term "Europe" in this discourse fails to recognize the generational history of communism of the former Eastern Bloc / Warsaw Pact countries and its influence on their generally accepted public opinion in regard to economic, political, and social philosophies.

For the countries of the former Warsaw Pact, the collapse of communism three decades ago has brought about a whole range of economic, societal, and political upheavals. The said changes are generally positively evaluated. For example, according to the Czech News Agency, the GDP of the Czech Republic has nominally increased up 700% since the fall of communism, and in real terms, the economy has roughly doubled since 1989 when the Velvet Revolution took place. Similar trends in statistics can be observed in most former Warsaw Pact countries, where the economic situation has largely improved since the transition to a free-market democracy (Henley, 2019). Such improvements naturally reflect on an individual's quality of life: for example, in the Czech Republic, citizens' purchasing power has risen two and a half times since the country's transition to a market economy (RPI, 2020). It is thus not surprising that the public opinion in the former USSR countries and Eastern Europe of the fall of

communism is mostly approving (Henley, 2019). Yet, even among the Eastern Bloc countries, the perception of each country's progression since the collapse of communism differs greatly. In Poland and the Czech Republic, up to 85% of respondents said they approve of the shift their countries have undergone since 1989-1991, while in Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine the approval rate is below 55% (Wike, 2020).

According to the Pew Global Attitudes survey, the respondents who grew up in the countries of the Eastern Bloc during the transition from the communist regime to the free market economy are more approving of the political and economic changes that their countries have undergone than their elders--those who were already adults when the Iron Curtain fell (Wike, 2020). The generational gap in attitudes towards communism, capitalism, and democracy has long been under the radar of researchers. From a sociological standpoint, it is curious to observe how older generations often tend to think of the communist past longingly, while the younger generation seems to have developed disapproval not only of the communist regime their countries have undergone before they were even born but also of the communist ideology and all adjacent to it schools of thought. That is, however, not to say that either of the generations are entirely satisfied with the political and economic climate in their countries. According to that same Pew Research Center survey, 69% of respondents from the surveyed EU nations, Russia, and Ukraine shared frustration with political and business elites that, according to the respondents, benefit from the fall of communism far more than the 'ordinary people' (Wike, 2020).

The cultural and historical legacy of the communist regime has greatly shaped the political attitudes of the Eastern Bloc countries. On the one hand, people are predominantly approving of the collapse of communism. On the other hand, the shift to a multiparty system and a free-market economy does not seem to have eradicated all the problems the post-communist countries face today and the support of capitalism seems to have been diminishing since the initial widespread enthusiasm that swept across the Eastern Bloc when the regimes fell (Wike, 2020). The above two statements put the former Eastern Bloc countries in a contradictory position. People recognize that the current economic system works against them and yet more often than not favor market capitalism, sometimes out of spite more than anything else, guided by the binary view of capitalism vs. communism and nothing in between. The justification for

favoring market capitalism is often accompanied by 'socialism has failed in my country' argument.

1.1. Statement of problem and purpose

The binary view of communism vs. capitalism has greatly contributed to the way we discuss political agendas. However, when we limit the discourse to the binary, it becomes evident that by assuming a position on the spectrum, we inevitably stretch it one way or another. Definitive opposition to communism and the associated ideology—those that fall on the left-side on the said spectrum—inevitably pushes the public opinion to the right side, and the other way around. Since there is no limit to how far that spectrum can stretch, it is important to recognize that definitive opposition to one end of the spectrum, for example, to socialism, harms not only radical, far-left parties, but also their moderate and centrist counterparts, such as, in this case, democratic socialist, social liberal, and centrist labor parties.

In the case of socialism, what we see as a result of sweeping all associated to communism terminology under the same umbrella is that progressive economic reforms not only fail but are not being brought for a discussion in the first place under a pretense of being 'too radical,' the latter usually being code for left-wing and communism-esque. *If you want to destroy a program, call it "socialist."* (Teneille Brown, Stanford Law School, 2009). These semantics are especially important in the political circles of the Eastern Bloc countries, where anti-communist posturing is often adopted as a populist argument aimed at scoring points among the electorate by speculating on the undeniably destructive heritage of the communism regime tried in the 20th century, which, however, is based in the assumptions that 1) the said regime was in line with the classless and stateless socialism, or even a fully-executed Marxism, 2) [the communist past] is the essential problem of today's post-communist societies. Even to argue on the above two assumptions, there needs to be space for a discussion that is often not available due to a definitive public opposition to socialism as an ideology and the social ramifications of being affiliated with the said ideology.

After the monumental events of 1989-1991, the communist parties of the Eastern Bloc were faced with the public pressure to either cease their existence due to the record of mistakes,

crimes, and atrocities committed on behalf of their ideology or to transform to a social-democratic orientation to align with the newly established democratic system. While some were successful at the transformation, most parties did little to reform their political philosophy or admit the shortcomings of the dictatorship that came with the ideology. As a result of the lack of inner reflection of the parties, they further perpetuated the public conviction of their inherent lapse and ostracized themselves--and with that other radical left parties--from the functioning parties on the political stage (Seckar, 2009). The problematic record of mainline communist parties in the former Eastern Bloc further reinforces the negative connotation of socialism and associated terminology.

Meanwhile, the record of today's capitalism spikes a load of criticism for the growing level of inequality, persistent poverty, exploitation of labor, environmental degradation, short-run profit planning, economic instability, and high consumer debt, to name but a few shortcomings (Piketty, 2013, 2017). The solution to the negative consequences that are argued to be created by the basic structure of capitalism is usually incremental and are being implemented in different manners across the globe, yet more often than not they incorporate the socio-economic principles of social democracy and economic progressivism, i.e. the belief that an unregulated capitalist market is inherently unfair and unsustainable. Among the commonly proposed progressive economic reforms are progressive taxation, income and wealth redistribution, a comprehensive package of public services, universal healthcare, universal income, minimum wage laws, social security, workers' rights legislation, a welfare state, etc. This approach is by definition leftist as it involves unconditional social protection, government regulation, and the maintenance of public goods as opposed to rugged individualism and market fundamentalism.

As the share of the post-communist generation (see *Subject (respondents) criteria*) within the total population of the respective countries is gradually increasing, it is them who hold a large portion of the voting power and thus determine the course of political development of the former Eastern Bloc. Concurrently, it is the post-communist generation that has experienced the least of the aftermath of the communist regime and most of the positive trends associated with the shift towards the free market economy. Exposed to both a load of information on the communist heritage and the reality of late capitalism, the post-communist

generation is forced to deal with the dilemma of their political affiliation: in the context of a 'socialism' vs. 'capitalism' dichotomy, which way does one dissatisfied with late capitalism lean toward if the alternative, i.e. communism, has an ambiguous, if not destructive record in the history of their home country? Forcing to confront that dilemma welcomes a more nuanced conversation in postcommunist societies, a conversation that has both academic merit and practical application in how we approach economics and politics while also acknowledging the historical legacy that still permeates collective consciousness. That nuance is especially important in how we discuss economic policies and theories, particularly in post-communist countries, especially in the Czech academic environment.

1.2. Research questions

RS1: *Is there a common pattern of attitudes, perceptions, and [possibly] misconceptions in regard to socialism, Marxism, and associated terminology and ideology among the respondents of the study that are representatives of a post-communist generation? If yes, is there an evident pattern of either resentment or approbation toward the above?*

RS2: *Is there a discernible correlation between the attitudes of post-communist generations toward socialism as an ideology and their opinions and voting behavior in regard to economic progressivism?*

RS3: *Is there a gap between respondents' political self-identification (on the left-right political spectrum) and their opinions and voting behavior in regard to economic progressivism (according to the ideological groupings/characteristics across the left-right spectrum)?*

1.3. Research limitations

Theoretical framework: The lack of existing research on the topic by itself presents a limitation: while there is a sufficient amount of research on each of spheres surrounding the discourse (see Figure 1), the framework and structure of this particular thesis (again, the very

Figure 1), i.e. that which explores the attitudes specifically of post-communist generations in selected countries, has had to be deduced based on logical reasoning and assumptions, and thus is not perfectly exhaustive given the constraints of scope and volume of this research. The fields of sociology and social psychology are mentioned but are not explored in detail due to the author's lack of experience or qualification to be examining and validating findings from those fields of studies. It is with acknowledgement that the research gap is far too large that this thesis' objectives are articulated: it does not aim to demonstrate or explain causal pathways between one's political values and their attitudes on socialism but to provide a conceptualized understanding of those values and raise hypotheses based on that understanding, not with an intent to accept or reject them but to make a case and urge for a more holistic approach to the socialism vs. capitalism discourse.

Research: To realistically accommodate for the time constraints, scope, and volume of this thesis, the selected sample of respondents is a convenience sample which, even though is not representative, is appropriate for the research objectives as they are not concerned with statistical measurements. The decision to limit the research to the four selected former Warsaw Pact countries--Russia, Ukraine, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic--is also an attempt of narrowing the scope of the study in accordance with above mentioned practical constraints. Factors such sex, class, and race are not being taken in consideration in this thesis but their role in shaping one's political and economic thought are undeniable (Munro, 1984; Lorde, 1984; Lawrence, 1997, Kraus, 2015; Wiarda, 2018, to cite just a few) and thus any further research on the topic is encouraged to be conducted with consideration of those factors.

1.4. Definition of key terms

The operational definitions for equivocal terms, along with justification for choosing to [or not to] use particular definitions will be presented throughout the body of the thesis as the terms are being introduced. Below are the clarifications for some of the definitions of terminology used in introductory paragraphs, i.e. objectives, methodology, statements of problem and purpose, and research questions, spelled out to ensure that the research scope is clear.

Post-communist (adj.): Referring to something existing or occurring after the end of communism (Merriam Webster), which for this thesis is chosen to be the year of 1991, marking the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the Warsaw Pact countries and the fall of the USSR.

Generation: A cohort of individuals similarly located during a historical process and sharing an exposure to a common historical and sociocultural reality (see Karl Mannheim's *The Problem of Generations* (1952)).

Generational history: Experiential account of past events, anchored in personal history and told and retold from a perspective of past generations (see the definition above) by the members of those said generations and formal and informal institutions (media, authorities, national archives, etc.), narrativized in a way that to a certain extent mirrors the collective memory and generally accepted public opinion of a social group (Jureit, 2017).

Associated terminology: Here, any terms or expressions, regardless of connotative and denotative differences, that are commonly associated with socialism and Marxism, e.g. communism, leftist, left-wing, Leninism, anarchism, dialectical materialism, collective ownership, alienation, class struggle, etc. (see Arthur Bestor's *The Evolution of the Socialist Vocabulary* (1948)).

2. Objectives and Methodology

2.1. Objectives

The main objective of this diploma thesis is to provide a conceptualized understanding of the attitudes of the post-communist Warsaw Pact generations toward socialism, Marxism, and the associated terminology based on their respective countries' history and cultural legacy of the communist regime tried in the 20th century. The above insight is to be formulated by attempting to answer the research questions (specific objectives), namely if there is a common pattern of

attitudes toward socialism, Marxism, and associated terminology among the respondents in the selected sample; is there a discernible correlation between their attitudes to socialism and their opinions on economic progressivism, and whether the above two can be to a reasonable degree explained by the communist era legacy. Based on the correlation of individual opinions of socialism and economic progressivism, if there is any, it would be possible to pinpoint gaps in and/or dilemmas of political self-identification of the respondents and to deal with a difficult question: in the context of a 'socialism' vs. 'capitalism' dichotomy, which one does one dissatisfied with late capitalism lean toward if the alternative, i.e. communism, has an ambiguous, if not destructive record in the history of their home country? The findings would be useful for future research on the shortcomings of rhetoric used by left movements in communicating their agendas to post-communist generations that are allegedly preconceived to oppose left-wing ideology based on its record of failure in the countries of their origin. The ultimate objective of the efforts outlined above is to encourage a more nuanced conversation about left-wing economics in academic and executive institutions in post-communist countries by confronting the historical legacy that still permeates collective consciousness to this day.

2.2. Methodology

The theoretical framework would include an overview of the generational history of communism of the selected Warsaw Pact countries and its probable influence on their generally accepted public opinion in regard to economic, political, and social philosophies. In addition to generational history, the literature review will also touch on other key spheres that surround the discourse on socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism, namely economic theory, political science, sociolinguistics, and semantics. The conceptualization in the practical part will then be done through identifying common patterns of thinking and opinions among the convenience sample of respondents as well as the correlation of their individual opinions of the abovementioned ideologies to their individual attitudes and voting behavior in regard to progressive economic reforms that are, in today's political and economic climate of respective countries, predominantly align with the ideology of the left. The methodology chosen for the practical part of this thesis is thematic content analysis and narrative analysis, both done through

conducting interviews with the subject group and then coding of individual responses and categorization and interpretation of common patterns [of themes] among the individual responses, if there are any. Through coding and categorization, it would then be possible to connect those with the points brought up in the theoretical part and attempt to explain connections between the two, if there are any.

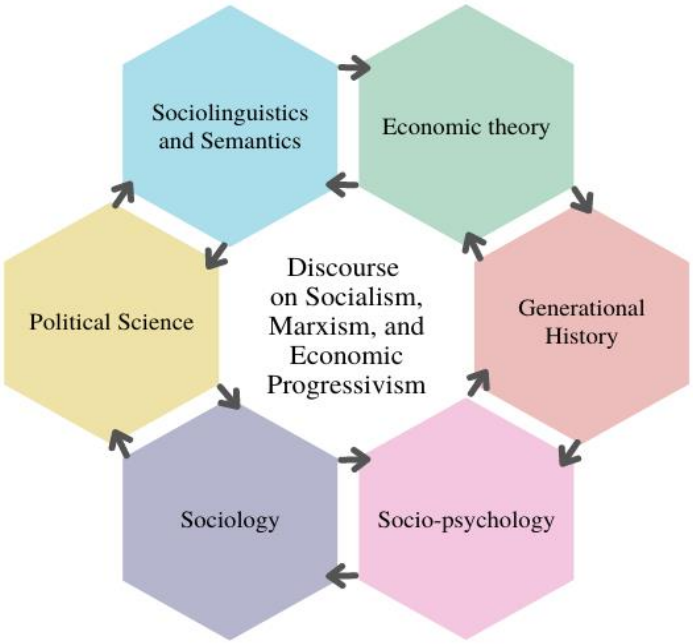
3. **Literature Review**

3.1. **Socialism, Marxism, and Economic Progressivism: understanding the discourse**

There is a growing body of research on the topic of political values, beliefs, and systems in post-communist countries, and there is a general consensus among that body of research that post-communist attitudes are not *tabula rasa* (Mishler, 1997, Tucker, et.al, 2002, Bernhard, 2007, to cite but a few); that there is indeed an acquired notion of ideology that is based on historical legacy of generations (generations as per Mannheim's understanding: see further in Section 3.1.). Despite a large volume of research, there is still no commonly accepted analytical framework for assessing the effect of one's belonging to a particular generation on their political beliefs and behavior. Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2011) have come closest to introducing such a framework, which will be looked into later, yet remain to be among the few who as much as attempted to make sense out of a convoluted notion of legacy through categorization and empirical methods). It is with acknowledgement that the research gap is far too large that this thesis' objectives are articulated: it does not aim to demonstrate or explain causal pathways between one's political values (note the difference from *political behavior*, which is political values aided with direct action, e.g. voting; *political values* are then simply attitudes toward politics and associated policies and agents) and expressed attitudes to socialism but to provide a conceptualized understanding of those values and raise hypotheses based on that understanding, not with an intent to accept or reject them but to make a case and urge for a more holistic approach to the socialism vs. capitalism discourse.

The discussion that is to follow is then intended to be not exclusive but as exhaustive as the format and volume of this thesis allows for. To account for the objective complexity of the world we live in, the discussion is to touch on the key six spheres that, according to the author's reasoning, surround the discourse on socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism: political science, economic theory, sociology, socio-psychology, generational history, and sociolinguistics and semantics (the order does not signify importance; see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Key six spheres surrounding the discourse



Source: Personal collection

3.1.1. **Language and Social Sciences**

Being a tool used for both communication and persuasion, language has always played an important role in political and economic movements, so much so that the area of research exploring the interrelation between language and political and economic theory has been quietly in the making for some fifty years now (Zhang, 2013).

Among the first mentions of that interrelation is Jacob Marschak's article 'The Economics of Language' first published in 1965 in *Behavioral Science* (Rubenstein, 2000). In his article, Marschak attempted to apply economic reasoning to language, arguing that a communication system, ranging from an entire language to a dial-and-buttons system of communicating a message, can be either optimal or not in relation to the set of objectives and utilities that system is trying to achieve and derive. While acknowledging that language extends

beyond the economic objective of optimization, Marschak demonstrated the ways in which economic theory and mathematical models are relevant to linguistics issues, especially in regard to languages' usage and survival. Marschak's article prompted a whole lot of further contributions on the topic, among which are published works by Grin (1994, 1996, 2003), Vaillancourt (1983), Grin, Sfreddo & Vaillancourt (2011), Rubinstein (2000) Glazer & Rubinstein (2001, 2004, 2006). The above have used very different approaches to examining the link between the studies of social sciences and linguistics, from surveying to game-theory, but all positively agree on the existence and relevance of that said link, asserting that, since political and economic agents are humans and humans use language to communicate among each other, make decisions, and form judgments, the significance of political and economic theories comes from their interpretation which is expressed by using language.

3.1.1.1. **Sociolinguistics and Semantics**

Sociolinguistics is a branch of study that aims to explore the ways in which social organizations, hierarchies, contexts, cultural norms, and beliefs affect the use of and changes in language (Mallinson, 2015). Contemporary sociolinguistics is in equal measure concerned with the effect of language on society and the effect of society on language: the two phenomena are considered to be mutually constitutive and inseparable (Mallinson, 2015). Sociolinguistic research aims to better understand how the speakers of a language assign meaning to language units based on the interrelation of their individual, communal, cultural, and societal roles and contexts/realities (Mallinson, 2015).

For this thesis, an especially relevant aim of sociolinguistics is that of language variation and alteration in response to social factors, i.e. how the perceived meaning of a unit of language changes in relation to the newly introduced historical, political, or cultural context (here: how terminology associated with communism is perceived based on the historical legacy of the communist regime). The work of Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) is credited as pioneering contemporary research that questioned the language homogeneity and suggested that a change in language use and perception/cognition is inevitable as the cultural and social context, i.e. socioeconomic reality and class, change (Mallinson, 2015).

3.1.1.2. Validation of sociolinguistic findings

There are two main approaches to understanding and validating sociolinguistic findings. The first approach is based on semantic individualism, also known as linguistic descriptivism, which assumes that people derive semantic notions, e.g. meaning and reference, based on their individual knowledge and cognition of language (Lassiter, 2008). This approach is most notoriously backed up by Noam Chomsky (1986, 1995, 2000). The individualist approach does not state that social aspects of language are entirely unimportant to language cognition but rather that social aspects are secondary or merely complementary to individualistic aspects of language.

On the other hand, semantic externalism--the second approach--holds that a language is communal and belongs to its users and that its constancy or evolution takes place above and beyond individual agency (Lassiter, 2008). According to this approach, the ontology and social practices of language exist independent of the linguistic or cognitive competence of its users.

To put it more coherently and to emphasize the relevance to this thesis,

Table 1: Semantic Individualism vs. Semantic Externalism

Semantic individualism	➔ language BELONGS TO the individual
	➔ semantics is being DERIVED FROM individual context and needs to be interpreted based on it and throughout the discourse
	Example: if an interviewee equates socialism with social democracy, which is *technically wrong*, but their [inaccurate] definition of socialism is the same as a textbook definition of social democracy, their statement is *NOT wrong*.
Semantic externalism	➔ language exists BEYOND the individual
	➔ semantics exists BEYOND the individual and needs to be articulated prior to engaging in the discourse

	Example: if an interviewee equates socialism with social democracy, which is *technically wrong*, but their [inaccurate] definition of socialism is the same as a textbook definition of social democracy, their statement *IS wrong*.

Source: interpreted from Semantic Externalism, Language Variation, and Sociolinguistic Accommodation by Daniel Lassiter, 2008

This dichotomy is important for this thesis because the side to which we choose to adhere will determine where we locate such semantic notions as truth and meaning: if, for example, an interviewee's use of language is *wrong* in relation to the definitions provided in section 3.1.3., is it a mistake (semantic externalism — the language exists independent from cognitive competence of a speaker and thus an incorrect usage of a term is a product of ignorance or unfamiliarity with a commonly accepted definition) or a failure of communication (semantic individualism — a meaning that an interviewee coded in their language is based predominantly on their individual cognition and then decoded through an individual cognition of the interviewer, thus inevitably distorting the originally conveyed message)?

For the purpose of this thesis, I will not be assuming one or another theoretical position but will be applying both where appropriate, accordingly. Since RQ1 deals with misconceptions and misunderstandings in relation to the terminology in question, it is important to have a code for pointing out factually 'right' and 'wrong' respondents' assumptions. For conducting the interviews, the logic of semantic individualism is more fitting since the goal is not only to see how and when the respondents use certain terms and claims but also what meaning/definition they hold and assign to those. For that reason, the definitions outlined in Section 3.1.3. will NOT be presented to them. For interpreting the interviews, however, I will assume the logic of semantic externalism as was elaborated in Table 1: if, for example, an interviewee's use of language is *wrong* in relation to the definitions provided in 3.1.3., it *is* a mistake, i.e. since language exists independent from cognitive competence of a speaker, an incorrect usage of a term is assumed to be a product of oblivion or unfamiliarity with a commonly accepted definition. This approach also allows to simplify the practical part of the research and to make it viable within the practical constraints. That being said, responses that are to be coded as 'right' or 'wrong' are in no way telling of ideological truth and are only reflective of truth in relation

to the terms outlined and articulated in 3.1.3.

Lastly, it is important to note the difference between denotative and connotative meanings. The logic of the two is similar to that of semantic externalism and individualism: semantic externalism holds that language exists beyond the individual, and denotation refers to the literal, dictionary meaning of a word; semantic individualism assumes that language belongs to the individual, and connotation refers to a personal and cultural meaning that accompanies the literal, dictionary meaning. Denotation is not classified, but connotation can be either positive or negative. Denotation then does not change regardless of personal or cultural experiences, whole connotation can and often does (Levinson, 2001). This method of describing the meaning will also be used in coding the interviews.

Table 2: Denotation vs. Connotation

Denotation	Connotation
A straightforward, literal, dictionary definition	Feelings and emotions, positive or negative, associated with a word
Example: Socialism	
Political and economic theory; social organization; leftism; rule of proletariat; public ownership, etc.	Positive: Fair, just, equal; Negative: Totalitarian, repressive, evil.

Source: Interpreted from *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature* by Stephen C. Levinson, 2001

3.1.1.3. **Semantic disputes and equivocation**

Especially important in political discourses are semantic disputes. A semantic discord is a type of disagreement that arises when the parties disagree on the meaning of words or terms that they use to make a claim, and not on the material reality of that claim (Devitt, 1994). In linguistics, semantic disputes are often regarded as unimportant (see Chomsky 1986, 1995, 2000 and Section 3.1.1.2.) since they fall under the logic of semantic individualism, meaning that since

individuals assign meaning to language based on individual context, the variation of that meaning is as large as the human population, difficult to analyze, and thus of little importance. In philosophy, however, semantic disputes are regarded not only as valid but primarily necessary.

The notion of semantics is inseparable from one's ideology--a set of beliefs or philosophies,--especially in the context of political campaigning and discourse. Take, for example, the word *progressive*. (1) A common, dictionary definition most familiar to one's ear would be *developing, happening gradually*. (2) If the political or economic context is introduced, that definition can be adjusted to *ideas, systems, or individuals that encourage sweeping social change*. (3) However, in the context of today's politics, *progressive* is a very explicit term, specific to leftist ideology, and the definition of it hardly vague; instead, it is closely associated with specific progressive reforms, e.g. welfare state, wealth redistribution, progressive tax, social services, etc. Without having that definition articulated, two parties can assign very different meanings to the same terminology. Based on the above logic, contexts (1), (2), and (3) can be reassigned to (No context), (General context), and (Specific context)--this will be useful for coding and interpreting the interviews to understand where semantic disputes can arise.

Another example would be the word *liberal*. The common, (No context) definition, would be *open to new ideas*. The political and economic (General context) definition is then *a philosophy that promotes democracy, civil liberties, and individual rights*. Then again, in today's vernacular, it has a more specific definition (Specific context), *something or someone on the left-wing of the political spectrum*. This example is very important because it is illustrative of the limitation of this coding system in regard to solving semantic disputes because even though it has been adjusted to the specific context (Specific context), it still fails to encompass its full external semantics. While *liberal* (Specific context) does mean *something or someone on the left-wing of the political spectrum,* the cognitive perspective of that term largely depends on the individual's own placement on the political spectrum. Where an individual with right-wing views would find the (Specific context) definition reasonably correct, someone with far-left views, e.g. radical, socialist, communist, Marxist, etc., could reasonably disagree with the same, arguing that *liberal* is hardly representative of the left-wing ideology and needs

clarification of its placement in relation to the right, center, and left marks on the axis.

The above two examples show the importance of semantic coding in understanding semantic disputes, while also acknowledging its failure to accurately define certain terms and apply the coding universally. Given the purpose and constraints of this research, the presented coding system (No context; General context; Specific context) is fitting and appropriate but when interpreting the interviews the limitations of the said system will be repeated and elaborated on, where possible, on a case by case basis.

Aside from leading to miscommunication and unproductive debates, semantic disputes can lead to equivocation, which is a logical fallacy that happens when the same term is used in multiple senses within one argument. (Kirwan, 1979) A relevant to this thesis example of equivocation would be the following statement: *democratic socialism incorporates capitalist practices, therefore, capitalist practices are bound to be used under socialism*. Here, the same term, *socialism*, is used twice in one logical thought. However, one can (and should) argue that in the first instance, *democratic* is not just an adjective, but an adjunct modifier to the noun *socialism*, and thus the two cannot be logically separated or equated with a stand-alone noun. If equivocation occurs, the statement in question is almost always considered to be invalid, regardless of its logical validity. This phenomenon is expected to be observed during the interviews since the respondents will not be given any outlined definitions of terminology in question and reserve the autonomy to interpret and use it relying on their personal knowledge and logic. For the purpose of this research, equivocation is not only expected but also anticipated, as it is directly related to the questions articulated as a part of R.Q. 1.

3.1.2. **Political science**

The above-explained equivocation and semantic disputes do not emerge from a vacuum. The words *socialism* and *Marxism* have a loaded connotation to them recognizable even to those who have hardly studied the dictionary definitions of the two. *Progressivism*, on the other hand, is a term that in its vastness has entered the political vernacular fairly recently, and is rarely closely associated with *socialism* or *Marxism*, even though logically the three fall under the same ideological thought.

Political science is especially concerned with semantics since the language bears consequences for political decisions and shapes political realities (Schaffner, 2010). With political campaigning becoming a common practice with a number of channels available for it, language has become an even more important tool in delivering political messages.

The dichotomy of socialism/communism vs. capitalism is an example of name-calling widely used in political campaigns. However, the term *capitalism* is rarely used as a scare word in mainstream politics as it simply reflects the material reality, while terms such as *communism*, *socialism*, and *Marxism* are often tossed around in political discourse in a derogatory manner, and the latter connotation is not exclusive to the nations where the terminology has taken root (Azerrad, 2016). While it is quite anticipated that those who experienced the communist regime have deep emotional scars associated with the terminology, even for nations with no socialist history to explain what socialism would mean in practice, e.g. United States, the terminology, if it doesn't belong to the dirty-word category, at the least brings out strong emotions.

Yet, the mainstream notion of socialism and whether it is a fitting term for the communism tried in 20th century Europe has long been debated. While socialism has an established core of philosophy and objectives, it has meant different things to different people in different times and places. In the early 19th century, when the term socialism was coined, it had two main meanings: Marxist and non-Marxist. The non-Marxist understanding of the term was a movement in opposition to the residual effects of liberal economics, which were claimed to be overly competitive and dehumanizing, and supportive of autonomy, communitarianism, and participation of the working class in governmental functions. Meanwhile, the Marxist understanding of socialism focused on class struggle, conditions of production and ownership, and the political consequences that dynamic produced (King, 2003). The above two-way classification is overly simplified but it shows how even in its early days, the meaning of socialism was disputed and contested, with different fractions claiming to have the purest, most accurate vision of socialism.

As those visions developed differently across time and geography, different forms of socialism and socialist practices were applied in different places. That dispersion naturally caused even more confusion as to what constitutes socialism and what kind of regime people think of when the word comes up, e.g. USSR or modern-day Sweden? Globalization, especially

that among the industrialized countries, has also contributed to blurring the definition of socialism. Scandinavian countries are generally regarded as quasi-socialist while they merely incorporate systems of socialized healthcare, education, housing, etc. into otherwise a free market system; Warsaw Pact countries mostly condemn their communist past while also sticking to the communist legacy of the welfare state; in the United States, democratic socialist politicians such as Sen. Bernie Sanders and congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are often regarded as far-left socialists, while their views are but left-leaning centrist if compared to the above-mentioned countries' understanding of political affiliation.

There is political reasoning in obscuring mainstream terminology, too. In political circles of the Eastern Bloc countries, anti-communist posturing is often adopted as a populist argument aimed at scoring points among the electorate by speculating on the undeniably destructive heritage of the communist regime tried in the 20th century. That approach is widely used in countries with no communist past, too, e.g. the United States, where *socialism* and *communism* are Pavlovian bells meaning 'totalitarian rule' even within the left-leaning Democratic Party.

As a result of being slathered over things hardly socialist, this essential terminology loses its meaning. That and the fact the distinction between socialism, communism, and social democracy is very unclear to the general public (and, arguably, to those in academic circles, too) makes it almost impossible to talk politics without running into some kind of semantic disputes.

3.1.3. **Economic theory**

There is also a good amount of ambiguity in what socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism mean in economic terms. For socialism, that confusion arises mostly from a wide-ranging left spectrum of ideology that is often swept under the umbrella term of socialism, including a common practice of amounting socialism to absolute communism. Marxism, being a body of doctrine developed by and named after Karl Marx, is heavily academized and often overlooked as a philosophy on itself as it was Marx's work that served as the foundation for the many failed dictatorships in the Eastern Bloc and beyond, which makes him a controversial figure. Economic progressivism is also a clouded term as not only it contains the dubious word *progressive* that does not clearly communicate its inherent tendency to bear left, but has also

been widely used as an ideology-free replacement for 'socialist,' which is misleading. Despite the differences, the three terms are closely akin when it comes to economic theory and vision, as will be explained in this chapter.

Since Marxism it more of a method of socioeconomic analysis than it is a school of thought on itself (though many schools of thought were developed based on Marxism, e.g. Leninism, Trotskyism, Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, to name but a few), it is important to emphasize that the term Marxian economics is not interchangeable with Marxism, meaning that one can agree with Marxian economics without being politically Marxist (Wolff and Resnick, 1988). Marx's original approach to understanding economics and its development is generally independent from his advocacy for revolutionary socialism, and adherents of Marxian economics do not lean on the traditional teachings of Marx alone and draw from a range of both Marxist and non-Marxist sources (Foley and Dumenil, 2008). Where in the case of socialism and progressivism, one generally falls under the label if they support respective policies, Marxist theory is so all-encompassing and is applied in interpretation of economic, cultural, and political systems, that is is difficult to assign it a clear definition, let alone assign it as a universal label without further specifying which parts of Marxist ideology one assumes in giving that label a meaning. Since Marxism and Marxian economics share a semantic field, it is expected to see the two being used synonymously in the interviews with the respondents, yet the distinction is made in literature review to be factually precise; henceforth, Marxist approach to economics will be explained through and by Marxian school of economics.

Most of Marx's economic theory is drawn from his major work on materialism, *Capital* (1867), in which he described economic and social reality in 19th century Europe and explained his theory of capitalism and its dynamics towards self-destruction. *Das Kapital* provided a grounding scientific foundation to Marx's early writings, including the famous Communist Manifesto. A text in three volumes, *Das Kapital* is hard to be summarized in a sentence, but it is essentially an extended argument on how an economic system that is based solely on profit maximization is inherently unstable. The key pillars of Marxian economics then, derived mainly from *Das Kapital*, are the following:

[1] **the labor theory of value** — a theory that the economic value of a commodity, i.e. its real price, is determined by the 'socially necessary labor time' required to produce the said

commodity; it then follows that the working class is responsible for the production of all value, i.e. wealth, consumed by all members of a society;

[2] **the economics of 'exploitation' and 'surplus value'** — the capitalist class extracts surplus value between the value created by the working class and the cost of their labor, i.e. wages, thus not paying the workers for the value they create, which is deemed as exploitative;

[3] **the inherent tendency of 'profit' to fall** — since the economic interests of the two classes (the capitalist class and the working class) are by definition incompatible, the clash between the two and seizure of control by the working class is inevitable.

Simply put, Marxian economics is a rejection of the classical economics--a free market regulated by supply and demand--based on the conviction that an onus of profit maximization only benefits the selected few. Marx then saw socialism as a transient stage on the way from capitalist to communist order. This is the most important point that makes a clear distinction between the terms Marxism and socialism--Marxism is but an analytical framework, a vision, while socialism is a broad range of systems of anti-capitalist economic organization.

The definition of a socialist economy also varies depending on how close its interpretation is to the tenets of socialism. The normative principles of a socialist economy are the following (Nove, 2008):

[1] **collective ownership** — all means of production belong to and are owned by the people, or the government that is regulated by the people, and the resources are utilized in interest of social welfare as opposed to sole profit maximization. Different branches of socialism are to different extent critical of private property: far left supporters usually support abolition of private property ownership, while center-left, e.g. social democrats, tend to focus on redistribution of wealth of markets and private enterprises as opposed to abolishing them altogether;

[2] **economic equality and the abolition of classes** — elimination of class struggle and reduction (going on abolition) of the distinction of classes, i.e. advocacy for economic, social, and political equality among all members in society;

[3] **economic planning** — a process of allocation of capital goods and factors of production among economic units, usually carried out by a determinate authority, e.g. central government (though not all socialist economic theories advocate for a central planning authority,

most still are centered around some form of a planned economy, e.g. decentralized planning).

In short, the idea of a socialist economy is rooted in a belief in social control and regulation of the economy but there are disagreements across the left spectrum regarding the extent of that regulation and intervention (Schweickart, 1998, pp. 61-63). While the [Western] socialist economic thought is largely influenced by and rightfully associated with Marx's and Engels' work and Marxism, its values also have roots in pre-capitalist institutions and organizations, e.g. rural and religious communes and social obligations in medieval Europe (Wallerstein, 1995; Halpin, 2011).

Now, progressivism is a term that has entered the mainstream political vernacular fairly recently and is not a complete system of ideas but rather a philosophy centered around the sentiment of social reform. Economic progressivism, then, is not as much a derivative from a specific ideology as it is an umbrella term for economic policies that aim at improving social welfare through government regulation, social protection, and maintenance of public goods (Halpin, 2011). A label *progressive* is often used as a substitute for *socialist* when the latter term has been demonized. *If you want to destroy a program, call it "socialist."* (Teneille Brown, Stanford Law School, 2009). As a political term, *progressive* on itself is rarely used outside of the U.S., where it is often applied in a manner just explained--in contrast with both conservative and neo-liberal free-market ideology but out of reluctance to identify as socialist. Economic progressivism as a practice, however, has a long history in Europe, from English Poor Laws to Bismarck's welfare state in Germany to Nordic models (Petersen, 2013). Some of the principles of economic progressivism and associated policies are as follows (Mcgerr, 2016, pp. 243-263):

[1] **reducing inequality of wealth**, e.g. through progressive taxation and income and wealth redistribution;

[2] **welfare state and upward social mobility**, achieved by universal access to public services, healthcare, public education, social security, etc.;

[3] **opposition to laissez-faire capitalism and corporate rule**, e.g. through introduction of minimum wage laws, antitrust laws, legislation protecting workers' rights and the rights of labor unions, etc.

3.1.4. **Generational history**

As it has already been established in Section 3.1.1., language, being a social product, is inseparable from the social context from which that language has evolved. It is then important to understand the sociocultural and historic context and how it has contributed to shaping the formative experiences of generations in question.

The sentiment that Denis Dedirot, a prominent philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment, addressed to the future generations in his work *Encyclopédie*, *"what men to whose instruction and happiness we were sacrificing ourselves would say about us, men we esteemed and loved, even though they did not yet exist"* (Diderot, 2001, p. 297) is the one common to the Bolshevik revolution (and, in the greater picture, Marxism), which viewed a generation, and even oneself, as but a stepping stone to the future, a future brighter and better, where the spectre of communism had finally come. The history of communism, then, is a generational history, inseparable from the milieu of those who lived to see the rise of the ideology and the respective regimes (Shore, 2009).

The concept of a generation, like the phenomena of generational difference, both have simple and conventionally agreed on definitions: a generation is a group of people born and living at around the same time, regarded collectively, or a period of 20-30 years during which people are born and grow up, become adults, and have their own children (Merriam-Webster); generational differences, then, are differences in values, opinions, and beliefs between people who belong to different generations (Jureit, 2017). However, the contemporaneity at the center of the above definitions fails to account for the nuances especially relevant to social sciences, such as historical and sociocultural context under which a group of people is born and raised, which, Karl Mannheim, the Hungarian sociologist whose name is ubiquitously referenced in academic work on generations, argued is what shapes the unifying commonalities of a generation. Henceforth, then, a generation will be defined as per Mannheim's understanding of it--a cohort of individuals similarly located during a historical process. It is important to note that Mannheim's *The Problem of Generation* (1952), where the above-mentioned definition was formulated, underspecifies the links between generations and social factors such as class and gender and conflated only age- and cohort-effects (Steele, 2012, pp. 47-70), which, while on

itself presents a limitation, is in line with the research limitations set for this thesis.

Jeffrey Kopstein, who has written extensively on post-communism, warned in his *Post Communist Democracy: Legacies and. Outcomes* (2003) that *"the concept of legacy is especially slippery. If the weight of the past affects the present, at a minimum, it is necessary to specify which past."* This presents less of a limitation and more of a delimitation that needs to be drawn, that is, we are assuming that the legacy of communism in selected countries stems if not solely then most definitely predominantly from the years of being under the communist regime, i.e. 1917-1991.

3.1.4.1. **Former USSR: Russia and Ukraine**

The 19th century Russia had seen multiple cultural transfers from one philosophy to another, especially within the intelligentsia circles. The Russian intelligentsia took to Hegelianism especially well, which paved the way to future radical intellectual traditions that later swept Russia, including that of Marxism. Marxist thought spread through Russia good three decades after the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) but it arrived just in time for Lenin to seize power in the Russian Revolution of 1917 and in 1922 to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) based on the one-party Marxist-Leninist rule (Shore, 2009).

Ukraine, similarly to other Slavic countries, experienced a time of national revival between late XIX and early XX centuries but the said revival did not catalyze the creation of a truly independent state until much later. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, several factions attempted to create an independent Ukrainian state. In the meantime, Bolsheviks instigated uprisings to support the revolution (Magocsi, 1996). After multiple uprisings, warfare, and changes in the Ukrainian government ordered by Lenin, the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of Ukraine was formed in Moscow in 1919 (Magocsi, 1996). The Russification, both by suppressing Ukrainian language and introducing Russian-led community initiatives and organizations, was met with resistance at some corners of Ukraine (the West) and welcomed in others (the East, which had been a part of the Russian Empire before the USSR formation).

For Russian intelligentsia and masses alike, communism arrived from Europe as an intellectual exercise and later came about with the 1917 Revolution as a promise of a fairer alternative to the absolute monarchy at the time. (Shore, 2009). In Ukraine however,

communism arrived pre-packaged in Leninist praxis. For Ukraine, that meant their national agency being taken away and hastily swept under the already established ideology--the development that still echoes in modern Ukraine's understanding of the events of the early XX century, resulting in a resentment of the Soviet communist rule. That resentment was then furthered by the Soviet famine of 1932-33, commonly known as Holodomor, that killed an estimated 6-8 million people in the Soviet Union, the majority of them being those who lived in Ukraine (Applebaum, 2018).

The zeitgeist in the USSR had changed multiple times during the 20th century but the spirit of communism had remained strong all throughout. Stalin's death was a national tragedy (Cohen, 1989). In his *Reflections on a Spawn of Hell* published in The New York Times in 1973, Joseph Brodsky, a Russian-American poet and essayist wrote: *"and they wept...because an entire epoch was tied to Stalin (or, more precisely, because Stalin had tied himself to an entire epoch)...People grew up, got married, got divorced, had children, got old and all the time the portrait of Stalin hung over their heads. There was some reason to weep. The question arose of how to live without Stalin. No one knew the answer."* Regardless the nationwide grief and confusion, the new leadership was promising: the country has entered the Khrushchev Thaw, a period of loosened up censorship and relieved repression (Cohen, 1989). That time of liberalization created somewhat of a bubble for those whose formative years fell during that time. Brezhnev, who came to power after Khrushchev in 1964, put an end to (and reverted) both that liberalization and European Marxism; in 1968, Soviet tanks arrived in Prague (Cohen, 1989).

The communist regime is responsible for a long list of atrocities committed against both Ukrainians and Russians, along with the others in and outside of the USSR, but today's Russia and Ukraine have assumed different memory models: where the mainline narrative in Russia asserts a 'triumphalist' version of the past, Ukraine has gone through a massive historical re-evaluation in the 21st century and positions itself as a 'victim,' rather than a subject, of the Soviet regime and its communist legacy. This difference in attitudes is especially visible in how the two countries regard Victory Day, traditionally celebrated on May 9: in Russia, it is a day of commemoration of the Nazi Germany surrender in 1945, the celebration of which is traditionally accompanied with grand military parades, whilst in Ukraine as of 2014 the end of

the WWII is celebrated on May 8 in an attempt to separate it from its Soviet roots and to change the dynamics from celebrational to mournful (Melnyk, 2020).

The Communist Party of Ukraine has hardly ever been anything but an extension to that of the RSSR. That has especially surfaced after the fall of the USSR in 1991 when, even though the Soviet-era Communist Party of Ukraine (CPSU) was succeeded by a newly formed Communist Party of [Independent] Ukraine (KPU) in 1993, KPU's agenda heavily relied on speculation on nostalgia for the Soviet Union and Soviet nationalism. Despite having a loyal electorate consisting of those thinking of the communist past longingly, KPU had not taken over 15% of the parliamentary seats in Verkhovna Rada since 2002 (66/450 in 2002, 21/450 in 2006, 27/450 in 2007, 32/450 in 2012, 0/250 in 2014), and in 2019 parliamentary elections they were denied registration in accordance with a set of laws signed in 2015 that outlawed communist symbols (The Guardian, 2015).

As the influence of the mainline Communist Party of Ukraine has waned, no new ideological successors have emerged (Portnikov, 2014). Decommunization had catalyzed the prohibition of KPU and the re-appraisal of the political past of CPSU has greatly contributed to the reluctance of any today's parties to use a label social-democrat, let alone socialist, even when it is most fitting with the ideology that parties pertain to (Delo, 2019). The ideological niche of the departed and fallen KPU and SPU remains vacant precisely due to the conflict of ideology and cultural heritage of Ukraine--while other former Soviet SOI countries have attempted, some more successfully than others, to represent the left ideological spectrum on their acting political arena, Ukrainian political parties remain hesitant of incorporating an unequivocal left rhetoric in their campaigns lest that should deter the votes (Portnikov, 2014). Interestingly, during the 2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine, the Post-Information Society Institute of Ukraine analyzed the campaigns and programs of Ukrainian political parties running for the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) of Ukraine and concluded that, regardless of the idology declared by the key speakers of the parties running for the elections, all the declared parties were left- or central-left based on their ideologies (Delo, 2019).

Meanwhile, in today's Russia, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)--the successor of the Communist Party of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic--is the second largest political party in Russian Federation. It still adheres to Marxist-Leninist

dogma (though in recent years, CPRF's ideology has been greatly influenced by Dengism and its pragmatic approach to politics and economics) developed during the USSR times, and uses the same symbolics and organizational structure as back in the days (Ishiyama, 2020). Its electorate mostly consists of the elderly voters and regardless of its nominal opposition to the ruling party, United Russia, CPRF does not appeal to the oppositional youth. Similarly to KPU, CPRF has done little to either rebrand themselves or critically analyze and address their Soviet legacy (Ishiyama, 2020). Out of the three leading political parties in Russia today, CPRF is the only one that is unambiguously left-wing; United Russia and Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) are centrist and far-right, respectively (Ishiyama, 2020).

Based on the above, the key experiences that might have shaped the national attitude of Ukrainians and Russians toward the socialist ideology are the following:

- For the USSR, communism had been a constant since its very formation, through the wars, and across generations, "*all the time the portrait of Stalin hung over their heads."* Both the regime and the ideology had seemed to be rather established, habitual, matter-of-fact.
- The spirit of communism had not significantly waned during any point of the USSR existence, there were no large-scale dissident movements, and its nominal approval rate remained stable until the collapse of the USSR.
- While communism originally arrived at Russia as an intellectual exercise, to Ukraine it arrived as Leninism, halting the process of national revival and later reversing it by aggressive implementation of social and institutional russification. Soviet efforts to indoctrinate Ukraine into the ideology and especially the famine of 1932-33, Holodomor, have left a lasting imprint on the national memory, resulting in resentment that still echoes in modern Ukraine's understanding of the communist regime and the ideology.
- Today's Russia and Ukraine have assumed different memory models: where the mainline narrative in Russia asserts a 'triumphalist' version of the past, Ukraine has gone through a massive historical re-evaluation in the 21st century and positions itself as a 'victim,' rather than a subject, of the Soviet regime and its communist legacy.
- The set of decommunization laws passed in 2015, under which Ukraine has outlawed

any use of communist symbols, is showing of the nation's attempt to shed the communist legacy; Ukraine's position in regard to the regime and with that the ideology is strongly disapproving. Today, there is an apparent reluctance of political parties in Ukraine to use a label social-democrat, let alone socialist, or incorporating an unequivocal left rhetoric in their campaigns lest that should deter the votes. The ideological niche of the once powerful left remains vacant.

- The Communist Party of Russian Federation operates still and is the second largest political party in Russia. It remains but a nominal opposition to the leading party (United Russia), has done little to rebrand or critically analyze and address their Soviet legacy, and predominantly appeals to the elderly voters.

3.1.4.2. **Soviet SOI: Czech Republic and Slovakia**

To Czechoslovakia, that lied in the Soviet sphere of influence (SOI) after the war, the communist ideology arrived mostly during and through WWII. Unlike Poland, Czechoslovakia at the time did not have a widely spread anti-Soviet sentiment or doubt regarding the Red Army's liberating efforts. In the election for the Constituent Assembly in 1946, Communists won the majority of votes in the Czech Republic, and finished second in Slovakia (Blaive, 2005). By 1948, Communists managed to take full control across the entire Czechoslovakia.

The war had then sliced time into two; Czechoslovakia left the Nazi occupation behind and ahead was, as it seemed at the time, a brighter future. Post-war Czechoslovakia was a highly industrialized country and no stranger to partial state ownership of enterprises and thus there was no hostility toward government intervention in the economy; social ideology was strong among workers and intellectuals alike; fear induced anti-German sentiment was still fresh, and religion exerted almost no influence across the country (Blaive, 2005). However, Slovakia that did not get much of a say in the post-war Republic, was not favorable toward the Czech nationalism that complemented Soviet communism.

In 1956, Czechs and Slovaks saw their neighbors in Poland and Hungary rebel against the communist regime but were reluctant to join the struggle. That docility stemmed from their overall satisfaction with the standard of living in Czechoslovakia at the time, so where political

disagreements arose, they were pacified by the argument of relative economic privilege (Blaive, 2005). That prevailing national attitude persisted even through the events leading to the Prague Spring in 1968, and then all throughout 1989. The dissident movement in Czechoslovakia was thus isolated and not very numerous.

From 1945 onwards, the KSU was promoting socialism that was specifically Czechoslovak and differed from the Soviet tradition in its commitment to democracy. The promise was then delivered by a newly elected in 1968 party leader Alexander Dubček, before a Slovak politician, to transition to a 'socialism with a human face' (Czech: socialismus s lidskou tváří) (Shore, 2009). That commitment gave hope to once-young Stalinists, now Marxists, and those just coming of age. That great hope did not last for long; Dubček's reforms were not received well by the Soviet leadership and on August 20-21, 1968, the Soviet Union together with the Warsaw pact invaded Czechoslovakia to suppress the reforms. (Navratil, 1998). The invasion had successfully halted Dubček's liberalization efforts and it also left a superlative imprint on Czech and Slovak national memory. With that, the generation of believers had passed, and the 'normalization' (Czech: normalizace) that followed--the years that Václav Havel called 'post-totalitarian'--shaped a generation of *'pragmatic people'* (Miroslav Kusy, interviewed in Bratislava in 1993); Marxism as a belief was entirely replaced with 'real socialism' as a praxis (Czech: reálný socialismus) (Shore, 2009). The generation of believers was then replaced by the generation of the guilty, with both belief (and later nostalgia) and guilt (and later shame) to this day echoing in the tone used to narrate the stories about communism in Czechoslovakia.

Then came 1989, the Velvet Revolution, the transition to a parliamentary republic, and later in 1993, a split into two independent countries--the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Blaive, 2005). A new, 'transitional,' 'bridging generation' was coming of age in the midst of post-revolutionary socioeconomic stratification (Shore, 2009). The cultural and political climate was favorable to the young, flexible, Western-oriented. For those who had worked under the communist regime their entire life and expected that effort to yield the return in their old age, the social contract had been broken and felt almost like a betrayal. (Shore, 2009).

For Czechoslovakia, the fall of the Iron Curtain opened the way not only to the West but also to itself; it incited an inward retrospection, an ongoing to this day process of opening

archives and revisiting wartime, Stalinism, post-war violent expulsions of ethnic settlements, i.e. the 'wild transfer' of Germans from Sudetenland, lustrations, public display of collaborators, topics of domestic violence and antisemitism, to name but a few (Shore, 2009). A wave of massive indictments and decommunization was soon to follow (The Office of the Documentation and the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism was established in 1995; act 198/1993 passed in on July 9, 1993 declared Communist regime in Czechoslovakia (referring to the period from February 25, 1948 to April 23, 1990) illegal and the KSU a criminal organization; purification laws of 1991 and 1992 blacklisted former collaborators of State Security from civil service, etc.). While the laws received in equal measure praise and criticism--the lustrations are a domain to be researched separately,--the sentiments behind them, those of revenge, justice, reconciliation, application of collective guilt, etc., reverberate still. No other Soviet SOI country carried out such a thorough purge of its historiography as the Czech Republic (Slovakia less so) (Blaive, 2005). Even so, the Czech Republic to this day continues to harbor in its political arena the Communist Party that, similarly to that in today's Russia, has done little to rebrand or reconstruct from the pre-1989 past (Ishiyama, 2020). The Communist Party of Slovakia has been receiving very marginal support since its formation in 1992.

Based on the above, the key experiences that might have shaped the national attitude of Ukrainians and Russians toward the socialist ideology are the following:

- The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) was founded in 1921 as a section of Communism International (Cominter) and as of 1928 was the second largest section of Cominter. Banned in 1938, KSČ went dormant for almost a decade before assuming control over the government in 1948. The seizure of power by the Communist Party was, among other countries in postwar Eastern Europe, the smoothest in Czechoslovakia.
- Slovakia did not get much of a say in the post-war Republic and was not favorable toward the Czech nationalism that complemented Soviet communism. Slovak numbers of the Party members remained moderate when those surged up among Czechs.
- Socialism that was promoted by the Party was said to be specifically Czechoslovak and differed from the Soviet tradition in its commitment to

democracy. That, together with overall post-war optimism, has shaped generations of idealists who genuinely supported communism and believed it to had been a step into the realm of freedom and progress.

- In 1968, the promise of 'socialism with a human face' abruptly clashed with the Warsaw Pact invasion, prompting the realization of impending totalitarianism that awaited. The generation of believers was then replaced by the generation of the guilty, with both belief (and later nostalgia) and guilt (and later shame) to this day echoing in the tone used to narrate the stories about communism in Czechoslovakia.
- Both Slovakia and the Czech Republic still have operating, if rather marginal, Communist Parties.
- The Czech Republic conducted a sweeping lustration of former communists. No other Soviet SOI country carried out such a thorough purge of its historiography as the Czech Republic (Slovakia less so). The sentiments behind such efforts, those of revenge, justice, reconciliation, application of collective guilt, to this day reverberate in collective memory.

3.1.4.3. **Terminology and the regime**

The debate on whether Soviet communism was an example of a *true* communist class structure, a *pure* communism in line with Marxist dogma, has been around since before the USSR fell, and even proponents of both the ideology and the Soviet attempt at incorporating it rarely go as far as to claim that the creation and evolution of the Soviet Union were indeed exemplary of communism. In *Class Theory and History: Capitalism and Communism in the USSR* (2002), Stephen A. Resnick and Richard D. Wolff, both specializing in Marxian economics, came to the conclusion that riles both the Left and the Right: that the struggle between communism and capitalism never happened in the Soviet Union but instead, Western private capitalism was pitted against state-run capitalism, implying that it is partially because of ingrained capitalist practices that Soviet communism collapsed, *"the Soviets didn't establish communism. They thought about it, but never did it."* One of Resnick's main arguments to

support that statement is that if true communism ever existed in the Soviet Union, it was only during the short period right after the 1917 revolution when the Bolsheviks redistributed land among the peasants and those formed collectives and used the surplus as they deemed appropriate. However, soon after, the Bolsheviks started assigning state managers to operate industries on behalf of the people, thus taking over decision-making about the production surplus and profits. Resnick and Wolff contend that state capitalism could have originally been seen by Lenin and the Bolsheviks as a stepping stone on the way toward communism, but that Stalin short-circuited that idea by accelerating the evolution and simply declaring the USSR a communist-socialist state, a politically loaded call, aimed mostly at assuaging the masses still recovering from WWI and the czarist regime; declaring the revolution a success was easier than working toward that success. By the 1980s, the production potential could no longer run by inertia to sustain industrial capital accumulation, consumer demands, and the Communist Party apparatus: something had to give, and soon private capitalism entered the play, too. In *Class Theory and History*, Resnick and Wolff go to great lengths in asserting that the Soviet structure strayed away from communism and embraced state capitalism shortly after the Union's creation, maintaining that a system where means of production are organized and managed as state-owned enterprises is by definition at odds with the communist theory. However, that is not to say that either Resnick or Wollf use that as an absolving argument in favor of communism. Quite the opposite, based on the Soviet experience they raise concerns about the viability, nature, and future of communism as an economic system, while also emphasizing that "*communism* [the authors devote an entire section of the book in an attempt to trace the understanding of communism and socialism to pre-Marx times] *hasn't been tried on a society-wide basis,"* and that *"it's a boastful notion that communism has been vanquished."* They then speculate on what that means for the Marxist thought, offering a thought experiment of what it would mean to redefine communism, strip it off the mental connections that it entails, that of totalitarianism and the Soviet Union--both of which, again, the authors argue are fast associated with communism for a reason but a reason not dialectically legitimate;--*"If we allow communism to be defined as people getting the profits, it opens up all different possibilities,"* Resnick says. According to his logic, if CPSU managed to redefine communism into the complete opposite of Marx's vision--into repression instead of liberation, dictatorship instead of democracy, state

capitalism instead of socialism--in under half of a century, then it is reasonable even if also overly optimistic to assume the inverse development should be possible.

For this thesis, to assume Resnick's and Wolff's understanding of the economy of the Soviet Union is to reject the definition of communism as it is generally understood in post-communist countries, which would certainly be negligent of the generational history and collective memory shaped by the communist regime tried in the 20th century. However, to disregard it entirely would be intellectually dishonest for, as stated in the very beginning of this section, the debate on whether Soviet communism is exemplary of true communism has never been concluded and it is especially outside of academic circles that the informal fallacy originates in one's conviction that Soviet communism is illustrative of socialist, Marxist, or any other kind of leftist thought.

Furthermore, to argue for complete emotional detachment when approaching political and economic theory is a slippery slope, as both political and economic realities consist of individuals taking on roles of different political and economic agents (Jasper, 2011). That being said, the decision to not explore the spheres of sociology and social psychology in this work is explained in thesis limitations, but there is a concept that relates to both the above sciences and is of great importance to the issues discussed in this chapter. That concept is collective consciousness, a condition inseparable from generational history, and collective trauma and collective sentiments that accompany that consciousness (Tileaga, 2018). For many of those who lived with the regime--whose stories are now being passed over to post-communist generations--it is not terrifically important whether or not the socialism they experienced is the socialism that is being talked about today in the context of progressive economics and politics; they know socialism without needing to define it and without particular interest in redefining it. That attitude can hardly be written off as a semantic dispute or an equivocation; that is cultural trauma that sets off one's memory beyond reason or dialectics, and rightfully so. Regardless of whether it is fueled by antagonism or guilt or nostalgic longing, a collective sentiment has had to shape a social response to the position that is today assumed in regard to how pre-1991 events are approached and discussed. It is then reasonable to anticipate resentment and outright animosity to any terminology that triggers that generational memory, e.g. socialism, communism, Marxism, Stalinism, Leninism, etc.

To remove the factor of human nature from a conversation about either communism as terminology or communism as a period in history is then to reduce that conversation to a vacuous discussion at a college-level debate club, but the discourse on socialism is multidisciplinary (see Figure 1) and thus it is of ultimate importance to approach it with nuance--nuance that is difficult to communicate even in academic settings, let alone informal ones. Below is a compelling illustrative example of that. Robert Strausz-Hupe, one of the four authors (all from the Foreign Policy Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania) of *Protracted Conflict: a Challenging Study of Communits Strategy* (1959), engaged in heated correspondence with Alfred G. Meyer, then a Sovietologist and professor of political science at Harvard, which was published in the bimonthly publication *Problems of Communism* (Volume 10, Issue 1) printed in Washington D.C. in 1961. Provoked by professor Meyer's rather antagonistic review of *Protracted Conflict* (1959), Strausz-Hupe presented a number of arguments in his work's defense, arguments in equal measure analytical and emotional, in response to Meyer's review of no less emotional tone (words like *fanciful, misleading, dangerous, morbid fascination, political hysteria* scattered all over Meyer's 1960 review). Strausz-Hupe opens by emphasizing that their book is *"*[an effort to] *explain Soviet behavior without constant exegetical reference to the sacred Communist texts. We would be the first to admit that a great deal has been learned about Communist ideology. At the same time, we think that there may be some value to be derived from an observation of the way Communist leaderships have actually behaved in history, irrespective of how they solemnly declare they ought to behave,"* a statement Meyer rebuts later, stating that "*it is curious that even though Prof. Strausz-Hupé and his collaborators profess to study Communist behavior rather than doctrine, they refer to the latter whenever it buttresses their views."* Among Meyer's main critiques was that *Protracted Conflict* (1959) portrayed communism as *"a conspiracy guided by diabolic intelligence . . ."* to which Strausz-Hupe provided an excerpt from Chapter 3 of their book, *"not a single operational principle of Communist strategy, looked at separately from the others, would deserve to be ranked as anything more than a common-sense proposition. One need not ascribe diabolical cunning to men who, in a contest for power, adapt their policies to the simple dictates of common sense,"* (p. 40), again highlighting that he does agree that devices attributed to communism are sensible. In response to Meyer's unrelenting animosity, and specifically to his arguments against stripping

communism off all ideological meaning and melding different leftist schools of thought together, Strausz-Hupe wrote "f*rankly, we are moderately skeptical of the squabbles among the "Titoists," "Stalinists," "Khrushchevists," "Gomulkaists," and "Maoists." If, in using the term "Communists" somewhat loosely to apply to practically all Communists indiscriminately, we scandalize Professor Meyer (as we seem to have done), nous regrettons."* In his closing argument, he adds that Meyer's approach is "*not the language of calm, academic discourse, but rather the polemic of someone who seems under a peculiar compulsion to lash out against a work which a prior he does not like but which he cannot dissect intellectually."* It is this closing remark that is especially interesting, as a relentless, a priori animosity to an ideology has until now been looked at in this thesis from the opposite side from this debate, and the urging to *"dissect [that animosity] intellectually"* has been intuitively addressed toward [post-communist generations] allegedly preconceived to oppose left-wing ideology based on its record of failure in the countries of their origin. The correspondence between Strausz-Hupe and Meyer is an important reminder of how the conversation about communism, whether as terminology, practice, or doctrine, can result in semantic disputes, logical fallacies, or simple miscommunications in equal measure due to either side's stance and the ways of articulating it. To claim that someone with an anti-socialist sentiment who might not be operating with nuanced terminology is by that account alone wrong is everything but nuanced. In the same way, to claim that a proponent of socialism who delimitates between political behavior and doctrine is wrong by that account alone is everything but nuanced, too. Strausz-Hupe and Meyer's debate is just one example how in complex multidisciplinary discussions, such as the one being explored in this thesis, the arguments can circle for long, if not infinitely long.

3.1.4.4. **Legacy and causal pathways**

Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2011), who in their *Communism's Shadow: Postcommunist Legacies, Values, and Behavior* have come closest to introducing an analytical framework for assessing the effect of the communist past on political values and behavior of those who lived during the communist regime, used the term *post-communist* to refer specifically to transitional generations, those who have lived both through communist and after its fall. Their theoretical framework was intended to be applied to *post-communist generations* as per their definition, but

it presents a foundation that, if critically adjusted to post-communist generations as defined in this thesis, i.e. generations who were born and grew up in the aftermath of the communist regime--after its fall,--still holds its validity. Pop-Eleches and Tucker differentiate between individual-level (demographics, psychological repercussions, etc.) and institutional (both formal and informal institutions) legacy of communism, and argue that those two are the *hows* of the assumed correlation, the mechanisms through which the past can influence the values and beliefs in the present. For this thesis' subject group, individual legacy would mean that which has been passed from previous generations, specifically by older family members; their experiences of (1) living under communist rule, and (2) living in the aftermath of it. They then also take into consideration socioeconomic factors, and state that the three possible socioeconomic legacies are (1) communism left post-communist countries significantly poorer than their Western European neighbors, (2) communism produced highly literate society with lower levels of income inequality, (3) communism resulted in rapid but distorted industrialization that lead to the formation of so-called pockets of industrial concentration, i.e. some regions are left behind with larger production potential than others and thus one can expect an uneven distribution of opinions when it comes to production potential. For the institutional legacy, Pop-Eleches and Tucker argued that ordinary people are directly exposed to political institutions on a limited and episodic basis, and thus a large part of how they assess and react to those institutions happens through cognitive shortcuts which may be shaped by the communist past. They then conclude on the two most important institutional factors that both shape political attitudes and can be rooted in communism: the media and how it is conditioned to present information about politics and economics, and nominal and perceived economic output of a state. Taken together, the individual and institutional pathways through which the communist past can influence the political present, as per Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2011), adjusted for the subject group of this thesis, are the following:

(1) **Individual-level experience** of living under communist rule, through its collapse, and in the aftermath of it, as told by family members, elders, local community;
(2) A **change in the sociodemographic landscape** since the years of communist rule, e.g. educational attainment, income and wealth inequality, etc.;
(3) **Formal institutions** from the communist era that continue to exist in the post-

communist years and still exert, to some extent, power and influence, e.g. acting communist parties;

(4) **Informal institutions** inherited from the communist era, e.g. repertoires of contention;

(5) **Socioeconomic and political outcomes**, both nominal and perceived, that serve as criteria for evaluating respective institutions and are shaped by communist legacy, e.g. welfare state, socialized healthcare and education, GDP/GNP indicators, etc.;

There are then the *whats* of assumed correlation, i.e. the types of values and beliefs that might be affected by the communist past through the methods--the *hows*--outlined above. Pop-Eleches and Tucker draw on both existing literature and deductive reasoning to conclude the following list:

(1) **Post-communist attitudes toward political parties**—the notion of political parties is tightly connected to the communist party due to little exposure to multiparty competition during the communist era;

(2) **Distrust in post-communist institutions**—ingrained legacy of distrust to institutions such as parliament, the government, civil services, and justice system dating back to the communist past (becomes less relevant as time passes and can be also a direct result of the performance of the said institutions in the post-communist years);

(3) **Political tolerance deficit**--imperial undertones of communist action and rhetoric exacerbated the frustration of small nationhood; the communist maxim of choosing sides--*either with us, or against us*--lent itself to a wider rejection of any 'other,' especially in political context, i.e. self-identifying as a communist in today's Czech Republic can be interpreted as an attack on nationhood, a moral and ethical treason. Important to note is that Peffley and Rohrschne (2001), who conducted a study on political tolerance in seventeen selected countries, concluded that political tolerance is higher in more stable democracies; Gibson (2002) and Katnik (2002) found that Eastern and East-Central Europeans are less politically tolerant than West Europeans; the above raise a question whether there is a distinct legacy of communism contributing to that intolerance as the existing comparative studies use West in contrast to post-communist countries and not comparable new democracies, which then makes it difficult to discern

such variables such as cultural and socioeconomic factors in the equation;

(4) **Political and civic participation deficit**—formulaic and coerced popular participation in politics during the communist years might have led to political apathy and lower levels of political participation in post-communist countries, however, it is difficult to reconcile that assumption with the remarkable spikes in political mobilization in some countries during late 1980s and early 1990s. An alternative explanation of that deficit is that communist legacy undermined institutional trust and that the shortages of centrally planned economies contributed to proliferation of informal [communal, friendship-based] trust networks. Unlike Western voluntary organizations that form based on the principles of civil participation, informal trust networks organize because of the disappointment with civic participation experience and in an attempt to form small, interpersonal mutual aid network that would provide a safety net when a compromised public sphere cannot. Such networks continued to thrive in the post-communist uncertainty, which then also aligns with individualism--the dominant ethos of a capitalist system;

(5) **Distinctive voting pattern**--a significant amount of research has shown that in post-communist political sphere, a party's relationship to the communist past, its similarity in rhetoric and political campaign, is more useful typology for political parties than the traditional left-right division. This raises additional questions when adjusted for this thesis, namely whether this pattern is still telling thirty years after the fall of communism, and if yes, if there is a discernible [positive or, what is intuitively more likely, negative] connotation to 'more similar to' and 'less similar to communist party,' or if it is simply a simplified labeling system for navigating multiparty landscape.

Pop-Eleches and Tucker then apply an empirical analysis to the hypothesis they derive from the assumption of correlation between the pathways (the *hows*) and the types of political beliefs and attitudes (the *whats*), specifically for the political party trust deficit, by using data from three survey waves of the European and World Values Surveys (EVS/WVS) and applying the ordinary least squares (OLS) model for the main regression to it and then interpreting regression coefficients and interaction effects. Their attempt is only illustrative of the potential of the

framework they introduce, but still bears an interesting finding: behind the post-communist deficit in public confidence toward political parties lies a complex mix of psychological and political developments and not only economic and institutional performance differences. This finding suggests that the younger generations of former communist states are starting to shed some of their engraved distrust in democratic party system. Still, Pop-Eleches and Tucker's conclusions are less important for this thesis than their developed framework. Most importantly, some of their counterintuitive findings are signifying of the importance of not simply stopping at an observation (e.g. in the case of this thesis, that post-communist generations hold a certain attitude toward socialism and Marxism based on the historic legacy of their countries of origin) just short of identifying the mechanisms and pathways by which the matter of that observation has come to be. Forcing to articulate intuitive assumptions and confront counterintuitive ones allows us to open a more nuanced conversation in post-communist societies, a conversation that has both academic merit and practical application in how we approach economics and politics while also acknowledging the historical legacy that still permeates collective consciousness.

3.2. **Literature review conclusion**

Before moving forward onto the practical part, let us sum up the working points from literature review most relevant for coding, categorization, and interpretation of interviews outcomes. The interviews will be analyzed through the prism of the four spheres of studies elaborated on in the literature review, namely **semantics, economic theory, political science, and generational history**. As explained in Chapter XXX, the terms socialism, Marxism, and progressivism are often slathered over things hardly socialist, Marxist, or progressivist, and as a result, the terminology loses its meaning. That and the fact the distinction between socialism, communism, and social democracy is very unclear to the general public (and, arguably, to those in academic circles, too) makes it almost impossible to talk politics without running into some kind of semantic disputes. It is then important to **take into consideration semantic individualism** (as will be mentioned below) and not stopping short of getting to the bottom of one's perceived/presumed understanding of those terms. The notion of semantics is inseparable from one's ideology--a set of beliefs or philosophies,--especially in the context of political

campaigning and discourse. People often use the same words to describe different realities, or different words to describe the same realities. That very notion is at the foundation of the purpose of this thesis, and thus is acknowledged and anticipated to be faced. For the purpose of this thesis, both theoretical positions of semantic individualism and externalism will be applied where appropriate, accordingly. **For conducting the interviews, the logic of semantic individualism is more fitting** since the goal is not only to see how and when the respondents use certain terms and claims but also what meaning/definition they hold and assign to those. For that reason, the definitions looked into in 3.1.3. XXX will NOT be presented to them. **For interpreting the interviews, however, the logic of semantic externalism will be assumed** as was elaborated in Table XXX: if, for example, an interviewee's use of language is *wrong* in relation to the definitions provided in 3.1.3., it *is* a mistake, i.e. since language exists independent from cognitive competence of a speaker, an incorrect usage of a term is assumed to be a product of oblivion or unfamiliarity with a commonly accepted definition. This approach also allows to simplify the practical part of the research and to make it viable within the practical constraints. That being said, responses that are to be **coded as 'denotative' or 'connotative,' 'right' or 'wrong'** are in no way telling of ideological truth and are only reflective of truth in relation to the terms outlined and articulated in Section 3.1.3. Given the purpose and constraints of this research, presented in Section 3.1.1.3. **coding system (No context; General context; Specific context)** will be used, taking into consideration the limitations of it when interpreting the interviews and elaborating on it on a case by case basis, where possible. There is also a good amount of ambiguity in what socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism mean in economic terms. Going forward, Chapter XXX will be used as the **main reference for analyzing the interviews for normative economic principles** of respective ideologies, but supplementary clarifications on definitions may be introduced, if needed, from other sources. Lastly, the generational history and causal pathways will be cross-referenced from Chapter XXX, relying on the **theoretical framework of Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2011)** for assessing the effect of the communist past on political values and behavior of respondents, and the **consolidated overview of historical significance of socialism and Marxism in selected countries**, provided on pp. XX-XX.

With consideration of all the above summarized literature and theory, the practical part

is to explore the attitudes of respondents from the post-communist generation to observe whether intuitive assumptions about their attitudes hold true, if there are theses that have been overlooked by the theoretical framework, and whether the findings can be cross-referenced with the information presented up until now.

4. Practical part

4.1. Sample and subjects (respondents)

The selected sample of respondents is a convenience sample as the research objectives to conceptualize does not require a representative sample. To realistically accommodate for the scope and volume of this thesis, the two subject criteria for interviewees is the following:

1. Born and raised in one of the following Warsaw Pact countries: Russia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, or Slovakia (the four countries are selected to ensure availability and accessibility of respondents);
2. Be of a post-communist generation, that is born in or after 1991, assuming that to be the time when Soviet military completely withdrew their forces from the Warsaw Pact countries (for selected countries, the milestone years are 1989 (the Velvet Revolution) for the former Czechoslovakia and 1991 (Soviet Union collapse) for post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia).

Each of the six respondents will be noted under their respective responses in the following format (RX (Respondent index number), age, country of origin). All the interviews were conducted in English, with an exception of those with R3 and R4 which were conducted in Russian and translated into English by the interviewer. For easier readability, the interviews were transcribed using a clean verbatim approach, meaning that the original dictation remains unchanged but stutters, filler speech, and repetition of words (unless useful for emphasis) are omitted. False starts and interviewer interjections are also omitted or lightly edited per interviewer's judgment. *Respondents' speech is in transcribed in cursive*, (Question or interviewer interjection), [Editorial comment], […] to signify that the thought continues before or after the transcribed text but is not relevant to the research. Full transcripts are available upon request.

4.2. Qualitative data collection and methodology

The methodology chosen for the practical part of this thesis is thematic content analysis and narrative analysis, both done through conducting interviews with the subject group and then

coding of individual responses and categorization and interpretation of common patterns [of themes] among the individual responses, if there are any.The reasoning behind choosing the methodology for coding of content and narrative data, along with their application and interpretation, is based on *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Research* (Johnny Saldana, SAGE Publications, 2019). Color coded for easy navigation (*On the Usefulness of Basic Colour Coding in an Information Display*, Smallman, et.al, 1993).

Table 3: Coding methodology

Deductive coding		
Values coding	Individual responses and experiences are coded to exhibit values, attitudes, and beliefs of the respondents (Saldana, 2019, p. 110)	[V] - Values [A] - Attitudes [B] – Beliefs
Semantic coding	see. *Validation of sociolinguistic findings* [R] and [W] coding is not reflective of absolute truth but are coded in relation to the terms outlined and articulated in Section 3.1.1.2. and under the assumption of semantic externalism.	[D] - Denotation [CP] - Connotation, positive [CN] - Connotation, negative [R] - Right [W] - Wrong
Context coding	see. *Semantics disputes and equivocation*	[NC] - No context [GC] - General context [SC] - Specific context
Inductive coding		
In Vivo Coding, (also known as verbatim or literal coding)	Spoken words and phrases used by the respondents are coded to attain an in-depth understanding of expressed stories, ideas, and meanings. (Saldana, 2019, p. 91)	No uniform codes; assigned based on words and phrases used by the respondents (inductive coding).
Thematic and narrative coding	(Saldana, p. 2019, 131)	No uniform codes; assigned based on patterns of meaning within the data set (inductive coding).

4.3. Data analysis: Coding

4.3.1. Assessment of acquaintance with the terminology

How would you define socialism?

[Socialism] *is when the state is taking care of you* [CP], [...] *especially when your life isn't going so well, or you're on a weaker side of society, for example if you're a child or an elderly person. And you know that since most people are paying taxes, you'll be taken care of.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

[...] *I associate it with equality* [CP] *among people and receiving the same portion of common goods per person* [W]. *For example, a person doesn't have more or less than somebody else* [W] *and if they are in a worse situation health-wise or whatever else there is, their basic needs are covered* [CP]. *And everyone has equal opportunity* [CP] *and access to education.* [...] *I see it as an ideology* [D] *or the way of life more than an economical system.*

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

I'm not sure I can separate it from all the history. The first thing that comes to my mind are all of the things I know about communism so it's when everything is owned by everyone, everything belongs to the entire society, there's no private ownership [R].

(R3, 23, Russia)

It's a system under which all the goods in the state are distributed equally among all the people [W] *in the state. It's when the state is managing all foreign trade and the economy.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

[...] *a system that is based on equal distribution of wealth among the working class and all other members. It's different from capitalism in a way that, as I've heard, you get equal shares of something, for example your paychecks are the same* [W]. *Something like getting 100 times more than the other person wouldn't or better say shouldn't happen in such a system.* […] *It's a way of handling the state.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

A political system based on sharing resources [R] *among people, the common start for everybody, I don't want to say a classless society, that would be communism. Socialism is a step toward communism* [R]. *A social system based on equal opportunities for everybody* [CP].

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

How would you define Marxism?

[...] *what I remember is what Marx said about work, how it's not supposed to be tedious, everyone is supposed to do the things they love most* [...] *all of their basic needs would be covered by the state, something like that. I think that's the quote that got me, that you can be a fisherman one day, an artist the second day, you can do whatever you want.* [R] *That's Marxism for me.* (Based on those definitions, what do you think is the biggest difference between socialism and Marxism?) *(hesitant)* (If I told you that I am a part of a socialist movement or a Marxist movement, would it communicate a major difference to you?) *No. For me, those are very connected. I don't see a Marxist society, I see a socialist society. Maybe it's not correct but I think Marxism is the theory, and socialism is a practical application* [R], *how it actually happened.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

I don't know much. I know he [Karl Marx] *hated rich people and for me it sounds more harsh and aggressive compared to socialism* [P]. *It comes from communism; the idea is very similar.* (Is it also an ideology?) *I'd say so, yes.* (You mentioned Marxism is more harsh, would you say there's any other

difference between the two?) *There's definitely a difference. I just don't know it. But when I think of Marxism I think of this hatred of the upper class* [CN], *the conflict between the class of peasants and the rich* [R].

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

(hesitant) (If you're not sure, take an educated guess). *There must be some key difference.* (That'd be my next question, what is the difference between the two, if any) *I honestly don't know.* [...] *Marx and Engels wrote their famous tractate but what exactly it says there I wouldn't know because I haven't read it. I've heard many times that if it was actually realized as he wrote it, maybe things would've gone differently* [P]. [...] (Would you use socialism and Marxism as synonyms?) *Somewhat, not synonyms, but they are definitely not polar opposites.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

To be honest, I don't know their difference. (What comes to your mind when you hear Marxism?) *Nothing.* (Do you know who Marx was?) *He was one of the founders of this whole concept. I never researched his theories much.* (If I told you that I was a part of a Socialist movement, or a part of a Marxist movement, what would be your perceived understanding of what I'm a part of?) *I don't have any bias about Marxism because I don't really understand what it is.* [A] *It doesn't evoke any emotions in me.* [A] *If you ask me about socialism, that evokes rather negative emotions in me, more so than positive* [A, P].

(R4, 25, Russia)

I am not really sure, I would just guess- I think it was Karl Marx but besides that, I guess it's something similar to socialism or communism [D]. (If I asked you to guess that difference between socialism and Marxism, do you have any educated ideas?) *No, none at all.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

Marx was dealing with destruction of the classes [R] *and moving property to the working class from the elites. I think it'd be more about that classless society* [R]. *Marxism is based on the teachings of Marx* [D]. (So what would you say is the difference between socialism and Marxism?) [...] *Socialism can have many different forms. All the countries nowadays are a bit socialist.* [...] *Marxism is not a political system, it's an ideal* [R]. *Socialism is a much broader term; European Northern countries are kinda socialist in this sense.* [...] *When I think socialism, I think politology* [political science]. *When I think Marxism, I think ideology.* [P]

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

What are some things that come to your mind when you hear socialism?

Sweden, USSR, benefits from the state, high taxes [D]. *In general, I have good associations* [A] *but it took me time to arrive here because I grew up in a post-socialist society and I can also see how those same mechanisms can also go wrong when things don't work right.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

Standing in a queue [CN] *for two hours for bananas. Now owning anything but also owning everything* [D]. *Equality* [CP], *oppression* [CN], *no freedom of speech* [CN], *provided basic needs* [CP], *healthcare* [D], *education* [D], *no freedom to travel outside of the borders of a specific country* [CN], *collective struggle* [R], *Soviet Union, Vietnam, Korea, Cuba, Venezuela* [D].

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

USSR, obviously. Cuba. [D] *I keep thinking about communism.* (Which is fine, if that's your association, I'm not asking to separate it) [...]

(R3, 23, Russia)

Equality [CP], *unfairness* [CN], *poverty* [CN], *mutual aid* [CP], *that's about it. USSR, North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba.* [D] *China, to some extent.* [W]

(R4, 25, Russia)

Obviously, the Czech Republic, Slovakia when they were under the influence of Russia[D]. *Travelling, that as I've heard, was not really possible, only within the borders. Suppression of rights and freedom of speech* [CN]. *More control over your life from the state. Nowadays, it's not as controlled as back then* [P].

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

Cuba, Castro, Che Guevara. [D]

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

Do you use the terms communism and socialism interchangeably?

No. (Can you separate them for me?) *[...] Communism is a very solid thing for me: bad. It's bad right now* [P], *I'm thinking of China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam. But socialist states exist on a spectrum: there are more socialist societies and less socialist societies.* (From the theoretical perspective, what would you say is the biggest difference?) *Communism is totalitarian, socialism isn't* [P].

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

Yes. (Could you try to define them separately?) *I'd say that communism is more an economic thing, as opposed to socialism* [W] *that seems to me more like an ideology* [P].

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

I rarely even use the term socialism. Communism is more clear to me so I avoid socialism. Socialism for me is a general idea and communism is its twisted, perverted real-life application [W]. *They're not synonymous but again not polar opposites, obviously.* [...] *Communism sounds optional, concrete, something that actually happened* [P], *while socialism is more of a school of thought, an ideology* [D].

(R3, 23, Russia)

Yes. (If you were asked to define communism and socialism separately, how would you differentiate between the two?) *I don't know the difference between them but as I understand it, communism is one of the branches of socialism* [W].

(R4, 25, Russia)

Yes, I'd say so. (And if I asked you to separate the two?) *I know that the Czech Republic and Slovakia used to be socialist when they were under Russian control, they were Socialist Republics* [D]. *I'm not really sure what Russia was back then. I know that after WWII, Russia used to be communist* [W] *but besides that, I have no idea. I can't really see the difference* [P].

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

Not really, they're different. Socialism is a general political idea and it can have many different forms and different approaches, every government is a bit socialist. Communism is again more of a political term but then it's something that never really took place. When I think of communism, on one hand it's something that was here [in the Czech Republic] *for 40 years but actually it was a socialist system going*

towards communism [R]. *You can have many types of socialism* [R], *Cuba* [D] *is an extreme example* [CN] [...] *but you have Chinese, Vietnamese, South American socialism* [P], *I don't even know all the different countries and their versions. It's much broader and you can find some signs of socialism in many countries, but not that many signs of communism in many countries.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

How would you define democratic socialism?

It's when individuals and businesses recognize that they need help from the state sometimes and so they organize their governments in the way that they can have that help and those policies [R]. (Would you say it's drastically different from socialism?) *Yes, I think so. Democratic socialism sounds like something that exists right now* [P], *for example when I think of Nordic countries* [D], *I don't think of them as socialist, I think of them as democratic socialist. Calling a country socialist feels like something from the past* [P]. *I know that some have a bigger degree of socialism, but I can't call them that because there is still a correlation with that totalitarian side. Calling a state socialist feels like too big of a statement* [P].

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

It's something we're trying to do here [in Europe] [D], *in contrast to America, for example. You can vote, you have the freedom of speech but at the same time healthcare is provided, education, at least the basic one, is for free,* [...] *and you are able to acquire capital* [R]. *If you're struggling, you can receive some money from the government.* (So, the main difference is that you can own capital) *Yes.*

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

[...] *I'm assuming it's when there is freedom but with ideas and economic practices of socialism* [R]. *Maybe economically it's more socialist but politically it's more democratic* [R]. (Do you understand the division of political left and right?) *One is more progressive* [GC] *and liberal* [GC] *and others are more conservative in all spheres. But since I think it's never so strictly delimited, in practice it is all mixed, it's difficult to say who's left and who's right* [P]. (Where on that spectrum do you think socialism falls?) *I think- Give me a moment. (hesitant) Now that I'm thinking about communism and socialism, I'd separate them further. Like, socialism to the left and communism more to the right. I don't think that's right though, just based on associations.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

It's when there remains the principle of equality [D] *and equal allocation of resources* [W] *but the people get to vote themselves instead of the government or a specific person deciding where the money goes. Everyone's equal and they're making decisions together.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

I'd guess that you as a citizen of a state are able to vote but the parties you vote for are still somehow shaped by socialist principles [D].

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

[...] *democratic socialism is carried by a party that shares socialist ideas but it is still based on free choice* [R], *so they try to incorporate socialist ideas into a democratic system* [R]. [...] (Do you understand the left-right spectrum?) [...] *it's again capitalism and socialism. I find it interesting that the conversation is mostly between communist and capitalist ideas but there are no countries that would follow either or, both are just concepts and there is no capitalist country in the world. I mean, generally we live rather in capitalism, but again it has not that much in common with capitalism from the 19th century.* [...] *Even communist China is capitalist a lot.* [...] (And then who's left who's right?) *Left would be socialism and right would be capitalism.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

What comes to your mind when you hear the word progressive?

Improving, technological, open. [NC] (And if I introduce a political or economic context?) *I don't know.* (The idea of progress as you see it, is it more leftist or rightist?) *Definitely leftist. At this point in time, the left is looking forward and trying to find new ways* [P]. *I haven't seen any right-leaning figures or movements that don't idolize and mythologize the past. That focus on the past is definitely not progressive for me. I haven't seen right movements that are both traditionalist and progressive, I think the combination is not possible.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

I think of a party we have in Slovakia, Progressiva Slovakia. That's the party that [Zuzana] *Čaputová founded. In general, it's about the path to equality, better life, more transparency in the government and the economy, less corruption* [GC]. (Do you think the progressive as a political term falls on a certain side of the left-right spectrum?) *I'd say it could be both* [P].

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

In accordance with current needs and problems, reactive to things that happen here and now, not relying on traditional and historical context. [NC] (What do you think does progressivism/progressive mean in an economic or political context?) *I don't know.* (Which parties would you say are more progressive, left or right?) *If the right is conservative and traditional, then I guess it's logical that the left is progressive* [P]. *But that's just because of terminology, maybe there are right parties that are progressive.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

Going beyond existing limitations and frameworks of understanding [NC]. *A concept that might not be understood or accepted at first, something unimaginable in the current system but also interesting and promising. For the greater good or toward some goal* [NC], *progress is for someone, maybe an invention for development of humanity.* (Have you ever heard the words progressive/progressivism used in an economic or political context?) *[...] What I remember is that economic progressivism is somehow related to socialism, it plays some role there though intuitively progressivism for me is an antonym for socialism* [P]. *I think progressivism is a polar opposite from socialism* [P]. *But I'm assuming that in a utopian setting, progressivism falls under socialism.* (Do you understand the left-right political spectrum?) *I tried to understand it* [...] *but it didn't make sense at all. For me, LGBT rights, market economy, human rights, all those fall in one bundle, but on the spectrum those are mixed out in a way that doesn't make sense, in a way that someone on the right can be a communist, an orthodox* [Chsristian], *and an LGBT ally.* [...] *If there were two polar categories with two sets of opposite attributes, that would make more sense.* (When I say left or right, do you have any associations with particular parties or figures?) *When I think about the right, I think of nationalists and socialist ideas.* (And the left?) *Liberal* [GC] *ideas.* (Can you define liberal for me?) *A liberal movement is a movement focused on human rights, individual rights, and free market economy.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

[...] *something that contributes to a better life, that makes our life easier* [NC]. (What do you think it means to be a progressive in politics?) *Maybe trying something new, what hasn't been tried before or was tried before but not in the era we are living it. Something that brings change.* (Can you explain the right-left political spectrum to me?) *I'd say socialism is on the left, capitalism on the right.* [...] (Where do you think in today's political climate would progressivism fall?) *I'd say on the right side* [P]. (How far right are we talking? Central right or more solid right?) *I'd say both* [sides] *have some advantages and disadvantages so usually when you meet somewhere in the middle, you won't make choices that would hurt minorities,* [...] *so somewhere in the middle* [P].

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

Moving forward. [NC] (Have you ever heard it used as in economic or political progressivism?) [...] *I think if I'm a progressive, it means that I'm not stuck with one ideology* [P]*, I can move around a bit, I find my own ways. It's not about being capitalist or socialist but kind of combining both.* (If I asked you to put progressivism per your understanding on a spectrum, where would it fall?) *Interestingly enough, I would say more toward the left.* [P] [...] *I'd say it's more conservative to stick with an idea and that's not progressive. But then it doesn't make sense because you could have a socialist conservative. Still, I think progressivism is on the left-side. When I hear the word progressive, I think of this young democrat in the U.S., Cortez.* (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez?) *Yes. She's a progressive, isn't she? I think she's a leftist.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

4.3.2. Socialization

Where have you learned about socialism as you understand it today?

Definitely started with family and then school. (Was it a different narrative at school and in the family?) *Yes. My parents are quite apolitical but my grandparents love their socialist times. [...]* (What about school?) *We learned it theoretically.* [In Ukraine], *there is still that correlation with the past, how it didn't end well. It was stronger than what we learned about other countries who had different experiences. Especially those more progressive ones, for example, Sweden.* [...] *Gradually, after school I learned more about it and formed a more positive- I separated socialism from Ukraine and its history. I looked into it and saw that it's actually not a bad idea, it just went really wrong. At school, we didn't really have any in-depth discussions, we just learned that it was like that.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

I'd say culture, mostly from home. (Family?) *Yes. When grandparents were talking about it. At school we obviously had some education about that but not broad.* [...] *What stuck with me is mostly what my grandparents were telling me, how they were explaining it to me, how they were describing communism.*

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

Probably the basics are from school but that was mostly from history class so it was about communism, the history of Russia, that experience. Family too, I guess. A bit from everywhere. Media too, you still hear things. In my family, we never really sat down to discuss these topics. So actually I'd probably say media the most and just the general discourse that's happening in society, I hear things here and there.

(R3, 23, Russia)

Definitely not in the university. I'd say mostly from school and history literature I read during those days. Also from my dad and my grandparents. (Can you recall what you learned at school, how much time was allocated for this topic?) *A lot of time was spent on this topic, I'd even say too much. It was all so idealized. We didn't go deep into the system itself, just some definitions and key attributes, we didn't even talk about other socialist republics* [...] *The USSR was portrayed very one-sidedly, with a nostalgic mood, some disadvantages and shortcomings were explained but in general it was shown in good light. And then I'd hear the same things from my grandma. I think it might've cultivated this rebellion in me that prompted me to be seeking the opposite side. I've mostly heard anti-socialist sentiments on TV and from my dad.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

Probably the media. [...] but I don't really watch TV anymore, and the Netflix shows I watch don't really cover this topic. (When you were at school, what did you learn there about the communist times?) *It wasn't a big part of the program. When I think about it, the school didn't teach us that much about it. We learned about Nazis but not that much about communism. I remember also from the family, we did learn a little bit from our granddad, he liked to talk about communists but we were just kids so we did not listen much.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

Not at school as in basic school, gymnasium. [...] *Probably we spent some time but not much dealing with modern history, like communism and the revolution. A lot from my parents and my family, that's an interesting mixture of mostly anti-socialists and then some communists. My own readings too, and then university, we had some classes but that was years ago.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

Do you know what your parents' / close family's life was like under the communist regime?

[...] *My grandma on my mom's side was in a Communist Party.* [...] *My grandpa was a lorry driver; he travelled a lot all across the Soviet Union and that's what he talks about dreamily when he talks about those times. Because of their hard work, my grandparents had a certain level of fortune and I think that's why they to this day reminisce about those times so traumatically because it all was gone. After the fall of the USSR, all those savings, hard earned money- I don't know how much but they lost all of it.* [...] *My parents have always been quite apolitical,* [...] *they got good education, they were happy they could get it for free and my dad had a free surgery on the heart when he was growing up, he went to Moscow for this very difficult operation.* [...] (What was their life like during the transitional years, in the 90s?) *It was quite difficult but not as scary as I sometimes read in the articles, that people had to scrape for food like in that movie, Brother (1997), dirty streets, people selling everything* [...] *My family had a house and a small garden so whatever anxieties they had about food, I don't think they ever felt so insecure that they had to sell everything.* [...] (Financially speaking, would you say they were better off before 1991?) *During the Soviet Union they were much better off. They stayed pretty prolific with their activities, they do whatever they can, but, for example, I can see that my parents can't take risks with their careers.* [...] *they can't trust anything anymore.* (You think it comes from that place of past experience, of how a social contract was broken?) *Yes, that they're not sure that they can bounce back so they don't want to risk it.* (What are some aspects they look at longingly?) *This mythological feeling of being protected.* (Are there any specific things they say were better in the USSR?) *Everything. Things were better. People were better. Relationships between people were stronger. Maybe it was just because their surroundings were very community oriented.* [...] *I don't remember that my grandma has ever said anything bad about living at that time. Which is weird, it always struck me as childish, too perfect to be true. I see the good sides but if you never mention anything bad, it's weird* [A]. *My great grandma* [...] *worked her whole life in the village, and she never talked about socialism well. It was different for those in agriculture, for the villagers. She survived The Big Hunger, Holodomor.* [...] *Her whole life she leaned towards religion. My whole family, too.* (That also had to be difficult during those years.) *My family is Polish by their descent, they're Catholic, which is a double jackpot because they were a minority and they practiced religion. [...] My grandma was also religious then but she has this fanatic adoration,* [...] *whenever I asked her about the clash between her religion and her being Polish and her being a communist, she always said that it didn't matter much, that they never were oppressed in the village, which I know is not entirely true. [...]* (You mentioned she was a member of the Communist Party?) *Everyone was but she was an active one. She went to the committee, put some traffic lights in the city, she was responsible for some infrastructure changes.* [...] (And your parents, were they Octobrists or something?) *Yes, [...] but they never talked about those times the way my grandma did. I think their sense of self was more connected to their friends and whatever they were studying. Even if they were active participants in some clubs and gatherings, Octobrists or whatever, they never took it ideologically. They took it as a chance to get together and dance and learn something new. It wasn't that loaded.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

[...] *All of them worked in the chemical industry and that's how they all met. My hometown was home to this big factory so the majority of people living there were also working in Chemlon* [synthetic fiber production plant in Humenné, Slovakia). *They were making nylon threads. My dad worked as a chemist.* [...] (What about during the transitional years, 1989 to late-1990s?) *It was a mess; a lot of people changed their work.* [...] *Many people took advantage of the change, some opportunists bought out big parts of the land,* [...] *my grandparents sold some of their land and they also retired when I was still young.* (Do you know if anyone in your family was a member of the communist party?) *That I'd say a big taboo. I think they had to be but we never spoke about it. Nobody likes saying that out loud.* (Is there any aspect of communism that you've noticed your family look at longingly?) *Not my parents as much as my grandparents, and my dad's girlfriend, [...] she'd say "you poor thing, you have to have a mortgage now; we were getting flats for free." That's her main thing, that and that everybody worked, and you didn't have to search for a job.* (What about your grandparents?) *They were not affected by it very negatively* [...] *their life didn't change much because they were pretty much poor before and poor after*. [...] (What about your grandparents, have they ever expressed any nostalgia?) *They were mostly speaking about what went wrong during WWII.* [...] *When it comes to communism, they didn't talk much about it.* [...] *I think the fact that they couldn't speak negatively about communism during that time affected them.* [...] (Would you say that your family members hold a strong position in regard to communism?) *I wouldn't say so. They're just dealing with whatever is happening right now.* (Has their opinion of communism seem to have changed from that they held before 1991?) [...] *What changed their opinion on capitalism was the struggle that my family went through some fifteen years ago when there was this big crisis in the East of Slovakia,* [...] *there was basically no work, my mom became a carer in Austria, my aunt went to Germany. All their friends, no matter if they were nurses before or not, went take care of older people in Germany and Austria. And a lot of men started to work abroad on construction sites and driving trucks.*

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

[...] *My great grandma's husband just disappeared. They came and took him. He never came back. Still, I know she has always defended the regime, she believed there were reasons that happened. Someone snitched on him, someone said he did something, and they took him away, probably sent him into exile somewhere. No one knows any details because no one discussed it. My grandparents on my mom's side belonged to somewhat of an upper class* [than working class], *I know they lived a bit better than ordinary workers at that factory but, according to what my mom has told me, they never could afford anything too luxurious.* [...] *On my dad's side, I know they had families with twelve children, they were peasants. The grandma worked at a factory as a technologist, so also not a general worker, but not any managerial position. My grandpa was a teacher at school, so also middle class.* [...] (What about your parents?) *They were at school back then so obviously they were pioneers and all that. Then they both went to university. I know they lived in the dorms,* [...] *and when other students were broke and hungry, my mom and dad had their fridge always full.* [...] (What about during the transitional years, i.e. 1989 to late-1990s?) *There was nothing too dramatic. I know some people had it bad. But I know that even after the USSR we lived just fine, no one lost anything.* [...] (Do you know if anyone was a member of the communist party?) *I think they all had to. My grandpa was the director of a factory, so he definitely had to.* [...] (Would you say that your family members hold a strong position in regard to communism?) *I mostly spoke about it with my mom and I wouldn't say she's a fan,* [...] *but maybe because she had a rather positive experience, she says that really there wasn't anything very negative. There was always food.* [...] *It was just a different reality and people lived in it* [P], *there were not hundred different kinds of everything available, but people didn't need it.* [...] *Of course, if we look back at it, since we can now travel, for example, it's different. But even for them, before, during Czar times, no one travelled either. You could go to Gelendzhik, all those other communist states. That seemed to be enough. She says that people really believed it was the right way.* [...] *There were bad things too, obviously but people were doing those five-year plans and were ideologically driven,* [...] *they saw that their parents were okay and thought they would be too. I wouldn't say that my family holds a very negative position about communism, but there is also no massive nostalgia.* (I was just about to ask if there are any things they look back at longingly?) *No, I can't think of anything*

that was connected to the regime. Obviously, they talk about their youth longingly, but it wasn't related to communism at all. My mom recalls with fascination how my dad and her would stand in the queue for hours in the cold without knowing what they were waiting for. Turned out it was- I think they were selling nail polish which they didn't even need but they'd buy it anyway and then exchange it for a box of juice, would come home and drink that juice under blankets since they were freezing. You know, those funny things. But those they think of as adventures, not adjacent to communism.

(R3, 23, Russia)

My grandma on my dad's side was a biologist, she had good education from Moscow State University, [...] *my grandpa was in the military, he was making very little and was deployed all around Russia. He was Jewish and Russia was very antisemitic back then. He wasn't getting promotions even though he was one of the best officers, he was deployed to Siberia, out of all destinations, even though for his performance he'd normally be sent to Moscow. My grandma followed him, and she started working at the Siberian Chemical Plant. She had a pretty good job there. When she got older, she was working as a cloakroom attendant and my grandpa after quitting the military worked as a security guard, I think.* [...] (What about your parents?) *My dad was born in better times, financially speaking, [...] the end of the 1960s. There wasn't much money, but they weren't poor, it was enough for food and clothing and they went for vacations to Crimea. My dad served in the army and then went to a technical university in Tomsk, graduated and through grandma's connections got a job at the Siberian Chemical Plant.* [...] *He met my mom at a resort in Tomsk. My mom lived in Tomsk and my dad lived in a closed* [to non-residents] *Seversk so he had to find workarounds to bring my mom to Seversk. My mom is from a very poor family.* [...] *She's always been a teacher. (*Do you know if anyone from your family was a member of the communist party?) *I'm not sure about my dad because he turned eighteen in 1986 and there wasn't this fetish anymore with Octobrists, but my grandparents - hundred percent, my dad - maybe seventy percent likelihood. It was still honorable back then since no one knew if the USSR would fall apart or not.* (Financially speaking, would you say your family was better off under communism or after its fall?) *For my grandma it's worse now because her pension is very low.* [...] *For my dad, he didn't really work during the Soviet Union,* [...] *but after* [the 90s] *he was making good money. My grandpa and my dad are people with similar talents, give or take, similar work ethic. My grandpa has got nothing in this life because he is Jewish but also because of the whole system. I think assertiveness and vigor pay off under capitalism more than under socialism. You see the output if you work hard* [P, B]. (Do you know how the transitional years were for your family? You briefly mentioned the 90s.) *It wasn't too bad the first half of the 90s, right after the fall. It was bad later, peaking in 1998 because of default* [1998 Russian financial crisis]. (Would you say that your family members hold a strong position in regard to communism?) *My dad is strongly against it, my mom is apolitical. My grandparents are naturally in favor of communism. But they are not blind, they knew that just because they were not sent to GULAG, it didn't mean that GULAG didn't exist. But there is still this lingering nostalgia and I understand why. They miss the unity, the comfort of it because they didn't have to think of anything, all decisions were made for them, they just had to sit and wait till they got an apartment and a job.* [...] *I do get it when she says that people were nicer because they weren't chasing this capitalist wealth, people were more united than now* [P].

(R4, 25, Russia)

[...] I know that my grandpa- If you wanted to get somewhere, you had to be a [Communist] *Party member. I'm not sure if he was there or he knew someone who wanted to recruit him. Usually those stories were told over a bottle of vodka.* [...] *It's blurry. You'd have to ask my dad.* (What was your dad up to in those days?) *I'd be so surprised if he was anywhere near politics. I wouldn't say he was interested in that at all at that time* [...] (What about during the transitional years, 1989 to late-1990s?) *I honestly don't know.* (Would you say that your family members hold a strong position regarding communism?) *We talked about it with* [the father's] *girlfriend because she was saying that communism or socialism in the 80s was great because you lived well. I don't know what my dad thinks.* (What I'm gathering is that it hasn't been a big conversation topic in your family?) *Not with my dad. I think when we talk about something, there are more interesting topics, and when we talk about politics, we usually fight.* (Financially speaking, do you

think your family was better off during communism or after?) *When my grandpa on my dad's side used to work, he was in some higher position, he was an engineer, and I think he had a pretty good salary, he had an apartment and a car. But then we moved to another apartment and when I began to remember things, we no longer had a car, we were paying the mortgage and I'd say we were not really poor, but I am definitely better off right now than they were at this age. They're better off now, too. My father has an apartment in the city now and he also has a big house in a village, it's not that expensive but still, and both are paid off, it's not a mortgage. He's doing good, I'd say.* [...]

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

My grandpa on my father's side was a Communist, he was a member of the Party. He wasn't politically active; he was a member so he could achieve what he wanted. He was working at the Ministry of Agriculture and he was also in charge of JZD [Jednotné zemědělské družstvo], *a farming unit created from properties confiscated from private owners after the war that was now managed by useless political people. My grandfather was one of those, but he actually wasn't that useless, he was pretty good at what he was doing, but that also means that he was a communist and he was defending it quite a lot.* [...] *My father never joined the Party, he's an individualist and he hated the idea.* [...] *On my mother's side, my grandma* [...] *did something completely apolitical. Same for my grandpa, he was a worker in a higher position but not a political position. He was a member of the Party, but he joined after the war because he was an idealist, it was a good time, rebuilding the Republic and all.* [...] *During the* [1968] *occupation, there were these interviews with the party members, they'd interview them on what their opinion was about the invasion,* [...]. *My grandfather was against it, he hated the idea of Soviet soldiers in Czechoslovakia, but he didn't want to say it out loud since he didn't want his family to suffer. He was avoiding the questions, and when the interviewee just asked him "comrade, if you met a Russian soldier on the street, would you shake his hand?" my grandpa answered, "Sorry, I don't shake hands with people I don't know." He got kicked out of the Party for that, which is worse than not being there at all.* [...] *My other grandpa left the party only after the Revolution.* (What about your mom?) *My father started a business and my mom is a co-owner. She is a bit more socialist-leaning but not to the extent where she supports communism. For example, my dad mostly voted- back then, now the situation in the Czech Republic is very different- but back then when there were actually parties to choose from, he would vote for ODS and my mom for ČSSD.* [...] (Financially, would you say they were better off before the fall of communism or after?) *Much better after, of course, because of the business. Not like the Revolution has made them wealthy, it was due to their hard work.* [...] (Are there any things your family thinks about with nostalgia when they think of those times?) *My dad is mostly negative about it, the idea of being his own master is very important to him. My mom also hates the regime, but she agrees with some ideas of it, such as social security or the fact that everyone had a job.* (And your grandparents?) *On my father's side, they've never talked about politics, but they don't have any of this huge nostalgia that they'd still vote for the Communist party. My dad's father, who was a former Communist, would defend some ideas but he was also a practical person so after the Revolution he moved on and started strictly voting for social democrats.* [...]

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

Do you think there still exist exhibits of the communist past in the way post-communist society is and if yes, which ones?

Oh, definitely, yes. [...] *Nobody was responsible for anything after the USSR fell apart. Same gangs came to power,* [...] *they all knew each other and had enough smarts to use what happened as an opportunity. Those small-range oligarchs, nepotism. [...] I was always arguing with my grandma about how if communism was that good, why is it that when everything fell apart, when all the restraining policies went away, why did it all just fall? If you say that people were better, where did these people go? You'd imagine they would employ the same principles that they were taught, doing stuff for the community, being honest.* [...] *the roads are still terrible, the bus lines all belong to one person, people are apathetic and angry*

about changing things. Nothing has changed, [...] (Do you think we can eradicate them as the post-communist generation) *Yes, I think those things are already disappearing. I see that people, especially in the big cities are changing their views on things. Probably the war* [in Donbass] *gave us an additional push, a sense of urgency. I can see that so many new ideas are there, new ways of critiquing things, analyzing* [...] *but it's going to take a lot of time. Take the Czech Republic, it's a small country but people still have those communist times influencing them, and Ukraine is a big country with lots of different unprocessed traumas* [P]. *[...]*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

[...] *Although we're supposed to have democracy and capitalism and all this, you still see a lot of remnants of what was happening before the revolution* [P]. *There are some good legacies* [A], *like public healthcare and education. But I think it affected not only how our government works right now but the minds of the people. This scare of snitching, for instance.* [...] (Do you think it will eradicate as your generation grows up?) *I hope so but I live in such a bubble that it's hard to say what's happening outside of it, in average families.*

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

[In Russia] *we still have this system where we have the same president for very long, which I guess is reminiscent of a Chief Commander* [P]. *But then also, there was a Czar before. If communism never happened, he* [Vladimir Putin] *could have been compared to the Czar.* [...] *I definitely think some of the views we hold, for example, fear of external opinions, "what will others say, what is someone snitches," that's the legacy.* (Do you think our generation can eradicate it?) *I think yes, it won't last, especially since many from our generation are moving out. Many people are immigrating to Europe and the U.S. and other countries because reality, especially political reality weights down on us.* [...] *I do think it'll gradually be changing, maybe not with our generation but our kids, our grandkids at the worst, which still isn't that long if you think of it. I don't think it's so engraved in us that it can last for much longer.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

I think our political system [in Russia] *is a direct legacy of communism. Foreign policy. People's mentality too.* (Can you elaborate on the mentality?) *This latency, apathy, waiting for someone to make decisions for you.* [...] (Do you think it will eradicate as your generation grows up?) *I think it will,* [...] *with us and my sister's* [Gen Z] *generation. And socialism in this twisted, modified form will become obsolete and if we are to have any kind of socialism, it will be new and theory-based, not the USSR kind since we didn't even get to see that. Our parents were very influenced by communism, but they don't carry this much nostalgia anymore, so I think it will be gradually fading away* [B].

(R4, 25, Russia)

I think they messed us up, economically and morally. [...] *It was forty years of the craziest stupid way of how to run a country, sharing resources* [D], *market was non-existent* [CN]. *[...] After 1989, everything changed too suddenly and a lot of people, criminals, former communists with connections grabbed the opportunity and wasted the country even more in those wild 90s. And morally because people stopped caring for forty years.* [...] (Do you think our generation is able to eradicate it?) *It's already sticking with us for a while if you think about it. Our parents were influenced, and our parents influenced us. It's not like you can draw a line there. We definitely will approach from a different perspective. For example, I still see in my parents' generation this approach toward Germans, that they are the ones who started the war. And it's been some time but it's still in them. My generation won't think so anymore about Germans.* [...]

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

4.3.3. Political opinions and behavior

How satisfied are you with the way democracy is working in your country?

(Do you vote?) *Yes, of course. I take pride in it* [V]*, I put additional effort in it. [...] I think the system we have works, it's just- I know it's a cliche to say but we're not mature enough as a democracy. [...] I was very disappointed by the results of the last presidential elections,* [...] *because people choose someone with no political experience whatsoever, who just looked great [...] But it shows you what the electorate really is like. By denying that people made that choice- you can't deny that. I couldn't say that it was fabricated. I could totally see the people voting that way. [...] (Are you a member of a political party?) No. (Are you a member of a labor union?) No. I would love to be. We had a small labor union at my previous job where we united with my coworkers to ask for a better pay for all of us.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

[...] *There is not much corruption with voting, to our knowledge. People do have access to information if they had time and energy to actually do their research. I don't think they'd be oppressed for saying their opinion or voting for some party.* [...] *As an institution, it does work* [B] *but the people are flawed on both sides, not only voters but the politicians, too.* [...] (Do you vote in your country's presidential/parliamentary/regional elections?) *Not regional since I don't live there now, the rest yes.* [...] *(Are you a member of a political party?) No. (Are you a member of a labor union?) No.*

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

I'm not. I don't think it's there. [...] (When you say there's no democracy, do you mean the institutions that are supposed to exercise it are faulty? For instance, that the elections are rigged?) *Yes.* (Do you think people actually vote differently from what you see in the results?) *That's a good question but a big one. You hear the opposition, you hear those who protest but for example supporters of Putin, you don't hear them.* [...] *Maybe people do vote the way we see it but then again democracy, or the lack of it, is visible in how people don't really have an option, they don't have what to choose from.* [...] (Do you vote in your country's presidential/parliamentary/regional elections?) *I didn't vote this last time around.* [...] *I don't know whom I'd vote for if I went now. Maybe against all.* [...] (What about parliamentary elections?) No. *I don't think I was eighteen when they were last held. I also don't think my family votes for deputies or anything besides the president.* (Are you a member of a political party?) *No.* (Are you a member of a labor union?) *No.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

[...] *I think right now fair elections are impossible, for as long as the current authorities are in power, there cannot be any democratic elections* [B]. [...] (Do you vote in your country's presidential/parliamentary/regional elections?) *No.* (Have you ever voted?) *No. But I say it with some level of guilt because I know that* [by not voting] *I'm removing my right to complain or appeal based on my dissatisfaction with the current government since I haven't done anything to change it, even nominally. I know this is my civil tool of influencing the government* [B] *that I do not use.* (Are you a member of a political party?) *No.* (Are you a member of a labor union?) *No.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

[...] *I'd say I do believe that the vote count is done in a proper way* [B]*. There are some cases where I heard stories of how you buy votes. That happens but it's not common.* [...] (Do you vote in your country's presidential/parliamentary/regional elections?) *Last parliamentary election was the first one where I voted, and I voted by mail.* (Are you a member of a political party?) *No.* (Are you a member of a labor union?) *No.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

Democracy in general is as good as it gets. The way democracy works in my country is not so well anymore. (Anymore?) [...] *When you have a country where only a few people are controlling everything, oligarchs controlling the media and the industries and are being supported by other high-profile politicians, then how can you call it a democracy? In terms of elections, I don't think they're fake here* [B]. *The state of democracy in my country is not so good but compared to some third-world countries, there are worse cases.* (Do you vote in your country's presidential/parliamentary/regional elections?) *I do.* (Are you a member of a political party?) *No.* (Are you a member of a labor union?) *No.*

(R5, 29, Czech Republic)

If I asked you to self-identify as a supporter of some social, economic, and political philosophy, what would it be?

I find socialist ideas quite close to me [A]. *More like liberal socialist* [SC], *that side.* (Is there a political movement or figure you especially agree with?) [...] *in the U.S., Bernie* [Sanders] *is pretty good.* [...] (Anyone in Ukraine by a chance?) *No.* [...] *In general, I don't really emotionally stand with political figures because at the end of the day it's just a show. It's a job. And they're all replaceable.* [...]

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

Leaning to social democracy. (Is there a political movement or figure you especially agree with?) *I mostly look up to* [Zuzana] *Čaputová.* [...]

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

I honestly don't know. Maybe it's because I grew up in a country where there's no point in even thinking about it [...] *because things won't change.* [...] *So what's the point of even forming your opinions and argue, even if with oneself, if at the end of the day it's not going to change.* [...] *I live in a society: something happens, and I can tell you if I agree with it or I don't but to have one big articulated opinion.* [...] *I can express my opinion on a case by case basis, based on how it affects me, but if it doesn't affect me it's hard for me to form an opinion because I haven't actually done much research.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

I'd say liberal [GC], *meaning that I definitely don't want any governmental institution to control the economy and human rights* [V]. *I want those to remain free, that and the market. Total freedom for businesses, human rights, freedom of thought, democracy, ability to petition those in power* [V]. (Is there a political movement or figure you especially agree with?) *No, not really since I'm not very interested in politics.* [...] *I haven't researched politicians in other countries and I'm not very well-versed in politics in general so I can only talk about Russia. Navalny is the first opposition for human rights, freedom of choice, and democracy. But since he only has theses, ideas, and not the plan, I can't even say I'm a big fan of his.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

Regarding the systems, capitalism is okay, I support it [B] *and I'm okay with it. Regarding voting systems or the way that power is distributed, I think that democracy is not a good way* [B] *to approach it but there's nothing better* [B] *at this time. [...] The problem is, if you give people power over something they are not familiar with, or they think they know it but they haven't studied it, they've just been manipulated by some websites and Facebook to vote for something, it wouldn't work.* (Let me just clarify which part of democracy you think is faulty, the way that people can make misinformed decisions?) *Yes.* [...] *There's a problem with people being misinformed and not being interested enough in a topic to study enough.* [...] *I'd say that people capable of making the right decisions should be making the right decisions* [B]. [...] (Is there a political movement or figure you especially agree with?) *Of course, Obama, he was great. And our president as well,* [Zuzana] *Čaputová.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

[...] a democrat [GC], *liberal* [GC] *in general, and if I think of this line between left and right, I'll be a bit more to the left* [B]. *I think a strong social system is important* [V]. *I used to vote for social democrats back then when it made any sense. I would be very happy for some actual reasonable left-wing party in my country, I'd be a fan, but now the situation is not really in favor of the left-wing* [P]. (Is there a political movement or figure you especially agree with?) *I really like our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Petříček. He is from the social democrat party* [...] *And then young people, like Alexandria* [Ocasio-]*Cortez. She's very interesting to me. I'm curious about* [Joe] *Biden now, it's not that I like him so much, he's not entirely my kind of a guy but I think he's leading the U.S. in the right direction. I like* [Angela] *Merkel too.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

4.3.4. Opinions on socialist and progressive economics

Do you have any concerns about the state of the world now, economic or social?

If climate change [V] *counts as an economic concern, then that.* [...] (During the pandemic, have you observed or experienced any economic or social conditions that made you question or reflect on the socio-economic system that is in place?) *Everyone's feeling like nobody knows anything. The governments are trying to find their way in the dark room. It wasn't all dark. For me, it's inspiring how the vaccine was founded so quickly. [...] It's a sign that with a sense of urgency, with a common enemy we can find a way to collaborate* [B]. *But there's also many undercurrent stones with that,* [...] *richer countries bought all the doses right away and poorer countries got whatever is left. I also read many reports about COVID and how it influenced women in the households, how they have to handle the schooling, and abuse levels skyrocketed.* [...] (For what cause would you go to a protest?) *For climate change. It's a very urgent cause but we're also very helpless. Individual action doesn't really help here, no matter how well you sort your trash, only the structural change can make a change. You can shame each other all you want for buying plastic bags and cups, that's all very valid, but we're not the problem.* (You said it's a structural issue, can you link it to economics, where does the issue take root if it cannot be solved on an individual level?) [...] *just look up the biggest corporations, what they're making and how they're making it. It's not the fault of the consumer that they're buying the stuff that is already faulty, that can't be recycled, not ecologically produced. [...]*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

Yes. (Could you elaborate on some concerns you find especially important?) *War* [V]. (That's an interesting answer). *I'm afraid that with how the world goes right now, and let's speak just about the Czech Republic since this is what affects us the most, is that the dissatisfaction of people here will grow to the point where they will want another revolution and that will bring chaos.* (For what cause would you go to a march?) *For women's right to abortion* [V], *that's for sure.* [...] (During the COVID-19 pandemic, have you observed or experienced any economic or social conditions that made you question or reflect on the socio-economic system that is in place?) *Well, the whole emergency state and the way the government can mandate a curfew and what else have we had,* [...] *I was a bit surprised how easy it is to put those restrictions in place.* [...] *For me personally, since I'm not a business owner, I didn't see a big impact.* [...]

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

The difference between the richest and the poorest is unimaginable [V]. *Some have everything and some don't have resources to make bread, let alone buy it.* (For what cause would you go to a march?) *If the Iron Curtain was to be brought back or something similar, and you can't go anywhere. Funny, that's actually what's happening now if you think of it. But if it was a permanent restriction, something politically-charged, I'd protest. Or, for example- we had those conversations going on conspiracy theories*

that the Internet could've been shut down or restricted. Having these personal freedoms restricted would be very concerning for me [V]*. To be honest, when I think of more socially important issues, someone's rights, don't get me wrong, those are very important, but I don't think I'd go to a march for those* [V]. (During the pandemic, have you observed or experienced any economic or social conditions that made you question or reflect on the socio-economic system that is in place?) *The first thing that comes to mind is that my mom has been unemployed for a year now. She's self-employed, she pays taxes and has lots of paperwork to do, and she has little protection. Sure, she's being paid some compensation, but those sums are ridiculous.* [...]

(R3, 23, Russia)

[...] *I'm very concerned about the pandemic aftermath.* [...] *That people are losing their jobs* [V]*, many businesses cannot work and are forced to close* [V] *for good. Many industries, for instance tourism, turned out to be very vulnerable, which could not have been predicted. My other concern is that the pandemic has shown the shortcoming of the "prosperous" capitalist world. Countries are not very concerned with helping each other with the* [COVID-19] *vaccine* [distribution]*, it's turned into a profit-driven race among pharma companies which has exposed many bigger issues that one can ponder on in the evenings alone at home, about the kind of world we live in, if the globalization as good as we have imagined to be, if different states can operate on the principle of mutual aid or is it always just a competition.* (For what cause would you go to a march?) *I think the only cause that would take me out to the streets is if there would be an actual chance of overthrowing Putin, if there was a tangible hope of being close to that. Then I'd gladly join that movement. Or if even more civil rights would be taken away* [V] *from us* [in Russia]*, on top of what we already don't have.* [...] *But I don't consider myself an activist* [A].

(R4, 25, Russia)

From the economic point of view, I'd say we're getting better [B]*. An average person can afford a lot more than we used in the past. An average lifestyle and economic situation is getting better* [P]. (For what cause would you go to a march?) *There were protests sparked because of Ján Kuciak's* [Slovak investigative journalist] *murder. If I was in Bratislava, I'd probably go there.* (Against political repressions then?) *Yes.* [V] [...]

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

[...] *Politically, in many countries the voters are turning to extreme choices* [P]*. Who'd say some years ago that Trump could be a president of the U.S., or Johnson the prime minister of the U.K., or Zeman elected for the second time. And other right-wing parties, in the Czech Republic you still have Communists* [NC]*, and other extreme parties like SPD or this Trikolor. AfD in Germany that actually gets some support. Political crisis, absolutely, people are desperately searching for any kind of an answer to their daily troubles. Environmental crisis, global warming* [V]*. The rest is kind of related, and then geopolitical issues, Middle East.* (What would be a cause that would make you go to a protest?) Political issues [V]*. I've joined some protests. [...] If somehow they'd push through a similar law as in Poland, against abortions* [V]*, that'd definitely force me to go on the streets as well. Human rights and maybe environmental issues* [V] *if it goes very wrong.* [...]

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

<u>The top 1% of households globally own 43% of all personal wealth while the bottom 50% have only 1%. Within this 1%, there is less than 0.1% of ultra-wealthy people who own 25% of the world's wealth (from 2020 Credit Suisse Global Wealth report). How do you feel about that statement?</u>

[...] *At some point that wealth feels so big and unimaginable* [A]*. [...] People love Bill Gates so much because he's surrounded with all these charities and educational programs. I'm pretty sure if you dig*

deeper down, not all of them are that impactful, they're just more of a box ticked [A] [...] (Let me clarify, you think one should not be able to become ultra-rich?) *Of course not. I can understand a certain level of richness but not that level* [B]. (Do you think a certain level of inequality is necessary?) *I think it comes naturally and there's no way around it. But sometimes the gap is too big, and it shouldn't be.* [B] [...] *It's going to strike back anyway. I watched The Crown* [TV series, 2016-] *yesterday and it was about this guy during the Thatcher era when unemployment went up and he was one of those people who lost his job and his wife and family and his everything, [...] It's an actual case, he broke into Buckingham Palace and spoke to the queen. This just shows how when people are unemployed, especially when there's a big amount of them, one of them will do such a thing or worse* [B]. *It doesn't matter how rich or protected you are, it influences everyone* [B]. *The more the scale of capitalism is, the more it's going to implode on itself. I even heard ideas that we should help it accelerate so that it flips.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

It's not something that would surprise me. I was aware of that. I do think it's alarming [B] *towards the bottom 50%* [...] *but I have a bigger problem with living standards and conditions than actually owning something* [V]. *Obviously property brings power* [B] *so I don't think it's fair* [V], *but giving everything to everyone like it was during communism* [W], *that wasn't perfect either.* (Do you think that gap needs bridging?) *I think the good movement is with those super wealthy people giving away their wealth at death to charities.* [A] *[...] So, yes. To some extent.* [...]

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

It's crazy. This I think is too much [V]. *I recently talked about this movie, Once Upon a Time There Lived a Simple Woman (2011) about women's rights and what life was like for women in Russia some hundred years ago, when women were treated worse than cattle.* [...] *A girl was born and doomed to be a slave. Same thing, someone is born doomed to be a slave, and someone else is born and already owns 25% of global wealth* [B] *, roughly speaking that is. I don't think that's fair* [V], [...] *and to be honest I don't know what needs to happen to change it and for* [wealth] *to trickle down at least a little bit.* (Can you think of any tools that could bridge that gap?) *I guess socialism in its ideal state would liquidate that inequality. There are some attempts at at least making it look like the bridging is happening, e.g. inheritance tax, wealth tax, but those laws are being passed by people who own wealth so it's a vicious cycle that cannot really work* [B]. [...] *The entire system needs to be changed but how do we overthrow those on the top, those who benefit from this inequality, that I don't know.* [...] *I cannot think of a realistic way.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

[...] *I think it's unfair* [V]. *Especially toward those who really need their basic needs covered, food, water, clothes* [V]. *It's the same how African countries cannot afford to buy the* [COVID-19] *vaccine while Europe is buying out all the supply. If someone in Africa told me they can't afford to go to a yoga class and I'd say, well, I can, that's different. When, as you said, 1% owns 43% of global wealth while some people have nothing to eat* [V], *I don't think that's what this system was intended to do.* [...] *If we look globally, of course it's unfair. Until this gap exists, I don't think we as a society can move anywhere forward* [V]. (Do you think that gap needs bridging, and if yes, how?) *Of course it needs bridging* [B]. *People with power and money need to have some level of social responsibility* [B] *which some do have, it's just that it isn't ubiquitous* [P]. *Individualism still prevails* [P], *people always think first of themselves* [B] *which is fine but when those basic needs are covered, instead of sitting on all that wealth like Scrooge McDuck, it would be better to think of how to help those in need. Unfortunately, it's not a systemic solution but I don't know what could be.* [...] (At which threshold do you think it'd be reasonable to legally oblige people to redistribute their wealth?) *It should only be for those in charge of multibillion corporations* [B]. *Not for an owner of a local grocery store or my dad who just has a good salary; it would be people who really have global power and multi-million bank accounts.* [...] *I would like to say that it should be voluntary, but I don't think it can really work like that because if it did, we wouldn't be having this conversation.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

Let's take the top-10 wealthiest people, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, [...] *they made a significant impact. Bill Gates changed the whole world. You are using something that he started.* [...] *He shaped history. Now, would you say that he should be on the same level as we are? Or only 10 times wealthier, 100 times wealthier?* [B] *But he changed the world. And if everyone wants to buy his product for this price, it's okay* [B] *because nobody forces you to buy Microsoft Windows, same with Elon Musk, no one is forcing you to buy sticks of Tesla, or a Tesla, but people want to. They earned that money* [B]. *Mark Zuckerberg created a platform that people use every day. Sure, he does some shady things with your data and doesn't really care about your privacy, but you are the user, you're willing to give that information to him. Why would he be punished for people wanting to use his platforms?* [B] *What I'm trying to say, it's natural* [B]. *They've earned it* [B]. *[...] You cannot expect the top wealthiest people to just give out their money. If we're not talking about people who got the money through inheritance. People who earned their money and made it to that 0.1%, I think they deserve it and I see nothing wrong with that* [B]. (And what did you mention about the inheritance?) *The argument that they've earned it wouldn't work there anymore. If you were a daughter of Bill Gates and you inherited millions of millions, would you just give everybody everything and start from zero? It doesn't make sense. You kind of earned it by the social standards where you give your children the money.* (Do I understand correctly, you don't think that that gap needs bridging?) *It would be nice, but you cannot mandate redistribution* [B]. *You can tax the wealthiest more but they are usually finding ways around it. They can afford to evade paying taxes. I'm not saying it should stay like this or that it's good, but it makes sense that it happens.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

It's sad. [...] *I'd be very happy if those wealthy people decide to share* [A] *but I don't like the idea of taking it away from them. During communism, what was the result of taking property from private owners? It messed up everything for everybody* [B]. *We equally had nothing. Something I don't really understand is progressive taxation- there you go, progressive* [GC]*! Isn't that what it's called? The more you make, the larger percentage tax you pay. I mean, one part of it doesn't make sense because you already have more and then you pay more?* [A] [...] *I think if you have this disgusting amount of money that you can't possibly spend in several lifetimes, it makes sense to pay it back.* [V] [...] *Living in a glass castle surrounded by slums isn't nice even for the person in the castle.* (Do you think it's democratic to oblige the rich to give up a certain level of their wealth?) *If enough people decide for it, yes, it's democratic. Taxation is already forced, if we don't pay, we go to prison, is that democratic?* [...] *It's great if it's voluntary, the way Bill Gates gives his money away, that's great.* [...] *But if you're asking about economic tools, I have no idea, this is not my field.* [...] *Let's have a different example, if you're Bill Gates, you kind of earned this money* [B] *by having a crazy clever mind, fair enough, even though it's crazy money. But when I think about some famous football player, earning extremely crazy money for not much of a value given back to society, then it's not really moral* [B], *but who am I to say "you're a football player, you should be earning this much?" I might not like it but I don't feel like bashing it.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic

<u>Do you think everyone is entitled to a certain standard of living, e.g. unconditional access to basic food and shelter?</u>

Yes. (Would you say the minimum wage in your country allows that standard of living?) *No.* (What is our opinion on universal basic income?) *I heard about it. I'm all for it. I read about this fabrication about the whole idea, that if you give money to poor people, they will become lazy,* [...] *and it's not true. People need basic things. It's not like the less you have, the more motivated you're going to be.* [B] [...] *I think I read that in connection to Marx or Lenin, that one of them said that it's wrong to think of proletariat as stupid for staying in, having a beer, and then going to bed after a hard day of work. They're exhausted, they can't spend their time reading academic works and think of the future and great big ideas when they barely have their basic needs covered. You can romanticize being poor, that even in such adversity people still find a way to live and raise their children and make great art, but it's not the mainstream case. Mostly,*

being poor makes people angry [B]. (What is your opinion on universal and socialized healthcare and education? How do you feel about mixed systems?) [...] *I think the mixed system is fine* [A]. [...] *I come from a family that I don't think could afford to pay for my education, I got two scholarships, many opportunities that if I didn't have, I wouldn't be here.* [...]

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

Yes. (Okay, my examples here are unconditional access to basic food and shelter) *Yes.* (Food should be free and available) *Yes. I do think that on a basic level, even if you don't work, you should be entitled to get some basic level of dignity* [V] *and not die from hunger. It's the 21st century.* [...] (What is our opinion on universal basic income?) *That would be great.* [...] (What is your opinion on universal and socialized healthcare and education?) *I like the combination and that the standard coverage is provided by the government. It's not the best but it's also not terrible. [...] I receive almost all health services from public institutions. But if you have money and you want better service or comfort, that's fine* [A]. (Same with education?) *Yes.* [...]

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

Yes. (Would you say the minimum wage in your country allows that standard of living?) *No. People adjust, we are such creatures that we can get used to anything, bread and water only if needed, but that is just a miserable state of survival.* [...] (What is our opinion on universal basic income?) *I read about it a few years ago, that it was tried as an experiment in some industrialized country, and that it didn't work. [...] I actually don't think it's a bad idea.* (Universal and socialized healthcare and education?) *There are many factors at play. In Russia, the existence of private institutions hurts public ones, and the private sector only benefits from that* [B]. [...] *Again, it creates a gap* [B]*: some can afford to receive healthcare and others receive it only nominally. I'm afraid education is not too different. If you could pay for middle* [primary and secondary] *school, if there was that division between private and public, which I know exists but it isn't very popular, I think having both would create an even more powerful pipeline to inequality.* [...] *I think it'd be better to only have public institutions* [A]*, then at least there is some uniformity. Of course, if the government is concerned with propagating a certain kind of perspective in its public institutions, that defeats the purpose. If there is going to be this uniformity, everything's public, it needs to come from a good place. If that's not the case, then a mixed system it is, I guess, but then again that can't come from a good place by definition since profit is involved.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

Yes. It's the responsibility of the rich countries that have surplus to provide that to their less privileged neighbors [B]. (Would you say the minimum wage in your country allows that standard of living?) *No.* (What is our opinion on universal basic income?) *I read some articles a few years ago, I remember that it was tried as an experiment and that it didn't work. I don't remember why. I'd say I'm more against than for* [A]*. I'd rather have a threshold for eligibility so that those in need receive support. Those who work and are getting by just fine, I don't see the reason to give them that* [B]. [...] *To answer it, yes for all who need it, those who fall under a certain set of criteria, but not for everyone* [A]. (Universal and socialized healthcare and education?) *When it isn't free, especially when it's very expensive, you either put them in a life-long debt or you take away their right for health and education entirely. Naturally, I think that ought to be provided by the state* [B]. (What's your opinion of the mixed, private and public system?) *That's great. This gives people with a certain level of wealth an opportunity to choose if they want some extra care, while people with lower wealth can go to public institutions.* (Same with education?) *Yes. I'm okay with it as long as everyone gets access to that service, public or private* [A].

(R4, 25, Russia)

That's a hard question. Let's imagine you do literally nothing. You sit here, or on the street, and everybody comes and asks you if you want to work and you say no. Do you deserve others to build shelter for you and give you the food? If you are capable of working and you choose not to, then I'd say you don't deserve it [B]. [...] (What is our opinion on universal basic income?) *I am against it for the same reasons.* (What

about universal and socialized [as opposed to private] healthcare and education?) [...] *Healthcare shouldn't be a business* [B] *that drains people out.* [...] *You definitely should have an option to pay for something that is better, if you can afford it* [A]. *Paying for premium care fuels the quality of healthcare* [B]. *A private institution can then come up with a new drug* [...] *and then start selling it to the public sector, too. Eventually, even people who didn't pay for premium care still benefit from it. Regarding education, it should be available to everyone* [V]. *Everyone should be able to access decent healthcare and education.* [...] *But you cannot forbid people from founding private schools.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

I believe that human beings we all deserve some standard of living. I can deserve some luxury, but I shouldn't be forced to deserve food to survive [B], *that's just sad.* [...] *I really like the idea of some minimal income for everybody, for instance. I think it's a wonderful idea. Will it work? I'm not entirely sure because you still work with people.* [...] *In our situation, I don't think it's manageable money-wise and I'm not sure how people would react because the idea is that now there is no burden on you, you know you will survive so you can focus on whatever makes you happy and contribute to society. But in practice, of course many people would just decide to no longer be doing anything. I hate to say that because that's an argument often used against social security and welfare. There are many people saying that we should cut back on social welfare, that people are lazy, and they are misusing it. There's always this small percentage of people who do really use the system this way, but it doesn't mean that it's not very helpful for the majority of people.* (How do you feel about the mixed system of private and public education and healthcare?) [...] *I think it's okay to have both. It's good to have options* [A].

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

<u>According to Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), communism is a *"social system based on collective ownership."* History aside, do you see a problem with that statement in itself?</u>

[...] *People need someone to be responsible for something to offload their sense of responsibility. They need a representation of responsibility in something, an institution, a person.* [...] *It sounds like a great idea but knowing the people's nature it doesn't go that well.* (So, unrealistic?) *Yes. Maybe it's just very hard to imagine any other system that we have now. It's difficult to move beyond the thinking that people are going to be unfair to each other and create some sort of system that would end up being similar to capitalism anyway.* [...]

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

I do from a sociological or psychological perspective because people are not willing to share and the majority will always want more than somebody else has. [...] *It would work if we were a different kind of people. In practice, I don't think it can work because of how we are programmed.* (If I gave you a horizontal axis with communism and capitalism on the opposite sides of the spectrum, where would you place yourself?) *I would say the middle because it depends what we are talking about. If it's healthcare and education, I like the socialized system* [A], *but when it comes to owning land and individual freedoms, I lean to the right.* [...] *Middle and then a bit to the right* [toward capitalism]. *But it's mostly because of the oppression that was happening during communism* [CN].

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

No, I don't have a problem with it. I think it can work just fine. (If I gave you a horizontal axis with communism and capitalism on the opposite sides of the spectrum, where would you place yourself, intellectually?) *[...] Capitalism for me is tightly related to that* [wealth] *gap which in my opinion is at the very core of that system* [B], *which is why I think I'd lean more toward socialism or communism, whatever we choose to call it, not to say that I'm all the way there but definitely closer to that side because I see capitalism as a divisive force.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

I do have a problem with it. I want everyone to have private ownership [V]. (I'll just give you this example I gave someone before, collective ownership as in, for instance, you work in a company of twenty people and all twenty of you own that company in equal share and get an equal share of voting power to decide on that company's future.) *I still wouldn't say I agree with that.* (If I gave you a horizontal axis with communism and capitalism on the opposite sides of the spectrum, where would you place yourself, intellectually?) *⅔ toward the capitalist side*.

(R4, 25, Russia)

Maybe I just don't see the point of it because I don't know enough about it. (In simple terms, if you were to work in a company, you as one worker would be entitled to a proportional to you against the total amount of employees number of shares of that company. If you're involved in something, you own a share of it). *Could you sell those shares?* (Technically, I guess you could, which would then somewhat defeat the purpose. But the question is more about the entitlement alone). *It goes back to the problems I spoke about when you asked about democracy. The basic worker may not have the knowledge to make the decisions that are good for the company because he is after all just a basic worker who works with a hammer,* [...] *maybe he is not the one who should be making decisions* [B] *about next year's strategy. That's what I'd see as a bad thing in that.* (If I gave you a horizontal axis with communism and capitalism on the opposite sides of the spectrum, where would you place yourself, intellectually?) *All the way to the capitalist side*.

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

In theory, it's nice. Historically wise, it's proven to be not possible. Marx definitely had some crazy important ideas, I'm not so educated in it but we are still using many of his ideas, even social welfare [CP] *kind of comes from it.* (What about specifically this idea of collective ownership?) [...] *If people agree on it, why not. But it's such an extreme that I don't think all people would just agree. Which is why I think it's a great concept for a social experiment in an open group, like Kibbutz. If I hate it, I'm leaving. But if you base the government, the state on this and then you prevent people from leaving the country, that's my problem with it. Again though, if we're talking ideologies, Nazism of course is terrible, it's based on violence and cruelty, there's nothing you can defend it with. But communism, there's nothing like this on paper* [A].

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

4.3.5. Thought experiments

Do you think there is a conflict between an individual's best interests and society's best interests?

[...] If you were in a government and thought that your ideas about how society should work are the best, that doesn't work like that because society is very multilayered, everyone wants their own thing and one person's idea about what it is and what it wants, however good it is, doesn't mirror the reality. But if you're not in power, if you're not deciding much, you are an individual, I think then there is no conflict. (So the conflict arises with power?) *With power, yes.* [B] *When you actually influence other people's lives. When you don't have power, most of the things you do, as long as you don't commit any crimes, are fine.* (Do you then think that individuals' best interests and societal best interests can coexist as long as there is no power imbalance?) *Yes.* (I'm putting words in your mouth, feel free to correct this.) *I think you condensed it pretty well.* (Can you think of any personal freedoms or market reforms that you grew up with that were not present under the communist regime as you know it?) *[...] I can travel, I can have my*

own path in life. If you think about it theoretically, all of the ways are open to me while twenty, thirty years ago it would be different. [...] *Right now it feels [emphasized] like all the paths are open to you* [P]. *Doesn't necessarily mean they are but it definitely feels freer in that way.* (And if socialism, as per your definition, was established now, which freedoms, if any, would be difficult for you to give up?) [...] *From my point of view, it doesn't look like I'd have to sacrifice anything. I would only gain from it.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

For sure. (Can you elaborate a little bit?) *If I'm in that 1% of the richest, I want to stay there, I want to be the one with power* [B]. *But if I'm one of the poorest, I want a share of that wealth, I want to eat and not die. That's a conflict.* [...] (What about yourself specifically, which of your interests cannot coexist with the best interests of a larger society?) *Travelling, consumerism, all that is at the expense of future generations. From an ecological perspective, I'm killing the planet because of my lifestyle.* [...]

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

Not really. If everyone had what to eat, what to do, and felt free and safe and confident that their rights and freedom will be protected today and tomorrow, then I think we can all coexist well [B]. *I don't think individual best interests would in any way intersect among people.* (What about yourself specifically, which of your interests cannot coexist with the best interests of a larger society?) *No, not that I know of. I don't think I'm sabotaging the wider society. (*Can you think of any personal freedoms or market reforms that you grew up with that were not present under the communist regime as you know it?) *Private ownership, for example. I mean, I don't own any now, my family does. Again, I can choose where to live, it was maybe possible back then too but it was more difficult.* (Which of those freedoms or reforms would you not be willing to give up if a socialist system was to be established now?) *I don't think there's anything socialism would limit me in because I am not among that 1% of people and I'd have no money to redistribute. Since we're not talking communism under which there might be dictatorship, I don't think socialism being established would be a dramatic change for my life.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

If we're thinking globally, my personal interests are not at odds with the larger society. I am rather individualist, I do believe that everyone is responsible for their own happiness, everyone can do what they want and make as much money as they want [V]. *But I don't think my individualism can hurt anyone* [B]. (When you say everyone can make as much money as they want, you are implying that it's not a zero sum game, it does not come at the expense of others?) *Correct. I think those* [rich] *people hold a social responsibility to help those who do not have money but there is no shame or guilt in making a lot of money* [B]. [...] (Which freedoms or reforms would you not be willing to give up if a socialist system was to be established now?) *I think it would influence my work somehow, I just don't know how. I mean my salary. Travelling, freedom of movement.* (In which way do you think it'd affect your salary?) *I don't know, maybe everyone would see their paychecks cut in half. But I cannot separate totalitarianism which theoretically should not be in socialism, so when I think socialism, I automatically think totalitarianism, that regime that forbids you to do anything. I didn't see any other example of socialism at work.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

Yes. (What about yourself specifically, which of your interests cannot coexist with the best interests of a larger society?) *There are a lot of them. Society will be here after I die. Its best interest is to take care of the planet so that it can go on existing. I know that I will die in less than a hundred years so I don't really have to plan for longer than that. [...] Sure, I have a choice to live without causing any pollution, buy recyclable stuff and so on. I could do that, but I won't because it's just easier for me to live the way I do now* [V]. I*t's not better for society because I cause pollution but it's better for me.* [...] (Which freedoms or reforms would you not be willing to give up if a socialist system was to be established now?) *Now, if you work harder than others, you also get more money than others. In a socialist system, you wouldn't. You'd get an equal share. Right?* (I'm kind of not supposed to be leading you anywhere.) *I know, I just based some of my answers on that assumption but I'm not really sure if that's the way it works.* [...]

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

[...] *If a society wants to be happy, its individuals need to be happy too. But if I want to be happy as an individual, I also need to give something to society. It's give and take.* (What about yourself specifically, which of your interests cannot coexist with the best interests of a larger society?) *Of course, I gather things, I inhabit some space, I buy stuff, I definitely have much more than I need. Out of all the things I have in this flat, two dozen of people in a third-world country can live on. [...] The more you try to live reasonably,* [...] *not eating meat or buying only local products or saving energy, the more you realize you will never live in a way that others will not suffer* [B]. [...]

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

Where do you see yourself financially in 10 years from now?

Everyone strives for the middle class. I'd want a house, a car. I don't even need a car. Just a house, maybe my own business, that's it. (How do you feel about your financial future?) *I feel okay* [...] *I feel capable. There are many factors, there's age, gender, things that can hold me back, the fact that I'm an immigrant but I feel like as long as you work well and be smart about your decisions, you'll be fine.* (Imagine you are where you aspire to be in 10 years: what would be the % of the tax you think would be reasonable to charge your household?) *Up to 40%. If I find it reasonable, if I know it goes for a good cause, then it's fine.* [...] *I imagine myself in the position where I get paid well but I don't sit on that wealth. I don't mind paying high taxes, [...] as long as I see that it goes into education, social support, it brings good results.*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

(Which economic class do you think you will fall under?) *Middle. I'll pay off a bigger portion of my mortgage than now. That's basically it.* [...] *I'll have more but not something that would drastically change my living standard.* (How do you feel about your financial future?) *Good. Hopefully. More optimistic.* (Imagine you are where you aspire to be in 10 years: what would be the % of the tax you think would be reasonable to charge your household?) *About 30%.*

(R2. 29, Slovakia)

I'm optimistic about it. (Which economic class do you think you will fall under?) [...] *I hope to have enough to know I have a safety net. I don't aspire to be in that 1%. I think there is something manic in wanting to end up all the way up there because if you're ultra-wealthy, what are you even going to do with all that money? It'd be enough for me to know that my family and I are well off and safe and that no unexpected crisis can hurt us too much.* (Imagine you are where you aspire to be in 10 years: what would be the % of the tax you think would be reasonable to charge your household?) *Same as now, up to 30%. I know that more progressive* [NC] *countries have higher taxes; some have extremely high rates but they know where that money goes.* [...] *I'll even pay 50% tax if I know it'll pay off, but I don't want to pay to see it being stolen.*

(R3, 23, Slovakia)

I'm very blase about money. I like to live well, [...] *I'm not very obsessed with an idea of wealth and I don't have that much in savings; I live in the present. If my current salary can secure me this lifestyle in the present, and maybe also help my family, that's totally fine by me.* (In 10 years, do you see yourself owning any assets?) *Most likely, [...] but I don't sleep and dream of a house and a car.* [...] (Imagine you are where you aspire to be in 10 years, what would be the % of the tax you think would be reasonable to charge your household?) *25%.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

I'm optimistic. I see myself in an upper class, not in the middle, maybe lower bit of the upper class. I'm not sure if there are any thresholds but as per my perceived understanding, I'll be in the bottom upper class. Having an apartment that I own, having a good salary, good lifestyle. (Imagine you are where you aspire to be in 10 years: what would be the % of the tax you think would be reasonable to charge your household? Imagine there's no inflation.) *Around 30%.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

Honestly, I don't know what I'm going to do in one year so I can't say. I think quite okay, but then again, I know that I have my family to support me so even if I end up very badly, I'll have the support of my family. So, I feel good maybe not because of my own job--hopefully that too--but also because I have back up. (Imagine you are where you aspire to be in 10 years: what would be the % of the tax you think would be reasonable to charge your household? Under the assumption that your taxes would go to the right place and take inflation out of the equation.) *30% is okay, if it works, I'm okay with it.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

Do you agree with a general statement that 'without financial incentive, there can be no progress?'

No. (Do you think you would stop working hard if there would be no promise of financial gain?) *(hesitant)* (Imagine you already have enough for survival). *People work not only because of money* [B], *it gives them a sense of purpose, a sense of making something, meeting other people. Yes, I would stop working in the sense of making money, but I would definitely still do things. People need a purpose, even if they have the happiest life it's not happy without a purpose and challenges. [...]*

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

I don't think so. I don't think that only money can push us to optimization and all that [B]. (What else do you think can?) *Ideally, thriving for the better world, for all of us to have a better life since there are still so many places where people are struggling a lot.* [...] *There are people, even rich people, Bill and Melinda Gates, for example, they have the foundation for having better access for developing countries to water and all those basic needs, vaccination. And they don't do it for profit because they already have money.* (Do you think you would stop working?) [...] *In my current work, if I don't get any money out of it, then yes.* (Based on what you are doing for a living now, how do you think quitting would affect the operation of the institution/company you currently work in?) *Nothing would change on a big scale of an organization.*

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

No, I don't think so. Maybe I'm romanticizing it but I think people are not that materialistic [B]. *People can do things just because they want to, even now we have volunteers and charity organizations.* (Do you think you would stop working if there would be no promise of financial gain?) *I would definitely be doing something to not go insane. I probably won't be working where I do now since I'd have more freedom and I think everything would have to be restructured under those conditions anyway and many jobs would disappear, maybe we'd replace them with automation and robots. I'd still be working but I'd choose something I'm genuinely interested in.* [...]

(R3, 23, Russia)

No. I want to believe that the [COVID-19] *vaccine was invented not for profit. The Red Cross, healthcare, education, those things aren't always profit-driven. Maybe they are in some ways but generally they develop not for a monetary goal.* (Do you think you would stop working hard if there would be no promise of financial gain?) *I think I'd still be working.* [...] *I like knowing that I'm being paid good money for sitting at my desk for eight hours a day.* [...] *I want to work just to be useful, be recognized by higher management, I want that social recognition.* [...] (Based on what you are doing for a living now, if your

position just ceased, would that be a big change for the organization?) *I think if all of us responsible for this step in the operation were to disappear, then yes. But to be honest I do sometimes feel like it's a worthless job. I don't see the real value of my work. I think I don't fully understand the idea of division of labor, I guess it does matter in the bigger scheme of things, it's just that it's hard for me to see my direct impact on that bigger scheme because it's in the little things.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

There would be progress but not as good as with financial motivation [B]. (Do you think you would stop working hard if there would be no promise of financial gain?) *Yes.* (Would you stop working completely?) *If the reward for working hard and not working at all, then I would be doing the bare minimum, I wouldn't be motivated at all.* (If your lifestyle was maintained, would you still work just because if there's no money in it?) *Depends on what I could do and whether I'd find a job that I would be interested in and found fun,* [...] *something that would help society or animals, still something related to IT.* (Based on what you are doing for a living now, how do you think would your lowered levels of enthusiasm [under the condition of no financial incentive offered] would affect the operation of the institution/company you currently work in?) *No. They'd just find someone else.*

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

I believe there can be progress even without financial rewards [B]. *If I believed otherwise, I wouldn't be a teacher.* (If you had this UBI and had all your needs covered, would you stop working?) *I'd get crazy if I didn't work. I think the pandemic is a good experiment of that, many people experienced not working and realized that they need to be doing something.* [...] *Another thing is if I would really think money-wise, I'd definitely continue doing my family business, there's incomparably more money in that than me being a teacher but that's something I don't like to do.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

How do you feel about political movements today reclaiming the terminology of socialism?

I'm okay with that. I think it deserves better. (Do you think a post-communist generation is capable of stripping the terminology off its connotation?) *I think it depends on how much exposure to the Western ideas you had. I can see in Ukraine lots of people reacted quite negatively to the BLM movement not only because of the racism, not understanding all the little details about racism in America, I can forgive them that, but many people were against it because it was strongly correlated with them being communists. They were saying that some of the leaders of the movement were communist- I don't know how communist their ideas were, maybe they said something slightly socialist and were branded like that but it doesn't matter.* [...] (Is there a certain reaction that the terminology of socialism and Marxism triggers in you?) *I think I'm pretty neutral about it* [A]. *It wasn't like that ten years ago, I'd think of that as something outdated or related to pro-Russian Ukrainian parties, definitely not something progressive.* (Would you be comfortable voting for a party / supporting a movement that has the word 'socialist' in its name or campaign outline?) *Yes.* (Would you be willing to show that support vocally, i.e. publicly advocate for it?) *It depends. If I told that at home to my grandma, she'd be very happy. But that socialism that I'd be for, a more Westernized version of it, would be completely different from what she thinks it should be, which is usually for her something Russian leaning.* [...] (What about your peers, friends your age?) *I don't think they'd be very happy because lots of people* [in Ukraine] *are still processing what happened.* [...] *Until people process this, I don't think it's going to be welcome.* [...]

(R1, 26, Ukraine)

Like KSČ? (Maybe not that one. Imagine a party that you agree with on most things.) *And they call themselves socialist?* (Yes.) *I don't have a problem with that. Because I wasn't living in that time, I wasn't personally affected by communism. I can imagine that older generations could still have those associations in a negative way but I personally wouldn't.* [...] (Is there a certain reaction that the

terminology of socialism and Marxism triggers in you?) *It is associated with communism to me right now* [A]. *In Slovakia, we have some social democrat parties, that's okay with me. I don't associate it* [democratic socialism] *with communism* [A] *because in Slovakia there are not many pro-communism movements but when it comes to Marxism there is literally nothing. I would associate a Marxist movement more with communism than socialist movements* [A], *since we do have social democracies and all that.* (Would you be comfortable voting for a party / supporting a movement that has the word 'socialist' in its name or campaign outline?) *Yes.* (Would you be willing to show that support vocally, i.e. publicly advocate for it?) *Yes.*

(R2, 29, Slovakia)

I think we need to start somewhere. It would interest some people, maybe even me if I read on it and found that I agree with what it stands for. As long as it's not something extremist [A], *I think any party should have its right to exist.* (Is there a certain reaction that the terminology of socialism and Marxism triggers in you?) *It does of course trigger associations with communism* [A] *but in today's context, especially if it's not a Communist Party, I think it sounds rather neutral* [P]. (Marxist too?) *This one is more abstract for me, very theoretical* [P]. *I don't really have any emotions about it.* (Would you be comfortable voting for a party / supporting a movement that has the word 'socialist' in its name or campaign outline, assuming you agree with it ideologically?) *I think yes. Why wouldn't I be? I think everything I've said up to this point kind of sums up to this. I see some positive things even in this "demonic Russian communism," things that I saw benefited people. Even that, if stripped off this association and left with the idea alone, can have its shot.* (Would you be willing to show that support vocally, i.e. publicly advocate for it?) *I think my peers and my social circle and my parents, similarly to me, do not hold a very strong association between socialism and communism. So, if I say socialism, people would take it just fine. And if I went as far to explain the idea behind it, I think many would even agree with it. I think it is communism as a term that is so demonized and that has this loaded connotation. I'm having a hard time understanding arguments of people who are adamantly against the idea of it. Surely, if someone is a militant capitalist, I guess they would have their arguments but those who are more on a neutral side I think many would agree with the ideas behind socialism, that includes me and my friends.*

(R3, 23, Russia)

Socialism, especially in Russia, is still a big and dubious label [P]. *In Russia, I think socialism would have a harder time than anywhere else in Europe because there is a very negative connotation to that term* [P]. *Because of that, I also have a negative association when I hear socialism.* [...] (What about Marxist parties or movements?) *Sounds much cooler.* (Does it?) *Marxist Russia, [sounds] very imperialist* [P]. *I can't say for sure since I don't really know the difference between it and socialism.* (Theoretically, if there was a party, say Socialist Russia, and you'd mostly agree with what it stands for, would you be comfortable voting for it?) [...] *I think if I understand what that party stands for and I would truly resonate with it, I wouldn't have a problem with it. In general, I don't think identifying as a socialist is something viscous* [P]. (Do you then think we can redefine it in a way, strip it off those associations?) *Yes. I don't really know what's in the ideology of socialism, I only know examples of its applications, and those have had to be twisted.* (Say you do support that imagined Socialist Russia, or Marxist Russia, how do you think your peers would perceive that?) *I think everyone is very apolitical in Russia, especially people my age and those younger, so as long as you don't label it as communism, it should be fine.*

(R4, 25, Russia)

Well, I don't think it would work and I wouldn't want to see it, I wouldn't want to be in a country where socialism is in place [A]. *If someone wants to form a party, I wouldn't vote for them and wouldn't support them.* [...] (Do you think a post-communist generation is capable of stripping the terminology off its connotation?) *I don't think we should. We should learn from history* [A]. *Maybe if they did something different it could work but we will never find out, or I hope we won't since I don't want to see communism take over the power again and restore the regime.* (Is there a certain reaction that the terminology of socialism and Marxism triggers in you? If I told you I was a part of a socialist or a Marxist movement, what would be your first thought?) *I would judge you. It wouldn't be a positive reaction* [A].

(R5, 28, Slovakia)

> *[...]There are parties like this, Social Democrats,* [...] *and it makes sense since they want to show that they are more left-wing.* [...] *we* [in the Czech Republic] *are lacking a proper functional reasonable left-wing party*. [...] *Regarding reclaiming the term, I think that's what right-wing parties do, naming and labeling non-socialist parties as socialists and communists. I don't think it's such a big deal here but also, that's what I see more in the West. Social welfare, healthcare, those things are called communist.* [...] (What if there was a Marxist Czech Republic?) *Nice, because then I already know I'm not going to vote for them* [A]. *It sends a clear message* [P] *and I like that.* (But if you for example would agree, more or less, with the Socialist Czech Republic, would you be comfortable voting for it given that it has this specifically socialist labeling?) *I'll stick with the Marxist one, I like the extremes for demonstration. To me it proves something, it's either that they are this extreme* [P] *and then I'm not interested, or that they share my opinions but are stupid enough to choose this name.* [...] *I want to vote for the people who know what they are doing and if this is their PR, I'm already not interested.* (Am I understanding this correct, you think it's too big of a label that you think would scare people off?) *It would get some people and it would scare some people, definitely. But I also don't think there's ever too early for this, it's going to be in hundred years the same.* (How do you think your social circle would take it if you were to be a part of that imagined Socialist Czech Republic party, or the Marxist Czech Republic one?) *I think my social circle is very much not socialist, so they'd be confused. I think my parents would call a doctor because it'd be too much of a turn, [...] I've always supported socialist ideas to some extent* [V]*, that wouldn't surprise them, but I've also always been against any kind of authoritative regime so if it was pointing that way, they'd be confused too.*

(R6, 29, Czech Republic)

4.4. Categorization and interpretation of themes

Based mostly on values codes, predominantly Perception [P] codes, and supplemented with in vivo and narrative codes, the following judgements that can be made regarding the attitudes of the subject sample toward terminology of socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism.

Socialism:

- A neutral, denotative [D] definition of socialism varied among the respondents but was mostly correct, even if rather simplified: e.g. an *ideology* (R2), a *school of thought* (R3), based on the *principle of equality* (R4) and *sharing of resources* (R6), an a*pplication of Marxism* (R1);
- All respondents pointed to countries that failed in application of socialist practices: there were four mentions of Soviet Union, four of Cuba, two of North Korea, two of

Venezuela, one of Vietnam. Three out of six respondents mentioned Nordic countries as a successful application of socialist practices;

- There is an almost equal amount of positive [CP] (*the state is taking care of you* (R1), *equal opportunity* (R2, R6), *equality* (R2, R4), *provided basic needs* (R2), *mutual aid* (R4), *social welfare* (R6)) and negative [CN] connotations across all the responses (*oppression* (R2), *unfairness* (R4), *poverty* (R4), *suppression of rights* (R5), *no freedom of speech* (R2, R5), *no freedom of movement* (R2));
- The positive to negative connotation ratio in individual responses reasonably correlates with one's intuitive assumptions on individual respondents attitude and their self-identification, e.g. R1 expressing no negative connotations [without explicitly emphasizing the awareness of the said connotations] and self-identifying as a liberal socialist; R2 and R6 expressing an equal amount of positive and negative connotations and self-identifying as right-leaning [centrist] and left-leaning [centrist], respectively; R5 expressing no positive connotations but multiple negative ones and self-identifying as a supporter of capitalism;
- The most common misconception among the respondents about socialism as a theory, coded in transcripts as [W], is the idea that under socialism, everyone is being paid an equal amount. E.g. *receiving the same portion of common goods per person* (R2), *a person doesn't have more or less than somebody else* (R2), *all the goods in the state are distributed equally among all the people* (R4), *you get equal shares of something, for example, your paychecks are the same* (R5), *equal allocation of resources* (R4). That assumption is an informal fallacy commonly known as a strawman, as there is no singular model for remuneration or resource allocation in a traditional understanding under socialism as theory or in Marx's teachings upon it is based. Marx's famous slogan *"from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"* (from *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875) and ambition of *"abolition of wages system"* (from *Value, Price and Profit*, 1865) are rudimentary rebuttals of that presumption;
- The definitions and explanations of socialism provided by the respondents were expressed rather hesitantly, often with acknowledgment of lack of knowledge. None of the respondents came across confident about their responses and none operated with

phraseology and terminology pointing at key pillars of the ideology, e.g. collective ownership of the means of production, abolition of classes and class struggle (with an exception of R6, who mentioned a *classless society* in relation to communism and *destruction of classes* in relation to Marxism), economic planning, socialized property, class consciousness, dialectical materialism, labor theory of value, surplus value, etc.;

- The distinction between socialism and communism also seems to be rather unclear to most respondents. R1 and R6 stated that they do not use them interchangeably because *communism is totalitarian, socialism isn't* (R1) and *socialism* [is a] *system going towards communism* (R6), the latter explanation being most accurate to theory. R2, R4, and R4 stated that they do use the two terms interchangeably, clarifying that *communism is more of an economic thing, as opposed to socialism* (R2); *communism is one of the branches of socialism* (R4); [they do not] *really see the difference* (R5). R3 stated that [socialism] i*s a general idea and communism is its twisted, perverted real-life application*, clarifying that the two *are not synonymous* but also *not polar opposites* (R3);
- Attitudes regarding reclaiming the terminology of socialism and its perception differed: *I'm okay with it. I think it deserves better* (R1); I *don't have a problem with* [a label socialist]. *Because I wasn't living in that time, I wasn't personally affected by communism* (R2); [...] *if it's not a Communist Party, I think it sounds rather neutral* (R3), *It's a big and dubious label,* [with] *a very negative connotation. I also have negative connotation to that term (R4), I don't think identifying as a socialist is something viscous* (R4); *I wouldn't want to be in a country where socialism is in place* (R5); *I've always supported socialist ideas to some extent* (R6). Four respondents (R1, R2, R3, R4) said they would be comfortable with supporting a party or a movement that is labeled as socialist for as long as they agree with its campaign, one (R6) expressed critical reluctance, and one (R5) expressed complete refusal.

Marxism:

- Marxism seems to be a considerably more bewildering concept to the respondents; definitions were expressed even more hesitantly than those of socialism;
- Among the knowledge regarding Marxism that the respondents showed, most was correct, even if, again, simplified, e.g. *Marxism is the theory, and socialism is a practical application* (R1); [dealing with] *the conflict between the class of peasants and the rich* (R2), b*ased on the teachings of Marx* (R6), [Marx] *was one of the founders of this whole concept* (R4), *Marx and Engels wrote their famous tractate* (R3), *Marxism is not a political system; it's an ideal* (R6);
- Most respondents either stated that they perceive there to be little difference between Marxism and socialism (*For me, those are very connected. I don't see a Marxist society; I see a socialist society* (R1); *None* [difference] *at all* (R5)) or recognized that there is a difference which they could not articulate (*There's definitely a difference. I just don't know it* (R2)*; There must be some key difference. [...] I honestly don't know* [...] [Marxism and socialism are] *somewhat synonymous* (R3)*; I don't know their difference* (R4));
- Some individual attitudes based on perception codes are that [Marxism] *sounds more harsh and aggressive compared to socialism* (R2); *doesn't evoke any emotions* [in the respondent] due to lack of knowledge (R4) but also that it [sounds] *very imperialist* (R4); is associated with *an ideology*, while socialism [is associated with] *politology* [political science] (R6);
- Uncertainty about Marxism seems to translate into different attitudes among the respondents, attitudes rather intuitively correlated to their self-identification: *I'm pretty neutral about it* (R1), *I would associate a Marxist movement more with communism than* [I would] *socialist movements* (R2), m*ore abstract for me, very theoretical. I don't really have any emotions about it* (R3); *can't say for sure since I don't know the difference between [Marxism] and socialism* (R4); *not a positive reaction* [to being told one is a member of a Marxist movement] (R5), it *sends a clear message* [...] *extreme* (R6).

[Economic and political] **Progressivism**:

- None of the respondents were confidently familiar with the specific [economic and political] context of the term progressivism. Most could semantically derive general context from an out of context word rood *progress*;
- All [No context] definitions and associations with progressivism were either denotative or carried rather positive connotations among all respondents, e.g. *improving* (R1); *reactive to things that happen here and now* (R3); *going beyond existing limitations*, [...] *for the greater good* (R4); *something that contributes to a better life* (R5); *moving forward* (R6);
- R2 semantically connected progressivism with Progressive Slovakia [Progresívne Slovensko--a center-left, social-liberal, progressive political party in Slovakia] and R6 connected it with progressive taxation and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez [U.S. politician serving in the House of Representatives] who is commonly labeled and self-identifies as a progressive; both respondents' mental connections carried positive connotations (see respective respondents' responses in section 4.3.3. *Political opinions and behavior*);
- Three respondents (R1, R3, R6) placed progressivism on the left side of the left-right spectrum, *the left is looking forward and trying to find new ways, [...]That focus* [of the right] *on the past is definitely not progressive for me (R1); if the right is conservative and traditional, then I guess it's logical that the left is progressive* (R3), *I would say more toward the left,* [...] *it's more conservative to stick with an idea and that's not progressive* (R6). R2 stated that it can fall on either of the sides. R4 said that they intellectually know that it falls on the left-side but indicated that *intuitively, progressivism* [for them] *is an antonym for socialism*, similarly to R5, who stated that *progressivism is a polar opposite from socialism* and that it falls somewhere on center-right.

To move away from descriptions to a more analytic level, indicative codes (thematic and narrative codes, highlighted in blue and pink) were grouped and supplemented with deductive codes to arrive to the following set of recurring themes:

- **Self-awareness of mental connections** between socialism as an ideology and communism tried in the 20th century: [In Ukraine], *there is still that correlation with the past,* [...] *I separated socialism from Ukraine and its history, lots of people* [in Ukraine] *are still processing what happened* (R1); *I'm not sure I can separate it from all the history,* [...] *I keep thinking about communism,* [...] *I think it's communism as a term that is so demonized and that has this loaded connotation* (R3)*; I cannot separate totalitarianism which theoretically should not be in socialism, so when I think socialism I automatically think totalitarianism,* [...]*. I didn't see any other example of socialism at work. I only know examples of its applications* (R4)*; the situation is not really in favor of the left-wing* (R6);
- **Self-awareness of lack of theoretical knowledge** about socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism: *We learned it theoretically* [at school], [...] *Maybe it's not correct,* [...] (R1); *I don't know much* (R2); *I wouldn't know because I haven't read [*the Communist Manifesto] (R3); *I never researched* [Marx's] *theories much,* [...] *I don't really understand what* [Marxism] *is.* (R4); *Maybe I just don't see the point of it because I don't know enough about it.* [...] *I am not really sure, I would just guess,* [...] (R5); *but then it doesn't make sense,* [...] (R6);
- **Awareness of hyperbolization and demonization** of socialism as an ideology: [...] *maybe they said something slightly socialist and were branded* [as communists] (R1), [...] *this "demonic Russian communism"* (R3)*;* [...] *naming and labeling non-socialist parties as socialists and communists* (R6)*;*
- **Skepticism toward the idealization of communism**: *it always struck me as childish, too perfect to be true. I see the good sides but if you never mention anything bad, it's weird* (R1); *it was all so idealized. The USSR was portrayed very one-sidedly, with a nostalgic mood,* [...] *it might've cultivated this rebellion in me that prompted me to be seeking the opposite side* (R4);
- **Perception / conviction of unattainability of socialism** and implementation of socialist practices**:** *calling a country socialist feels like something from the past.* [...] *It sounds like a great idea but knowing people's nature it doesn't go that well. Maybe it's just very hard to imagine any other system.* [It] *would end up being similar to capitalism anyway*

(R1)*; I do* [have a problem with collective ownership] *from a sociological or psychological perspective because people are not willing to share*. [...] *In practice* (R2); *I cannot think of a realistic way* (R3); *I don't know what could be* [a systemic solution], [...] *I don't think it can really work like that* (R4); *Will it work? I'm not entirely sure because you still work with people.*[...] *In theory, it's nice* (R6)*;*

- **Perception of attainability of democratic socialism**: *democratic socialism sounds like something that exists right now* (R1)*; it's something we're trying to do here.* [...] *I don't associate it* [democratic socialism] *with communism (R2); you can find some signs of socialism in many countries* (R6)*;*
- **Acknowledgment of communism as an antagonizing term**: *communism is a very solid thing for me: bad.* [...] *Communism is totalitarian, socialism isn't (R1); socialism for me is a general idea and communism is its twisted, perverted real-life application.* [...] *If it's not a Communist Party, I think it sounds rather neutral* (R3), *you still have Communists* [as in Communist Party, negatively connotated] (R6);
- **Knowledge of basic income (UBI) pilot experiments**, particularly of failed trials: *I read about this fabrication about the whole idea, that if you give money to poor people, they will become lazy* (R1); *it was tried as an experiment in some industrialized country and that it didn't work* (R3)*; I remember that it was tried as an experiment and that it didn't work* (R4).

Some less relevant to research objectives but rather curious themes that emerged from in vivo codes are the following:

- **Acknowledgment of insufficiency of individual and scattered effort against systemic issues**: *only the structural change can make a difference* (R1)*; pipeline to inequality* (R3)*; shortcoming of the "prosperous" capitalist world.* [...] *It's not a systemic solution.* [...] [rich] *people hold a social responsibility* (R4)*; You can tax the wealthiest more but they are usually finding ways around it* (R5)*; It's great if it's voluntary, [...]* (R6);

- **Meditation on modern socialism**: [socialism I'd support is] *completely different from what* [my grandma] *thinks it should be (R1), if we are to have any kind of socialism, it will be new and theory-based* (R4)*;* [post-communist generation] *will approach* [socialism] *from a different perspective* [from the previous generation] (R6);
- **Perception of socialism as a spectrum:** *socialist states exist on a spectrum: there are more socialist societies and less socialist societies.* (R1)*; every government is a bit socialist* (R6). This assumption could be disputed, though might also be attributed to a semantic misunderstanding, since a statement *you can have many types of socialism* (R6) is factually correct if we are talking types of socialist ideologies, e.g. Marxism-Leninism, anarchism, democratic socialism, eco-socialism, etc. It would be more accurate to explicitly refer to socialist and progressive practices and tools and say that they are being employed by governments or are present in ideas or practices to a lesser or higher degree; assuming that socialism on itself exists on a spectrum blurs the line between some crucial binary concepts that define socialism in the first place, e.g. private vs. socialized ownership of assets, market economy vs. planned economy, supply-and-demand theory of value vs. labor theory of value and use-value, etc. For semantic reasons, this is not assumed to be misconception but is the impression that might need to be addressed when introducing socialism to post-communist representatives that are familiar with differently applied socialist practices, i.e. communism tried in the 20th century, Nordic countries branded as socialist, etc.

Another interesting semantic observation is the respondent's use of the tern liberal. Across the interviews, it was used by four respondents in the following contexts: *liberal socialist* [as self-identification] (R1); [the left] *is more progressive and liberal and others are more conservative,* […] (R3); *when I think about the right, I think of nationalist and socialist ideas,* [when I think of the left, I think of] *liberal ideas* [a *liberal* movement later defined as movement focused on human rights, individual rights, and free market economy], […] *liberal, meaning that I don't want any government institution to control the economy and human rights* (R4); *a democrat, liberal in genera*l [as self-identification] (R6). In contemporary terminology, especially of that in Europe, *liberal* does not have a uniform denotation. In this case, R1 used a very specific term,

liberal socialism being a political philosophy on itself, and R3 interpreted the left wing and right wing as liberal and conservative, respectively; both denoting the left. R4, however, uses the term liberal as in economic liberalism, that opposing left-wing economic orders, while R6 uses the term to signify a political and moral philosophy based on democracy and liberty. The three different interpretations, none of which are necessarily incorrect on semantic externalism terms, call for particular attention to using the term as something expected to be perceived in a like manner.

Based on personal narratives, the profiles of the respondents were compressed following the structure: **Socialization (parents' and grandparents' attitude toward socialism)→ Family financial situation during and after the fall of the communist regime→ Attitude toward the left→ Political self-identification→ Political behavior**

- **R1:** apolitical parents, rather approving grandparents, better off during communism→ approbation → identifies as rather left (*liberal socialist*) → politically active
- **R2:** neutral parents, neutral grandparents→ no drastic change→ neutrality→ contradictory self-identification: center-right (*middle and then a bit to the right on the communism-capitalism spectrum) and* center-left (*leaning to social democracy)* → politically active
- **R3:** neutral parents, rather neutral grandparents→ no drastic change→ approbation→ no self-identification, rather left (*I'd lean more toward socialism or communism*) → politically inactive
- **R4:** rather negative / apolitical parents, rather approving grandparents→ drastic change for better→ resentment→ identifies as right-leaning (*liberal, ⅔ toward the capitalist side*) → politically inactive
- **R5:** neutral parents, neutral grandparents→ rather positive change→ resentment→ identifies as right (approving of capitalism, *all the way to the capitalist side*) → rather active

- **R6:** negative / apolitical parents, neutral / rather approving grandparents→ positive change→ neutrality→ identifies as center-left (*between left and right, I'll be a bit more to the left)* → politically active

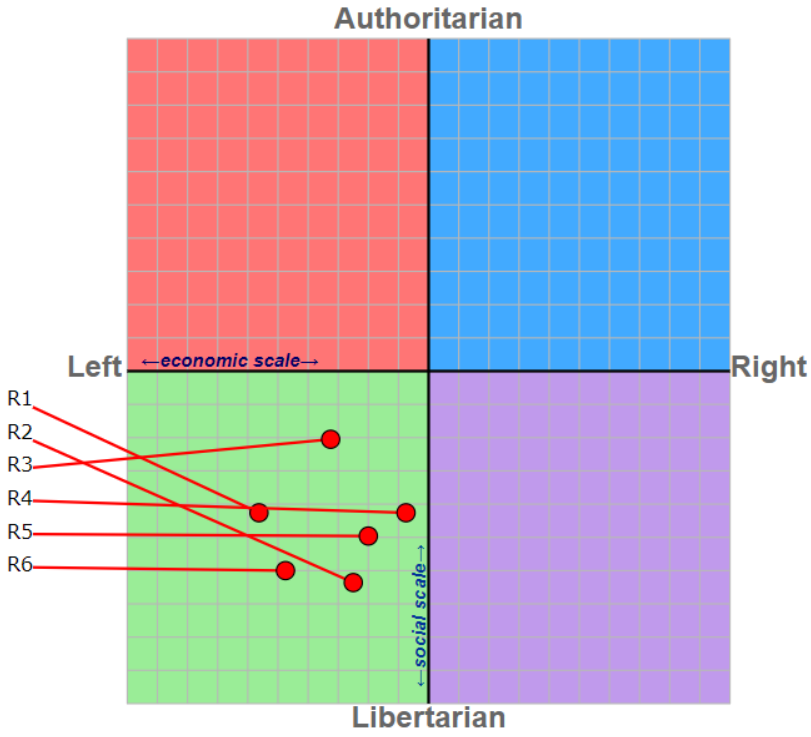
After the interviews, all respondents were asked to take a simple political compass test (politicalcompass.org), that uses 62 prepositions to place one's political ideology on a spectrum with two axes, the horizontal one (economic left/right) being most important to this research. The selected political compass text opens with a preface, *"...Some propositions are extreme, and some are moderate. That's how we can show you whether you lean towards extremism or moderation on the Compass. Your responses should not be overthought. Some of them are intentionally vague. Their purpose is to trigger reactions in the mind, measuring feelings and prejudices rather than detailed opinions on policy,"* which is in line with the research objective to point at attitudes and perceptions rather than intellectual judgments. The model is then not presumed to be conclusive but rather exhibitory.

Table 4: Respondents' political compass results in Cartesian coordinate system (two axes)

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6
Economic Left/Right	-5.63	-2.5	-3.25	-0.75	-2.0	-4.75
Social Libertarian/Authoritarian	-4.26	-6.36	-2.05	-4.26	-4.92	-6.0

Source: Personal collection

Figure 2: Crowd chart of respondents' political compass results



Source: Personal collection, generated via politicalcompass.org/crowdchart

As per the coordinate plane, all respondents fall in the Left-Libertarian quadrant. For R1, R3, and R6 it rather corresponds with their political self-identification, that is liberal socialist (R1), no self-identification but leaning left (R3), and center-left (R6). For R3 and R6, their self-identification is somewhat understated, and they are more left on the spectrum than stated. R2 had a contradictory self-identification -- center-left and center-right -- while they are solid center-left. R4 and R5, who identify as right-leaning and right, respectively, are the most centrist out of all the respondents but are yet center-left.

5. Conclusion

RS1: *Is there a common pattern of attitudes, perceptions, and [possibly] misconceptions in regard to socialism, Marxism, and associated terminology and ideology among the respondents of the study that are representatives of a post-communist generation? If yes, is there an evident pattern of either resentment or approbation toward the above?*

While there seems to be no common pattern of attitudes toward the terminology among the respondents—the sample is rather heterogeneous when it comes to their attitudes toward socialism, stances ranging from approbation to neutrality to strong resentment—there are a few patterns of perception and understanding of the terminology that are worth mentioning. First, all respondents, regardless of their opinion of the left-wing politics, expressed an awareness of their lack of theoretical knowledge to make an informed judgment on socialism, Marxism, and economic progressivism. Especially evident and self-acknowledged by the respondents is the knowledge gap regarding Marxism; while all respondents connected it with Karl Marx's teachings, only a few could articulate its basic principles and relationship to socialism and communism. The latter two terms also seem to be surrounded by a considerable amount of confusion regarding the distinction between them. Socialism, as expected, seems to come across to the respondents as a rather moderate model of the communism of the 20st century. Most respondents also explicitly expressed a degree of self-awareness of mental connections with the communist regime tried in the 20th century that the terminology of socialism and Marxism triggers. Even so, another common pattern of perception spotted in the respondents' interviews is their conviction of socialism being rather unattainable and almost utopian. Even the respondents who are quite approving of left-wing politics, conceded that they do not see its practical application in today's world. The respondents seem to have an easier time imagining democratic socialism at work, even though it was defined by all rather simplistically. Still, the term in itself did not bring about any negative connotations among the sample. The most common misconception among the respondents about socialism as a theory is the idea that under socialism, everyone is being paid an equal amount. Less of a misconception and more of a semantic confusion, some respondents expressed that they see socialism as a spectrum. From a

position of semantic externalism that assumption can be disputed, but with semantic individualism in mind, it is apparent that by ‘socialism’ in this case they mean the entirety of left-wing politics and practices. Still, this and the strawman of equal pay are fallacies to be cognizant about when communicating socialist ideas to post-communist generations.

RS2: *Is there a discernible correlation between the attitudes of post-communist generations toward socialism as an ideology and their opinions in regard to economic progressivism?*

Through interview questions, the respondents’ fundamental beliefs about selected tools of economic progressivism were explored, namely universal basic income (UBI), wealth redistribution practices, and universal and socialized healthcare and education. The correlation between their attitudes toward socialism as an ideology (based on their own understanding of the said ideology) is rather noticeable. For example, those respondents that stated their definitive or moderate approbation of the left (R1, R2, R3, R6) unequivocally expressed their belief that every person deserves unconditional access to food and shelter and were approving of UBI. Meanwhile, R4 and R5, both identifying as right-leaning and expressing resentment to socialism as an ideology, were considerably less approving of UBI (R4 did express a concern regarding global wealth inequality but was still rather disapproving of basic income for all). With an exception of R3 who inclines, critically so, toward a universal, 100% public healthcare and education system, the rest of the respondents agreed that everyone should at the least have access to foundational healthcare and education through public institutions, but that private institutions should exist, too. Interestingly, R4 and R5, along with other respondents, also acknowledged the insufficiency of individual and scattered efforts against systemic issues. Yet, among the latter, the attitudes of R4 regarding economic progressivism based on isolated examples was far from pointedly adverse, and R5, though overall disagreeing with the tools and practices of progressivism, still recognized the shortcomings of the systems that progressivism aims at mending. While not all respondents placed progressivism on the left-side of the political spectrum, all definitions and associations with progressivism were either denotative or carried rather positive connotations among all respondents, mostly due to the word root *progress*. To sum up, respondents who expressed some degree of approbation of socialism as an ideology

turned out to be considerably more approving of selected practices of economic progressivism than those who expressed resentment. The two respondents expressing resentment toward socialism also seem to be less averse to progressive practices than to the notion of socialism by itself.

RS3: *Is there a gap between respondents' political self-identification (on the left-right political spectrum) and their opinions and voting behavior in regard to economic progressivism (according to the ideological groupings/characteristics across the left-right spectrum)?*

Based on the rather limited due to research limitations framework of progressivism explored during the interviews, the respondents' attitude toward economic progressivism as a practice were rather positive. More concrete socialist practices, e.g. collective ownership of the means of production, were received with less confident approbation, if with approbation at all. Yet, as per Figure X, all respondents fall in the Left-Libertarian quadrant. For three out of six respondents, their self-identification rather corresponded with their placement on the political compass, though two of those three have somewhat understated their left-leaning tendencies and turned out to be further left on the spectrum than acknowledged. One of the respondents whose self-identification (center-right) was at odds with their self-assigned political label (social democrat) fell on the solid center-left on the spectrum. The remaining two respondents who self-identified as right-leaning and right, respectively, are the most centrist out of all the respondents but are yet center-left. Economic (horizontal) axis considered alone, it can be concluded that among the selected sample, there is an observable gap between respondents' political self-identification and their opinions on in regard to economic progressivism as a practice.

Interestingly, Pop-Eleches and Tucker's (2011) analytical framework for assessing the effect of the communist past on one's political opinions, adjusted for the subject group of the thesis, specifically the five pathways through which the communist past can influence the present, have all been alluded to during the interviews, specifically in section 4.3.2. *Socialization*. Individual-level experiences of living under the communist rule through its collapse, and in the aftermath of it, as told by family members seem to be the most central source of information in regard to

socialism as an ideology for most of the respondents, more so than the generational history as a whole. While there seem to be no direct correlation between respondents' attitude on socialism and that of their parents and grandparents, those with negative either parents or grandparents happen to be either resenting of socialism (R4) or carefully and critically left leaning (R6). Overall, there is no linear correlation among the variables, but the personal profiles of socialization led to deriving the above mentioned in response to RQ1 awareness of mental connection between the socialism as a theory and terminology and communism as the regime tried in the 20st century.

Another set of pathways, a change in post-communist of sociodemographic landscape from that from communist times and socioeconomic and political outcomes, seem to also be important aspects shaping the opinions of the representatives of the post-communist generation. All without fail mentioned how they consider themselves better off, even if only nominally, then their parents and grandparents who lived during the communist times. As per the formal institutions, still functioning communist parties were regarded with negative connotations, but most respondents were rather satisfied with the democracy apparatus' as a whole. Still, the acknowledgment of communism as a rather antagonizing term lets us assume that Pop-Eleches and Tucker's assumption of political tolerance deficit and an existence of distinctive voting pattern is indeed valid.

While this thesis was not intended to be a comparative study, it would be negligent not to acknowledge the similarity in attitudes toward formal institutions among the two respondents from Russia, both of whom were rather pessimistic and disapproving of the way democracy works in their country and are also the only two respondents in this study who stated that they are not exercising their right to vote. Similarly, informal institutions, such as social movements and protest- and petition-related tools, were touched on by all the respondents with an exception of the two respondents from Russia who, again, expressed a rather low interest in civic engagement. The two observed patterns are in line with Pop-Eleches and Tucker's assumptions of assumed correlation between the communist past and present, namely distrust in post-communist institutions and political and civil participation deficit.

To sum up, while the review of relevant literature suggested that there might be a common pattern of attitudes toward socialism and Marxism among the representatives of the

post-communist generation, based on the history of their respective home countries and the resultant abuse of terminology wildly employed in political and social circles for anti-communist posturing, there is little support for that assumption in the data presented in the practical part of the thesis. However, the theoretical framework analyzed and readjusted for this scope of research could still be deductively applied to the analysis of the practical part, and the findings from the practical part can be used to inductively form further hypotheses. That being said, this work and the topic itself has a lot of potential for further research. Since this thesis is of exploratory nature rather than descriptive, is limited to a very narrow scope and assumes the post-communist generation of four selected countries to be a nominally homogeneous group, there is a lot of space for further comparative, correlational, and causal-comparative research.

The historical legacy of the communist regime to this day permeates collective consciousness of post-communist societies. Yet, as the actual memory of the past is fading as its being passed down from generation to generation, contemporary understanding of socialism seems to be stuck in the limbo between rigid conceptions inherited from the 20st century and the perception of Western neoliberalism with practices of left-wing politics as socialist. The opportunity cost of not confronting the obscurity surrounding socialism as a theory and adhering to the binary ‘socialism’ vs. ‘capitalism’ dichotomy is the capacity of existing and emerging left-wing theory, both radical, i.e. Marxism, and moderate, i.e. economic progressivism, to contribute to a nuanced conversation about the concerns the world is faced with today, such as the growing level of inequality, persistent poverty, exploitation of labor, environmental degradation, short-run profit planning, and economic instability, to name but a few. With the post-communist generations one step away from dominating the labor market and with that decision-making that comes with the territory, it is more important than ever to diversify the economic scholarship and introduce pluralism in economics, both in formal, academic settings and informal cultural and social ones. That is not to say to go beyond all historical legacy of the post-communist societies but rather to engage in conversations critically, aware of what that legacy means and entails, of semantic and etymological fallacies surrounding the terminology that is being debated, and to encourage those conversations to be had in the first place.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1: Interview structure and questions

Since the method of a semi-structured interview allows the respondent to divert, the predetermined questions are supplemented with *follow-up questions highlighted in cursive* that can be changed or adjusted depending on the flow of the interview.

I **FULL DISCLOSURE:** familiarizing the respondent with the topic, purpose, objectives, and methodology of the research; explaining the rationale behind not presenting them with any existing terminology; agreeing on how the interview will be transcribed.

II **ASSESSMENT OF ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE TERMINOLOGY**

1. How would you define socialism? What about Marxism? *(If the definition of Marxism is different from that of socialism), could you tell me some main differences between the two as you see it? (If the definitions are the same or similar), can you take an educated guess on what is different between the two?*
2. What are some things that come to your mind when you hear socialism? *i.e. schools of thought, adjectives, countries, policies, etc.*
3. Do you use the terms communism and socialism interchangeably? *If you were asked to define communism and socialism separately, how would you differentiate between the two? Do you personally find that difference significant or important to the conversation?*
4. How would you define democratic socialism? *Do you think it is drastically different from socialism as you define it? If yes, what are some main differences between the two? Can you think of any other political philosophies that fall on the left side of the Left-Right political spectrum (if the respondent is not acquainted with the spectrum, ask about philosophies that fall under the same semantic field, e.g. social democracy)?*
5. What comes to your mind when you hear the word progressive, out of context? *Have you ever heard the words progressive/progressivism used in an economic or political context?*

III **SOCIALIZATION** (family, school, culture)

1. Where have you learned about socialism as you understand it today? *i.e. school history classes, university, self-study, family, activism and civic participation, cultural events, fictional or non-fictional media, etc.*
2. Do you know what your parents' / close family's life was like under the communist regime? *What about during the transitional years, i.e. 1989 to late-1990s? Do you know if anyone from your family was a member of the communist party? Is there any aspect of communism you've noticed them look at longingly? Financially speaking, would you say your family was better off under communism or after its fall? Would you say that your parents / close family members hold a strong position in regard to communism? Has their opinion of communism seem to have changed from that they held before 1991?*
3. Do you think there still exist exhibits of the communist past in the way post-communist society is and if yes, which ones, e.g. corruption, bureaucracy, etc.? *Do you think those*

are isolated phenomena or the product of the communist aftermath? If the latter, do you think it will eradicate as your generation grows up?

IV **POLITICAL OPINIONS AND BEHAVIOR**

1. How satisfied are you with the way democracy is working in your country? *Do you vote in your country's presidential/parliamentary/regional elections? Are you a member of a political party? Are you a member of a labor union?*
2. If I asked you to self-identify as a supporter of some social, economic, and political philosophy, what would it be? *Is there a political movement or figure you especially agree with?*

V **OPINIONS ON SOCIALIST AND PROGRESSIVE ECONOMICS**

1. Do you have any concerns about the state of the world now, economic or social? *Could you elaborate on some you find especially important? For what cause would you go to a march? During the COVID-19 pandemic, have you observed or experienced any economic or social conditions that made you question or reflect on the socio-economic system that is in place?*
2. The top 1% of households globally own 43% of all personal wealth while the bottom 50% have only 1%. Within this 1%, there is less than 0.1% of ultra-wealthy people who own 25% of the world's wealth (from 2020 Credit Suisse Global Wealth report). How do you feel about that statement? *Do you find those numbers alarming, do you think that level of inequality is necessary, etc.? Do you think that gap needs bridging, and if yes, how?*
3. Do you think everyone is entitled to a certain standard of living, e.g. unconditional access to basic food and shelter? *Would you say the minimum wage in your country allows that standard of living? What is our opinion on universal basic income? Universal and socialized [as opposed to private] healthcare and education?*
4. According to Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), communism is a *"social system based on collective ownership."* History aside, do you see a problem with that statement in itself? *If I gave you a horizontal axis with communism and capitalism on the opposite sides of the spectrum, where would you place yourself, intellectually?*

VI **THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS**

1. Do you think there is a conflict between an individual's best interests and society's best interests? *What about yourself specifically, which of your interests cannot coexist with the best interests of a larger society? Can you think of any personal freedoms or market reforms that you grew up with that were not present under the communist regime as you know it? Which of those freedoms or reforms would you not be willing to give up if a socialist system was to be established now?*
2. Where do you see yourself financially in 10 years from now? *Which economic class do you think you will fall under, i.e. low, middle, upper, etc (perceived understanding: no thresholds are to be offered to the respondent). How do you feel about your financial future? Imagine you are where you aspire to be in 10 years: what would be the % of the tax you think would be reasonable to charge your household?*

3. Do you agree with a general statement that ‘without financial incentive, there can be no progress?’ *Do you think you would stop working hard if there would be no promise of financial gain? Based on what you are doing for a living now, how do you think would your lowered levels of enthusiasm [under the condition of no financial incentive offered] would affect the operation of the institution/company you currently work in?*
4. How do you feel about political movements today reclaiming the terminology of socialism? *Do you think a post-communist generation is capable of stripping the terminology off its connotation? An introspective question: is there a certain reaction that the terminology of socialism, Marxism, etc. triggers in you? Would you say it affects your opinion or behavior in regard to politics? Would you be comfortable voting for a party / supporting a movement that has the word ‘socialist’ in its name or campaign outline? Would you be willing to show that support vocally, i.e. publicly advocate for it?*