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**“Like in Europe”:**  
Promotional Discourses of the Stipend Reduction and Justification of the  
Neoliberal Transformations in Ukraine

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## Abstract

This research explores the promotional discourses the neoliberal experts and politicians use to legitimise the stipend shortages to the students, whose interests this policy contradicts. The thesis argues that the proponents of the reform established the dialogue with the opposition in order to avoid the large-scale protests against the policy. The study suggests that the policy promotion opens up the wider picture of how the neoliberal transformations are justified in contemporary Ukraine and how the proponents of the neoliberal transformations draw on local values and collective memories to reach their aims.

The thesis employs critical discourse analysis and, firstly, explores the reframing of the dichotomy between the idealised neoliberal imagery labelled as Europe and the demonised imagery of the “Soviet”. Secondly, the thesis explores the neoliberal construction of reality with the redefinition of the wider societal relations under the umbrella of the “bright European future”. They include the role of the state and its citizens as well as the role of higher education. Thirdly, it investigates the interplay between the neoliberal and nationalist discourses and the meanings it creates. I conclude that the nationalist discourse and the discourse of the “outside threat” reinforce the neoliberal state and leads to devaluation of the citizens. Finally, it studies how the experts and politicians appealed to the value of democratisation in order to avoid the resistance of the opposition. I employ Harvey’s perspective on neoliberalism as the political and utopical project where the latter one is used by elites to justify the former one.

**Key words:** neoliberalism, post-Soviet Ukraine, post-Maidan politics, nationalism, neoliberal state.

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# 1. Introduction

On December 6, 2018, the law "On Higher Education" was changed by the Ukrainian government. Before the changes, the law guaranteed two-thirds of all the students on the state-funded places to get scholarships at the level of the subsistence minimum. In the changed law, this norm was abolished. Instead, the Cabinet of Ministers gained authority to decide upon the amount of the stipend recipients and the sum of stipends each year (Kurovska 2016b). After the first phase of the reform the number of scholarship holders fell to 40-45% (Muliavka 2017). This change allowed the shortages of the scholarship fund and helped to "tighten the belts" in the higher education sphere. Since the stipend guarantee was a cornerstone for the financial stability for many students, the news about the probable shortages of the stipends provoked the resistance alongside with the threats of the nation-wide students' protests (Glavkom 2016). So, proponents of the stipend shortages could face the significant resistance against the new policy. I argue that in order to avoid the resistance of the opposition the proponents of the policy change tried to persuade the students to accept the policy change.

The discussions around the stipend redistribution change started with the recommendation letter by the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Education in August 2016, which contained the package of the austerity policies. Within the educational sphere, the abolishment of the merit-based stipends was advised alongside with decreasing of the state-funded places in universities and the introduction of tuition fees for the high school (Ministry of Finance 2016). The letter provoked the resistance of the students and unions as well as efforts to legitimize the policy by certain politicians and think-tank experts. The most active participants of the policy promotion among the politicians were the ones from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance. The other active proponents of the changes in the law were the think-tank experts whose affiliation I explain later in the thesis. I refer to this cohort of experts and politicians who took the active part in the promotion of the law change as the key players.

The discussions around the policy change mostly took place in August - September 2016 with the issue fading away from the informational space at the end of the latter month. These discussions regarding the stipend policy change are the object of the research. So, this thesis aims to investigate the legitimation efforts made in August-September 2016 by the key players in order to change the law regarding the stipends.

In order to reach the research aim, I conduct critical discourse-analysis of the texts produced by the key players who aim to persuade the students and other potential opposition to accept the change in the law. By texts, I mean newsletters in online Ukrainian media, videos of public discussions and interviews. I do not explore the reception of the promotional discourses by students, but I touch upon it since the promotional discourses were influenced by the dialogue with the opposition. So, finding out whether the change in the law was legitimized successfully is not the aim of the research.

I suggest that the main players tried to legitimize the policy by appealing to the values, symbols and collective memories familiar to Ukrainians, mostly to the values of Westernization and democratisation connected to the Ukrainian nationalist project and current socio-political transformations. By the transformations, I mean the EuroMaidan protests in 2013-2014, the annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation, which followed the protests, as well as the outbreak of the war in Donbass<sup>1</sup>. Since the neoliberal discourse is connected to the Ukrainian nationalist project, I suggest that it could cooperate with the nationalist discourse. So, I aim to investigate this interplay in the research.

Even though I research the promotion of the concrete policy, I suggest that the analysis of the legitimation efforts opens up the wider picture of the introduction of the neoliberal doctrine in the current Ukrainian society. After the EuroMaidan protests, the government took a course on strengthening relations with the European Union, part of which was cooperation with the international institutions. The institutions, in particular, the International Monetary Fund, demanded neoliberal restructuring in exchange for loans given to the government. The stipend reduction policy was presented in the package with the other austerity policies in the recommendation letter by the Ministry of Finance. So, I suggest that it was promoted as part of the bigger socio-economic transformations in the country. I employ the theory of David Harvey, which is critical to neoliberalism and approaches it as the class-based political project.

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<sup>1</sup> More detailed description of the historical background can be found in the chapter “The Historical Background and Introduction of the Policy”.

### *1.1. Map of the Research.*

In order to make the logic of the research clear to the reader, I shortly map it out in this subchapter. I start the thesis with the chapter 2 “Historical Background and the Introduction of the Policy”. Firstly, I describe the socio-economic transformations in Ukraine, which are relevant to the research (p.8-9). It gives the reader the basic understanding of the context in which the legitimisation efforts take place. Moreover, the events described are directly and indirectly referenced by the key players during the legitimisation efforts. In the second chapter, I also describe the policy which the key players tried to legitimise and its possible consequences for the students (p. 9). I put the law change in the larger context of the transformations of the higher education in Ukraine. It gives the reader the better understanding of the complexity of the sphere in which the policy is implemented and promoted.

The methodological chapter starts with the umbrella of theoretical inquiries and the methodological premises outlined in the first two subchapters (p. 13-14; 14-16). I conceptualise the use of the term legitimacy and legitimisation efforts and the audience they are directed at (p. 13-14) and explain the way I conceptualise the methodological and theoretical premises of the critical discourse-analysis (p. 14-16). This wider theoretical and methodological umbrella gives the reader the understanding of the ground on which the research stands. Further, I move to the reflexions about my position towards the researched issue (p. 16-18), which lets the reader know where I stand in the researched issue and how it affects the research. I continue with practical aspects of the research such as the definition of the main players and the timeframe (p. 17-18). Afterwards I describe more specific processes of the data collection, analysis (p. 18-21) and limitations of the research (p. 21-22).

The chapter 4 “Neoliberal perspective and the previous research” aims at clarifying the theoretical perspectives I use in the analysis, certain aspects of the context I appeal to and the overview of the previous research. There I first describe the neoliberal ideology from the perspective of its proponents (p. 23-25). I use the theory in order to identify the rhetorics of the key players as neoliberal. Afterwards, I describe the critical perspective on neoliberalism as the political project by David Harvey (p. 25-26). I adopt this theory as the theoretical framework for the research. Afterwards, I analyse the symbols and values in the Ukrainian context, to which the proponents of the neoliberal reform appealed (p. 26-28). I describe the brief history of the

nationalist projects, its connection to the EuroMaidan protests and the values of Westernisation and democratisation connected to both phenomena. This subchapter also proves the importance of the values mentioned above to the population, which gave the key players the valid reasons to appeal to them within the legitimisation efforts. In the “Previous Research” subchapter I make an overview of the researches made on the promotion of economic neoliberal transformations in different contexts.

The analysis of the context of discourse contains information about how the dialogue evolved within the investigated timeframe, which makes it easier for the reader to orient in the later analytical part (p. 31-34). The other important part of the chapter is the analysis of the relations between the key players, mostly the conflicts between them (p. 34-35). This part of the context of discourse is highly important since it gives the reader a clearer picture of who the proponents of the reform were and what were the differences and commonalities between them.

The analysis is framed around the values of Westernisation and democratisation to which the key players appealed during the legitimisation efforts. The first chapter starts with the analysis of the idealised neoliberal imagery labelled as Europe and contrasted to the demonised imagery of the “Soviet” (p. 36-41). “Wrapped” into the package of the “European way” neoliberal discourses spread in the different aspects of life, which I research in the next subchapters (p. 36-44). I finish the chapter with the analysis of the interplay between the neoliberal and nationalist discourses (p. 48-53). I argue that when the politicians and experts appeal to the value of Westernisation, they already act within the nationalist project (I prove the connection in the subchapter “The Ukrainian Nationalist Project and Possibilities for Neoliberalisation” on p. 26-28). So, I place this part in the chapter about Westernisation. However, the key players started to use the nationalist discourse and the discourse of the “outside threat” only after the war in Donbass entered the discussion during the open discussion on August, 30.

I analyse the appeal to the value of democratisation in chapter 7 (p. 54-56). There I support the argument that the key players did not aim to establish the dialogue with students, but used the notion of democracy as a tool to persuade the students. This argument is also supported in chapter 5 “Context of discourse” (p. 32-34).



## 2. The Historical Background and Introduction of the Policy

In this chapter, I introduce the brief history of EuroMaidan protests and armed conflict in the Eastern Ukraine and some of their consequences for the society. Afterwards, I describe the state of higher education in the country and the changes in the scholarship redistribution system promoted and implemented by the key players. I also briefly describe the possible outcomes of this change for some students.

### *2.1. EuroMaidan and the Armed Conflict.*

The starting point for understanding the context of the discourses investigated is EuroMaidan protests in 2013-2014. They began when the president Viktor Yanukovich rejection to sign Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement on November, 21. That night people began protesting against his decision on Maidan Nezalezhnosti ("Independence Square"), the main square in Kyiv. Students took part in the protests as well and were among the activists who were subjected to the brutal police violence on November, 30 (EuroMaidan Press, 2016). After the latter event from 400,000 to 800,000 people joined the protests in order to resist the police violence (Onuch & Sasse, 2016, p. 13). After about 3 eventful months Viktor Yanukovich and part of his government left Ukraine. The confrontation between police and activists ended up with about 100 activists and 10 policemen killed. The protests were called EuroMaidan after the main square of Kiev and the pro-European agenda of the protests (EuroMaidan Press, 2016).

In less than a week the Crimea was annexed by the Russian government (BBC, 2018). Some of the Crimean citizens supported the annexation while others had to leave the peninsula in fear for their safety. The situation was worsened by the armed conflict which arose in the Eastern part of the country in April 2014. Even though the conflict is unofficially called war, its official name still is "Anti-terrorist Operation". The armed conflict is a mixture of civil conflict, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia and the geopolitical standoff between Russia and the West (Bojcun, 2015; Averre & Wolczuk, 2016). The second type is highly emphasized while the first one is hardly ever mentioned or even considered the sign of the "pro-Kremlin" position.

In this context, the neoliberal economic transformations are implemented. Following the pro-European agenda of the EuroMaidan, the new government officials started the collaboration with international institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund, which provides

Ukrainian state with loans to sustain the country's economy. In return the IMF demands the government to implement the austerity and anti-corruption policies. After the EuroMaidan protests the wave of reforms followed considering educational and medical reforms, liberalization of gas tariffs, increase of retirement age and changes in trade agreements. The research conducted in 2018 showed that the majority of Ukrainians did not support the neoliberal reforms while they supported the need in reforming the system (Prozenko 2018)

## *2.2. State of the Higher Education in Ukraine*

In order to understand the policy and discourses for its promotion it is important to be aware of the state of the higher education in Ukraine and why people want it to be changed. Ukrainian system of the higher education has undergone gradual transformations since 1991 when the country became an independent state. The amount of higher educational institutions began to grow rapidly with transition, largely at the expense of private educational institutions. In 2005, Ukraine joined the Bologna process, which should have made Ukrainian higher educational institutions closer to European standards. However, because of the different interpretations of its principles and practices, its implementation was quite chaotic. For example, there is no single system of the introduction of a credit transfer system, and subjects of free choice are sometimes chosen not by students, but by departments. The chaotic transformation creates many problems not only from the point of view of management but also from the perspective of international mobility. Due to the lack of integration into the international educational and scientific space, the Ukrainian educational system can be considered as partially isolated. Moreover, among the problems of educational system corruption, plagiarism in dissertations and coursework, pseudo-teaching and studying just for the sake of obtaining a diploma can be listed. Depreciation of the work of civil servants and inconsistency of management contributed into developing of these problems (Muliavka, 2016).

## *2.3. The Changes in the Stipend Redistribution System.*

I argue that the purpose of the main players was to change certain norms in the law "On the Higher Education" without dealing with mass students protests. These changes were implemented on December 6, 2016, two months after the investigated period of the legitimization efforts (Kurovska 2016b). Firstly, the norm on the provision of stipends for at

least 2/3 of full-time students in funded places was abolished. Secondly, the norm that the size of the minimum stipend cannot be less than the subsistence minimum was abolished. However, the second norm had never been fully implemented by the government. The amount of scholarship payment was regulated by Cabinet of Minister resolution "Some issues of scholarship support" from March 5, 2008. While in 2016 the minimum wage varied between 1378 and 1600 UAH (Minfin 2018) the amount of stipend was 825 UAH (Kurovska 2016b). The politicians explained the underpayment by the lack of money to fulfil the norm. So, before the changes implemented in December 2016 the law on higher education guaranteed that at least two-thirds of students would get the stipends on the level of the minimum wage if the average grade is identified as "good" (minimum 71 from 100 points) (Scholaro Pro 2018) This stipend was called merit-based while the need-based stipend was paid separately (Kurovska 2016b). Even though the stipends were not paid at the level of the subsistence minimum, they still had to be paid to the majority of students.

In the new law on the higher education, all technical matters were referred to as "order", "criteria" and "percentages" and defined by the Cabinet of Ministers, which makes it easy to change them every year (Turanizya 2016). So, there are no guarantees regarding the amount of money allocated for this expenditure, the percentage of students who get scholarships or the sum of stipends. The Ministry of Finances gained the authority to make decisions regarding these issues each semester depending on the "budgetary capabilities". After the first phase of the reform in 2017, the number of scholarship holders fell to 40-45%. Deputy Finance Minister Sergei Marchenko announced that the Ministry of Finance planned to reduce the number of recipients of scholarships to 25% in 2018, and to 15% in 2020 (Muliavka, 2017).

Besides that, the division between need-based and merit-based scholarships was emphasized in the reform. The changes listed above were made regarding merit-based scholarships while need-based ones were taken under the management of the Ministry of Social Policy. The Ministry has to ensure that those who receive need-based stipends do not receive any other assistance from the ministry (Turanizya, 2016).

The changes in the scholarship system redistribution would strike students who "do not reach" the critical point of receiving need-based scholarships. According to the research regarding the social-economic situation of students, the stipends played important role in the budget for the majority of them. For 25% of students, the stipend covered 50% and more of their spenders

while for 36% of them the stipend covered 25-50% (Kogut, Samohin, Stadniy, Kudelya & Zheryobkina, 2016).

In case of the absence of the scholarships, students would have to fill in the gaps in their budgets, which would probably lead to higher involvement of students into working during the studies. Moreover, some students would have to switch from part-time jobs to full-time ones. Such a situation would affect the engagement of students into education. According to the research, the majority of students did not work while studying (63%) and most of the working students had a part-time job (27%). Only 4% of the students managed to study while having a full-time job (Kogut, Samohin, Stadniy, Kudelya & Zheryobkina, 2016). The concerns about the difficulties of combining studies with a job were expressed by students during the discussions about the change in the law. During the discussion in the Ministry of Finance on September, 2 students said that due to the high workload in the university it is almost impossible to combine studying with working (Laba 2016a).

Moreover, so far, according to law the maximum amount of payment for university dormitories is 40% of the minimum academic scholarship. Despite the poor conditions, dormitories are the lift for the upward mobility for students from villages and poorer regions to afford their living in big cities. With the law change, this norm would be questioned since the scholarship sums rise and the number of its receivers decrease dramatically (Kurovska 2016a).

I was among the students for whom the scholarship covered about 25-30% of the expenses. I moved to Kyiv from the other city and lived in the dormitory. I was quite a privileged student since the money provided by my parents was enough to cover expenses on food, transport and dormitory. The stipend covered the expenses of clothes, medicine if needed, travels to the hometown and some other activities. Some of my roommates in the dormitory received the bags stuffed with food from their relatives from the villages, but less money. It happened quite often that students ran out of money before the scholarship arrived or if it was delayed. In these cases, students often shared food, coffee and other things with each other. Such a habit together with the compact accommodation created certain culture of friendship and solidarity. As students from the funded places use to live in the dormitory, most of us got the scholarships. So, I know from my experience that the scholarship helps students to afford higher education in the other city. Even as a quite privileged student I depended on the scholarships and knew for sure that people around me did as well.

### **3. Methodology and Conceptualization**

In this chapter, I explain the methodology of the research, some of the concepts used and the research process. In the first subchapter, I define the concept of legitimacy and its applications in the research. I also discuss its connection to the other part of the theoretical framework. Further, I claim and support the argument regarding the target groups of the legitimation efforts. I continue the chapter with the subchapter devoted to the critical discourse analysis (later referred to as CDA) and its implications in the research. Besides defining CDA, I discuss the concepts of ideology, reality and truth within the discourse-analysis framework applied in this research. Afterwards I reflect upon my position as the researcher. I grasp my experience of the latest historical transformations in Ukraine and my participation in the opposition to the change in the stipend law. Locating myself in the Ukrainian context and regarding this particular policy can help the reader to understand my position and biases connected to it. In the next subchapter I define the key players and explain the logic behind choosing these particular actors. I also explain the logic behind the time frame chosen. In the subchapter “Collecting and Analysing Data” I lead the reader through the processes mentioned and thoroughly explain the logic behind the purpose sampling and its implications. I finish the chapter with the description of the limitations of the research and the possible improvements in case of obtaining more resources for the research.

#### *3.1. Legitimation Efforts: Definition and Target Groups.*

In this subchapter, I define the concept of legitimacy using the Weberian perspective and outline its implication in the research and connection to the theoretical framework. I also argue that the legitimation efforts were aimed at potential opposition to the austerity policy, especially at students.

Max Weber (2005) defines legitimate order as the one in which people subjected to this order believe, which leads to them conforming to its rules (Swedberg & Agevall, p.31). He emphasizes the subjective belief in the validity of the order, which constitutes the validity of the order itself (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005, p.33). Legitimation process from the Weberian perspective can be interpreted as the attempt of the system to establish the belief in its legitimacy (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005, p.213). In the thesis, I research the attempt to establish the belief in the legitimacy

of certain changes in the scholarship redistribution system. I do not aim to find out whether those attempts were successful or not (if recipients believed in the validity of the change or not). The main focus is on the legitimation efforts, the ways the main players tried to make people believe in the legitimacy of the changes. The research also briefly examines rhetorics of the opposition since the rhetorics of the main players change in the dialogue with the opposition.

I argue that the recipients of the legitimation efforts were students and other active Ukrainian citizens who could organize to resist the change in the law. I have several claims to support this argument. Firstly, the large-scale student protests had already taken place when the governments made attempt to commercialize the higher education in 2012. Students influenced the governors and made them withdrawal the changes they aimed to implement (Slukvin, 2015).

Secondly, students are often referred to as “the drawing force” of the EuroMaidan. Some of the oppositional forces and the newsletters mentioned students participation in the EuroMaidan as the predictor for the protests against the possible changes in the policy (Glavkom 2016; Laba 2016b).

Finally, the main players started the legitimation efforts after the Ministry of Finance released the austerity recommendations, which caused resistance and threats of the nation-wide protests. The further legitimization efforts tend to appear in response to the resistance during the investigated timeline (more detailed in “5.1. Timeline of legitimization efforts”).

### *3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis: the Knowledge Produced*

Critical discourse analysis is theories and methods for the empirical study of relations between discursive, social and cultural developments in different social domains (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.60). According to one of the definitions, discourse is a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 66). In the research, the way of speaking from the neoliberal perspective is investigated. According to discourse analysis, discourse is a form of social action and plays part in producing social world (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.5). On the other hand, according to CDA, “discursive constitution of society emanates from social practice rooted and oriented to real, material social structures” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 62). So, this type of discourse analysis recognizes material structures and their interdependence with the discursive ones. Therefore, an interdisciplinary

perspective in which textual and social analysis are combined is needed (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 65).

I have chosen critical discourse analysis (CDA) by Fairclough as its epistemological and certain methodological premises are suitable for my research. CDA generates critical social research, which contributes to solving of injustice (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.77). In the case of the research, the injustice is the legitimation of the shortages of the public sector. I claim that the aim of the key players is to produce “misrepresentation” between reality and people’s view on it (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.77).

The other reason to choose CDA for me is that it follows Marxist tradition in using the concepts of power. CDA diverges from Foucault’s notion of power as a productive force creating subjects and, instead, enlists concept of ideology to theorise subjugation of one social group to another one. CDA research focuses on both how discursive practices construct a representation of the world, subjects and relations and role they play in furthering interests of particular groups (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). In the case of the scholarship shortages policy, the key players gave meaning to the policy change as ‘positive’ in the sake of withdrawing resources from students.

According to this discourse-analysis approach, the truth is a discursive construction and different regimes of knowledge struggle for the right to define what should be considered as truth (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.13). In the case of scholarship shortages two regimes of knowledge compete for defining the truth. The proponents of the change claim that the previous stipend policy was ‘wrong’ in a different sense and that the new system would be the “right” or “better” one. The other regime of knowledge produced by the opposition is that the change of the policy is part of the politics of austerity and would make the education less accessible. I support the latter regime of knowledge. These regimes of knowledge struggle for the right to be defined as the truth about the policy. The one that gets this right influences social practice, in this case, whether the students organize the protests or not.

According to CDA, how texts treat events constructs versions of reality (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 83). In the research, I investigate how the key players make efforts in constructing the reality of the policy perception through ideological discourses. The purpose of the research is not to discover the reality behind the discourse, but to analyze the patterns of discursive creation of reality (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.21).

From the methodological tools offered by Fairclough I use the three-dimensional model which includes 1) text, 2) discursive practice and 3) social practice.

1) The *text analysis* contains formal features such as grammar, syntax and vocabulary (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 69). I do not focus on this dimension of the model, but devote more time to discursive practice.

2) Analysis of *discursive practices* focuses on how the authors of the text draw on existing discourses to create the text and how the receivers of the text apply available discourses in consumption and interpretation of the text (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). I do not study the reception of the text focusing on the former part of the discursive practices.

3) Analysis of the *social practice* contains an analysis of the broader social practices and its relation with discursive practice. The other theories can be used to map non-discursive social relations and social matrix of discourse (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.86). I employ the theory of neoliberalism by David Harvey to map the non-discursive practices.

### 3.3. Reflexivity: my Place in the Research.

A researcher takes a position in relation to the field of study and reflects upon how this position influences what she sees and presents as results, assess possible consequences of their contribution to discursive production of the world (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 22). I explore familiar discourses as I took part both in the EuroMaidan protests and the discussions analysed in the research. I also have left-wing political views, so I ally to critics of the neoliberal transformations and choose the theoretical framework accordingly. I try to distance myself from the material I explore. On the other hand, as the insider, I gain a significant amount of information about both the broad context and the particular processes analysed.

I am from the southern part of Ukraine, which is one of the homelands of the anti-Maidan and separatist movements. In 2014 during the outbreak of the armed conflict, the southern part was listed among the ones which could be annexed by Russia. Even though I identify myself as the Ukrainian, I am half-Russian and have some cultural affiliation with this country. I am also bilingual since I studied in Ukrainian, but speak Russian with my family. So, for a long time, the Ukrainian political project was alien to me. I faced it when I entered Kyiv-Mohyla Academy for obtaining the bachelor degree. The university positioned itself as nationalist, pro-European and was in opposition to “Party of Regions”, which was in power that time. I studied there when the



EuroMaidan started and took part in it opposing the police violence, but criticizing the nationalist agenda. After the outbreak of the armed conflict, I found myself on the intersection of the Ukrainian nationalist project and the antagonist one. I understood both sides of the conflict and found many commonalities between them. Processing the conflict and misunderstandings connected to it was the part of this research.

Even though during the time period I investigate I was outside of the country, I thoroughly followed the discussions around the policy and took part in them. I joined the discussion after the students protest in the end of August. I mostly got the information from social networks, where people who defined themselves as pro-Maidan promoted the neoliberal and nationalist agendas to support the reform. There were articles, which claimed that students did not need scholarships and students who supported this claim. What is more, people who were against the policies were pictured as passive, “not deserving”, even connected to “Soviet past”, which was portrayed highly negatively. On the other hand, I knew people who opposed the policy and tried to deconstruct the promotional discourses. I came up with the idea of the flashmob in social networks “I need the scholarship; my scholarship is fair”. As a former student, I knew how important and helpful the scholarship was. So, discussions around it impressed me significantly. It was a challenge for me to distance myself from that experience since I explored the rhetorics of the neoliberal experts and politicians, not the bloggers and social media users. The ideological discourses the politicians and experts used differed from the ones I faced in the social networks in August-September 2016. The key players were more careful with their rhetorics and put different accents than the social network users. On the other hand, participation in the discussion in 2016 helped me to formulate the aims of the research and the suggestions which were confirmed during the research process.

#### *3.4. The Key Players and the Timeline of the Legitimation Efforts.*

I have chosen the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, Center for Society Studies “CEDOS” and Kyiv School of Economics (KSE) as the key players. “CEDOS” is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit analytical centre, which conducts research in the education, migration and urban development (CEDOS, 2018). KSE is the educational institution, which contributes to the development of spheres of the economy, business, and economic policy in Ukraine and neighbouring countries (Kyiv School of Economics, 2018). I learnt about these

organizations from the pre-research I made by reading the articles from the analytical journal “Commons”, where some of the discussions around the policy were described. These organizations were also suggested by Viktoria Muliavka, who researched the changes in the educational sphere in Ukraine and took part in the researched events. I have chosen these main players since they were the most active in the promotion of the policy as I could conclude from the materials accessible for me in the pre-research. I used the key players mentioned above in the search of the materials for the analysis. I also refer to the proponents of the reform who participated in the public discussions I analyse as the key players. I do it because it is convenient to refer to all the proponents whom I quote with the same name during the analysis.

There are two major public discussions to the participants of which I appear as the key players. The first one is the open discussion “Stipends: how to turn the handout into the incentive?” on August, 30 organized by the Ministry of Finance. During this discussion, students protested against the policy change. One of the slogans they shouted was “Money for education, not for war”, which became the inspiration for the name of the second discussion I closely analyse. It is the expert debate “Money for Stipends or for the War?” on September, 12 organized by the Kyiv School of Economics. The videos of the discussions are available in the open sources, which gave me the opportunity to analyse them in detail.

I have chosen the timeline August-September 2016 because the major public discussions I analyse took place within this timeframe. The dialogue about the changes in the current system started at the beginning of August after the recommendations released by the Ministry of Finances to abolish scholarships for students. They provoked the resistance from the opposition, which lead to the dialogue between the proponents of the policy change and its opponents. The events escalated at the end of August after the public discussion during which students threw the cake in the Deputy Minister of Finance as the protest action against the stipend shortages. The video of the protest became viral in the Ukrainian media and lead to the appearance of many newsletters and opinion pieces devoted to the policy change. The discussions around the policy gradually faded away during September from the public sources I can access. From September, 8 to September, 30 I found only a few newsletters each week. The last communicative events analysed was the expert debate “Money on Stipends or on War?” on September, 12.

Even though the research timeline is August-September, I also briefly analyze certain materials from other time periods to get a more clear understanding of the context of discourse. I elaborate on these in chapter 5 “Context of Discourse”.

### *3.5. Collecting and Analyzing Data.*

I started collecting data with the pre-research. I read all the articles regarding the educational sphere in the journal “Commons” for the period of 03.2016 - 12.2017. “Commons” is the Ukrainian analytical journal, which openly positions itself as the left-wing one. It “covers a wide range of topics such as Ukrainian and international politics, economics, education, science and other ones using contemporary critical social theories. The journal publishes analytical articles that undergo internal review, interviews, reports and blog posts with subjective opinions regarding certain events (Commons, 2018). I was in the editorial board of this journal for a year and share the anti-neoliberal agenda promoted by it.

While conducting the pre-research I learnt more about the context of discourse and the promotional discourses themselves. Firstly, there was an analysis of the state of the educational sphere in Ukraine and the changes it has undergone since Ukraine got independence. Secondly, the events in August and September 2016 were discussed. This discussion gave me the starting point to understand both the context of the discourse and some of the arguments produced by the main players. I discovered the communicative events I later analyzed in the research and the key players who took part in the promotion. I also discovered the other legitimization efforts which took place in 2014 and included them into the analysis of the context of discourse.

The next phase of the research was the main phase of the data collection, where I used the purpose sampling. I based it on the google search. I used the instruments of the Google search to investigate each week of the timeframe separately. I aimed at finding out how the discussion evolved, how the key players built the dialogue with the opposition and how the discourses changed. I googled the “stipend reduction” and names of the main players mostly for the one week periods within the timeframe. I have chosen the one-week format because it gave me the possibility to see the dynamics of the discussion but did not make the search significantly time-consuming. I searched for each key player in sequence in combination with stipend reduction or stipend cancellation. I searched for the stipend cancellation only for the August time frame since the discussion at that time was framed around the stipend cancellation, but not the reduction. I used both Ukrainian and Russian languages, which rarely provided me with the different research results.

### The Purpose Sampling

The Time Period	The Reasoning	The Words Searched
August, 1 - August, 15.	The first news regarding the policy change appeared on August, 8, so I widened the time period to 2 weeks.	Stipend reduction/stipend cancellation + Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Education; CEDOS; Kyiv School of Economics (later refer as the key players).
August, 15 - August, 22.	The one-week time period.	Stipend reduction/stipend cancellation + the key players.
August 22 - August, 29.	The one-week time period.	Stipend reduction/stipend cancellation + the key players
August 29 - September, 1.	In order to grasp the media-reaction on the protest during the discussion on August, 30, I narrowed down the timeframe to 4 days.	Stipend reduction/stipend cancellation + the key players
September, 1 - September, 8	The one-week time period.	Stipend reduction + the key players
September, 8 - September, 15.	The one-week time period.	Stipend reduction + the key players
September, 15 - September, 22.	The one-week time period.	Stipend reduction + the key players
September, 22 - September, 30.	The one-week time period.	Stipend reduction + the key players

I made the purpose sampling, which significantly relied on the repetitive actions because I aimed to explore the context of discourse, in particular, the dynamics of the discussion. Moreover, I wanted to look through as many materials as possible. The purpose behind this was to reduce my

bias towards the events analyzed. I had the picture of the discussion and the discourses employed in it based on my participation in the discussion and the position of the analytical journal “Commons”. Both my experience and the journal included the discourses produced by the other actors than the key players, for example, the right-wing bloggers and students. It also included the vision of the key players as the monolithic group and the simplified vision of the context of discourse. So, I aimed to, firstly, understand the material structures within which the discourses existed. Secondly, I aimed to analyse the discourses systematically to draw the conclusions from the analysis, not from my personal experience of the events. I use my experience as an insider to formulate the argument and suggestions of the research. The discourses and their context which I found out during the research differ from the ones I remember, which, in my opinion, shows that I managed to reduce the biases.

The analysis of the data collected was a multi-layer process. It is hard to disconnect the analysis from the data collection since I drafted of the analysis while collecting the material. I created a google document in order to collect the information, which could be useful for the research. I also drafted the analysis in the comment section. After the data collection, the google document consisted of 62 pages. It contained the material from the journal “Commons”, google search results of the investigated timeframe, the transcripts of the videos of the public discussions and interviews with the key players, some researches and information about the Ukrainian context, which I found relevant for the analysis or the conceptualization.

Since some parts of the discussions provoked strong emotions, I transcribed and analyzed them one or two days later. It helped to be more calm and precise during the analysis. After I read and listened to multiple materials produced by the main players I not just understood where they stood and how they justified their position but felt persuaded by them for a short period of time. So, in my opinion, I have done enough work with the first sources to distance myself from my experience in order to attribute my research as reliable.

### *3.6. Limitations of the Research.*

This research contains certain limitations. In this chapter, I describe the limitations and discuss how I could improve the research if I had more time and resources to do it. The first limitation is connected to my bias. As I mentioned before, I have the strong position regarding the researched

issue. This position can influence research results and the data I choose to use. I describe how I limited the bias in the previous subchapter. On the other hand, the position of the researcher is both the pro and the con of the research. Besides bringing in the bias, the positionality is an inherent part of the critical discourse analysis and my knowledge as the insider contributes to the research.

The second limitation is rooted in the google search method. Some materials could be unavailable in the google search. The research could be furthered by using more sources of information. For example, other tools of the Google search and monitoring pages of the main players (both pages of organizations and the pages of the actors).

The other issue to focus on is the investigation of not only the online media but also the large-scale TV media. It would benefit the research to learn how the messages the main players produced were presented and how the presentation varied among different channels. It would be interesting to learn how the politicians and experts tried to influence beliefs of the wider circle of the citizens. Moreover, since in the context of Ukraine the news channels are owned by local oligarchs whose interests vary, it could affect the way the messages were presented in different channels. Moreover, the way they presented the student's protests and the discussions around the armed conflict could be interesting to investigate. So, if I had more time and resources including the access to the news broadcasted in the popular channels, I would include them in the research. I could also monitor the social networks within the explored time frame. It could help to grasp the perception of the policy by students and leaders of opinions in the social networks. As I was involved in the dialogue on Facebook, I know that the nationalistic discourses were used there in a different way than in the official debates.

The other limitation is connected to the time frame. The time frame is highly limited, which means that I could have missed some parts of the legitimation efforts. For example, I learned that other legitimation attempts were made after the changes were implemented in January and were done in certain universities. These legitimation efforts could not be included in the research due to time and resource limitations.

The last limitation is connected to the sources accessible. The newsletters as the source of information can contain some distortions of the information and biases of the journalists regarding the issue. It can be especially relevant in case of discussions videos of which were not available, so that I had to rely on the newsletters. I did not use the quotes of the key players from the written sources and quoted them only from the video sources available. The video sources

available had the limitations, too. It is hard to hear the opposition who got involved in dialogue without a microphone in the video of the discussion on August, 30. The video from the debate on September, 12 shows only part of the event and stops before the expert debate finishes.

## 4. The Neoliberal Perspective and the Previous Research

I start the chapter with the ideological roots of neoliberalism presented by its proponents since the rhetorics of the key players corresponds to the neoliberal theory. Afterwards, I summarise the critics of neoliberalism by David Harvey and his approach to neoliberalism as either the political or utopical project. I sympathise this critical approach and employ it in the analysis. Afterwards, I explain the relation of the values of Westernisation and democratisation to the EuroMaidan protests. I also explain how the key players got the opportunity to promote the neoliberal transformations as the part of the nationalist project. Finally, I analyse the previous research made on the legitimisation of the neoliberal agenda in various contexts.

### *4.1 Neoliberal Ideology and its Critics.*

I start this chapter with the description of the set of neoliberal ideas, which the key players use in the legitimisation efforts. I use the description to analyse how the politicians and experts employ the neoliberal theoretical perspective to promote the policy and to redefine the wider societal relations from the neoliberal stance. Afterwards, I describe the critics of neoliberalism by David Harvey referring to his book “Brief History of Neoliberalism”. As I mentioned before, I oppose the neoliberal agenda while my analysis corresponds to its critique. To define the neoliberal ideology I use “The SAGE Handbook of Neoliberalism”(Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018), which summarises the set of the ideas from its influential proponents such as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and others.

Neoliberalism is the set of ideas, which idealises the market not just as the universal result of the human evolution and the only way of the development, but also as substitutive to the morality, merit and the most important precondition to freedom of the individual (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 69-81; p. 129-142). The freedom of the individual is the central notion for the neoliberal ideology. Unlike liberalism where polity comes before the economy, neoliberalism not just prioritises economic freedom, but claims it to be the precondition for the political freedom (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 70). As a result, social redistribution and solidarity are seen as the limitations to individual freedom within the free market (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p.6). The poverty is supposed to be marginal in



well-functional neoliberal order. The theorists consider the public assistance, but only for those who “fall below a certain threshold of economic need” in the sake of social stability and political legitimacy for the neoliberal regime (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 132).

The free market is supposed to lead to the self-development through participation in it. Hayek views the markets as information devices, which generate a learning process for its participants leading to changing of the participants' worldviews (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 134). Competition plays important role in this process since it motivates individuals to pursue the knowledge and “is essentially a process of formation of opinion“ (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 134). The vision of the free market as “a neutral solution” makes it possible for neoliberal theorists to define ethical standards through it or, more concretely, leave their definition to the free market itself. In this way, competition comes to be a moral standard and the base for the definition of merit (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 70).

The characteristics and values of individuals are highly important for the market society to function. The starting point of the Hayek’s neoliberal moral economy is the assumption that a person is both rule-following and purpose-seeking (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 134). Rodrigues in referral to Friedman describes the actor within the neoliberal ideology as “self-interested maximizer, endowed with perfect knowledge and immersed in perfectly competitive markets” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 135).

Even though free market is assumed to be the “natural” order, the important part of the set of neoliberal ideas is setting up of its order including its legitimation. Hayek argues that neoliberal institutional set-up “has an impact on human ends and values and requires essential reference to such values in its justification” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 134). This task is delivered to scholars who should produce the expert knowledge and popularize it. In Hayek’s and Friedman’s opinion, the intellectual and political elite are crucial for the success of implementation of the neoliberal moral economy since they can “create the appropriate intellectual and moral climate” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 136). The responsibility for implementation of neoliberal agenda is also on the state, which is supposed to “ensure the construction, preservation and expansion of markets” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 134), which involves “transformation of ends and aims of individual” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 138). Friedman also emphasizes the importance of crisis in the transformation of “the politically impossible” into “politically inevitable” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 136).

Despite the emphasis on personal freedom, the neoliberal theorists are not the full supporters of democracy. Milton Friedman doubts the rule of the majority and stands behind “the individual freedom in a society in which individuals cooperate” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 105). The significant expression of freedom according to the classics of neoliberalism is engaging in choices in the market (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 105). Moreover, according to them, the democracy should be limited to avoid contexts that could create collective action favouring like redistributive policies grounded into the idea of social justice (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 133). Neoliberal theorists are in favour of giving the power of decision-making to elites driven by the market-based logic. Director argues that policy-making should be based not on the consensus through the democratic discussion, but on the neoliberal economic analysis (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 106). According to George Stigler, “an elite must emerge and instil higher standards that the public or the profession instinctively desire” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 106).

David Harvey criticizes neoliberalism from the class-based perspective (2005). He refers to it as either an utopical or a political project preferring the latter definition. The scholar defines neoliberalism as the political project promoted by elites to re-establish the conditions for the capital accumulation and restore the power of economic elites (Harvey, 2005, p. 17). He claims that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are centres for enforcement of neoliberal transformations since the invention of the structural adjustment (Harvey, 2005, p. 29). David Harvey calls the theoretical design of neoliberalism the utopian project of international capitalism reorganisation which aims to legitimize the restoration of the class power (Harvey, 2005, p. 19). The legitimation happens through the construction of “common sense ground” consent across the large spectrum of the population (Harvey, 2005, p. 39). It can be done by appealing to cultural and traditional values and fears (Harvey, 2005, p. 40). Construction of consent varies from place to place (Harvey, 2005, p. 41). Persuasion of social groups to act against their material interests is a feature of implementation and legitimation of the neoliberal political project (Harvey, 2005, p. 50). Neoliberal states are convinced that the neoliberal path is right (Harvey, 2005, p. 72).

The other way of legitimation is the political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom. These are core concepts to which the neoliberal utopian project appeals. Those ideals also

became the drawing force for the dissident movements in Eastern Europe (Harvey, 2005, p.5). Neoliberalism is also backed up by the emphasis on consumer choice, respect to different lifestyles and modes of expression (Harvey, 2005, p. 42). While personal freedom is guaranteed, individuals are responsible for their own well-being, which justifies the shrinking of the welfare state (Harvey, 2005, p. 65).

David Harvey claims that after a state apparatus makes neoliberal turn it “uses its powers to persuade, bribe and threat to maintain the climate of consent” (2005, p. 40). Moreover, the scholar claims that neoliberalism has profoundly anti-democratic nature (Harvey, 2005, p. 206), which corresponds to the suspicion of the neoliberal theorists described earlier.

According to David Harvey, a neoliberal nation-state seeks internal rearrangements in order to improve its competitive position as an entity in the global market (2005, p. 65). In conflict, nation-state tends to take the side of the good business climate as opposed to collective labour rights or quality of life (Harvey, 2005, p. 70). The state intervenes to create the infrastructure for a good business climate (Harvey, 2005, p. 72). For capitalists, individuals are a mere factor of production (Harvey, 2005, p. 167). In order to sustain the competition, a neoliberal nation-state needs to ensure the loyalty of its citizens. So, the neoliberal state needs nationalism to survive (Harvey, 2005, p. 85). Nationalist discourse can also be reinforced by the threat from outside and inside like in the case of USA (Harvey, 2005, p. 82).

#### *4.2. The Ukrainian Nationalist Project and Possibilities for Neoliberalisation.*

In the previous subchapter, I approached neoliberalism as an ideology presented and criticised as a universal theory by the scholars. In this chapter, I take a closer look at how the neoliberal discourses find their way to the construction of the reality in the Ukrainian context. As I mentioned before, the neoliberal politicians and experts draw on the values, symbols and collective memories connected to the Ukrainian nationalist project and the EuroMaidan protests. I do not aim to explain the complicated nature of the EuroMaidan protests or the Ukrainian nationalist project but to outline the features that the key players appealed to in August-September 2016. In order to do it I, firstly, introduce the Ukrainian nationalist project and the antagonistic project. Afterwards, I connect the Ukrainian nationalist project to the EuroMaidan protests and outline the values of Westernisation and democratisation.

After Ukraine got independence in 1991 all permanent residents of Ukrainian Soviet republic were granted the citizenship (Zhurzhenko, 2015, p.253). The citizens of the independent country could combine identification with the new Ukrainian state and Russian, Slavic or pro-Soviet cultural affiliations and local identities. People had such affiliations mostly in the East-South region of the country (Zhurzhenko, 2015, p.253). The Ukrainian nationalist groups, on the other hand, were anti-Soviet and anti-Russian. Their important symbol is the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the soldiers of which cooperated with Nazi Germany during the Second World War with the further aim to attain the independence for Ukraine from the Soviet Union. These nationalist groups were mostly supported in the Western part of the country and “among the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Kyiv” (Zhurzhenko, 2015, p.253). The division within the country was facilitated during the electoral campaign in 2004-2005 within which the politicians appealed to electorate depending on its regional identities. The Ukrainian nationalist groups were appealed to with the narrative of “Ukraine as a postcolonial nation, struggling to emancipate itself from Russia’s political and cultural influences” (Zhurzhenko, 2015, p. 254). Strengthening relationship with EU as the “other direction” apart from Russia and the Soviet bloc was the important part of the nationalist project. The “Party of Regions”, on the contrary, appealed to Russian-speaking voters in the Southern and Eastern regions. In this case, the “negative identity” was cultivated through the rejection of values associated with Western Ukraine. They also drew on neo-Soviet symbols and narratives including the narrative regarding the Second World War and marked their opponents as fascists (Zhurzhenko, 2015, p. 255). So, the Ukrainian nationalist project, mostly supported in the Western and the central parts of the country, contained the anti-Soviet and anti-Russian position. It was opposed to the pro-EU and pro-Western one as the way out of Russian influence and the Soviet past.

In 2013 when EuroMaidan started the “Party of Regions” was in power with the party leader Viktor Yanukovich obtaining the position of the president. The rejection of the former president to sign the agreement was the starting point of the EuroMaidan protests. According to Marko Bojcun, the pre-conditions for the protests were the economy falter during the financial crisis in 2008, and facing “a zero-sum choice of accepting either Russia’s or the West’s terms of integration into their respective regional integration projects” (Bojcun, 2015, p. 400). He also writes that the protesters interpreted the refusal to sign the Agreements as a result of the pressure coming from Moscow (Bojcun, 2015, p. 408). So, the pro-Western position, as opposed to the

pro-Russian one, was one of the cornerstones of the protests, which connects it to the Ukrainian nationalist project.

The other connection is between the project and the protests were the protesters themselves. According to the EuroMaidan Protest Participant Survey, 63% of the respondents participated in the “Orange Revolution” protests during the electoral campaign in 2004-2005. These protests drew on the Ukrainian nationalist discourses and opposed the “Party of Regions”. What is more, the majority of the participants of the EuroMaidan in Kyiv were from the central and western parts of the country, where the project is mostly supported (Onuch & Sasse, 2016, p. 14).

The protesters were heterogeneous and the protests were dynamic with the number of people and emphasis on different demands changing over time (Onuch & Sasse, 2016). However, strengthening of relations with EU remained one of the main demands of the EuroMaidan and motivations for people to join the protests. According to the survey conducted during the EuroMaidan by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) and Ilko Kucheriv “Democratic Initiatives” Foundation, the most widespread motives for people to join the EuroMaidan protests were the police violence against the EuroMaidan participants at the beginning of the protests (70%), refusal to sign the EU-association agreement by the former president (53.5%) and wish to change the standard of living in Ukraine (50%). (Bekeshkina & Hmelko, 2013) Moreover, according to the research the demands which the EuroMaidan participants supported the most were stopping the repressions against the EuroMaidan participants, the resignation of the president and the government and signing the Association with EU (Bekeshkina & Hmelko, 2013). The resistance to repressions made the value of democracy significant to the protesters. After the EuroMaidan participants were brutally beaten in the Berkut raid on 29-30th of November the broader human rights discourse was adopted together with the discourse of “saving Ukrainian democracy” (Onuch & Sasse, 2016, p.13). Europe became the symbol of the EuroMaidan protests. The EuroMaidan protests were driven by “hopes of better living standards and living in ‘a normal European country’” (Onuch & Sasse, 2016, p.3.). The most typical phrases used by the activists and journalists in their posts and in speeches during the protests were “We want a European Ukraine” and “Ukraine is Europe” (Onuch & Sasse, 2016, p.9). People often conceptualised the EuroMaidan as protests for the “European” and democratic future (Onuch & Sasse, 2016, p. 16). The values and demands of the EuroMaidan were important for the large part of the population. The EuroMaidan protests led to the power shift in the government and change of the political course of the country. The new pro-Western direction

included not only hopes for a better future by the citizens, but also the cooperation with the International Monetary Fund, which demanded the public shortages in exchange for the loans. It gave the politicians and experts opportunity to justify the shortages with the pro-Western direction and other symbols and values of the EuroMaidan protests and the nationalist project connected to them.

#### *4.3. Previous Research.*

In this subchapter, I make an overview of the researches made on the legitimization of the neoliberal agenda in different countries. I start with the overview of researches conducted by Schmidt regarding the legitimization of neoliberalism in Europe. I continue with the research made on the promotion of the neoliberal agenda in the post-Soviet region and its relevance to my research.

Schmidt uses the discursive institutionalism to analyze the interactive processes of discourse in an institutional context (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 69). He suggests that the government's discourse enables change that contradicts the interests of its constituency. Moreover, if government faces the opposition mobilised in protests, it appeals to "values, whether to values of national solidarity or the public good" (Schmidt, 2000, p. 8) "Differences in institutional context also serve to differentiate countries, even when they resemble one another in values" such as a single - actor versus multi - actor political systems (Schmidt, 2000, p. 96) According to Schmidt, neoliberal ideology comes with two types of arguments, which are cognitive and normative ones. Cognitive arguments are connected to the expert knowledge and justify the policies through reference to scientific disciplines or technical practices (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 69, 73). Normative arguments instead include appealing to the underlying values in a society and speak to the appropriateness attaching policies to the core of principles and norms of public life (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 70; 73). According to Rothstein, the arguments can also apply to collective memories in a society (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p.73). Schmidt describes the arguments used in Britain and in France. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher relied not only on the neoliberal economic philosophies but supported them with the values of liberal state and individual freedom which prevailed in Britain (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p.73). She also appealed to the notions of "deserving" and "undeserving" poor and supported her argument by claiming that inequalities are necessary for development of individual talent and economic performance

(Schmidt, 2000, p. 15) In France where the value of solidarity is significant, the government had to use the argument of “economic necessity” to legitimize neoliberal policies (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p.73).

So, I outlined certain researches made to legitimize neoliberal agenda in European countries and now switch to the post-Soviet context. Scholars tend to define nationalism in collaboration with authoritative populism as the backlash from the neoliberal experiences of dispossession. This tendency is global and includes the post-Soviet block (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 236). In the case of the legitimation efforts investigated in the thesis, the nationalist discourse is used to reinforce the neoliberal one, which contradicts this tendency. The usage of nationalist discourse in the promotion of the neoliberal transformations in the post-Soviet region is explored by Makovicky (2013) in the article “‘Work pays’: Slovak neoliberalism as ‘authoritarian populism’”. He researches the discursive construction of welfare dependence as a “Romani” problem and puts it in the wider context of employment of nationalist symbols into selling the neoliberal agenda (Makovicky, 2013, p. 77). The politicians used the strategy of “selling” the neoliberal transformations to the population by usage of the discriminatory ideas of nation and ethnicity (Makovicky, 2013, p. 78). The author argues that the existing nationalistic symbols were appropriated and subverted into the market-driven political logic (Makovicky, 2013, p. 78). The Roma people were discursively constructed as the “undeserving” citizens through the appeal to the values of “work”, “responsibility”, and “decency”, which gave the politicians legacy to use measures of control against the protests (Makovicky, 2013, p. 87).

## 5. Analysis of the Context of Discourse

According to Fairclough, one of the aspects of contextualisation is social and cultural relations and structures that constitute the wider context of the discursive practice (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 64). The structures that constitute the wider social practices I investigate in this chapter are the sequence of the events within the researched timeline and the conflicts between the main players. I also use materials from outside the chosen timeframe in order to grasp the wider context of the discursive practices.

Firstly, I describe the sequence of events and change of discourses within the researched timeline. It would help the reader to orient in the analytical part and understand how the discussion evolved. Moreover, the investigation of how the dialogue evolved is part of the investigation of how the key players appeal to the value of the democracy. I also mention the legitimisation attempts which happened two years before the researched timeframe because I argue that it is important for understanding of the context of discourse as well as for supporting the argument of the thesis.

The second part of the context is the conflicts between the key players. The landscape of the relations between the key players creates the context of the legitimisation efforts. Knowing what conditions the politicians and certain experts united to promote the change, what they conflicted about and had in common could help to understand the context in which the promotional discourses were created. I do not gain a significant amount of information regarding the relations between the key players, but I could access certain information.

### *5.1. The Timeline of the Legitimization Efforts.*

Even though I investigate legitimisation efforts made in August-September 2016, I suggest that it is important to mention the other legitimisation attempt, which happened in December 2014 - January 2015. I briefly explore this time frame because it supports my argument that the aim behind the promotional discourses in August-September 2016 was the budget shortages. The legitimisation efforts in 2014 started the same way they started two years later. The order of the Prime Minister on changes to legislative acts for budget economy appeared. This project was called “shocking” for the rapid shortage of the public sector (Shevchuk 2014). Among the shortages there were abolishment of the free medical care, requirement of tuition fees for high



school education, raise of retirement age, abolishment of merit-based stipends for students and decreasing the state-funded places in universities (Shevchuk 2014). The order provoked resistance among students including threats of the nationwide protests (Shevchuk 2014). At the same time, the expert interviews and analytical articles with the promotional discourses appeared in the media space. The brief research of this timeframe showed that some of the key players were involved in the promotion such as CEDOS and the Ministry of Education. Moreover, the same arguments were used. The experts appealed to changing the scholarship redistribution system instead of abolishing the scholarships and used the “European experience” for the validation of the change. The division of the scholarship into merit-based and need-based with the arguments of “deserving” students were used at that time.

Discussions regarding scholarship cancellation appeared again in August 2016 with the same reasons as ones two years earlier. On the 8th of August, the news appeared that the Ministry of Finance sent an instruction letter about the state budget for 2017 and the draft state budget forecast for 2018-2019 for the main spending units. In the guidelines accompanying the letter, the reducing of the number of scholarship expenditures was claimed. According to it, the only recipients of the scholarship were students with special needs, social insecure students and PhD students (Ministry of Finance 2016). Moreover, unlike budget for 2016, the budget for 2017 had separate sum for scholarship payments (Turanizya 2016). I suggest that it aimed to put more pressure on the Ministry of Education. But the former institution resisted the pressure claiming that they did not support the initiative of the Ministry of Finance and that they did not initiate drafts of normative acts aimed at reducing the level of scholarship provision for students (Ukrayinska Pravda, 2016).

Discussions in the media were framed mostly around scholarships cancellation. The news about the probable cancellation caused resistance by students, university staff and unions. The Ukrainian Student Association assured that students were set up for strikes and rallies. The trade unions of workers of education and science promised to go on strike as well. The discussions around the cancellation of merit-based scholarships were combined with discussions of the other austerity policies. For example, the description of the press-conference organized by the opposition also contained the information about making the MA degree paid (Glavkom 2016) and in some newsletters an increase in the ratio of teacher-student from 12 to 14 people was mentioned (Ria News 2016) The rising of the gas and heating tariffs was also mentioned and referred as part of the “anti-people” reforms (Glavkom 2016). During the press-conference the

opposition demanded increasing of the scholarship to the level of the minimum wage instead of the cancellation (Glavkom, 2016).

So, the discussions around the stipend policy started from the document, which proposed the package of the austerity measures and was resisted as part of the “anti-people” neoliberal reforms. Since the policy change is inclined in the overall neoliberal transformations, it supports my suggestion that the promotion of the scholarship policy should be studied as part of the promotion of overall neoliberal transformations in Ukraine. Moreover, the opposition appealed to the EuroMaidan experience of students in order to scare the governors with the probable protests. So, appealing to the EuroMaidan values and symbols could be a valid tactic to choose for the key players.

The reaction of the key players was quite rapid. On August, 10 after 2 days the news about scholarship cancellation appeared in public, the Minister of Finances made a video blog on youtube channel where he explained the “real reasons for reforms” including the stipend one. It was the first video blog the Minister had ever made (Danilyuk, 2016). Meanwhile the same day the deputy Minister of Finances Sergey Marchenko gave the interview on the “Hromadske” channel, the online resource which is closely associated with democracy and EuroMaidan. He claimed that the aims of the document were to motivate the Ministry of Education to change the old system of stipend redistribution and to inform them about the budget limits (Hromadske TV, 2016). This idea was supported by the expert from CEDOS. He claimed that the radical rhetorics of Ministry of Finance was caused by inactivity of the Ministry of Education where the changes to mechanisms for scholarship redistribution have been discussed for already 2 years. According to him, the Ministry chose the tactic of “asking for more in order to get at least something” (Savchuk, 2016).

So, the key players tried to change the subject of the discussion from the scholarship abolishment to the scholarship change. I suggest that it was one of the main aims for their first appearance in public. Since the news about the stipend cancellation could provoke the large-scale resistance of the students, the neoliberal politicians and experts tried to reframe the discussion into the policy change. The latter discussion gave them the possibility to drag the opposition who was going to protest to the dialogue. The change in the discussion found its recipients. Some students claimed that they agreed with the need for changes in the scholarship redistribution system, but did not see the solution in cancellation of the merit-based scholarships (Savchuk, 2016). Students

social-democratic platform criticized authorities for not having any specific alternative to the previous policy but agreed that the system needed to change (Nagornjak, 2016).

The open discussion “Stipends: how to turn the incentive into the handout” on August, 30 was the turning point within the legitimation efforts. Firstly, after that mentions of the stipend cancellation disappeared from the informational space that I could access. Secondly, the students threw the cake to the face of the Deputy Minister of Finance as the protest against the policy change. The video of the protest became viral and was actively spread by the media, which made the stipend policy a “hot” topic. The amount of news and discussions regarding the issue rose rapidly in the next few days. Finally, the discourse of the war in Donbass entered the discussion. It appeared from the activists' slogan “Money for the education, not for the war”.

Since the discussion on August, 30 finished with the conflict between the audience and the panellists, the Ministry of Finance organized another discussion on September, 2, which, unlike the previous discussion, was closed and forbidden to film. According to the media newsletter which described it (Laba 2016a), the students mostly opposed rhetorics of the politicians and the discussion was finished with no agreement on the policy. After the discussion on the 2nd of September, the amount of the news regarding the event reduced. I also did not find any other appearances of the key players in public regarding this issue except the expert debate on September, 12.

### *5.2. The Conflicts between the Main Players.*

There were certain conflicts within the experts and officials community. The alternative mechanism of stipend redistribution was decided upon in December about 4 months after the legitimation efforts started. I claim that throughout the legitimation process the key players tried to legitimize not a particular mechanism, but the idea of it and the idea of changing the old one. The expert from the think-tank CEDOS promoted the change of the need-based scholarship policy regulations. He claimed that need-based scholarships should be paid not only to students in extreme conditions but to different people depending on the income of their parents, place of living and other factors. The expert claimed that the system should be regulated by the verification mechanism based in the Ministry of Finance (Savchuk 2016). So, the expert wanted significant shortages of the merit-based stipends and “covering” them for students with the

targeted need-based ones. After the change in the law, the verification mechanism was not implemented. So, the expert took the active part in the promotion of the changes, but the changes implemented were not the ones he aimed for.

During the interview, the expert said that the officials did not want to change the system radically not to evoke the student protests. So, they decided to gradually reduce the amount of merit-based scholarship holders each year. He also said that the main restriction for implementation of the verification mechanism was the corruption of the high-ranking officials, which the mechanism would reveal (Hromadske Radio 2016). So, I assume there was a conflict of interests between politicians and certain experts. While some experts had the intention of the systematic changes of the stipend policy, the politicians wanted to reduce the stipend funding without facing the resistance from the students.

## 6. “Like in Europe”: Legitimation through Westernisation

Westernisation is one of the values the policy makers appeal to within the legitimation efforts. I start the chapter by investigating how they appeal to the idealised imagery of Europe and demonised imagery of the Soviet creating the dichotomy between them and labelling the policy change as “European”. The pro-Western agenda and negative perception of the Soviet experience are part of the Ukrainian nationalist project, which gives the key players ground for exploiting these imageries in the legitimation efforts. They create neoliberal imagery and denote it with the label of Europe or the West. In this context, neoliberal transformations are presented as the “way to prosperity” and “the way to the European future”. In this chapter I, firstly, research how they wrap the neoliberal agenda into the shining package of the “European experience”. Afterwards, I research the attempt of the discursive constitution of society from the neoliberal perspective made by the main players. The further two subchapters show how neoliberal discourses spread from the concrete policy promotion into the wider societal relations and basic notions on which they are built. Being presented under the umbrella of Westernization the neoliberal discourses spread into different aspects of the societal life. I start with the redefinition of the basic notion of justice, which aims at framing the policy change as just. Afterwards, I investigate redefinition of the wider societal relations from the neoliberal stance such as state-citizens relations and the role of the higher education. After investigating the promotional neoliberal discourses I research the interplay between the neoliberal and nationalist discourses and the new meanings it creates.

### *6.1. “Business will not pay for greyness”: Reframing the Binary between Europe and the Soviet.*

In this subchapter, I research how the binary between the positive neoliberal imagery labelled as Europe or West and negative imagery of the Soviet was reframed within the legitimation efforts. As I mentioned before, the imagery of Europe had the significant symbolic value for the EuroMaidan. The key players used it to promote the neoliberal transformations. The imagery labelled as Europe was widely used by the experts and politicians in their speeches and interviews regarding the stipend policy. The legitimation efforts started with the referral to this imagery when the Minister and Deputy Minister of Finances tried to persuade the audience that they did not plan to abolish merit-based stipends as mentioned in the document. The Minister

claimed that they wanted to change the stipend policy in accordance with the “best European practices”. Within the neoliberal imagery, they tended not to mention differences between the policies in different European countries framing the imagery of the monolithic experience. Moreover, they referred not only to countries in the EU as positive examples of the policymaking but also to Canada and US.

I have chosen three quotations, which show how the neoliberal imagery was created as the positive example. Quotation 1 is taken from the interview with the expert from Kyiv School of Economics on August, 17. Quotation 2 is taken from the video-blog of the Minister of Finance as well made in the very beginning of the legitimization efforts. Quotation 3 is the part of the description of the public discussion regarding the policy change organized on August, 30.

Quotation 1: *“Ukraine spends more money on higher education than all the EU countries except three of them”* (5th Channel 2016).

Quotation 2: *“We have to implement this mechanism, particularly this mechanism exists in all the countries in Europe”* (Danilyuk 2016).

Quotation 3: *“What is considered an outstanding academic achievement in Ukraine? Does it correspond to the best world practices?”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016).

Even though I took the quotations from different contexts they have the common features. Firstly, in all of them “Europe” is framed as the example to follow. In the Quotation 1, the smaller expenditures of “Europe” on the education should lead to shortages of them in the Ukrainian context while in quotation 3 the “best world practices” are referred to the “European” ones. The stipend within the “best world practices” is defined to be paid for the “outstanding academic achievement”, which shifts the meaning of the stipend from being paid to the majority of students to being paid for the merit achieved through competition according to the neoliberal stance.

Experts tend to provide the audience mostly with the cognitive arguments referencing technical practices of “Europe” and being accurate with the generalisations they make. They tend to refer to a particular country as an example of a “European practice” or as it is visible in the Quotation 1 use the expression of “European countries” as the solid figure, but add some extra information like framing the differences within “Europe” as exceptions. They fit the differences in the “appropriate” package to support their argument.

Unlike the experts, certain politicians were less accurate with their expressions. In the quotation 2, the Minister of Finance puts forward the inaccurate statement about “European” policy. He uses “Europeanisation” as the normative argument appealing to it as the underlying value of the Ukrainian nationalism and is less accurate with the information he gives. He also speaks more emotional than the expert from Quotation 1.

The experts were also legitimized through the concept of “Europe”. Education and work experience in a “Western” country played a crucial role in it. For example, during the open discussion on August, 30 the moderator used the monolithic imagery to present one of the experts. From her view, the fact that the expert had experience in the US academy made him “familiar to the Western system of education”. In this case, the idealised imagery was labelled as the West. In her further question, the moderator divided the systems of education into “theirs” (European or Western) and “ours” (Ukrainian) presenting the system of education in the “West” as the monolithic. Moreover, the imagery of the monolithic Western system of education was framed as the example to follow for the Ukrainian one.

The neoliberal positive imagery of “Europe” was also created through contrasting it to the demonised imagery of the “Soviet”. The main players applied to the collective memories of certain negative experiences under the Soviet regime in order to legitimize the policy. The anti-Soviet sentiments are part of the Ukrainian nationalist project. Moreover, with decommunisation being the part of the after-EuroMaidan politics appealing to the imagery of the “Soviet” as the dark past could be beneficial for the legitimation efforts. The main players appealed to the imagery of the “Soviet” more rarely than to the idealised imagery of Europe. They mostly tried to reinforce the idealised imagery with the brief mentions of “the dark Soviet past”. They elaborate on the imagery of the Soviet during the open discussion on August, 30. During the interviews, they used it briefly and quite rarely, but during the discussion, they elaborated on it trying to reinforce the positive neoliberal imagery. In order to appeal to the imagery of the Soviet, the key players used the subconcepts of “*greyiness*” and “*uravnilovka*” (levelling). With these subconcepts, the main players draw on the collective memories of the Soviet Union. The example of the use of the concept of “*uravnilovka*” is by the Deputy Minister of Finances during the discussion on August, 30:

*“EU countries provide equal access to higher education not according to the Soviet model of “uravnilovka”, but on the basis of the individual approach (my translation)”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016).

In the statement of the politician, the idealised imagery of Europe is reinforced by the negative imagery of the Soviet. “Uravnilovka” (levelling) can be defined by as “unreasonable and unjustified equalization in remuneration of labour regardless of its quantity and quality” (Ushakov Dictionary). The word has roots in the Soviet practice of small differences between salaries for the low-skill and the high-skill work (Newsland, 2012). The synonym to uravnilovka mentioned in one of the russian vocabularies is depersonalization (Kartaslov.ru). The main players redefined the scholarship redistribution system within which two-thirds of students could get the stipend as uravnilovka and contrasted it to the “individual approach” prescribed to the positive imagery of Europe. The increased competition for the merit-based stipends, which the key players promoted as part of the idealised neoliberal imagery, was contrasted to the uravnilovka. According to Hayek, the free market generates a learning process and competition motivates individuals to pursue knowledge (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 134). Since the other set of ideas and values stands behind the system, the advocates of the system define it as unjust. I elaborate on the use of this argument in the next subchapter.

The creation of the “Soviet” through the subconcept of uravnilovka was supplemented by the subconcept of “greyness” as shown in the quotations below.

The speakers never mentioned the connection of “greyness” to the Soviet context. I draw this connection as the person who comes from the context and the recipient of the message. I found the mentions of the Soviet “greyness” in connection to the Soviet architecture and the monotonous everyday life with little space for self-realisation (RBK 2016). Soviet “greyness” is the common-sense understanding of the Soviet experience as the negative one. Even though I never experienced life in the Soviet Union, I have the vivid picture of what the “greyness” means, which appears from the cultural production and shared memories of my family. It is connected to the monotonous everyday life with a well-set, but low paid working environment, food deficits, long lines for the grocery, same clothes people wear and same-looking grey buildings. I suggest that a person who grew up in the post-Soviet Ukraine would understand the shared meaning of greyness, to which the key players appealed. This imagery evokes negative



emotions in me as the person who grew up in an independent Ukraine soaked with the values of success and consumer choice. Since I am part of the audience targeted by the legitimation efforts I assume that some part of the audience could share this feeling, which I suggest to be the aim for the key players.

The concept of “greyness” was only used during the discussion on August, 30. It was used by the Deputy Minister of Finance and repeated by the moderator and other participants. The quotations below illustrate how the word was used.

Quotation 1: *“We will not support the greyness when 75% of the students get a scholarship just because they are studying (my translation)”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center, 2016).

Quotation 2: *“Currently the scholarship does not fulfill their function to motivate, it is payment for greyness (my translation)”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016).

In the quotations, 1 and 2 “greyness” is connected to the lack of competition which ought to trigger motivation. The other important aspect of creating “Soviet” through “uravnilovka” and “greyness” is creating it as oppressive to an individual. A strong image of oppressive “grey” Soviet society is contrasted to the neoliberal values of freedom attributed to the figure of “Europe”. Freedom of individual is the central value of the neoliberal ideology mostly conceptualised through consumer choice, individual lifestyles and individual libertarianism (Harvey, 2005, p. 42). This freedom is pictured as bright in contrast to the “grey” one in the Soviet past. The extremely limited possibilities for the consumer choice in the Soviet past is pictured as oppressive to individual and connected to the scholarship policy left from that time period marking it as oppressive as well. Since according to the neoliberal theory the participation in the competitive free market is also assumed to be part of the neoliberal freedom (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 105), social redistribution is claimed to be the limitation to the freedom (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 6). The system where the three fourth of students can get scholarship has redistributive character, which is characterised by the key players as oppressive for an individual.

According to David Harvey, one of the ways of legitimation is through political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom, which were also the drawing force for the dissident movements in Eastern Europe (p. 5). These ideals were also central to the EuroMaidan protests and used by the neoliberal politicians and experts to legitimize the budget cuts. They were also strengthened

by the appeal to the collective memories of the “Soviet” and constructing this experience as negative. The constructing of the Soviet experience as negative was part of Ukrainian nationalist project and the after-EuroMaidan politics, which included decommunisation.

“Greyness” is also used to promote the wider agenda than the change in the law regarding stipends, which is illustrated in the following quotation.

*“Business is ready to pay, but not for the greyness ... They want lower taxes to run the economy (my translation)”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016).

The redistributive stipend policy is named “greyness” and recognized as inconvenient for the business as the main agent in the neoliberal economy. The subconcept of “greyness” reinforces the discourse of need in the reduction of the public expenditures and taxes lowering. The wider picture around the image of the “Soviet” is also framed by marking the redistributive scholarship policy as the part of the “Soviet remnants” or the “Soviet relic”, which creates the vision of it as the “leftovers” from the previous system needed to be replaced.

So, within the promotional discourses, the idealised neoliberal imagery labelled as Europe played the role of neoliberal utopia with the various possibilities for individual freedom and self-expression. The change in the policy was framed as part of this utopia, in which the students were encouraged to believe. On the contrast, the negative imagery of the “Soviet” was pictured as oppressive for an individual with appealing to collective memories of “greyness” and “uravnilovka”. The binary of Europe and the “Soviet” had more potential to influence people who supported the Ukrainian nationalist project within which this binary had already been framed.

## 6.2. *“We give money to all students at the expense of the best”*: Justice in the Neoliberal Rhetorics.

Since the stipend shortages could be identified by the opposition as unjust and lead to the wave of protests, it was important for the key players to redefine the notion of justice. The main

players used the concept of justice mostly to picture the previous system as unjust and need in “justifying” the payments instead of paying the majority of students. The argument of the unjust redistributive policy was connected to the discourse of oppressive Soviet experience by the claim that the previous scholarship policy was oppressive for an individual. According to the rhetorics of the key players, the “greyness” was connected first of all to the redistributive policies. In the case of the stipend reduction, the “bright” minds and outstanding personalities were claimed to be suppressed by the redistributive policy. It can be illustrated by the following quotation by the Deputy Minister of Finance said during the open discussion.

*“We give money to all students at the expense of the best”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016).

An important part of it was identifying the students who should get the scholarships as the best ones and picture them as underpaid and lacking attention under the system where the majority of the students got the money. Through the image of a successful, talented, “the best” students, the image of the “other” students was created the payment to whom were claimed to be the burden to the “deserving” students.

The justice argument was also supported with the claim that taking the payments from “less deserving” would lead to the bigger amount of the payment for the ‘more deserving’ students. The contrasting of quantity and quality within the discourse of effectiveness was an important part of the argument. On the open discussion on September, 2 the Minister of Finances said that if the number of scholarship holders increases, the amount of stipend would decrease (Laba 2016a). The effectiveness argument together with the claim about the restricted amount of money strengthened the argument about targeted payments for the most “deserving” students.

The redistributive policy was pictured as unjust or even harmful not only for the “most deserving” students but also for vulnerable students, who according to the proponents “really needed it”. The word really pointed out at the creation of the group of “deserving” students. But in this case, the students “deserved” it due to their poor financial situation and vulnerability. Creation of the group of students who were “really in need” of the stipends created the other

group - students who were not in “real” need of the stipend, but received it within the previous system. The existence of this group was defined as “unjust”.

The need-based payments are an important part of the neoliberal ideology. The classics of the neoliberal theory supposed that poverty should be marginal within the neoliberal order. As a result, the public assistance should be targeted to detect the ones who “fall below a certain threshold of the economic need” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 132). This logic of targeted payments was used by the main players in the Ukrainian context to persuade the opposition that it is important to target people who were beyond the threshold instead of giving the support to the wider population. Neoliberal theorists defined the role of the public assistance as the one which should support the legitimacy of the neoliberal regime (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 132). The proponents of the reform seemed to follow that function claiming that they were not going to withdrawal scholarships from those who are in “real” need of the money but only from “others” who were not supposed to receive it.

As a result of emphasizing the importance of the need-based scholarships to be targeted, the need-based stipends felt into the logic of competition. The payments became less accessible and, as a result, people had to put significant effort into getting them. This logic is illustrated in the following quotation:

*“We will carefully check every social payment from the budget. Those who are eligible for a scholarship must prove it”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016).

The expression about the careful checking of each payment put pressure on people who defined themselves as the ones in need of the state support. It pushed them to doubt whether they needed it. The strong modality word “must” combined with the word “prove” shows also that the students should be ready to fight for the stipend.

The conclusions regarding the use of the justice argument and connection between its merit- and need-based parts can be drawn from the quotation of Deputy Minister of Finances Sergiy Marchenko.

*“Not everyone will be satisfied [with the new policy], but the best ones and ones who really need scholarships will be satisfied (my translation)”* (Ukrainian Media Center 2016).

The argument of justice was used to justify the shortage of the amount of the stipend recipients. In order to do that the students were divided into the ones who “really deserve” it for merit decided through competition and the students who “really deserve” it due to their financial vulnerability, which they had to prove in order to receive the payment. In this way, the group of “undeserving others” was constructed, which, according to the officials, was neither prominent students nor people who had “real” financial problems. No criteria were mentioned for getting into the both “deserving” groups since the main players rarely gave any specific information. Moreover, as I mentioned before, I argue that the key players tried to legitimize the change in the law without having an agreement between each other regarding an alternative to it.

Besides that, such rhetorics could be an attempt to divide the students and target those who defined themselves as “deserving” from the merit- or the need-based perspective. They could be the recipients of the message. What is more, the creation of the group of “undeserving others” lead to justification of overlooking the opinions of the “undeserving” ones. The Deputy Minister claimed that “not everyone will be satisfied with the policy” putting forward that the ones who did not agree with it were the ones who did not belong to either “deserving” group.

Overlooking opinions of people is part of both neoliberal ideology, which is constructed as elitist and suspicious to “unlimited democracy” by its proponents (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 105; 106; 133) and of critics of it as class-based neoliberal political project by David Harvey (2005).

### *6.3. Neoliberal Transition: Redefining Wider Societal Relations.*

Under the umbrella of the positive imagery mostly labelled as Europe, the neoliberal discursive construction of reality took place. The key players often appealed to wider societal relations trying to redefine the role of the higher education and the state-citizens relations. I suggest that they did it not only to promote the particular stipend policy but to “adjust” citizens to the austerity policies in general.

I start this subchapter with the redefinition of the function of the higher education according to the neoliberal ideology. In the rhetorics of the main players, the functions of the higher education were limited by the labour market demands, influence on the economic growth and competitiveness in the global arena. Fundamental for the redefinition was contrasting of quality

of education to the number of students and institutions involved in it. The following quotations by the expert from the neoliberal experts illustrate the quantity-quality argument.

Quotation 1: *“Since everyone can enter a university, the motivation to study is low”* (Financial and Economic Analysis Office 2016).

Quotation 2: *“Do we want to prepare 5% of high quality specialists or 60% of the average level?”* (Ukrainian Media Center 2016).

As the quotation 1 illustrates, the motivational role of competition stands behind contrasting quality and quantity. According to the expert, the only pre-condition for motivation to study was competition for the places in the university. The decrease of the accessibility of education was framed as an important step towards increasing of the quality of education. The quotation 2 contains the message that the decrease in the number of people who get higher education would inevitably and automatically lead to a higher quality of education. I suggest that the pronoun “we” was used in order to persuade the audience that the advocates of the reform had the same interests as them since the quality of the education was important for all the actors involved.

The argument of increasing the quality of education by its shortages was reinforced by the argument of limited resources possessed by the state in the context of the political and economic crisis. The argument of the limited resources made the recipients of the promotional discourses face the choice of improving the quality of education or having more high-educated people. It was also used by the officials to redefine the incentives into education as the investment emphasising the aim of profit-making for the country from the educational institutions. The legitimization of the austerity policy by the crisis is not new for the neoliberal transformations. The neoliberal theorists define crisis as the way of making “politically impossible” the “politically inevitable” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p.136). David Harvey (2005) also claims that crises give elites wider opportunity to implement the neoliberal political project.

Redefinition of the functions of the higher education reinforced by the quality-quantity statements supported the statement that fewer people should get higher education. One of the arguments made by experts was that the amount of highly educated people did not influence the

GDP of the country. The other example of expressing this argument was illustrated in the quotation below.

*"People get the degree in law, for example, and then go to work at McDonald's. They could go to McDonald's before receiving the degree, and the state could save these 800 hryvnias [the amount of one stipend payment to one student per month] (my translation)"* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016).

The expert gave the very simplified example of how the state could act as the “effective entity” in Harvey’s definition and “tighten the belts”. The argument of the absence of need in the higher education in the local labour market was emphasized by the expert. He used the example of the well-recognized speciality and announced the absence of difference between getting the degree in it or not.

The functions of education were not just limited to benefiting the economy of the country but are shaped into a certain type of economy. During the open discussion on August, 30 the expert said that amount of people who could access higher education in Ukraine is *“too big for the resource-based economy”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016). I can not claim that all the key players supported the idea of the reduction of the higher education to the level intrinsic for resource-based economies. However, it illustrates that the country was shaped not just as the competitive entity, but also as the one that took part only in certain types of international competition.

Redefining the country as the *“effective entity”* required the change of the state functions and its priorities. So, the key players tried to change the role of the state and its relations with the citizens. The main function of the state within the neoliberal economy is to install and strengthen the market. It contains the responsibility for implementation of neoliberal agenda, which includes ensuring *“construction, preservation and expansion of markets”* (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 136) and construction of the neoliberal common sense including *“transformation of ends and aims of individuals”* (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 138). The likewise change of the state role can be illustrated by the following quotation.

*“Our task is to ensure that taxpayers' funds are distributed effectively, and not disguised, to satisfy everyone”* (Ukrainian Media Center 2016)

According to the Deputy Minister, the actions regarding the state fund would be aimed at the effective distribution instead of covering the demands or needs of the citizens. So, the state changed its priorities from its citizens to function as the “effective entity”. The redistributive policies were referred to by the politician with neglect. The Deputy Minister called them “disguised [money]” trying to change the perception of the state support as its inherent function into the waste of money.

According to David Harvey, the notion that each individual is responsible for her freedom within the neoliberal theory legitimizes shrinking of the welfare state (Harvey p. 65). Since the role of the state changed and it took less responsibility for the social sector, people were framed as the ones responsible for the social services including the higher education. This process is visible in the rhetorics of the main players. In the interview to the 5th Channel the expert from Kyiv School of Economy said the following:

*“Ukrainians should understand that no one is obligated to provide the students for us. If a family wants a child to receive higher education, they invest in getting a good education. They should require teachers to grade students according to their knowledge. The responsibility is on us. We can not rely on the state to provide us with all our needs. It will be painful, but in 10-20 years Ukrainians will be more focused on quality, rather than relying on the state (my translation)”* (5th Channel 2016).

Within the logic of the expert, the responsibility for the financial support of students was put on the household within the limitation of the functions of education to the investment into future employment. According to Friedman, people within the neoliberal political economy are “self-interested maximizers” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 135), which is assumed by the expert as well. According to her logic, the interest of the household should be in maximizing the opportunities for their members by investing in higher education. The responsibility of the households was not limited by the full financial responsibility for the higher education of its members. The expert also put the responsibility of control over the quality of



education on the households. The strong words like “no one is obligated” point at the high affinity of the author to her statement. The new redistribution of responsibilities between the state and its citizens were presented as the new reality which the citizens had to face. The transition from relying on the state support to taking responsibility was announced to be “painful”. By this statement, the expert acknowledged the difficulties the citizens would face as the result of the state role change. This quotation also shows that within the legitimation efforts of the stipend policy the wider societal relations were redefined since the expert talked about the significantly wider range of issues than the stipend policy.

So, the role of the higher education was redefined in order to place the stipend shortages in the bigger framework of the shortages in this domain. The higher education was placed into the limited role of its subjects as participants in the labour market and to the role of the neoliberal state as the effective entity in the global market. Considering the fact that one of the experts framed Ukraine as the agrarian country, which should have the smaller amount of highly educated people, even bigger limitations could be imposed on the accessibility of the higher education. The key players also tried to redefine the state role. The comparison of the state support to the money being “disguised” made a strong claim of negativisation of spending the state funds on satisfying demands and needs of citizens. Since the state took less responsibility for the public facilities, the key players tried to change the self-perception of the citizens whose lives would become harder with this change. Certain key players tried to push the citizens closer to the Hayek's image of a citizen as “self-driven maximizers”. In this way, they tried to persuade the audience to take more responsibility on the households and, as a result, take over the work the state used to do before.

#### *6.4. “Money for Stipends or for the War?”: When Nationalist and Neoliberal Discourses Mix.*

The social relations within the policy promotion were redefined not only according to the neoliberal ideology. The discourse of war was brought into the discussion after the student's slogan “Money for the education, not for the war”. It provoked the discussions around the armed conflict and became the starting point of using it in the legitimation efforts.

The freedom of the individual is central to the neoliberal ideology (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 70), which makes neoliberalism contradictory to nationalism since the latter

one places a nation over the individual freedom. However, within the legitimation efforts neoliberal and nationalist discourses cooperated. In this subchapter, I research how it happened despite the paradoxical nature of such an interplay. The core material I analyze is the expert debate “Money for Stipends or for the War?” (Financial and Economic Analysis Office 2016) named after the slogan of the students protest. The roundtable was built around the competition between experts who represented certain Government Ministries for the state funding. The ministries which participated were Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Healthcare, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Social Policy. Each Ministry was represented by the team of 2-3 experts and each team had around 7 minutes to present their arguments.

The arbiters who assessed the performance were the neoliberal economists. They had a significant amount of power during the debate. Arbiters were supposed to give their verdict at the end of the debate regarding the ministry that “deserved” the money. They had the right to interrupt the participants and disregard their arguments. The example of such a behaviour was in the way one of the arbiters replied to the speech of the healthcare experts:

*“I did not hear what each of you asks the money for from the [state] budget and how it will influence the quality of the services (my translation)”* (Financial and Economic Analysis Office, 2016).

The arbiter behaved not like he asked the question to clarify the argument, but as a person who owned the money and could give it to ministries only on his conditions.

The important role was also held by the moderator who framed the discussion exceptionally within the discourse of effectiveness and enforced the competition between the ministries. He switched from the Ministry of Infrastructure to the Ministry of Education by asking *“Why are you better than the infrastructure? (my translation)”*. He also interrupted the expert who represented the Ministry of Education when the expert criticized the way the discussion was organized.

So, the debate followed the logic of “limited democracy” using the neoliberal principles of effective and limited time redistribution and delivering the power of decision-making to the elites driven by the market-based logic (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 106). The

experts from the ministries followed the neoliberal agenda building their arguments on the amount of money that could “come back” to the state from each dollar invested in their ministry.

Not only neoliberalism was inherent for the roundtable, but also nationalism framed through the discourse of the war in Donbass. The debate was named “Money for scholarships or for war?”, which already gave a hint at the issue of the priorities regarding the budget spending. Even though the name of the discussion was framed as the question, it already contained the answer. The war was considered to be the top priority, which framed other issues as insignificant in comparison to it. During the roundtable this question was answered quite clearly - the defence was the top priority. The following quotation is from the speech of the expert who represented the Ministry of Defence.

*“Defence is the only area that can not be outsourced to the private sector... The “aggressor” state, even if we build a well-functioning infrastructure and healthcare system, will not disappear... If we lose the army, we will lose the state even if we build a well-functioning infrastructure... We won’t build anything without the defence (my translation)”* (Financial and Economic Analysis Office 2016).

The Ministry of Defence was framed not just as the priority over other ministries, but as the one which enabled their very existence under the “outside threat”. Such rhetorics significantly devalued the importance of the other ministries and their performances, which could justify shortages of the budget expenditures on them. Such rhetorics framed the state as the one in need of protection and sacrifice by the other spheres of life. The one who performed the protection was the Ministry of Defence, so the experts from the Ministry had more power in the expert debate. He was not interrupted by the moderator or the arbiters even if his arguments did not follow the logic of effective money redistribution. He also spoke on behalf of other ministries without being interrupted. For example, the expert elaborated on the privatisation of the educational domain claiming that people *“are distracted for 5 years from the labour market (my translation)”* while they get the higher education. He also claimed his expertise regarding the Ministry of Infrastructure suggesting that the roads could be built by the private actors. The expert was treated with respect and his statement about the defence as the top priority was sometimes repeated by the moderator and even the arbiters. So, there was a clear consensus

around the defence being the top priority and, therefore, the exception was made for him in the strict neoliberal debate format.

The discourse of the “aggressor” country as the “outside threat” which threatened the very existence of the state created the state not only as the business entity, but also as the entity which fought for its very existence and, therefore, was in need of sacrifice. The interplay of nationalistic and neoliberal discourses in creating the meaning of the state can also be illustrated by the following quotation from the discussion on August, 30.

*“We have a weak economy, we do not have enough taxes to, firstly, protect the country and secondly, invest money in the future. It is painful for everyone when we are poor and, besides that, have to find money to invest in the future. The future [means] not to “eat away” the money in stipends and pensions... We have to cut the expenditures and fight the corruption for the country to exist in 1-2-5 years (my translation)”* (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2016)

At the beginning of the quotation the speaker outlined the functions of the state. While the function of defence (“protect the country”) corresponded to the nationalist discourse, the function of “investment in the future” drew on the neoliberal agenda. The latter action was acknowledged to be “painful” for citizens, which was aimed to push them to agree for sacrificing their interest to “save” the country. The “investment in the future” was contrasted to the money being “eaten away”, which was the metaphor for the redistributive policies. The country was framed under threat of both the Russian Federation and the economic crisis, which could be overcome by the “painful” public shortages. In this way, the nationalist discourse of “saving the country” in the context of multiple threats reinforced the neoliberal discourse of effectiveness and disregard of the policies aimed at redistribution.

So, the interplay of neoliberal and nationalist discourses created the meaning of the nation-state as not just an “effective entity”, but also as the one which needs the protection and sacrifice. If on theoretical level proposed by the proponents of neoliberalism the interplay between the former and nationalism is impossible, from the position of David Harvey who treats neoliberalism as the political project, such an interplay is natural. The scholar argues that since the nation needs to be stable in order to be the “effective entity” in the global market, the loyalty

of its citizens is needed (Harvey, 2005, p. 85). Nationalism and the threat from outside and inside can be used for this purposes (Harvey, 2005, p. 82).

Since economic growth and security discourses were the only ones the judges listened to in the competition for the state funding, the ministries applied these discourses to justify the need in financial support from the state. Such attempts were made during the roundtable by the experts from the Ministry of Healthcare.

*“The problem is that we treat medicine as a social payment sector, but we should treat it as the investment in the economy. People are the most expensive resource, good medicine prolongs a person's working life... [Investing in healthcare] is also investing in security. People are afraid to get sick not to get into the financial trouble because the state can't protect them... It's an investment in people knowing that they can protect themselves from illnesses (my translation)”* (Financial and Economic Analysis Office 2016).

The expert drew on the existing neoliberal and security discourses in order to create the text, which would be legitimate for the neoliberal experts. In the case of the security discourse the expert changed the logic from the state which needed protection present in the debate into citizens who needed protection. While the discourse of satisfying the needs or demands of citizens was disregarded, the discourse of protection was treated significantly better by the neoliberal experts. Within the neoliberal discourse, the human life value was reduced to the “working life” and a mere investment. It corresponds to the Harveys claim that capitalists see the human being as the mere investment (Harvey, 2005, p.167). The brightest example of this phenomena was present in the dialogue between the moderator and the expert from the Ministry of the Healthcare. The expert argued need in money for the ministry by the value of lives of people who needed the medical care. The part of the dialogue is below:

*“The moderator: The debates are about what should be the priority.*

*The expert: Don't you think that human lives should be the priority?*

*The moderator: I do. But the same can be said about the education and the defence ministries. We have to know why to invest. (my translation)”* (Financial and Economic Analysis Office 2016).

Even though the moderator agreed that human lives should be the priority, he claimed that the reason behind the money allocation should be connected to the logic of investment. He openly disconnected the notion of budget priorities from the lives of the state citizens. While the neoliberal utopia claims that individual and her freedom are the central value, the implementation of the neoliberal political project works in the opposite way by devaluating the human lives. It is not surprising since from Harvey's perspective the aim of the project is accumulation through dispossession.

So, despite the centrality of the individual to the neoliberal theory, the value of human life was disregarded in the context of the interplay between the nationalist and the neoliberal discourses. Protection of the country and neoliberal economic development of the nation-state became the central goals according to the key players. According to the rhetorics of the officials, economic growth strengthened the country's position in the war. In this context, the human life and well-being were valued only if they could benefit the neoliberal economy or engage in the protection of the country. In the competition for the state funding the domains of public expenditures tended to frame their agenda within either the discourse of economic growth/investment or within the discourse of security of the nation-state. This situation allies to Harvey's perspective according to which the neoliberal political project needs nationalism to ensure the loyalty of citizens while elites treat them as a mere investment (Harvey, 2005).

## 6. Legitimation through Democratization

I argue that the main aim of the legitimation efforts was to avoid the large-scale protests of the opposition. I also claim that the key players appealed to the core components of the Ukrainian nationalist project such as Westernisation and democratisation in order to legitimise the change. Democracy and strengthening relations with EU were among of the key demands of the EuroMaidan protests and motivations for the people to join it. In the previous chapter, I researched how the key players appealed to the value of Westernisation and created the positive neoliberal imagery labelled as Europe or the West. In this chapter, I investigate how they appealed to the value of democratization and prove the argument that the efforts were made to avoid the protests. I claim that the creation of the vision of the democratic dialogue was one of the key tools for promoting the reform. I investigate how democracy and its components such as transparency and dialogue were used as tools to avoid students protests and legitimize the policy.

The tool that the officials and experts used was “to be closer to people”. As the previous government was known by being close to the dialogue, the after EuroMaidan officials tried to make an impression of working with experts and including students into the discussion. The experts and the governors' opinions and discussions appeared as a reaction to the resistance shown by students towards the austerity policy as argued in the previous subchapters. The key players firstly appealed to openness two days after the letter of recommendation by the Ministry of Finance was published. The politicians from the Ministry of Finance made the public statements. The Deputy Minister gave the interview to “Hromadske” channel while the Minister of Finance made the video blog. I already discussed this communicative events in the “The Timeline of the Legitimation Efforts” (p. 34). In addition to that, I suggest that the format of the video blog targeted at the students since they were the active social media users. Both politicians appealed to openness and honesty. The Minister claimed that he wanted to be “as frank as possible” while the Deputy Minister appealed to honesty and transparency.

The imagery of the openness was created also through the organizing of the open discussions, especially the one on the 30th. However, from the way, the discussion was organized and announced I conclude that it was not aimed at the dialogue with students, but at persuasion. The discussion was announced the day before the event took place, which made it hard for some

people to join. Moreover, it was called: *“How to turn the handout into an incentive? Possible options for changing state policies on scholarships, and the views of the key interested parties about this (my translation)”*. The name contained the message that the system should be changed claiming that within it the scholarships for students were “the handout”. The interested parties presented were mostly neoliberal experts and politicians. There were only two students who participated in a panel of eight participants. What is more, the audience participation was highly limited. Only 30 seconds per person were given to the audience, which they could use only at the end of the discussion. When the audience wanted to respond to the arguments of panellists the moderator did not give them the opportunity to do that appealing to the reglament. According to it, the audience could speak only at the end of the discussion. It led to the tension rise during the discussion and the audience shouting in order to be heard.

The image of the democratic decision making created the image that students could influence the future policy through the mechanisms created by the officials and experts. Such an image added to the negativisation of the actors who acted outside these mechanisms as can be seen from the quotations below.

Quotation 1: *“Let's hold a discussion in a civilized way ... I emphasize again - we are ready for dialogue (my translation)”* (Ukrainian crisis media center 2016).

Quotation 2: *“You are the future of Ukraine, you must learn to engage in a civilized dialogue (my translation)”* (Ukrainian crisis media center 2016).

The image of the “civilized” and “mature” dialogue was contrasted to students trying to be involved as “uncivilized”. The “civilized” discussion based on the rules of the proponents of the neoliberal agenda was claimed to be the only way for the students to take part in the discussion. Framing students as the “future of Ukraine”, which should be “civilized” was also the tool to discipline students into the agenda the key players needed to implement.

The “civilized” and “mature” behaviour was claimed to be shown by the experts and the governors while the students were meant to “learn” from them. The experts treated the students as a priori not mature enough and referred to them as to children. For example, after the moderator claimed she would not give the microphone to the audience anymore, she gave it to the associate professor. When he took the microphone she called him *“the most civilized discussant (my translation)”*. I suggest that his status as a non-student was a reason for the



moderator to treat him differently. So, students were framed as the ones who had to learn from the experts and politicians and not considered as equals with whom the dialogue could be built.

According to Director, the decision-making should be based not on the consensus through the democratic discussion, but by the elites are driven by the market-based logic (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 106). George Stigler argued that an elite must “install higher standards than the public desire” (Cahill, Cooper, Konings & Primrose, 2018, p. 106). In the case of the discussions around the policy, the decision had already been made by the key players. During the discussion, they tried to popularise these ideas using the expert knowledge and the appeal to the value of democracy important for the potential opposition. The way the discussions were organized, announced and delivered shows that they were organized to explain the policy decision based on the neoliberal economic analysis. These processes correspond not only to ideas of classics of neoliberalism but mainly to the David Harveys perspective on neoliberalism as the anti-democratic elite-driven political project (Harvey, 2005).

## 7. Conclusions

I investigated the attempt to legitimize the austerity policy to people whose interests it contradicts. This research opens up the wider picture of how the neoliberal politicians and experts employ values, symbols and collective memories familiar to the large part of the population to legitimise the neoliberal transformations implemented in the country. The research corresponds to David Harvey's perspective on neoliberalism as the political project, which aims at the accumulation by dispossession leading to the worsening of lives of the vulnerable groups and populations of the countries indebted to the international institutions. According to him, the neoliberal project is legitimised by appealing to the neoliberal theoretical premises, which he calls the utopical project. The research shows how this utopical project was used in Ukraine and connected to the local values and symbols. In the case of the promotion of the law change, the key players appealed to the idealised neoliberal imagery of Europe, which was framed as the utopian neoliberal project. The value of Westernisation is part of the Ukrainian nationalist project and the importance of the "European direction" for EuroMaidan protests made a ground for politicians to reframe the image of Europe in the way which was beneficial for achieving their aims. The imagery of heading towards the "bright European future" was reinforced by "leaving behind" the demonised "Soviet past". The "Soviet" was characterised as oppressive through appealing to the collective memories of its disadvantages already demonised within the Ukrainian nationalist project. These collective memories were used to frame the redistributive policies as oppressive and threatening to the individual freedom. The "European experience", to the contrary, was characterized as the "way to prosperity" through the neoliberal path of praising the competition and freedom of the consumer choice. Within this binary, the key players tried to redefine the notion of justice. The redistributive stipend system, which existed before the reform was referred to as oppressive both for "the best" students and the disadvantaged ones who "really need the money". Moreover, within the idealized imagery of Europe, the shortages of the public sector were promoted under the redefinition of the state role and the citizens as "rational self-maximizers" who should take responsibility for issues the state was responsible before.

The politicians and experts also appealed to the value of democracy. It is important for the Ukrainian nationalist project reinforced by the EuroMaidan protests with high emphasis on democracy. Following these rhetorics, the politicians and experts adopted the strategy of

building the vision of the dialogue with students in order to persuade them in the appropriateness of the policy change. The politicians and experts did not build the democratic discussion but used the top-down approach of “explaining” the policy to students and excluding them from the discussion.

Even though the experts built their rhetorics of the “bright future” around the freedom of the individual, they devalued the lives of citizens in the context of the interplay between neoliberal and nationalist discourses. According to Harvey (2005), capitalists see the human being as the mere investment (p.167). Defining the citizens in frames of investment was reinforced by the nationalist discourse and discourse of the outside threat, which framed the state as the one which needed sacrifice from its citizens in order to be saved. The neoliberal and nationalist perspective collaborated since the vision of the state as the one which needed sacrifice was beneficial for its neoliberal function to work as an “effective entity” in order to compete in the global market. It allies with Harvey’s perspective of the neoliberal political project, for the sake of which nationalism can be employed. In the case of the stipend shortages, students were supposed to put the interests of the nation-state in defence and economic growth above their interest in getting the payments.

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