Charles University
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PhD Thesis

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Contextualizing Student Political Participation: Comparison of the Czech Republic and East and West Germany

Studentská politická participace v kontextu:
Srovnání ČR a starých a nových spolkových zemí SRN

Thesis supervisor:
PhDr. Zdenka Mansfeldová, CSc.

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Statement of originality of the thesis

Prohlašuji, že jsem disertační práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

I hereby declare that the content of this dissertation is my own work and that I wrote it independently, using only duly listed and properly cited sources and references. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

Prague, 15 November 2020

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Abstrakt

Demokracie nemůže existovat bez aktivních a vnímavých občanů. Charakter politické participace se však především mezi mladou generací mění. Vzhledem ke klesající ochotě mladých lidí účastnit se tradičních forem politiky je velmi relevantní zkoumat zdroje jejich politického zájmu, jejich vztah k politice a motivace k účasti na politickém životě. Disertace proto sleduje politické trajektorie mladých českých a německých politických aktivistů, přičemž se zaměřuje na kontextuální a sociálně psychologické faktory, které je utvářejí. Cílem práce je odpovědět na hlavní výzkumnou otázku: ***„Jak a proč se čeští a němečtí univerzitní studenti angažují v politických a občanských organizacích?“***

Práce nejprve zkoumá roli primární a sekundární politické socializace v rozdílných společenských kontextech. Nabízí pochopení klíčových mechanismů a narativů politické socializace v rodině. Pozornost je věnována také vlivu občanského vzdělávání, vrstevníků a učitelů na základních a středních školách a dopadu univerzitního prostředí na politický aktivismus. Disertace také zkoumá motivace pro vstup do politických a občanských organizací a proces politické rekrutace a mobilizace. Práce dále popisuje, jak mladí rozumějí politice a vztahují se k ní v rozdílných kontextech, a rovněž se zaměřuje na důvody, proč lidé nechtějí vstoupit do politických organizací.

Disertace vychází z unikátního datového souboru 60 polostrukturovaných rozhovorů s univerzitními studenty ve věku od 18 do 30 let, kteří jsou aktivní nebo neaktivní v politických organizacích. Rozhovory byly provedeny na šesti univerzitách v bývalých starých a nových spolkových zemích SRN a v České republice a byly analyzovány metodou tematické analýzy v kvalitativním softwaru Atlas.ti.

Disertace identifikovala *vliv* jako klíčový faktor politické socializace a nabídla vlastní klasifikaci módů vlivu. V otázce politických motivací byla zvláštní pozornost věnována problému *politické efektivity* (political efficacy). Zejména *vnitřní politická efektivita* (internal efficacy), tedy důvěra ve vlastní schopnost efektivně se podílet na politickém procesu, byla identifikována jako klíčová pro formování politické motivace u mladší generace. Dalším přínosem práce je originální typologie politických narativů a jejich propojení s mechanismy socializace. Disertace rozpracovává klasické typologie politických motivací a důvodů neúčasti v organizacích, obohacuje je o nové kategorie a představuje také vlastní typologii cest k aktivismu. Výsledky práce mohou nalézt praktické uplatnění například při náboru nových členů do politických stran a v oblasti občanského vzdělávání.

Klíčová slova: *politická a občanská angažovanost; mechanismy a narativy politické socializace; občanské vzdělávání; politická motivace; konceptualizace politiky a občanství; neúčast v organizacích; politická efektivita; česko-německý kontext*

Abstract

Democracy cannot exist without active and responsive citizens. However, the character of political participation of the young generation has changed. Given the decreasing willingness of young people to participate in conventional politics, a highly relevant issue is to examine the sources and motivations of their political commitment and relations to politics. Therefore, the dissertation traces the political trajectories of young Czech and German activists and focuses on the contextual and sociopsychological factors that shape them. The aim of the text is to answer the main research question: ***'How and why do Czech and German university students get involved in political and civic organisations?'***

Firstly, the thesis examines the role of primary and secondary political socialisation in different societal contexts. It provides an understanding of the key mechanisms and narratives of family political socialisation. Attention is also paid to the influence of civic education, peers and teachers at secondary and grammar schools, as well as to the impact of the university environment on political activism. Secondly, the thesis explores the range of motivations for organisational membership and recruitment procedures, as well as the variable ways of how youth relate to politics. The dissertation also focuses on the reasons for refraining from membership of political organisations.

The dissertation draws upon a unique dataset of 60 semi-structured interviews with university students who are active or inactive in political and civic organisations. Interviews were conducted in six universities in the new and old German federal states and in the Czech Republic. The method of applied thematic analysis, through a qualitative software Atlas.ti, was used.

The thesis identified *influence* as a core factor of political socialisation and offered an original classification of the modes of influence. In this regard, special attention was paid to *political efficacy*. *Internal efficacy* especially, which is the citizen´s conviction that he/she is able to influence the political process, was identified as the core in forming political commitment among the young generation. Another contribution was the original typology of political narratives and its connection to the mechanisms of socialisation. The dissertation also elaborated the classical typologies of political motivation, and refraining from membership enriched them with new categories and offered my own typology of paths to activism. These outcomes have practical implications, for instance, for the recruitment of new party members and for civic education policy.

Key words: *political and civic engagement; mechanisms and narratives of political socialisation; civic education; political motivation; conceptualisation of politics and citizenship; refraining from organisational membership; political efficacy; Czech and German context*

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List of abbreviations

BA ……bachelor's degree

BMZ ……..Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development *(Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)*

BPB ……..Federal Agency for Civic Education *(Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung)*

CDU-CSU ……Christian Democratic Union of Germany and Christian Social Union in Bavaria *(Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands und Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern)*

ČRo ……...Czech Radio *(Český rozhlas)*

ČT24 ……Czech Television *(Česká televize)*

CV ……..curriculum vitae

DDR ……..German Democratic Republic *(Deutsche Demokratische Republik)*

e.g. ……for example

GDP ……gross domestic product

GDR ……German Democratic Republic *(die Deutsche Demokratische Republik)*

GER ……...…….gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education

HBO ……Home Box Office

Ibid. ……..in the same place

ICT ……information and communications technologies

ISSP ……..International Social Survey Programme

JuLis ……...Young Liberals *(Junge Liberale)*

JUSOS ……..Young Socialists in the SPD *(Jungsozialistinnen und Jungsozialisten in der SPD)*

KSČM ……..Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia *(Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)*

LHG ……Liberal University Group *(Liberale Hochschulgruppe)*

MA ……..master's degree

MAPP …….. Members and Activists of Political Parties

MP …….....Member of Parliament

NGO ……..non-governmental organisation

ODS ……..Civic Democratic Party *(Občanská demokratická strana)*

PC ……..personal computer

PhD ……Doctor of Philosophy

PR ……public relations

RCDS ……Association of Christian Democratic Students *(Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten)*.

RTL ……Radio Televison Luxembourgh *(Radio Télévision Luxembourg)*

SECONOMICS …….Socio-Economics meets Security

SPD ……..Social Democratic Party of Germany *(Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)*

StuPa ……...……Student Parliament *(Studierendenparliament)*

StuRa …….……...……Student Council *(Studierendenrat)*

TOP 09 ……...Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity *(Tradice, Odpovědnost, Prosperita)*

TV …….television

USA ……..The United States of America

US …….American

VŠE ……Prague University of Economics and Business *(Vysoká škola ekonomická v Praze)*

ZDF ……Second German Televison *(Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen)*

1. INTRODUCTION: Contextualizing youth political participation

'So we have democracy now, time to find some democrats.'
Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk

The above-cited words of the first Czechoslovakian president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk pointed to the postulate of political science that no democratic regime can exist without active, responsive and self-confident citizens.[1] Participation in a decision-making process is essential for liberal democracy because men and women can pursue their interests and preferences through public involvement as well as control, and confer on the legitimacy of their elected representatives (Barrett and Zani 2015; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Zukin et al. 2006).

Nevertheless, with the dramatic societal transformation and related value transformation, citizens' relationship to politics has significantly changed in advanced industrial democracies. This shift demonstrates the so-called *paradox of participation* (Dalton and Klingemann 2007) describing raising economic conditions, the quality of the education system and social equality on the one hand, and the constantly decreasing conventional participation manifested in voter turnout as well as in membership in traditional political organisations on the other (Morales 2005; Putnam 2000).

This change, more or less valid for all generations, is the most visible in the case of young adults (Dalton 2008; Dalton and Klingemann 2007) aged 18–30, who are sometimes referred to as *Generation Y* or *Millennials* (Stein 2013). Young adults participate disproportionally less in mainstream politics than the other age cohorts and even less than the generation of their parents at their young age. Instead of a hierarchical *institutionalised model* of participation; young people prefer grass-route activism. This *bottom up model* contests the authority of political elites and emphasises the role of individuals as political actors (Norris 2002; Zukin et al. 2006).

In political sociology, an inconclusive debate has been focusing on the question of whether this transformation of young people´s participation weakens democracy, or vice versa and means a new challenge for it. In this regard, two struggling views are presented. *Pessimists* refer to young people as egoistic, overconfident and fame-obsessed individuals (Pfaff 2005; Twenge 2014) who are *'too concerned about their rights and own well-being'* (Dalton

[1] Even authoritarian and totalitarian regimes require people´s forced and extensively manifested participation because of their legitimisation function (Dalton and Klingemann 2007).

2008:165). According to them, *Millennials* are not interested in electoral participation, they are unsupportive of political institutions and instead of joining political parties, they prefer *'bowling alone'* (Loader, Vromen, and Xenos 2014; Putnam 2000; Stein 2013). Furthermore, young people do not read the newspapers, have minimal political knowledge (Hooghe and Stolle 2004), a lack of respect for authorities and a low understanding of democratic principles (Henn and Weinstein 2006). Political passivity of the young generation is caused by fun-oriented and highly-commercialized youth culture accompanied by an erosion of social capital (Pfaff 2005; Putnam 2000).

In contrast, optimists claim that the young generation is more educated, open-minded and innovative. Similarly, *Millennials* are willing to try new things as well as being more cosmopolitan and self-confident than older age cohorts. Therefore, they are critical of highly-institutionalized ways of political representation and they are organised around a particular lifestyle or societal issues such as environmental or human rights protection (Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Lichterman 1996; Norris 2002).

This changing nature of youth involvement can be illustrated by a similar analogy, as Russel Dalton described in his book *Good Citizen* (2008:1). According to him, some young people are reluctant to go to polling stations only 200 yards away because they find elections meaningless. At the same time, they are willing to travel more than 2000 kilometres to help to coordinate humanitarian aid for war refugees at the Serbian or Greek borders, although it costs them incomparably more time, effort and money than the act of voting.

Instead of a full replacement of conventional forms by new activism, young people combine various modes of participation, for example, protest politics, consumer boycotts and electoral activities (Corrigall-Brown 2012; van Deth 2012; Quintelier 2013; Zukin et al. 2006). They also frequently use digital means of communication and find political information on the Internet and social networks such as Facebook or Twitter, which serve them as tools for political mobilisation (Castells 2012; Delli Carpini 2000). Hence, youth participation is getting fuzzier, more autonomous, and horizontal, blurring the distinction between private and public activities (van Deth 2012). *Optimists* claim that although *Millennials* are related to politics and society differently than the generations of their parents and grandparents, they are loyal to the democratic principles prevailing in the debate on youth engagement.

1.1. The aims and structure of the thesis

In the light of the above-mentioned transformation of young citizens' relationship to politics, the identification of paths, sources and motivations of current youth political engagement in changing sociopolitical contexts is a highly relevant research issue. The presented dissertation addresses this goal by tracing the trajectories of young people´s organisational involvement from the commencement of their engagement to their future plans, and by focusing on the contextual and sociopsychological factors which shape them.

To reach this goal, the range of motivations for joining a political or civic organisation, recruiting procedure, mobilisational structure and processes, as well as the variable ways - young people understand and relate themselves to politics in different contexts, will be analysed. The aim of the thesis is to answer the main research question ***'How and why do Czech and German university students get involved in political and civic organisations?'***, which is elaborated in the following sub-questions (see Table 1).

Table 1: **Sub-questions of dissertation**

WHY
1. Political socialisation
What are the mechanisms of primary political socialisation?
What is the perceived quality and role of civic education?
How, why and where do youth speak - or not speak - about politics?
2. Motives for engagement in organisations
Why did they join - or not join - political or civic organisations?
HOW
3. Organisational recruitment
How did they join their political or civic organisation?
4. Organisational membership
How do they evaluate their organisational membership?
5. Conceptualisation of politics and citizenship
How do young people understand the terms 'politics' and 'good citizenship'?

Source: created by Prokschová

The thesis focuses on the overlooked and often hidden patterns of motivations for political action. It provides an understanding of the key patterns, mechanisms, and narratives of primary and secondary political socialisation in relation to motivations for organisational membership. Moreover, it targets the perception and evaluation of political engagement and conceptualisation of politics and active citizenship.

My dissertation draws upon a unique dataset of 60 semi-structured interviews with university students aged from 18 to 30 years, conducted in six cities in the new and old German federal states and in the Czech Republic. Forty-five of these young people were active in political and civic organisations. The additional 15 interviews with individuals without an organisational membership enabled a better understanding of the core group of organisationally involved young people. This collection of a relatively large amount of data enabled us to gain new insights into similar cases of student political activism in the Czech Republic and Germany (Gerring 2006; Hawkins 2009).

To identify what makes people engage in political organisations, qualitative research methods are employed. Qualitative analysis provides a detailed exploration of the phenomenon of youth political motivation, while the prevailing standardised approach offers a rather limited understanding of young people's political behaviour and its meaning for individuals.

For example, quantitative research claims that family, friends, and school environment are some of the most important predictors of organisational involvement (Vráblíková and Císař 2014). Nevertheless, it does not clearly specify the connective mechanisms between the socialisation process and political recruitment. Likewise, statistical correlations cannot deeply grasp the multifaceted motives and context of political action (Creswell 2013; Hawkins 2009).

Qualitative methods have also been chosen because student activism is currently relevant only for a limited and specific group of young people (Gilcher-Holtey 2001), which is not easy to target by large quantitative surveys. Only a few studies compare student activism on a cross-cultural basis (Handy et al. 2009:504) and not enough space has been allocated in the literature to their political mobilisation, recruitment and its social context (Linek et al. 2017). Moreover, there have been calls in the literature (Bloemraad and Trost 2008; Corrigall-Brown 2012) to explain youth participation by theories distinguishable from interpretations of adult involvement (relying mostly on socioeconomic status), which are not sufficient for young people given their age and phase of life. In this respect, qualitative research is a suitable tool for theory building (Creswell 2013; Rubin and Rubin 2011).

My dissertation attempts to fill these research gaps by gathering my own qualitative data and, on the ground of its analysis, providing theoretical postulates for students´ political involvement in *old* and *new* democracies which go beyond the established understanding of this problem.

The Czech Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany represent cases of both *old* and *new* democracies. This is particularly visible in the German example, because Germany provides a unique experience of a country divided for 40 years into two separate parts differing in the character of political regimes and political cultures (Gaiser, De Rijke, and Spannring 2010; Wessels 2009). The new German federal states, as part of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), share an experience of a bureaucratic-authoritarian communist regime with Czechoslovakia. The former GDR and former Czechoslovakia shared a similar historical context and both underwent a process of democratic transition which Kitschelt et al. (1999) called an *implosion of old order.*

Despite the relatively quick and unproblematic transformation and consolidation of the democratic system, the communist regime was imprinted on the value system of citizens who lived under its rule, and was difficult to eradicate despite the introduction of basic rights and freedoms (Inglehart 2006). Communist heritage still partly prevails in underdeveloped citizens' competencies, political alienation and relying on social networks on the one hand, and in paternalistic attitudes stressing the role of the state on the other (Mansfeldová 2013).

In this respect, high expectations are put on the generation born after the fall of the Iron Curtain and socialised in a democratic political system. These people are supposed to have a stronger commitment to democratic values and principles than their parents and grandparents (Horowitz 2005). Therefore, the presented thesis addresses a call from the literature (Catterberg and Moreno 2006; Horowitz 2005; Howard 2003; Vráblíková and Císař 2014) for research focused on new democrats in new democracies, on people born in the late 1980s or 1990s and growing up in the era of post-communist transformation.

The presented thesis has a linear structure. The second chapter outlines its main theoretical foundations. It is concerned with the state of the art in youth political socialisation, participation, and motivation, tackling the question ***'Who participates, how and why?'*** Special attention is paid to the mechanisms and narratives of family political socialisation, civic education at Czech and German schools, motivational stimuli, and explanations of political passivity.

The third chapter describes the qualitative research design by providing information about data collection (such as sampling strategy, interview structure, and the process of interviewing) and analysis by the method of applied thematic analysis.

The bulk of the thesis (chapters 4, 5, and 6) is devoted to qualitative inquiry. Research findings are highlighted by examples from life stories of organisationally active students with different contextual backgrounds. For instance, the thesis describes the paths to activism and ideological profiling of a conservative Christian rightist, an environmental activist, and an old-left supporter from a small town.

Chapter 4 evaluates the impact of the family on individual paths to activism. It investigates four mechanisms of primary political socialisation (*exposure*, *admiration*, *pressure*, and *opposition*) as well as the character, quality, and content of family political talks. In this respect, my personal typology of political narratives (*power-free discourse*, *discourse of ignorance* and *avoidance*) is elaborated.

Chapter 5 portrays schools and universities as bridges to politics. Firstly, it focuses on secondary and grammar schools, investigating the role of civic education, teaching and school climate in different contexts. Secondly, attention is paid to the impact of the field of study and social capital at universities on political activism.

Chapter 6 examines what drives university students to join political and civic organisations. For this purpose, it elaborates classical typologies of political motivation and enriches them via new categories. Moreover, it deals with the forms and structure of political recruitment and illuminates the reasons for avoiding organisational membership.

Chapter 7 summarises the main theoretical contributions of the thesis to existing knowledge. Chapter 8, the conclusion, provides its practical implications, limitations, and potential avenues for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Who participates, how and why?

Two influential approaches - *rationalist* and *sociopsychological* - have evolved in the field of explaining political behaviour. The first frames political behaviour within the scope of rational choice theory and denotes political involvement as a matter of considering costs and benefits (Olson 1965). Nevertheless, this conception of the rationality of individual decision-making allows only a limited understanding of political participation (Dalton and Klingemann 2007). Any model based on cost-benefit cannot fully explain group political processes and individual sacrifice in favor of a collective cause (Eliasoph 1998; Hirsch 1990:243). Moreover, the rationalist approach neglects the role of emotions in politics.[2]

I agree with Laura Morales that political involvement is *'...much more a response to social experiences and to interactions with mobilizing agents than the results of individual calculations of cost and benefits'* (2005:117). That is why I am considering a more fruitful second approach to political participation, emphasizing the individual as well as sociopolitical context.

The theoretical background of the dissertation lies at the intersection between a sociopsychological perspective of participation and political socialisation theory, which describes participatory behaviour as a product of the interplay between the participating individual and the mobilising structure (Hooghe and Stolle 2004:43). Political socialisation refers to social contacts and connections among family, school, acquaintances, and peer groups as mediators between an individual and a societal level of participation (Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Horowitz 2005:85).

Currently, there is growing literature on youth political participation. Although the prevailing approach is quantitative (among others Dalton 2008; van Deth 2009; García-Albacete 2014; Hustinx et al. 2012; Norris 2002; Zukin et al. 2006), numerous valuable studies using qualitative methodology have recently been published. In this regard, we can mention Yannis Theocharis (2013) and Kjerstin Thorson (2014) who focused on youth political engagement in social media, as well as Ariadne Vromen and Philippa Collin (2010), dealing with the views of young people on political participation, and Irene Bloemraad and

[2] Nevertheless, rational choice theory can be important in explaining the cost structure in participation (Morales 2005).

Christine Trost (2008), conducting multi-generational interviews about immigrant political activism.

Similarly, the literature on young people and politics using mixed research methods is expanding. This type of research was conducted, for example, by Michal Bruter and Sarah Harrison (2009), who compared motivations for joining political parties, political preferences and perceptions of politics among young people in six countries, and Marc Morjé Howard (2003), exploring the weaknesses of civil society in post-communist Europe.

We can also find several process-oriented and context-sensitive approaches to this problem (such as Corrigall-Brown 2012; Eliasoph 1998; Hochschild 2016; Lichterman 1996), which have served as an important source of inspiration for the thesis.

Within this framework, I will focus primarily on the factors and circumstances influencing people's political behaviour. Given the research focus, special attention will be paid to the specifics of youth and particularly student organisational involvement. Moreover, I will focus in particular on family, school, political motivation, and active citizenship to frame the research topic for the empirical part of the thesis. The theoretical part addresses this question by reviewing the relevant literature: ***'Who participates, how and why?'***

Firstly, it deals with the issue *'Who participates?',* tackling the predictors of participation on an individual and societal level with the use of the *Civic Voluntarism Model* of Verba et al. (1995). Furthermore, it focuses on primary and secondary political socialisation, describing its mechanisms in the family environment and the specifics of civic education in the Czech and German context.

Secondly, the theoretical part is concerned with the question *'How do people participate?'*, reflecting the great transformation of political behaviour during the last 70 years. It describes the modes, forms, intensity and frequencies of current involvement with a special focus on political behaviour of university students. It is also concerned with the role of lifestyle politics and media in youth participation.

Thirdly, attention is also paid to the origins of political commitment to explore *'Why people do not participate?'* in different forms of collective action. Moreover, it tackles the issue of the desirability of political participation by exploring how much engagement is good for democracy. For this purpose, it focuses on different modes and strategies of citizenship.

2.1. Who participates?

To answer this question, Table 2 offers an overview of individual, meso and collective preconditions of involvement which are elaborated in the subchapters below.

Table 2: **Contextual determinants of political participation**

Individual 	socioeconomic status (education, occupation, income)
	sociodemographic characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity)
	civic orientations and attitudes (political ideologies, internal and external political efficacy, religiosity, political interest)
Between individual and societal	social capital (bridging and bonding), social trust
 **Societal**	institutional setting (political regime, length of democracy, political opportunities, electoral system)
	economic development (GDP per capita, redistribution)
	political culture
	catalytic political circumstances (electoral campaigns, revolutions, crisis, wars)

Source: created by Prokschová based on the cited literature on participation

2.1.1. Individual context of participation

One of the core predictors of participation is individual socioeconomic status, which includes indicators such as education, occupation and income. According to the Verba, Schlozman, and Brady´s *Civic Voluntarism Model* (Verba et al. 1995), political participation, including joining a political organisation, is easier for people with higher socioeconomic status because they have more resources (such as time, money, political skills, and knowledge) that mitigate the costs for participation. People with a higher status possess more economic, cultural and social capital. In other words, they have better cognitive capacities, communicational and organisational abilities and more opportunities to use their time, money and skills for effective participation in public life (Ibid.; Bernhagen and Marsh 2007; Vráblíková 2009).

Education triggers political participation because it increases political knowledge and civic skills. People with higher education usually have a higher income and other resources (Linek et al. 2017). That is why citizens with a university degree are the most politically active in both conventional and unconventional modes of participation, because public engagement is easier for them. In this regard, Lukáš Linek admits that populist claims about the dominance

of the educated elite are partly based on truth (Ibid.).

Below, I present current and past data on university students in the Czech Republic and Germany. In both countries, the number of students is rising. To illustrate this, the ratio of enrolment for tertiary education (GER)[3] in the Czech Republic was 64% in 2016, while in 1996 it was only 22% (World Bank 2019). In other words, the number of Czech university students has increased threefold in the last twenty years. In 2014, approximately 347 000 people were enrolled at 69 Czech state and private universities including about 41 000 foreigners (Český statistický úřad 2014). In Germany, GER rose from 47% in 1996 to 68% in 2016 (World Bank 2019). In 2014, approximately 2.7 million students were studying at 399 German universities, including more than 300 000 foreigners (Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2018).

The level of conventional political participation rises gradually with age, reaches its peak in the forties and fifties and then declines after 60 years of age. Political parties are getting older; the average age of a party member is increasing.

This trend leads to a growing gap between the age of party members and the general population, as pointed out by Scarrow and Gezgor (2010). In other words, young people are underrepresented among party members (Cross and Young 2008). For example, in the *Czech Social Democratic Party*, 35% of members are over 60 years of age and only 9.5% of members are up to 30 years of age (Bican 2015). Under these circumstances, it is difficult for parties to sustain a dynamic image and the notion that they represent the whole population. Unwillingness of young people to join the parties, together with their ineffective recruitment, are the main reasons for the decrease in membership (Bruter and Harrison 2009; Cross and Young 2008).

Regarding age and involvement in social movements, Catherine Corrigal-Brown identifies as crucial the so-called *biographic availability* (2012:17). Individuals at a certain life stage (such as young adulthood or retirement) are more likely to participate in social movements because they have more time, fewer responsibilities and constraints (for instance a parent role and full-time employment) to bear the costs and risks of long-term political commitment (Corrigall-Brown 2012; Gomez and Gunderson 2003; Snow et al. 1986).[4]

[3] *'The gross enrolment ratio is the ratio of total enrolment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. ... Enrolment indicators are based on annual school surveys, but do not necessarily reflect actual attendance or dropout rates during the year'* (World Bank 2019).

[4] Nevertheless, we should add that findings in this area are sometimes mixed. Some studies (e.g. Putnam 2000; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991) identified parents, married, and fully-employed people as those who are more likely to participate in social movements as well as in certain kinds of community involvement.

In this regard, Alexander Hensby (2014) mentions the biographic availability of university students as a crucial factor of involvement in high-cost and risk activism such as the occupation of buildings and blockades. On the contrary, married people with children are more home-based and engaged in church and child-related activities such as school boards (Putnam 2000:278).

The current young generation is more biographically available to participate in political organisations due to the prolonged transition to adulthood compared to the older age cohorts. This change is most visible in the case of the educated middle and upper class. Given the increased educational and career opportunities as well as the emancipation of women and greater tolerance of premarital sex in advanced industrial democracies, young adults postpone their lifetime decisions and traditional markers of adulthood, such as finding a stable job and starting a family (Arnett 2013; Collin and Burns 2009; Tanner and Arnett 2009).

This change illustrates the following data from the Czech Republic and Germany. Data shows that people in both countries get married mostly in their late twenties or early thirties. In the Czech Republic, a woman's average age for first entering marriage was 28.5 and a man's 31.3 years (Český statistický úřad 2013) while in Germany it was 30.9 years for women and 33.6 for men in 2013 (Statista 2018).

Other important preconditions of participation include a citizen's political and civic orientations and attitudes such as political ideologies, conviction of political efficacy,[5] level of religiosity, political interest and interpersonal trust. In other words, people with profiled political opinions, and an interest in politics, as well as those people who believe that they are able to influence the political process, feel a stronger need to participate in public life (Almond and Verba 1963; Norris 2002; Quintelier 2013; Vráblíková and Císař 2014). For instance, people who trust political institutions are more likely to vote in elections, while critical and dissatisfied citizens prefer other forms of participation (Linek et al. 2017:175). Furthermore, it is obvious that to join a political organisation, it is crucial to feel at least a basic ideological commitment and sympathy with its goals and methods (Corrigall-Brown 2012; Lichterman 1996).

For instance, field research among members of the US anti-hunger movement showed that the most committed were people who believed that their voice was heard and that they could

[5] We can further distinguish *internal* and *external* political efficacy. The former is related to self-confidence and refers to the citizen´s conviction that he/she is able to influence the political process. The latter describes a belief in the responsiveness of institutions to the needs and demands of citizens (Pasek et al. 2008; Pollock 1983). Lukáš Linek (2010:89) mentions that these two dimensions of political efficacy may, but also may not be related. People can believe in their own ability to act politically and at the same time do not trust in the responsiveness of the government and vice versa.

actively influence the movement (Barkan, Cohn, and Whitaker 1993). Furthermore, Cross and Young´s (2008) data confirmed the hypothesis that young people who joined political parties believed that their membership was an efficient way to influence the political process. In contrast, youth who were non-members were skeptical about the efficacy of party politics to change the situation and achieve political goals, as well as not trusting in the capabilities of party members.

2.1.2. Between an individual and collective context of involvement

The substantial predictors of participation are also social ties among family members, friends, at school, work, and at political, church, or cultural voluntary associations. Political socialisation theory refers to these ties as mediators between individual and societal levels of participation because they bridge the gap between citizens, mobilising strategies and organisations (Morales 2005:126). Moreover, they generate and transmit social capital (Vráblíková and Císař 2014:37) conceptualised as *'networks, norms of reciprocity and trust for mutual collective benefit'* (Putnam 2000).

Social capital is a key socioeconomic resource and a mechanism for the formation and transmission of political values, attitudes, and skills necessary to function in the political world (Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Horowitz 2005:83). It empowers the community, strengthens civil society, and creates a positive climate for participation. Furthermore, social capital reduces costs for political involvement because interpersonal relations help to overcome the individual biographical obstacles of participation.

For instance, it facilitates recruiting processes to political organisations and lowers the cost for political mobilisation (Corrigall-Brown 2012). In other words, people with higher social capital are more likely to be invited to join a political party or civic organisation because political recruitment is often realised through family, friends, and acquaintances, and due to mutual trust, they are more likely to accept this invitation (Morales 2005).

However, social capital can be under certain circumstances also an obstacle of democratic political and civic participation. In this regard, Fukuyama (2002) and Putnam (2000) speak about the so-called *bonding capital* which appears in very homogenous groups (for instance marginalized or minority groups). *Bonding capital* supports the notion of in-group exclusivity and creates prejudices or even hatred against other groups.

In contrast, *bridging capital* overcomes distrust and intolerance in society because it is presented in heterogeneous groups consisting of people from different societal (such as class,

religious and ethnic) backgrounds. This kind of social capital also promotes democratic values and political participation.

According to Robert D. Putnam (2000:278), both *bridging* and *bonding social capital* have constantly been decreasing in American society in the last three decades. Losing family, friendship, and neighborhood bonds have caused a decrease in connectedness, community involvement, and organisational membership. Nevertheless, Dalton and Klingemann (2007:14) state that the situation in the United States is atypical. In other parts of the world, on the contrary, social capital is rising.

Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone* (2000) declares that emancipation of women resulted in two-career marriages which often end in divorce. The current young generation was often raised in single-parent families, in front of the television or other mass media channels, which created in them selfish individualists unwilling to take part in civic affairs. According to Robert D. Putnam (2000), television was one of the causes of declining social capital and civic engagement in the United States because *electronic entertainment* creates isolated, passive, and politically alienated citizens. On the contrary, further research (e.g. Hustinx et al. 2012; Norris 1999; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005) indicates that following political news and informative programmes on television and other media types positively correlates with political knowledge, discussion and participatory behaviour.

2.1.3. The collective context of participation

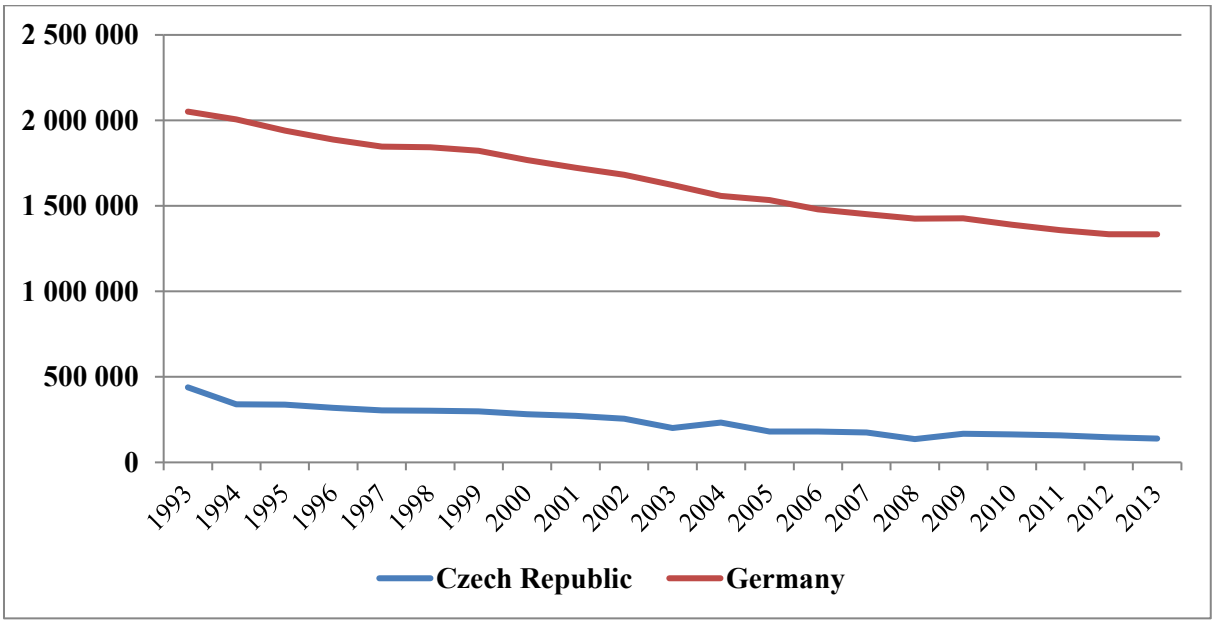
Individual political participation (the so-called *micro* dimension) is significantly shaped by the general social environment, characteristics and specifics of the political system (the so-called *macro* dimension) (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1977; Norris 2002; Putnam 2000). *Institutional settings* belong to the *macro* dimension, which provides incentives for political participation including organisational membership (Morales 2005:167). To be more specific, *institutional settings* cover, for instance, formal and informal institutions, type of regime, length of democracy, political pluralism and fragmentation of elites, type of electoral and party system,[6] separation or sharing of powers, amount and character of political opportunities, and the education system. Political participation is also influenced by economic development (including the character of the labour market, domestic product per capita as well as the level of economic redistribution in society).

[6] For instance, according to Jeffrey A. Karp and Susan Banducci (1999) the proportional electoral system increases political efficacy because people have the notion that every vote is important and they have the power to influence electoral results.

Regarding the *macro* characteristics affecting people´s willingness to join political parties, the literature also mentions the structural change of the party system from a mass to a cartel party (Katz and Mair 1994, 1995). In this system, parties have no major interest in maintaining a mass membership base and *'...need media figures, spin doctors and campaign money more than enthusiastic young members'* (Hooghe and Stolle 2004:44). That is why they do not invest many resources in recruiting new (mostly young) members, which has resulted in a continual decrease in party membership in the last three decades (Putnam 2000; Skocpol 2004).

The following figure depicts the decreasing trend in party membership in the last two decades in the Czech Republic and Germany. To illustrate this point, the German political party with the largest membership, the *Social Democratic Party of Germany* (SPD), lost approximately 45% of its membership base between 1993 and 2013. By comparison, the comparable Czech political party, the *Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia* (KSČM), lost more than 83% of its members during the same period[7] (Linek 2014; Spier 2014). Detailed information about the development of membership of Czech and German parties is available in Appendix (Table 10, p. 198 and Figure 9 and Figure 10, p. 199).

Figure 1: **Decline of party membership in the Czech Republic and Germany between 1993 and 2013**



Source: created by Prokschová based on data from MAPP Project Data Archive (Linek 2014; Spier 2014)

[7] In 1993, the number of SPD members was 861 480, while twenty years after it was only 473 662. In the case of KSČM, there was a rapid drop from 317 104 members in 1993 to 53 479 members in 2013 (Linek 2014; Spier 2014).

The situation is even more dramatic in the case of youth party organisations. While *adult* parties lost approximately 25% of their members, this decrease affected as much as half of the membership base in the youth organisations (Bruter and Harrison 2009; Hooghe and Stolle 2004:44).[8] This inability of youth party organisations to recruit new members has, according to Hooghe and Stolle (2004), negative connotations for *adult* parties because youth organisations serve as an important reservoir for their future members.

Political involvement also varies according to time, place, and specific political circumstances, when people are exposed to political stimuli more often (such as through revolutions, elections, public protests, wars, political scandals, and political crises). These catalytic moments motivate people to participate and to articulate support or dissatisfaction, and pursue their own political interests. Political participation can be a manifestation of support or enthusiasm for a collective cause, or vice versa, a citizen's reaction to a shocking event (racist demonstration, political scandal), and an expression of disagreement with a particular political style or decision (Bruter and Harrison 2009:57).

In this regard, Bruter and Harrison (2009:56) point to the importance of electoral campaigns in people´s willingness to join political organisations. At the time of a campaign, political parties and their leaders receive extensive public attention. In other words, politics reaches the streets and homes, and the effort to recruit new members and volunteers is more intensive and successful.

Similarly, contextual factors (such as short distances between people's homes and polling stations, elections on weekends, bad weather, opportunities for automatic voting registration, and postal voting) increase voter turnout (Vráblíková and Císař 2014:37).

Political mobilisation makes citizen's engagement easier in an inclusive political system with open political opportunities and a positive climate for activism. Moreover, there is broad access to participation characterised by a number of access points where citizens and interested groups can influence the policy-making process (Císař 2008; Ehrlich 2011).

Not only institutional and structural, but also cultural aspects of the political context are essential for a thriving democracy (Skovajsa 2006). Therefore, another precondition of involvement is political culture, which consisted, according to Almond and Verba (1963:12), of citizens´ cognitive, affective, and evaluative attitudes and orientations to the political system, its various parts and the role of the individual as a political actor. These doyens of

[8] For instance, the membership decrease of Belgian *Youth Christian Democrats* dropped from 12 000 members in the 1980s to approximately 5 000 members in the 2000s. In the case of Belgian *Youth Liberals*, it was a drop from 8000 members in the 1980s to 2 500 members in the 2000s.

quantitative research in this field defined political culture as the aggregated distribution of political orientations in a population. These orientations are not random but persist long-term and form a common complex of concepts and practices that create a consensus among citizens, shape their political behaviour, and give structure and meaning to the political process (Almond and Verba 1963).

My thesis is influenced by interpretative and process-oriented approaches which define political culture as a psychological and subjective aspect of political behaviour (Pye 2001:636) and focus on uncovering and explaining the meanings which individuals ascribe to their political actions. This perspective deals with forming attitudes, values, and beliefs during the process of political socialisation.

Regarding the cultural context of political mobilisation, we can mention the theory of *Discursive Opportunity Structure* formulated by Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham in 1999. Their work combines political opportunities, mobilising structures and framing processes in the field of social movement. It deals with the interpretative schemes and the role of language by which people characterise and judge politics. In political discourse, only some demands, claims, and needs are considered *'legitimate'*, *'acceptable'* or *'realistic'* and this notion changes over time in reaction to specific circumstances (Císař 2008:76; Koopmans and Statham 1999).

In summary, people participate more often in systems where they think that their voices are heard and where they have a sufficient number of political opportunities, favourable institutional settings, and political culture providing enough space for participation (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1977; Vráblíková and Císař 2014).

In the last subchapters, I have focused on the contextual preconditions of political behaviour. Further attention will be paid to the issue of political socialisation in the family and school because socialisation represents a connective mechanism between social context and political participation (Morales 2005:125).[9]

[9] Morales further describes other mechanisms: (1) flow of communication and information and (2) recruitment and political mobilisation. She mentions that they operate jointly with political socialisation during social interactions and that is why it is complicated to distinguish between them (Ibid.).

2.1.4. The role of the family in the process of political socialisation

There is a consensus in contemporary literature that the family is a crucial agent of political socialisation because it accumulates, maintains, and transmits social, cultural, and economic capital from generation to generation (Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Urbatsch 2014). Moreover, political experiences in early life have a long-lasting formative impact on future behaviour, skills, attitudes, values and knowledge (Horowitz 2005; McLeod, Atkin, and Chaffee 1972; Westle 2006). That is why family is an influential predictor of young people´s participatory repertoire (Grusec and Davidov 2007).

Verba et al. (1995) reported that politically active parents are more likely to have politically active children, because young people observe parental participation, which inspires them. Children of politically active parents vote in elections, go to demonstrations, sign petitions or boycott certain products more often than their counterparts in a politically inactive family environment (Andolina et al. 2003; Dalton 2008; McIntosh, Hart, and Youniss 2007). Besides their own example, parents´ impact on the development of civic attitudes is manifested also in their influence on children's hobbies, school and friends (Grusec and Davidov 2007; Urbatsch 2014). According to socialisation research, political attitudes and values gained from family remain relatively stable during a lifetime (Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Urbatsch 2014).

Family political influence is particularly strong in the case of parents active in political organisations as well as in situations where a father and mother share similar political opinions (Bloemraad and Trost 2008). For instance, Cross and Young (2008) revealed that membership in political parties is significantly more often apparent among parents of young party members than in the rest of the population. In their analysis of Canadian data, they further identified family recruitment as a crucial pathway to political parties. More specifically, from their dataset, one third of party members under the age of 26 was asked to join the organisation by a relative who was a party member (Cross and Young 2008).

Bruter and Harrison (2009:47) identified four specific mechanisms transmitting the influence of parents on the organisational involvement of their children. First, *exposure,* where children are exposed to political stimuli (such as political discussions and an example of their parental engagement), which creates the notion that membership in voluntary associations is desirable (Ibid.:41). Second, *admiration,* where children are proud of the political engagement of their parents in local or national politics and perceive their

involvement as a part of a family heritage. That is why they feel morally obliged to continue in this tradition, but they can realise it in different ways (Ibid.; Hensby 2014).

The above-mentioned mechanisms indicate that children find inspiration in the political behaviour of their parents, while the remaining mechanisms are more forceful and direct.

Third, *pressure,* describes strong parental encouragement or even pushing their children to join a political organisation for ideological or utilitarian reasons. The fourth mechanism, called *opposition,* is manifested by children's distanced attitudes or disagreement with the political ideology or the activities of their family. According to Bruter and Harrison (2009), a latent or directly articulated conflict among family members about politics is most often presented in families where someone expresses extremist opinions. For instance, politically moderate families rejected extreme ideology or membership in the radical political organisation of their children and vice versa.

The family political influence described in the mechanisms above is, among others, realised via political talks. Contemporary research (e.g. Bruter and Harrison 2009; McIntosh et al. 2007) indicates that adolescents who discuss political events with their family, friends, and peers have higher political knowledge, which creates a greater preponderance to vote and willingness to join a political organisation. In other words, political discussions are an important piece of a puzzle transmitting family influence to young people's political and civic behaviour (McIntosh et al. 2007:495).

Above all, the context of family political discussion is crucial. Behind the prevailing narrative in political talks, the level of family organisation and hierarchy may be hidden. In other words, it is essential to reveal who speaks or does not speak with whom about what, to identify the deeper context of family interaction and power setting.

In this respect, Ochs and Taylor´s (1992) analysis of discursive practises in early socialisation identified a rather rigid patriarchal family environment. According to them, children were mostly the *recipients* of the message instead of *narrators* shaping communication. Mothers played the roles of *introducers* of new issues and fathers were identified as the main *narrators* and *provocateurs* in family discussions.

Nevertheless, family discussions positively shape political behaviour in families with strong and responsive interactions. This setting is typified by an atmosphere of mutual trust and equality, where everyone dares to give their own opinion and all family members have enough space to articulate their minds and needs (Bloemraad and Trost 2008).

Miller et al. (2012) reflected the above-mentioned differences in family political narratives in their comparison of personal storytelling in Taiwanese and English households. Their

ethnographic analysis of speech revealed a relatively strict and didactical approach to communication in Taipei in contrast to respectful patterns of speech in the London suburb of Longwood. Longwood´s family setting typifies the contemporary shift in parent-child relations in Western families.

As Joel Stein states in his Time article *Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation:* this friendly-based family environment does not contain any more proclamations such as *us versus them*. According to him, the young generation does not rebel against its parents so often because *'it´s hard to hate your parents when they also listen to rap and watch John Stewart'* (Stein 2013:6).

This reciprocity in socialisation patterns is a consequence of long-lasting changes of family relations caused by employment and the emancipation of women, and the weakening of the patriarchal family structure (Kuczynski and Parkin 2007; Putnam 2000; Quintelier 2013). Consequently, the role of children, teenagers, and young adults in the process of political socialisation is now seen as more dynamic, complex, and mutual than in the pioneering studies on political socialisation such as Hyman (1959) and Langton (1969).

Early researchers conceptualised socialisation within the family as a narrow process of intergenerational values and roles transmission from parents to their children. Similarly, they stressed the importance of children's conformity to the ideas of their parents. In contrast, contemporary scholars (e.g. Dalbert and Sallay 2004; Dunn 2007; Kuczynski and Parkin 2007; Zukin et al. 2006) focus on direct and indirect interactions among political socialisation agents and the fact that children can also influence political attitudes, values and the behaviour of their parents and other family members. In this respect, children are more familiar with new technologies and also have political information from school and social media.

Bloemraad and Trost (2008), who focused on families with immigrant backgrounds in the United States, also pointed to the practical and legal aspects of bi-directional family socialisation. Children or teenagers from immigrant backgrounds were often the only family members with US citizenship and a fluent knowledge of the English language, which fostered their civic competence. They tried to actively influence their parents to stand up for their rights (Ibid.).

To conclude, political socialisation in the family is salient for shaping future political taste, preferences and involvement, but it is not omnipotent. Every generation learns political attitudes, values, and participatory behaviour from their parents. Nevertheless, children are not perfect ideological imprints of their mothers and fathers. Even siblings growing up in the

same environment often express different political opinions (Dunn 2007). Family political influences are reciprocal and mutual.

2.1.5. School in the process of political socialisation

The development of political interest as well as the forming of opinions and behaviour is a product of the wider social context that young people are exposed to. In this respect, socialisation at school, within a peer group, and via media and voluntary organisations plays a crucial role (Bloemraad and Trost 2008; Teorell 2003; Zukin et al. 2006).

Children spend a significant amount of the day at school. Schooling has multiple impacts on the process of political socialisation, including formal and informal interactions with teachers and peers. Family, like school, provides an opportunity to negotiate political opinions, discuss individual points of view and form coalitions and compromises.

School is a bridge to a different social circle than one's own (Quintelier 2013). Peer groups are crucial in the process of separation from parents and finding personal autonomy. Despite the liberalisation of family ties, relationships with schoolmates and friends are still based more on equality and friendship than parent-child relations. The influence of the peer group is currently even more intensive because online connectivity enables them to be continuously in touch with friends via social media (Bukowski et al. 2007).

The school environment plays an important role in providing opportunities for developing abilities such as social responsibility and cooperation (McIntosh et al. 2007; Wentzel and Looney 2007:383) and promoting citizenship competences and democratic values. For this purpose, civic education programmes have been introduced. They aim to stimulate young people´s political interest and promote critical thinking and media literacy, which are expected to result in higher political participation and active citizenship (Himmelmann 2013; Manning and Edwards 2014).

This effort may facilitate the usage of new tools of digital interaction, which provides a useful platform for civic education, for instance, by offering opportunities for volunteering or informing about interesting projects on a local, regional or global level (Collin and Burns 2009:286; Delli Carpini 2000).

Another goal of school-based civic education is to mitigate differences in political knowledge among students from families with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and thus to enable more equal participation (Castillo et al. 2015; Kudrnáč 2017; Tonge, Mycock, and Jeffery 2012).

2.1.6. Civic education policy in the Czech Republic and Germany

The following part will focus on the state of civic education in the Czech Republic and Germany. Germany represents a successful implementation of democracy-building via civic education and ranks among the countries with the most developed systems of civic education worldwide (Kuhn 2013; Reinhardt 2007). The Czech Republic, on the other hand, is among the *new* democracies with an underdeveloped and underfunded conception of civic education (Čáp, Matějka, and Protivínský 2013; Kalina et al. 2013; Protivínský and Dokulilová 2012).

Between 2007–2013, in the Czech Republic, the government allocated 10.9 million euros to support 77 projects focused on civic education. In comparison, civic education in Germany received 350 million euros in 2013 and from 2007 to 2013, approximately 2 380 million euros in funds was allocated (Kalina et al. 2013).[10]

The German war experience clearly showed that the relationship between the level of economic prosperity and democracy is not linear, but a sustainable democratic regime also needs cultural prerequisites such as public identification with democratic values (Almond and Verba 1963). Civic education was introduced after the Second World War by the Western allies as a tool of denazification, moral re-education, and promotion of democratic values among the German population. It was also used as a tool to deal with the traumatic legacy of National Socialism and to commemorate the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes (Ehmann 2004; Kuhn 2013).

For this purpose, the *Federal Agency for Civic Education* (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung - BPB) was established in 1952 (BPB 2018). During the 1960s and 1970s, frequent debates revolved around the nature, impact and character of civic education. The question of whether civic education should be focused more on societal consensus or critical thinking, connected with the aim to change the world by political means, caused much debate in Germany (Kuhn 2013; Reinhardt 2007).

This dilemma was solved in 1976 by the so-called *Beuteslbach consensus* (Beutelsbacher Konsens) which defined three fundamental principles of civic education teaching in Germany: (1) the banning of ideological indoctrination (Überwältigungsverbot), (2) supporting of critical thinking and ideological balance and (3) orienting to specific target groups (such as students, adults, immigrants). and provided them with the independence to form their own

[10] Nevertheless, we should also take into account the different sizes of both countries, including the different number of teachers, and the fact that German civic education is anchored in the constitution as a priority, while Czech schools try rather to be *apolitical*. The German civic education system also faces certain limits. For instance, according to Westle (2006) it still fails to bridge gender-specific discrepancies in political attitudes.

opinions (Kalina et al. 2013; Reinhardt 2007). After German reunification, the Western concept of civic education was also adopted in East Germany.

The current system of civic education in Germany is very heterogeneous and pluralistic. It is administered by state institutions on a federal level, as well as by single federal states. Civic education on a federal level is provided by the *Federal Agency for Civic Education*, through specialized subjects at school, and by federal ministries.

Moreover, the civic sector actively participates in this education area through (1) foundations which are ideologically close to political parties represented in the *Federal Parliament* (Bundestag) financially supported by the *Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development* (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung), (2) foundations connected with private companies (e.g. Robert Bosch Foundation), (3) church organisations, (4) trade unions and (5) the so-called *Adult Education Centres* (Volkshochchulen) - institutions for education of adults (Kalina et al. 2013).

Civic education has a long and rich tradition in the Czech Republic. The First Czechoslovak Republic adopted the first law about civic education in 1919 (Smékal et al. 2010:17). In 1922, the so-called *Small Education Act*, introducing courses of civic education to secondary and grammar schools, was adopted. The first Czechoslovak Republic founded one of the widest net of public libraries in Europe, which also served civic education purposes (Ibid.).

Currently, in the Czech education system, specialized subjects called *Civics* (Občanská nauka respectively, Občanská výchova) at primary and secondary schools and *Introduction to social science* (Základy společenských věd) at grammar schools are focused on civic education. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned subjects do not have sufficient respect in the Czech environment. It is believed that everyone can teach the lessons of civic education.[11]

Teachers are focused particularly on factual knowledge about the political system (e.g. description of the electoral system, number of MPs, dates of important historical events). In contrast, the normative issues (such as political legitimacy, expectations from the political system, citizenship rights and responsibilities) are often neglected (Kalina et al. 2013; Protivínský and Dokulilová 2012). Similarly, less formalized activities (e.g. project-based learning, discussion groups, government simulation games, excursions to political institutions) still do not receive enough space and support in education plans (Čáp et al. 2013).

[11] This pattern is also typical in other countries, for instance, British civic education also has a marginal status in the eyes of exam-focused teachers (Mycock and Tonge 2012).

Teachers complain of a low number of hours for teaching, an overly broad curriculum, and a lack of and poor quality textbooks. The role of the state is often fulfilled by nongovernmental organisations. The problem is also inadequate education at pedagogic faculties (Preissová Krejčí et al. 2016).

In this regard, it is surprising that the Czech general public has mostly positive attitudes towards civic education. Data from the ISSP quantitative survey in the module *Role of the Government 2016*[12] shows that 65% of Czech respondents considered civic education useful for pupils at primary and secondary schools. In addition, more than 80% of the population think that this kind of education is beneficial for grammar school students. In opposition to this, 25% of the Czech population consider that civic education is not useful in primary and secondary schools, and 11% think that it is not beneficial for grammar school students.

According to education experts from the civic sector (among others Kalina et al. 2013; Protivínský and Dokulilová 2012), civic education at school is not efficient because it does not help students to orient themselves in local and global problems. This claim is supported by data from representative surveys from 2009, 2012 and 2014 conducted within the project *Jeden svět na školách* (One World at Schools). In the questionnaires, grammar school students reported thatthey saw school as a poor source of information about the current socio-political issues, and the last one they would choose to access. This minimum impact of school on the perception and interpretation of political issues has not changed over time.

To illustrate this, data from 2014 shows that school was the main source of information about local and national problems for only 2% of respondents. Furthermore, only 8% of respondents claimed that school is the most important source of information about the problems of the world for them (Jeden svět na školách 2014). In contrast, the results showed that the media was perceived as the most frequent source of information rather than school or parents. Nevertheless, media consumption was very often uncritically based on information shared within social networks out of context and by anonymous opinion leaders in internet discussions. In this respect, effective civic education should play an important role because it could teach students how to resist media manipulation and propaganda (Ibid.; Čáp et al. 2013).

A similar pattern is also visible in other new democracies, for instance, in Slovakia (Kusá and Juščáková 2017; Lášticová et al. 2018; Zápotočná and Lukšík 2010) with which the

[12] Data are available in the Czech Social Science Data Archive (CSDA), the project is named *Changes in the Perception of the Role of Government after the Crisis. The Czech Republic in Comparative Perspective* (No. 16-04885S).

Czech Republic shares more than 70 years of common history in one state. Results for Slovakia reflected the impact of civic education, which was showed to be minimal. Instead of school based civic education, the most formative was associational membership.[13] Slovak experience (e.g. Macháček 2002; Zápotočná and Lukšík 2010) shows a high level of patriotism in the young generation compared with the average of the EU, while associational membership is well below the average within the EU members states, as well as in the young citizens´ sense of self-efficacy and equity fairness.

Moreover, the results indicate lukewarm attitudes to children with special needs and a lack of tolerance (Kusá and Juščáková 2017). However, students from secondary schools where special emphasis in civic lessons was put on cultural tolerance and diversity were more open to ethnic minorities, and in addition schools which were perceived as more open also had more tolerant students. Similarly, gymnasium[14] students who had more history lessons had a higher knowledge than people from other types of school, as well as their tolerance to minorities being higher. Research showed a link between the social and cultural capital of family and tolerance (Kalmárová et al. 2017).

Multicultural education and teaching about ethics, religious, and sexual minorities belongs among the controversies in the teaching of civic education in new democracies (Lášticová et al. 2018; Preissová Krejčí et al. 2016). In this respect, qualitative interviews with teachers show that they are convinced about their relatively low influence on children[15] and would prefer to leave the controversial issues to be discussed in the family environment, which they consider formative (Kusá and Juščáková 2017; Zápotočná and Lukšík 2010). Nevertheless, certain improvements and more enthusiasm are visible in the new generation of teachers who are more willing to discuss controversies (Zápotočná and Lukšík 2010). However, teachers´ perceptions of their role differ. Teachers may play the role of *moderators*, *correctors*, or *impartial observers* in class discussions (Lášticová et al. 2018:83).

[13] For instance, from Macháček´s (2002) comparison of students from Bratislava and Vienna there was a relatively high political knowledge in contrast with actual associational membership, a low normative dimension and civic competences of Slovak students in comparison with their Austrian counterparts was visible.

[14] In the Czech and German context, a *gymnasium* is a type of grammar school preparing students for university.

[15] The situation where teachers hold different values (for instance, about ethnic minorities) than are expected in civic education manuals is problematic (Lášticová et al. 2018).

2.1.7. Political socialisation at university

University study facilitates political engagement in many respects. It promotes political mobilisation because it enables the formation of relationships and networks of politically interested or active people, for instance, housemates, fellow students, and teachers. It also brings opportunities for various forms of political and civic engagement, for instance, protest events, university politics, and joining political groups formed in faculties. In other words, the university represents a formative environment where political activities are accepted as normal or desirable (Hastie 2007b; Hensby 2014:95–98).

Generally, it is expected that university education broadens horizons and leads to anti-authoritative attitudes manifested in the refusal of political extremism (Hastie 2007a). Even though the academic environment is rarely openly committed to specific ideologies, most studies indicate certain ideological inclinations of disciplines and academic staff (Kemmelmeier, Danielson, and Basten 2005).

Regarding the ideological profiling of university teachers, research shows that humanities and social sciences academics are most often left or liberal-oriented (e.g. Elchardus and Spruyt 2009; Jacobsen 2001; Kemmelmeier, Danielson, and Basten 2005). Moreover, they have a relatively strong influence on the political attitudes of their students because the nature and focus of their academic discipline offers them many opportunities for discussing politically-related issues during lectures. In contrast, business, engineering, and law professors incline more often to the right or the conservative part of the political spectrum, while natural scientists stand, according to research, somewhere in the middle (Elchardus and Spruyt 2009).

The question of whether and how the university environment shapes the political attitudes of students has caused much debate in academic discourse, which has generated two interesting hypotheses. According to the *selection hypothesis*, students´ choice of academic field corresponds with their previous political attitudes created during the early stages of socialisation.

For instance, young adults who are concerned with questions of social justice and ecological issues prefer the humanities and social sciences. In contrast, people who emphasise the role of personal responsibility, market contestation, and freedom over equality opt for business or law programmes more often (Hastie 2007b). Students of economics and law are described as more career-oriented, self-confident, and competitive than students of social sciences and humanities (Handy et al. 2009; Hustinx et al. 2012).

According to the *socialisation hypothesis*, the political attitudes of students are primarily shaped by the university environment, for instance, by their teachers, as well as the postulates and paradigms of their academic discipline (Elchardus and Spruyt 2009). In this respect, social sciences offer a situational and contextual explanation of sociopolitical issues, while economics offers an explanation related to personal responsibility because it is rooted in the paradigms of Protestant philosophy and free market competition (Guimond, Begin, and Palmer 1989:128; Hastie 2007b:264).

We can demonstrate this difference in an example of poverty and unemployment. For social scientists, these problems are created mainly by wider sociopolitical circumstances, while according to liberal economists it is specifically a problem of the poor and unemployed themselves (Kemmelmeier et al. 2005).

Empirical evidence for this claim offers a longitudinal study conducted by Elchardus and Spruyt (2009) on approximately 600 students at the Free University of Brussels. The authors found a very strong selection effect between students´ sociopolitical attitudes formed before starting university education and the chosen academic field. They observed only a weak socialisation effect.

Nevertheless, both the *selection* and *socialisation* hypotheses can operate simultaneously and mutually reinforce themselves. Students select an academic discipline according to the political attitudes created during their early life. During their studies, their political ideas are shaped and strengthened by academic discipline and other factors inside and beyond the university.

We should also consider other explanations, such as that some students enrol in an academic discipline although they have different ideological backgrounds which prevail in their field. Even during their studies, they do not identify with the paradigmatic postulates of their disciplines or they simply do not care about ideology.

Nevertheless, research shows that students whose values match their academic environment are more satisfied as well as more successful. In other words, undergraduates who express similar political opinions as their teachers receive better grades and feel more comfortable in their college (Kemmelmeier et al. 2005).

2.2. How people participate?

2.2.1. Transformation of political behaviour

In the 1940s and 1950s, voting in elections was the prevailing form of political participation. That is why the attention of political scientists was paid to campaigning, party membership and elections. With the rise of new social movements during the late 1960s and 1970s, the research focus moved to various forms of protest activities (Dalton 2008; van Deth 2012). Since the 1990s, political scientists have focused mostly on social and community-based involvement. Finally, with the expansion of new media and social networks after the year 2000, the scientific debate has also revolved around online political activism (Castells 2012; García-Albacete 2014; Theocharis 2013).

Given these contextual changes in participation, my aim is to leave the definition of participation maximally open, in order to capture the diverse ways of young people´s political behaviour. That is why I have adapted Clive Zukin´s definition of democratic participation for my thesis as *'citizen's voluntary activities done alone or collectively with the aim of influencing policy process*[16] *on community, or state, at an international or global level'* (Zukin et al. 2006:51). Zukin et al. (2006) distinguished two further types of participatory behaviour such as *political engagement* focused on the polity level and *civic engagement* realised at the community level, for instance, in the form of volunteering (Ibid.).

The advantage of the above-mentioned definition is that it covers both the *conventional* (such as voting, campaigning, membership in political parties, running for office, donating money) and the *unconventional* (e.g. protest activities, political consumption, occupying public space, online activism, writing political graffiti on buildings) modes of participation (Barrett and Zani 2015).

Nevertheless, there is no entirely clear distinction between conventional and unconventional engagement, and this notion evolves over time (Dalton 2008). Political activities which were considered unconventional in the 1950s and 1960s (such as signing petitions) have become common in the current context and vice versa (e.g. wearing a political badge belongs to less conventional activities nowadays) (van Deth 1986; Lebeda and Vlachová 2006).

[16] Following Bernhagen and Marsh (2007:46), I understand the political process as *'denoting collective decision-making about the distribution and allocation of resources, norms, and public goods within a certain society at a particular time'*.

Currently, the nature and character of a citizen's participation is rapidly changing and this shift is particularly visible in young people. They prefer to be episodically involved in multiple civic organisations or social movements, taking part in particular events such as demonstrations, blockades, or boycotts of a certain product, rather than joining formal organisations (Corrigall-Brown 2012:7; Hustinx et al. 2012:2).

This change is reflected in the Lesley Hustinx et al. (2012) typology of university student engagement based on 1500 respondents from Belgium and the Netherlands. They distinguished the following categories of college students:

First, *disengaged students,* who are the most passive group and unwilling to join any voluntary associations. They express a low interest in public affairs. Second, *classical volunteers,* who are engaged in formal organisations (such as youth associations, cultural or sports clubs). Nevertheless, they often avoid unconventional forms of participation, including political consumption. Third, *humanitarian citizens,* who are active in conventional and unconventional modes of engagement. They are active in advocacy, ecological, and social service groups as well as often donating money for humanitarian purposes.

Fourth, *monitorial citizens,* who participate outside of formal organisations and substantially prefer unconventional modes of participation. Fifth, *civic omnivores,* who frequently participate in all forms of engagement. This group does not substitute one form of participation for another, and on the contrary, they combine them creatively (Ibid.:106).

2.2.2. Frequencies and intensity of political and civic involvement

Forms, modes, and frequencies of political involvement differ according to the amount of time, money, and energy that people are willing to sacrifice for their involvement (Corrigall-Brown 2012; Verba et al. 1995). In this regard, Lester Milbrath (1965) distinguished the following types of conventional political engagement: *gladiatorial*, *transitional* and *spectator*. *Gladiatorial* activities (such as holding a public office and active membership in a political organisation) require the most costs and that is why they are pursued by a minimum of the population. On the contrary, the most frequent *spectator* forms of participation (including political discussions and voting in elections) do not require much time and effort (Ibid.).

The intensity of citizens´ involvement as well as the level of their ideological commitment varies during their lifetime according to personal and societal circumstances (Bruter and

Harrison 2009; Corrigall-Brown 2012; Lichterman 1996). In this regard, Corrigal-Brown (2012) speaks about four trajectories of engagement.[17]

First, *persistence* - citizens remain in their initial organisation for their lifetime without any interruption. Second, *transfer* - people stop being active in their initial organisation, but continue in another one. Third, *individual abeyance* - citizens interrupt their membership and after a break return to their initial organisation. Fourth, *disengagement* - individuals stop their activities in any type of organisation (Corrigall-Brown 2012:7).

Political engagement realised at university had a long-term impact, which was examined in particular in connection with student civil rights activists in the research of James Max Fendrich and Kenneth L. Lovoy (1988). They identified the trajectories of engagement *abeyance* and *transfer* in their longitudinal study of college activists from the 1960s. I have referred their findings to Corrigall-Brown's (2012) classification. They discovered that former activists mostly continued in their engagement through new means after a break connected with starting a family or a professional career. They took part, for instance, in protest activities, became party members, volunteers in electoral campaigns, or were engaged in local community affairs (Fendrich and Lovoy 1988).

The category *disengagement* is typified in the book *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah et al. 1985) by ex-student activist and Republican Party member Ted Oster. During his university studies, Ted was very active in the anti-war movement; for example, he organised demonstrations against the US invasion of Cambodia. Nevertheless, after getting married and starting an advocacy career, he stopped his activities because he had a lack of time, and different priorities. Currently, Ted feels solely committed to his immediate surroundings, consisting of people like him with the same social milieu. He has a problem identifying himself with a nation of a hundred million anonymous individuals (Ibid.:179).

Regarding the frequency of engagement, Bruter and Harrison (2009:72–75) distinguished four types of party members according to the frequency of their engagement and level of ideological commitment. The most active are *everyday party-holics* who work for their organisation daily, and their involvement gives meaning and purpose to their lives. The authors further differentiated organisational members into *weekly activists*, *monthly visitors* and *occasional members* (Ibid.).

According to them, most young party members fall into the category of *monthly visitors*. On the one hand, they express a relatively high level of ideological commitment with

[17] She relates her typology to social movement activism, but I assume that it is also applicable to membership in political and civic organisations.

organisational goals and a willingness to participate in events (such as plenary sessions, demonstrations, meetings). On the other, they mostly do not relate their personal identity to their organisation, and are not willing to sacrifice their study results, friends, and hobbies to their political engagement (Bruter and Harrison 2009:74–75).

2.2.3. Lifestyle politics and political consumption

In every organisation, there are some highly committed individuals who consider their engagement part of their personal identity in the intentions of their life *as a political project* (Lichterman 1996:216), *personal is political* (Carroll 1989) and *life politics* (Giddens 1991). They are committed to live according to certain ideological principles which are manifested, for instance, in their consumption behaviour, their profession, or choice of school for their children. Lifestyle politics is typical especially for grass-route activism, for instance, the environmental movement (Bellah et al. 1985; Lichterman 1996:216).

Lifestyle politics includes creative forms of participation, which are relatively new, individualized, and preferred mostly by young and highly educated people. Moreover, women participate in this field more often than men because a typical feature of lifestyle politics is blurring the distinction between the private and public political sphere (Hustinx et al. 2012; Stolle et al. 2005).

Lifestyle politics covers political consumerism (boycott and vice versa buycott[18] of certain products for political reasons), politicizing dietary habits (such as vegetarianism and veganism), and pursuing a life of political self-expression. Political consumerism also includes wearing particular fashion labels and listening to specific music for a political reason. Similarly, it covers campaigning against certain labels, for example, global protests against poor labour conditions in Third World factories of brands such as Nike or Microsoft (Bennett 2009; Micheletti and Stolle 2012).

Nevertheless, not all participatory repertoires covering lifestyle politics are lawful and promote democracy. In this respect, Micheletti and Stolle (2012:129) mention the example of the Ku Klux Klan, religious fanatics, and ecoterrorists who use violence to reach their goals. We should take into account that not every consumer action and way of life means political self-expression. Lifestyle politics includes only actions whose motives and intentions are expressed and understood as political (van Deth 2012:152; Micheletti and Stolle 2012).

[18] By buycott I mean refraining from purchasing any products for political reasons (Micheletti and Stolle 2012).

We will demonstrate this feature through the example of vegetarianism. Micheletti and Stolle (2012) distinguished two forms of a plant-based diet. *Self-regarding vegetarianism*, justified by personal health-related reasons (such as a healthy lifestyle, fear of antibiotics being present in meat), they consider a vegetarian lifestyle but not as lifestyle politics. In contrast, *vegetarianism as the only right choice*, motivated by ethical concerns about sustainability, animal welfare, and environmental protection, they assigned to a lifestyle political expression (Micheletti and Stolle 2012:142). Despite the fact that both motivations are often presented at the same time, *self-regarding motives* still prevail among vegetarians.[19] The situation is different in the case of veganism, which is driven mainly by moral and ethical concerns.

Research on university students did not show any particular differences in political attitudes or voting behaviour between people who take part in creative modes of participation and those who do not. In contrast, people involved in political or civic organisations and in protest events showed significant attitudinal differences (Stolle et al. 2005). That is why Jan van Deth (2012:171) claims that new creative participation does not have *'many new creative consequences for democracy'*.

2.2.4. Role of media in political engagement

In recent years, the rapid development of the Internet,[20] wireless networks, and related information and communications technologies (ICT) including smart phones and tablets, which mediate everyday interaction, significantly transform the nature of social ties and daily interactions (Collin and Burns 2009).

Although digital connectivity affects all age groups, it is particularly visible in the case of the generation of *Millennials* who have grown up with ICT. They were born to the digital world and socialized in it (Loader et al. 2014; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010). People aged 18 to 29 are the most frequent users of the Internet and social networks. In 2016, 88% of American youth who used the Internet had Facebook accounts, and 36% had Twitter accounts (Greenwood, Perrin, and Duggan 2016). Young people prefer visual means of communication and global interconnection (Collin and Burns 2009). Therefore, it is not surprising that young adults consider the Internet and social networks a more useful source of political information

[19] An opinion poll conducted among 700 readers of *Vegetarian Journal* in 2002, indicated that the prevailing justifications for being vegetarian are health-related issues. Only 26% of respondents stated the ethical concerns of animal wellbeing and love for animals as their main motivation (Micheletti and Stolle 2012:144).

[20] To illustrate this, every second person in the world had internet access in January 2017, which means 3.77 billion internet users worldwide.

than television, newspapers, or personal discussions. Globalisation, social media and exposure to Western culture means that *Millennials* are more similar to each other worldwide than previous generations (Stein 2013).

The Internet increases the volume and speed of spreading information, allows communication regardless of time and place, and creates networked citizens in a networked society (Castells 2012). It is no surprise that the new communication environment means long-standing implications for the patterns and quality of political involvement (Delli Carpini 2000). The Internet lowers the costs for participation and public awareness. It is a platform for coordination, deliberating, discussing politics and making collective decisions as well as for organising protest events, viral campaigns and political petitions. The Internet and related technologies also bring new possibilities for digital democracy, for instance, through e-governance, e-voting and e-referenda (Norris 2001). ICT also enriches the connection between citizens and politics by facilitating their interaction with political parties, politicians and civic society organisations.

The Internet also increases organisational flexibility through the faster distribution of information and instructions. This can be particularly efficient for organisations without a formal hierarchy and those which face repression from the state apparatus. It enables people to reorganise themselves quickly in a different place, for example, in the case of political protest (Castells 2012). In this respect, the Internet played an important role in protest politics, for instance, during the Arab Spring, the Spanish movement *Indignados,* and *Occupy Wall Street.* In particular, the strong mobilisation effect created images of police brutality against the protestors, which spread virally through social networks and increased public sympathy for the goals of these movements (Ibid.:225).

Due to the World Wide Web, politics has become global and local at the same time (Castells 2012:223; Chadwick 2006). For instance, the *Occupy Wall Street* movement was local because its supporters occupied a particular urban space as well as global, having communicated their goals and strategies via the Internet.

Digital connectivity blurs the distinctions between (1) public and private life (Collin and Burns 2009), (2) different media types (such as print, audio, video) due to its interactivity, and (3) traditional information gatekeepers - *producers* of information and their audience - *consumers*.

Through blogosphere, do-it-yourself-journalism, individual web pages or social networks, the Internet enables everyone to address society and attempts to set informational agendas. In this respect, ICT is a useful tool of expression for the political opinions and demands of

marginalized groups of society, as well as an alternative source of information (Bennett 2009; Chadwick 2006; Delli Carpini 2000). The advantage of the Internet is its decentralisation, with no control from one command center in contrast with television, radio and newspapers (Castells 2012:231).

Digital media play a crucial role in recruitment for conventional and unconventional modes of political action. Facebook,[21] Twitter, Instagram and You Tube are easy, quick and cheap mobilisation channels (Chadwick 2006; García-Albacete 2014; Norris 2001). Social networks enable various forms of online acts of engagement such as discussing politics, sharing political articles and other information, following the profiles of politicians and political organisations, contacting political elites and declaring political support.

The potential of social networks for electoral campaigns was firstly visible worldwide in the US 2008 presidential election, which was even called the *Facebook Election* because candidates firstly addressed their voters via social networks. Barack Obama was the most successful in this attempt. The combination of social networking (Obama had 2 000 000 supporters on Facebook and 112 000 on Twitter),[22] mobile messaging, and podcasting, significantly helped him to win the election (Fraser and Dutta 2008; Loader et al. 2014).

Research (e.g. Delli Carpini 2000; Norris 2001; Schlozman et al. 2010) indicates that ICT is mainly beneficial for citizens who have already been engaged offline, but fails to reach non-active citizens. The concept of *digital divide* describes how the Internet widens the gap between the engaged and disengaged on a global level (between Western industrial democracies and developing countries) as well as on a group and individual level (in socially disadvantaged segments of the population), which has an impact on the inequality of participation (Norris 2001:4).

The following hypothesis, describes how the Internet influences political behaviour. The *selection effect*, states that the causal chain goes from previous offline engagement to online engagement. In other words, citizens are politically engaged first in the real world and then start to be active online. A further hypothesis, *media effect*, offers the opposite chain of causation and claims that people are politically active first on the Internet and online engagement inspires them to offline activism. The last hypothesis called *virtuous cycle*

[21] Facebook is currently the most popular social network worldwide. By the middle of 2016, it was used by approximately 1.7 billion of the population worldwide (Pospíšilová 2016). In 2016, 79% of Americans who used the Internet had activated a Facebook account. Among all Americans - including people who had never used the Internet - 68% of the adult population and 76% of users indicated that they visited Facebook daily or several times a day (Greenwood, Perrin, and Duggan 2016).

[22] By comparison, Obama´s main counter-candidate John McCain had 600 000 supporters on Facebook and only 4 600 followers on Twitter (Fraser and Dutta 2008).

presupposes a two-way influence between the offline and the online world. In other words, people who are engaged offline also start to be politically active online and these participatory behaviours are mutually reinforced (Ibid.:230).

2.3. Why people (do not) participate

2.3.1. Reasons for organisational involvement

The motivation for political action is a multidimensional phenomenon. Individuals are driven to political involvement by several incentives at the same time and their motives often overlap. Organisational involvement means a mix of material, cognitive, and psychological benefits for their members (García-Albacete 2014). Among the reasons to join a political or civic organisation are, for instance, attaining collective goals and receiving selective benefits (such as new possibilities, contacts, entertainment, and positive emotional rewards) (Scarrow and Gezgor 2010). People also become organisational members because of feeling a social pressure to be active, loneliness, an excess of leisure time (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen 1991) and an engagement for the future and wellbeing of their own children (Eliasoph 1998:246).

In Western industrial democracies, most people get involved in organisations because of a combination of self-interest and ideological affinity (Bellah et al. 1985; Eliasoph 1998). In this regard, Bellah et al. (1985:167) refer to Alexis de Tocqueville, who claimed in his book *Democracy in America* that individual self-interest transformed American society, and led to civic involvement and self-controlled citizenship, which is desirable for democracy.

Michal Bruter and Sarah Harrison identified in their research on 2919 party members aged between 18 and 25 years from six European countries, three main motivations for entering a political party: *moral*, *social* and *professional* (Bruter and Harrison 2009).[23] What they called *moral* motivation, other researchers labeled as *altruism*, *value-based motivation* and *political idealism* (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen 1991; Handy et al. 2009). Furthermore, Sidney Verba et al. (1995) speak in this regard about *personal citizen's satisfaction* and Paul Lichterman (1996) about *personalised political commitment*.

Morally-driven members express predominantly idealistic values. They stress the ethical purposes (such as supporting an important cause, helping others, or finding the meaning of their own life) for joining their organisation (Bruter and Harrison 2009:22). They have broad

[23] Similar to the concept of *biographical availability*, I suppose there is more general applicability of this classification than for political parties only. It can be useful, for instance, in explaining an individual's motivation for joining civic society organisations.

visions about the world and society, which are sometimes formed by religious beliefs (Handy et al. 2009). Political commitment is an important part of their personal identity, which is often manifested in their politicized lifestyle (Lichterman 1996).

Furthermore, *morally-driven* people possess radical beliefs more often than other types of organisational members. They are more likely to be involved in demonstrations and further unconventional forms of activism. Similarly, they do not avoid direct confrontation with other political subjects and sometimes even with police. They do not often consider their political activities a preparation for a future professional career and do not expect material benefits for their engagement (Bruter and Harrison 2009; Lichterman 1996).

We can find an example of *morally driven* citizens concerned with individualism and political commitment in America in the book *Habits of the Heart*, written by Robert Bellah et al. (1985). They are called *concerned citizens* and political engagement means a form of sacrifice for them. They belong mostly to the less-educated working class; for instance, many housewives form part of this group. *Concerned citizens* prefer to stay at home with their families. Nevertheless, they are concerned about their community life and, therefore, they decide to engage despite it meaning having to overcome shame and doubt about public appearance (Bellah et al. 1985).

The next type of young party members, Bruter and Harrison (2009) label as *social-minded citizens*. Organisational involvement means for them a possibility to interact with like-minded people, take part in discussions, meetings, and social events occurring within their organisations, and have some fun. The benefits of their involvement include close friendship ties (Barkan et al. 1993), community belonging, and group affiliation, which is particularly important for young adults (García-Albacete 2014). They are less career-oriented, efficient, disciplined, as well as ideologically driven, than their *morally-* and *professionally-minded* counterparts. In other words, they prefer making friends to ideology (Bruter and Harrison 2009).

Regarding the motives for political protest, Eric L. Hirsch (1990) studied the divestment movement from South Africa at Columbia University in April 1985. He investigated group tactics and the motives of participation in social movements. As crucial he identified that moral motivation consisted of a strong ideological commitment with the goals of the movement and the belief that these claims cannot be achieved through institutional means of participation. Nevertheless, he also described a strong social motivation based on the following of a charismatic leader, an ascendant group dynamic, development of solidarity

based on collective power, polarisation between the group and its opponents, and collective decision-making (Hirsch 1990:244).

The third category of motivation for organisational involvement includes *professional* incentives (Bruter and Harrison 2009). In other studies, it is also known as a *utilitarian* or *pragmatic* motivation (Handy et al. 2009). *Professionally-minded* people see an opportunity to learn skills such as leadership, critical thinking, and problem solving in their political activities.

Moreover, they want to gain experience and valuable contacts useful for their future careers in professional politics, business, or the state administrative sector. In this regard, many British or American students take part in voluntary work to increase their chances of admission to a prestigious university (Hustinx et al. 2012). In the Czech and German context, extracurricular activities also play a positive role in reaching university. *Professionally-minded* people also believe that their organisational involvement means a signal to a potential employer that they are *good and responsible citizens* (Gomez and Gunderson 2003; Handy et al. 2009).[24] This notion can be particularly useful for university students in their transition from education to the job market (García-Albacete 2014).

Professionally-minded members are moderate in their political opinions, focused on reaching a compromise and gaining a good position in their organisation. They are rather pragmatic in their views and not ideologically driven, but attracted to power and material benefits (Bruter and Harrison 2009).

We can find an example of *professionally-minded* citizens in the book *Habits of the Heart* in the so-called *town fathers* (Bellah et al. 1985). They connect community service to their self-interests. In other words, *town fathers* get personally involved in their town because their work depends on their community success. They conceptualise civic duty as an activity people do not get credit for. Public good for them means that everyone gets exactly what he/she pays for (Ibid.).

[24] To illustrate, 23% of Canadian volunteers started their activities to increase their employment opportunities (Hall, McKeown, and Roberts 2001). Similarly, 59% of British volunteers stated that their engagement for them means the opportunity to learn skills and gain new experience which could be useful in their future career (Prouteau and Wolff 2006).

2.3.2. Why do people avoid politics?

The motives for political passivity remain another important puzzle in participatory research. Sidney Verba et al. (1995:269) summarised three main reasons why citizens avoid political and civic engagement. Firstly, they *'cannot participate'* because they have a lack of relevant resources such as time, money and civic skills. In this regard, lack of time was most often mentioned, which almost 40% of the respondents of their survey stated (Ibid.).

Secondly, citizens *'do not want to participate'* because they are not interested in politics and have other priorities. For instance, they want to devote their leisure time to their family or hobbies rather than politics. Furthermore, they have a lack of psychological connection with politics and, therefore, assume that they cannot influence the political process (Eliasoph 1998). To illustrate, Nina Eliasoph mentions in her book *Avoiding Politics* (Ibid.:232) that people associate politics with something *'big'* and *'not close to home'*, which is alien to their daily routine.

Among the other reasons for political passivity, the conviction that politics is boring and dirty was mentioned. However, an encouraging finding is that only 3% of their respondents were afraid of potential problems (for instance in their job or family) connected with political engagement (Verba et al. 1995). Nevertheless, in other contexts, these concerns can be a serious obstacle for participation.

Thirdly, citizens do not participate because *'nobody asked them to'*. They are isolated from social networks and not targeted by political mobilisation. In other words, people avoid political and social involvement because they do not have enough participatory opportunities to convert their interest into political action (Delli Carpini 2000; Verba et al. 1995). According to Delli Carpini (2000), the generation of *Millennials* is disengaged because it is alienated from political institutions and processes, as well as not sufficiently motivated by incentives and political opportunities to overcome this alienation.

Social pressure, which may in certain circumstances push people into politics, can also play an opposite role. It can discourage people from activism if they are convinced that potential engagement would worsen their image among friends and colleagues. In this respect, Nina Eliasoph (1998:135) speaks about *'a risk of making a fool of oneself'* by joining a political organisation. Other reasons neglected by Verba et al. (1995) are the convictions that people do not participate because they are satisfied with the political situation and therefore do not want to change anything, or they live in an individualist culture stressing success over common good commitment (Ibid.:253).

2.3.3. Modes of democratic citizenship and how much participation is enough

Many current debates in political sociology revolve around the issue of whether political passivity means a real threat for democracy, and the question of how much political activity is desirable (Amnå and Ekman 2014; Gyárfášová and Bútorová 2010). Political participation as well as political passivity is related to the theory of citizenship dealing with the normative question: *'What type of value orientation and behaviour do people connect with "good citizens"?'* Citizenship requires a certain type of public engagement as well as the notion and acceptance of citizens´ rights and responsibilities (Dalton 2008; van Deth 2009). These expectations substantially differ according to the models of democracy, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3: **Models of democracy and modes of citizenship**

models of democracy	minimalist	participatory	representative
modes of citizenship	duty-based	engaged	monitorial

Source: created by Prokschová based on existing theories of democracy and citizenship

The Minimalist Model of Democracy represented by Joseph A. Schumpeter does not consider extensive citizens´ participation desirable. Schumpeter understands democracy as a mechanism of competition among leaders and compares it to the capitalist market. People should avoid politics except for elections and leave the management of public affairs to professional and qualified political elites (Schumpeter 1942).

Russel Dalton (2008) calls this kind of citizen *duty-based*. They have knowledge about the political system but underdeveloped self-esteem. *Duty-based* citizens perceive their citizenship in traditional terms of voting in elections by obeying the law, reporting a crime and serving in the military (Dalton 2008). Astonishingly, it may be true that the majority of the population shares the *duty-based* ideal of citizenship (van Deth 2009:183). To illustrate this, only 25% of people consider membership in political or civic organisations an important part of good citizenship (van Deth 2009).

In contrast, the model of *participatory democracy* considers political passivity dangerous because responsible citizens should get involved in the political process on a regular basis (Amnå and Ekman 2014). This model of democracy requires different norms of postmodern

citizenship represented by the so-called *engaged citizens* (Dalton 2008), *critical citizens* (Norris 1999), *global citizens* (Bennett 2009) or *active citizens.*

This kind of citizen is supportive of democratic principles, but with new means of participation avoiding its routine-based and hierarchical forms (Norris 1999). For instance, *engaged citizens* are active in collective (e.g. protest politics) or individualized forms (such as political consumerism) of unconventional participation (Dalton 2008:4; Stolle et al. 2005). They are lifestyle oriented, networked, cosmopolitan, and often relate themselves to global political identities (Bennett 2009). Furthermore, they are more independent, self-confident, and tolerant than their *duty-based* counterparts.

This model of citizenship would not be possible without the great societal transformation in Western industrial societies after the Second World War (Inglehart 1977). The changing socioeconomic context has brought better living conditions, health and educational conditions, gender equality, and the expansion of civil rights, as well as a transformation of jobs and the market.

The above-mentioned societal shift has also reshaped political values towards greater individualism manifested in self-expressive culture and postmaterialism (Bennett 2009; Inglehart 1977, 1990; Skocpol and Fiorina 2004). People with postmaterial orientation prefer environmental protection, personal autonomy, a need for self-realisation, and the rights of ethnic, religious, sexual and gender minorities over material benefits, low taxes, economic growth, security and nationalism (Inglehart 1977, 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005).

The representative model of democracy represents the intermediate position between *minimalist* and *participatory* democracy. Its proponents consider, on the one hand, active citizenship desirable. On the other, they claim that too extensive participation can destabilize democratic regimes (Almond and Verba 1963; Dalton 2008). The increase of public engagement does not necessarily mean the increase of democracy. And we should also not ignore the concept of *uncivil society* where political and civic activities are realised by non-democratic motivations and means (Ibid.).

For instance, Alexis de Tocqueville was afraid of *the tyranny of the majority* and claimed that in order *'to love democracy, it is necessary to love it moderately'* (quoted from Dalton 2008:163). In this regard, Almond and Verba (1963) described the so-called *civic culture*, consisting of a mix of highly participatory citizens with their more passive counterparts as an ideal environment for democracy. Similarly, Russel Dalton (2008:169) claims that both *duty-based* as well as *engaged* citizens are necessary for democracy.

For *the representative model of democracy*, so-called *monitorial citizens* are typical. At first glance, they seem to be passive, but they critically monitor the political system. If they are dissatisfied or feel that democracy is endangered, they express their disagreement by public protest or other means of engagement (Hustinx et al. 2012:96).

2.4. Summary

To shed some light on the puzzle of youth organisational membership, the theoretical part of the thesis has focused on the predictors of political participation, and forms, strategies, and foundations of political motivation related to the norms of citizenship. Below, I summarise who participates in politics, how and why they do this, and draw the implications of these findings for the empirical part of my dissertation.

To summarise, people who have good social, economic, and cultural capital are more willing to be publicly involved because they possess resources such as time, money, skills, and opportunities for participation. They are also well-integrated in social networks facilitating political and civic engagement. Moreover, people who were exposed to a number of motivating stimuli in their family and at school are more likely to be engaged in civic and political organisations (Bernhagen and Marsh 2007; Morales 2005; Verba et al. 1995; Vráblíková 2009). Citizens´ involvement is also supported by macro-social conditions such as favourable institutional settings, participatory political culture, inclusive political systems, and a good level of economic development. These individual and social preconditions create an environment where people believe that their participation matters (Almond and Verba 1963; Corrigall-Brown 2012; Quintelier 2013).

To understand the process of creating and developing political commitment, I will focus on primary and secondary socialisation in the empirical part of my dissertation. I examine family political socialisation by creatively adapting the mechanisms of intergeneration value transmission formulated by Michal Bruter and Sarah Harrison (2009). These mechanisms originally explained the roots of youth party membership in six established democracies from Western Europe. I will apply these mechanisms to the Czech and German context, focusing on organisationally active and inactive university students.

Moreover, based on new facts about the reciprocal character of political socialisation (Andolina et al. 2003; Kuczynski and Parkin 2007; Zukin et al. 2006), the thesis focuses on patterns of mutual family influence. Bruter and Harrison´s typology neglects the role of family discursive practices and, vice versa, research on the structure of family political

narratives ignores the impact of political socialisation mechanisms. My empirical study targets both these aspects of political socialisation and connects them to encapsulate the complexity of family political interactions.

One of the key factors fostering citizens´ sense of self-efficacy is schooling. The theoretical part pays attention to civic education policies in Germany and the Czech Republic. I summarise expert voices who have criticized the prevalence of frontal teaching, emphasising facts over opinions, and a lack of dialogue about current political issues in Czech schools. The empirical part of my study lets students of both countries speak about their concrete experiences with civic education, including the performance of their teachers. My aim is also to track the connections between primary socialisation in the family and secondary socialisation at school.

The literature (e.g. Amnå and Ekman 2014; García-Albacete 2014; Norris 1999; Vromen and Collin 2010) shows that university students have a good cognitive capacity for participation and are familiar with new technologies which lower costs for political mobilisation and engagement. Most of them have been raised in families with good socioeconomic status, which is a key predictor of political involvement. University environment also facilitates their political recruitment because it lowers the costs for engagement and provides them with a politically stimulating background.

Moreover, they are biographically available for the unconventional and risky modes of involvement, due to their relatively long transition to adulthood and mostly absent family or stable work commitments (Corrigall-Brown 2012; Tanner and Arnett 2009). They hold postmaterial values more often than the rest of the population and their political involvement means an essential form of self-expression for many of them. Their participatory repertoire covers political consumption as well as online activism (Inglehart 1990; Lichterman 1996; Norris 2002).

Taking into account these theoretical findings, I will examine the structure of their motivations for organisational membership in the empirical part of my dissertation. However, the character of student activism substantially differs from that of the general population and cannot be fully explained by current typologies. Therefore, my aim is to enrich these typologies with new categories. I consider incomplete reasons for avoiding politics and will explore this issue in more detail.

Stemming from different theories of democratic citizenship, I will explore the links between political motivation and the notion of citizens´ rights and duties. To reach this goal, I will examine what citizenship means for university students and what they consider to be a

good citizen. Furthermore, I will focus on lifestyle politics, level of ideological commitment, intensity of organisational membership, and the role of participation in the daily routine of young educated people. I will examine to what extent political activity is a part of students´ image and self-expression, what they are willing to sacrifice for their involvement, and how these factors differ according to the type of their political motivation.

Furthermore, the main body of literature explaining youth political participation was written from the perspective of established *old* Western democracies, with a special focus on the context of the United States. Nevertheless, the situation in *new* democracies in Central and Eastern Europe is more complex and specific and, therefore, cannot be fully explained by the theories and concepts formulated in the Western academic world without an experience of communism and the subsequent democratic transition (Bernhagen and Marsh 2007).

Therefore, the thesis focuses on a Czech-German comparison in the creation of political commitment as well as on the roots and paths to organisational membership. The Czech Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany provide unique opportunities to study these phenomena in the context of established (old German federal states) and post-communist democracies (new German federal states and the Czech Republic).

3. METHODOLOGY

'Stories - not "facts" and not mere "information" - are ultimately what we are hearing in a qualitative interview, small stories (episodes, subplots, chapters) excerpted from the story of one's life as a whole' (Randall and Phoenix 2009:126).

The empirical part of my thesis aims to answer the main research question ***'How and why do Czech and German university students get involved in political and civic organisations?'*** It draws on original data retrieved from 60 semi-structured interviews with university students. Attention was mainly paid to the roots of organisational involvement, and therefore I chose to interview 45 students who were active in political and civic organisations. An additional 15 interviews with individuals without organisational membership enabled a better understanding of the core group of young people involved in organisations. Interviews were analysed using the qualitative method of applied thematic analysis.

3.1. Focus on university

The thesis concentrates on a specific and relatively selective group of young people - university students. They are a distinct group with regard to their political knowledge, skills, expectations, priorities, opportunities, and participation. For instance, university students are more likely to vote, join a protest event, political or civic organisations and hold public office than their less-educated peers (Dalton 2008; Dalton and Klingemann 2007; Vromen and Collin 2010).

According to the *impressionable years hypothesis*, young people in their twenties are particularly susceptible to changing their value orientation (Krosnick and Alwin 1989). In this regard, the university environment offers them many opportunities to profile their political views in gaining political knowledge, discussions with teachers and colleagues, joining various kinds of student associations and becoming engaged in university politics.

Some current students become future elites, or tomorrow's political or business leaders. Therefore, the focus on students enables us to anticipate potential trends in the future development of political participation in relation to the generational exchange (Bruter and Harrison 2009; Zukin et al. 2006).

The age limit of my interviewees was set purposely, ranging from 18 to 30 years. This life stage of so-called *provisional adulthood* (Sheehy 2011) is a time when young people's long-term political and professional choices, as well as social and moral values are formed to a great degree (Tanner and Arnett 2009). After graduation, their political views, values, and

beliefs remain relatively stable (Hastie 2007b).[25] Given the longer and more complicated transition to adulthood than in the case of previous generations, I set the upper age limit at 30 years having been inspired by the studies of Bernhagen and Marsh (2007), Gaiser et al. (2010), and Stolle and Hooghe (2005).[26]

Research on youths' relation to politics is mainly focused either on children up to the age of 12 years (van Deth 2008; James 2013; Mac Naughton, Hughes, and Smith 2009; Sugarman 2007), or on adolescents up to the age of 18 years (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 2010). Astonishingly, recent publications on the source of political commitment and apathy, (Eliasoph 1998; Lichterman 1996) as well as on the trajectories of party members and social movement activists, (Corrigall-Brown 2012; Hochschild 2016) focused mainly on middle-aged and elderly people. The population of young citizens between 18 and 30 years old has not often been targeted in these studies, despite the fact that the focus on this age group brings two substantial benefits.

Firstly, children and adolescents under 18 years old mostly do not have any direct political experience. In contrast, young adults between 18 and 30 years of age are eligible to vote in public elections, join political organisations, and are able to reflect more deeply on their life experiences.

Secondly, owing to their youth, they have relatively fresher and perhaps more vivid memories than older generations of the process of their socialisation, the inception of their interest in politics, political recruitment, and the factors which motivated them to political action.¨

Therefore, my research focus enabled me to gain fundamental insights into the mechanism of forming individuals' attitudes and relations to politics during a distinctive life stage, as well as to understand what drives young people to join political and civic organisations.

[25] Here We should also mention here a stream of primary socialisation research (e.g. Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Urbatsch 2014) which claims that the family is essential for forming political values and views, and that these remain relatively stable from adolescence onward.

[26] Nevertheless, there is no strict academic consensus in this regard (Roller, Brettschneider, and van Deth 2006). Other publications (e.g. Bruter and Harrison 2009; Cross and Young 2008; García-Albacete 2014) focused on young adults up to the age of 26 years.

3.2. Selection of interviewees[27]

Methodological justifications for a number of interviews and sampling procedures were found in the relevant literature (such as van Deth 2008; Gerring 2006; Howard 2003; Katrňák 2004; Quintelier 2013; Rubin and Rubin 2011). I used a mix of purposive and convenience sampling. Therefore, the selection of interviewees could not achieve the criterion of representativeness (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, the goal was to secure a relatively heterogeneous sample of informants regarding their (1) organisations (type of organisation, their ideological profiling), (2) experiences with politics, and (3) sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics (such as age, gender and family background). The Table 11 (pp. 204–210 in Appendix) presents information about the interviewees, including their pseudonym, country, seat of their university, age, gender, type of political organisation, political orientation, intensity of engagement, and level and field of study.

The goal was to find a mostly balanced number of female and male interviewees. The aim was to contact the students from the whole political spectrum enrolled full time at the university. Other selection criteria were the position in the organisational hierarchy and the amount of activities undertaken in the political organisation. I approached young people from all levels of the hierarchy such as the chairman and the vice chairman, as well as common members of the organisation. Moreover, my goal was to contact very active, partly active, and less active members to reach a greater range of interviewees (Rubin and Rubin 2011). Regarding the field of study, my sample included students of humanities, the social sciences, medicine, law, IT and engineering. However, students of the social sciences and humanities prevailed in my sample (see Table 11).

The process of approaching the interviewees was similar in both countries. Interviewees were contacted in various ways to reach a wider range of the sample. First, I contacted student umbrella organisations,[28] student coordinators, and teachers at several faculties of the surveyed universities and asked them to communicate my request for interviews among their students.

[27] In my dissertation, I refer to students whom I talked to as to *interviewees, communication partners* or *informants* which are common terms in qualitative research. I used these expressions as synonyms.

[28] In Germany, I contacted *STURA - Studierendenrat* (Student Council) and *STUPA - Studierendenparliament* (Student Parliament). These umbrella organisations have several mailing lists which target not only their members, but also students not active in organisations. That is why I was able to contact a heterogeneous group of people.

Secondly, I approached student political organisations, political parties, and civic organisations with my request. I contacted them via e-mail, as well as directly.[29] Finding interviewees from the conservative and centre-right end of the spectrum in Germany was particularly difficult for me. In the end, some of them agreed to participate in my research, but this was mainly agreed upon after direct and repeated requests for an interview.[30] In the Czech Republic, there were no significant problems finding interviewees from both ends of the political spectrum.

Thirdly, I distributed posters with information about my research in university areas. Fourthly, I used the *snowball technique* which is widely applied in qualitative research. Snowball sampling is used to target limited subgroups such as student activists, and works like a chain referral where interviewees recommend other people with similar traits of interest (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; van Meter 1990). I requested every interviewee to give me contacts for their politically active or inactive friends. Similarly, I used this technique when I asked my politically active friends and colleagues from the Czech Republic for direct recommendations of new interviewees.

Lastly, I gained contacts for Czech students active in political organisations at a seminar about *Young people´s participation in European politics,* organised by the European MP Tomáš Zdechovský, which took place on the 21 and 22 November 2015 in Mladé Buky. This event was also important for the validation of my preliminary findings, because I found reliable informants there who gave me insightful information, with practical details, about youth involvement in the Czech Republic.

In this regard, I relied also on my politically active acquaintances from Prague and Ostrava. Moreover, I gained useful German contacts from politically active young people (for example former university students or academics) in Cologne and Jena who explained the specifics of German youth engagement to me. I did not include these additional expert interviews in my sample, but it provided me with a holistic view of the problem.

[29] I attended the meetings of *Studentenparlament* (Student Parliament) in Jena and Cologne, as well as several meetings of political organisations (such as CDU, Junge Union, die Linke in Cologne and SPD and Jusos in Jena and Cologne).

[30] Regarding the unwillingness of these communication partners, I questioned my German informants, colleagues, and acquaintances, and always received the same answer. Right-wing and conservative interviewees felt a certain pressure when expressing their opinions, some of them even felt ostracised, and that is why they were not fond of speaking about their views on politics and pathways to activism.

3.3. Selection of organisations

The selection of organisations was intentionally broad to ensure the heterogeneity of the sample, which allowed a better exploration of the mechanism of political involvement in different organisational contexts. Driven by the occurrence of expanding political opportunities and the repertoire of the young generation (Norris 2002; Verba et al. 1995; Zukin et al. 2006), groups with different political profiling, level of hierarchy and issue scope were chosen.

I selected interviewees from OLD political groups such as parties, youth party organisations, and trade unions, as well as activists from NEW types of organised interested groups, for example, ecological, human rights and social justice organisations (see Table 4). Given the fact that pluralisation of involvement is typical for youth political involvement (Hustinx et al. 2012; Norris 2002), interviewees engaging in BOTH types of organisations were also selected.

The fourth category, NONE, was represented by students who did not belong to any organisation.[31] These interviews were useful for the triangulation of the data. Inactive students were not the main target of the research, but they were a control group which enabled me (1) to find out the possible differences (e.g. in political socialisation, conceptualisation of politics) between people who were active in organisations and those who were not and (2) to examine if the research results were valid for the whole group of interviewed students or only for the interviewees with organisational membership.

Table 4: **Types of political and civic organisations**

OLD: political parties, youth party organisations, trade unions	**NEW:** new social movements, NGOs
BOTH: old and new forms together	**NONE:** inactive in organisations

Source: created by Prokschová

[31] This category was very heterogeneous and included communication partners who declared a strong interest in politics and participation in individual forms of political engagement, as well as those who expressed political apathy or disillusionment.

3.4. Sampling of universities

To further clarify my research design, I will describe the sampling strategy of universities. To make the selection and interviewing process manageable for one researcher, I chose two cities from the former West Germany, one city from the former East Germany, and three cities from different regions of the Czech Republic as the sampling points (see Table 5).[32] The selected cities are the seats of established universities with developed structures of political and civic organisations providing opportunities for student engagement.

Table 5: **Information about selected universities**

City	University	Number of students[33]
Cologne	University of Cologne *(Universität zu Köln)*	49 772 (2014)
Mannheim	University of Mannheim *(Universität Mannheim)*	12 054 (2017)
Jena	Friedrich Schiller University Jena *(Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena)*	18 219 (2017)
Prague[34]	Charles University *(Karlova Univerzita)*	48 623 (2017)
Olomouc	Palacký University Olomouc *(Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci)*	20 395 (2017)
Ostrava	University of Ostrava *(Ostravská univerzita)*	8 543 (2018)

Source: created by Prokschová based on web pages of selected universities

I was aware of the fact that the sampling of cities could not be representative because it would be against the logic of qualitative research (Creswell 2013; Hendl 2016; Rubin and

[32] Of course, not all the interviewees come from the city, region or federal state where they had studied at university.

[33] This data serves only to illustrate the size of universities, and was last updated in the years specified in brackets

[34] In Prague, one interview was conducted exceptionally with a student of the Prague University of Economics and Business. This interview offered a substantial insight into the paths of activism and ways of thinking of a conservative student, and that is why I decided to include it in my sample, although this student did not attend Charles University. Similar to Charles University, the Prague University of Economics and Business has a very good reputation and draws students from the whole country.

Rubin 2011). Instead of that, the selection was driven by maximizing the degree of variation among different contexts.

In Germany, the selected cities represented an East-West dimension. In the former West Germany, Cologne, which is the capital of the federal state North Rhine-Westphalia, and Mannheim, from the federal state Baden-Württemberg, were selected. In the former East Germany, I choose Jena, which is a high-tech center and the second largest city in the federal state of Thuringia.

My aim was to avoid German specific regions (such as the federal state of Bavaria or the capital city Berlin) preferring to choose *typical* German cities. According to Jan van Deth, Mannheim is an example of an *average* German city regarding its size, history, political attitudes of citizens, structure of industry, and services (van Deth 2008:13). Moreover, practical aspects also played a role in the sampling of German cities. My research visits and internships at the universities of Mannheim, Cologne, and Jena gave me the opportunity to conduct my own qualitative research there.

In the Czech Republic, the economic dimension as well as the reputation of the university, was followed. In this regard, the capital city of Prague, the industrial city of Ostrava, and city of Olomouc typical for its student atmosphere, were selected. Prague represents a prosperous metropolitan city with the best socioeconomic conditions (such as quality of life, the highest income, and the lowest unemployment) in the Czech Republic (Sirovátka and Saxonberg 2010). Ostrava lies in a structurally disadvantaged region facing higher than the national average unemployment, environmental pollution, and problems connected with the transformation and mitigation of the coal mining industry (Hruška-Tvrdý 2011).

Charles University, due to its long tradition and good reputation, draws students from the whole country. Similarly, Olomouc renowned for its student atmosphere and its university is, after Charles University, the oldest university in the Czech Republic. The city of Olomouc has the highest density of university students in Central Europe, while the University of Ostrava has a rather regional character and less of an impact than the other universities.

3.5. Qualitative interviewing

The technique of conducting a semi-structured qualitative interview was used as the method of gathering qualitative data. To reduce the risk of bias and ensure consistency, I maintained similar conditions for each interview (Howard 2003; Rubin and Rubin 2011). The length of the interviews with people active in political organisations was between 40–60 minutes. Interviews with non-active students took approximately 30–40 minutes on average, because these interviews did not cover organisational recruitment and activities within a political or civic group.

Table 6: **Information about the interviews**

Country/Region	City	Date of interviews[35]
West Germany	Cologne, Mannheim	15 June – 14 July 2013 1 – 21 June 2014 1 – 30 September 2015
East Germany	Jena	30 November – 13 December 2014
Czech Republic	Prague, Ostrava, Olomouc	spring 2015, spring 2016

Source: created by Prokschová

I conducted all the interviews myself, because I wanted to use my field notes, including nonverbal expressions and the body language of the interviewees, as well as my personal impressions from the interactions, for the analysis. Generally, only the informant and I, as a researcher, were present.[36] I consider it important for the atmosphere of an interview to be rather informal, friendly, and open. In this respect, I think that my age and status as a PhD student was an advantage. I was only a few years older than the interviewees, and I was also a university student, which meant that the relationship between us was closer.

The meeting place mainly was chosen by the communication partners. If they did not have a particular preference, I suggested a place. Interviews were mostly conducted in a quiet café, at the university or at the interviewee's organisation. Two interviews were conducted via

[35] An objection may arise that data collection was completed during a relatively long period (from 2013 to 2016). This was caused by the fact that all the interviews were organised by a single researcher, and from six cities within two different countries. I did not consider it a limitation of the thesis because my research was focused on issues which were not closely related to the current context, and were not subject to sudden change.

[36] Nevertheless, there were exceptions in Germany where two interviewees who knew each other came together for the interview, and another situation where the communication partner was accompanied by his friend who helped him with the translation of English into German.

Skype as a video chat, because my communication partners were studying abroad at that time. This method did not influence the quality of the interview, apart from the fact that there was a quieter environment for recording, which was a marginal advantage. The interviews were recorded, and I also kept notes. No one refused to take part in the recording.

In the Czech Republic the interviews were conducted in Czech, and in Germany, in English.[37] However, I am satisfied that no significant self-selection bias occurred due to the German communication partners' knowledge of English. If German interviewees did not know a suitable word or phrase in English, they could say it in German. One informant came with his friend who helped him with translation. Another one preferred to conduct the interview just in his native German. That is why I consider that no significant self-selection bias occurred due to any knowledge of English that the German communication partners had.

Regarding the ethics of the research, all communication partners were informed in detail about the purpose of the interview, and signed an informed consent form (see p. 201 in Appendix) about the storage of their records and their use for potential further analysis. All the interviews were pseudonymised.[38] My data contains indirect identification such as interviewees´ age, city, where they study, and the type of their organisations. All my interviewees gave permission for this in their informed consent forms.

The interviews were semi-structured with the aim of not significantly interfering with the interview process. In other words, I let my informants speak as freely as possible. When they stopped speaking, I prompted our conversation by asking supplementary questions (Howard 2003; Katrňák 2004).

Every interview started with questions focused on the interviewee´s political interest. Mostly, I asked variations of the questions: *'How long have you been interested in politics?'* and *'Do you remember why you started to be interested in politics?'* Then, questions tackling the following issues continued as follows:

(1) *'Primary and secondary political socialisation'*: focused mainly on the history of family political engagement and parents' and other family members' relationship to politics.

[37] The reason for this decision was simple. At the time of the research, my knowledge of German was poorer than my English. Therefore, I preferred to use English to capture the nuances and connotations during the interview. However, I was also able to communicate in German.

[38] *Pseudonymisation* is a technique of data anonymisation which involves replacing direct identifiers with a pseudonym, code or number in such a manner that an interviewee cannot be identified without the use of additional information which is kept separately (Enisa 2019:9; Esayas 2015:4).

Furthermore, I concentrated on the role of school with a special focus on civic education, and its impact on the interviewee´s secondary political socialisation.

(2) *'Membership in political organisations'*: covering a description of the motives and perceptions of membership (its advantages, disadvantages, and time aspect).

(3) In the case of organisationally inactive informants, I investigated their *'reasons for avoiding membership of any political or civic group'*.

(4) *'Understanding the notions of politics and citizenship'* by questioning *'What do you imagine when I say the word "politics"?'* and *'What does it mean to you to be "a good citizen"?'*

(5) *'Political behaviour realised inside and beyond organisations'*: I concentrated on both conventional and unconventional types of participation with a focus on political consumerism (such as boycotts, or vice versa, buycotts of certain products for ideological reasons).

(6) *'Media consumption and political communication'*: I focused on the following of political news in traditional and new media. In this regard, attention was paid to the role of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Moreover, I was interested in interpersonal discussion about politics in the family, peer groups, and at school.

At the beginning of the research, I had only a vague idea about the motivations of Czech and German interviewees for their political behaviour. Moreover, most of my information came from foreign (mainly Anglo-American) literature. Therefore, the first several interviews were explorational, and enabled me to have a better insight into the research problem (Katrňák 2004).

The structure of the interviews was similar in the Czech Republic and Germany. The order of the above-mentioned sets of questions was not identical, but was chosen according to the nature of each interview. A detailed guideline of the interview is available in Appendix, pp. 202–203. None of the interviews was conducted in entirely the same way because the findings from the previous interviews influenced the process of the following one. After the first set of interviews, I had a better idea about students´ paths to activism and I could add selected concepts which had been mentioned in previous interviews (Ibid.). This approach is typical for the procedure of qualitative research interview (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Katrňák 2004; Rubin and Rubin 2011).

3.6. Applied thematic analysis

'The qualitative analysis is not about mere counting or providing numeric summaries. Instead, the objective is to discover variation, portray shades of meaning, and examine complexity. The goals of the analysis are to reflect the complexity of human interaction by portraying it in the words of the interviewees and through actual events and to make that complexity understandable to others' (Rubin and Rubin 2011:202).

Interviews were analysed using applied thematic analysis,[39] which is the most common method of textual analysis in qualitative research (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012:11). Thematic analysis was selected because it is very flexible and moves *'beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is themes'* (Ibid.:10). It is the method of identification, analysis, and referencing the same patterns (themes) in the text (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Unlike the grounded theory, thematic analysis enables the usage of theoretical concepts from literature prior to and during the analysis (Rubin and Rubin 2011). This was a very important benefit of the thematic analysis, because I could use the literature on youth political participation to gain better ideas for coding, developing new concepts, and the interpretation of my data.

Another advantage compared to the grounded theory is the fact that thematic analysis does not include the phase of *open coding,* which requires an enormous amount of time, and generates many codes which are never used. In the analysis of my interviews, *open coding* would have been redundant because the raw material of the records contained a large amount of extra information, as well as pauses and disruptions. Thematic analysis only allows coding of the passages related to my main research question and sub-questions (Ibid.).

For coding and the segmentation of data, the computer-assisted qualitative software Atlas.ti was used.[40] It is an easy, quick, and reliable tool for the processing and visualisation of different types of qualitative data such as textual (e.g. interview transcripts, newspaper articles), audio (interview records, radio programmes) and visual (images, photos) (Konopásek 2007; Rihoux 2008). During the thematic analysis, I took the following steps to extract the evidence based interpretations from the raw interview material (Rubin and Rubin 2011).

(1) Immediately after finishing each interview, I typed up the notes I had made. I wrote a brief summary of the content of each interview, focusing on the main highlights. I also added

[39] See the example of applied thematic analysis in Appendix, pp. 222–225.

[40] I learned how to work with Atlas.ti during a workshop *Prague Graduate School in Comparative Qualitative Analysis'* organised by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences within the project SECONOMICS *'Socio-Economics meets Security* on 13 – 18 May 2013.

my comments and impressions about the communication partners (Katrňák 2004). I marked every interview file with the pseudonym of the interviewee, his/her age, university, and organisation.

(2) During the process of analysis, I carefully listened to every interview several times to examine its content and to see what I had learnt, and what I still needed to find out (Rubin and Rubin 2011). I wrote down any additional comments and insights. Then, I transcribed or was assisted in transcribing the interview[41] in the text editor, and then uploaded the transcription to the Atlas.ti programme, where I had also transferred all my notes (as *memo files*) and summary of the interviews.

(3) The next step was data segmentation through coding of the interviews[42] (Guest et al. 2012). The term *code* referred to every meaningful quotation taken from an interviewee´s speech (such as a word, a sentence, several sentences, a paragraph, or several paragraphs) which dealt with the particular issue relevant for my research problem. Codes are less specific than the *themes* of conversation (Ibid.; Rubin and Rubin 2011).

(4) During this part of the analytical process, the codes, with their examples, were systematically sorted into categories according to their meaning and gathered into a single computer file in Atlas.ti. Within this file, I could examine the meaning of the codes in detail. Firstly, I focused on the codes within a single interview. Secondly, analysis of codes across all the interviews followed, to find out what a particular concept meant for the groups of interviewees (Rubin and Rubin 2011). In this regard, attention was paid not to isolated or exceptional experiences, but to the shared characteristics of interviewees, such as repeated patterns of conversation (Guest et al. 2012). My goal was to separate the facts about interviewees´ political behaviour from their interpretations of this behaviour.

(5) Next, finding mutual relationships among the codes followed. I constantly compared, recontextualized, and regrouped the codes to match them into bigger analytical units, in order to identify the main themes (Ibid.). In this part of the analytical process, I created schemes and diagrams to gain a more explicit view of the connections between the codes.

(6) The next step was reviewing the themes and finding the boundaries between them, because they could not overlap with each other. I used the procedure of *hierarchical coding* to find out if some themes were subsumed within others. I created an outline for the detailed

[41] See the example of verbatim interview transcription (including filler words, silences, pauses, and hesitations) in Appendix, pp. 211–221.

[42] I relied on Herbert and Irene Rubin´s definition of coding *'Coding involves systematically labelling concepts, themes, events, and topical markers so that you can readily retrieve and examine all the data units that refer to the same subject across all your interviews'* (Rubin and Rubin 2011:207).

visualisation of relations among themes and the identification of sub-themes. I named the selected themes and sub-themes either according to the concepts from the literature field of youth political participation, as Rubin and Rubin (2011:209) suggested, or named them personally where it was more appropriate (for instance, suitable concepts in the literature were missing, were not accurate or did not match my findings).

(7) I then read all the codes, themes, and sub-themes again, and considered the validity of every theme in the context of all the findings. I checked that no important aspect had been overlooked (Braun and Clarke 2006).

(8) The last step was the connection of the themes with sub-themes, to create a logical and coherent narrative, resulting in the creation of the *story* describing how and why university students participated in politics (Ibid.; Ezzy 2002; King and Horrocks 2010). Finally, broader theoretical conclusions with an attempt to enrich the existing theories of youth political and civic engagement were drawn.

3.7. Limitations of my study design

In the thesis, I rely on an interpretative retrospective approach which is appropriate for examining young people's life stories and paths to political engagement, because it emphasises life experience, and gives space to individual explanations, meanings and understandings of political actions, motivations and relations to politics (Brocki and Wearden 2006; Rubin and Rubin 2011).

Furthermore, the interpretative paradigm enables a flexible research design which is open to the diversity of forms, patterns, and categories in different individual, organisational, and societal contexts (Ibid.; Sandberg 2005). Retrospective design is particularly vital for identifying how young adults view their political socialisation, discussion climate in their families, and civic education at their school. Nevertheless, the following sacrifices are made for these research benefits.

First, qualitative methods cannot provide representativeness between the samples of interviewed students and the general student population of the Czech Republic and Germany. In other words, my study design is not able to achieve a criterion of statistical generalisation (Gerring 2006; Yin 2013).

Moreover, regarding the sampling strategy of interviewees, a problem of self-selection bias might appear (Collier and Mahoney 1996). I was aware of these limitations. My selection was driven by attaining a maximal degree of variation among interviewees, to capture in detail the

nuanced and complex situation of youth activism. Nevertheless, I am aware of the fact that students of social sciences and humanities prevailed among my interviewees. This may be seen as a certain methodological limitation, but my main focus was in the Czech and German context and not on the field of study. Therefore, I do not consider this fact as a serious obstacle of my research.

Second, the validity of retrospective qualitative interviews can be questioned because of its subjective nature and reliance on self-reported data. Consequently, my research results could not achieve the positivistic criteria of objective knowledge and truth (Brocki and Wearden 2006; King and Horrocks 2010; Sandberg 2005).

In other words, my thesis relies on individual reports and joint reflections, and interpretations of the interviewees and myself as a researcher. These reflections are related to participants´ willingness and ability to sufficiently describe their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, as well as the researcher´s skills of adequate analysis. I am aware of the fact that interpretations are influenced by the life experience of my communication partners, as well as by my own research conception. For instance, problems with exaggeration, attribution, and giving socially desirable answers might appear.[43] People also might keep their distance and not be completely open, in order to protect their own or their family and friends´ privacy, as well as their answers possibly being influenced by their mood during the interview or by the interview effect.

Another methodological limitation of the retrospective design lies in the potentially vague or incorrect recall of images from interviewees´ childhood and adolescence (Randall and Phoenix 2009). Nevertheless, this is a natural feature of memory which is episodic and selective, and some details are difficult to fully recollect, while others are emphasized, or vice versa avoided. As William L. Randall and Cassandra Phoenix pointed out in their article *The Problem with Truth in Qualitative Interviews: Reflections from a Narrative Perspective* life stories are not:

> *...videotaped recordings of what actually took place, stored within our brains with computer-like efficiency and retrievable exactly as experienced at the time. They are approximations. They are expurgated versions, refracted from 'the original' through a narrative lens, both at the beginning, when initially experienced, and whenever they are brought to mind thereafter - above all, when we seek to put them into words for the benefit of others* (Ibid.:126).

[43] On problems related to the reconstruction of past feelings and motivation, Catherine Corrigal-Brown in her book *Patterns of Protest* pointed to investigating pathways of participation in social movements. According to her, a proper reconstruction of former feelings and attitudes is complicated at an older age and, therefore, she focuses rather on descriptions of the past behaviour of her interview partners (Corrigall-Brown 2012).

Despite these limitations, on the ground of comprehensive analysis of my own qualitative data, the thesis helps achieve a better understanding of the nature of youth involvement applicable at many levels. My approach is particularly vital as it captures the nuanced and complex situations of youth activism, and creates new theoretical postulates that enhance cumulative knowledge in the field of political participation and socialisation.

4. FAMILY AND POLITICS: Who influences whom, how and why? Mechanisms and narratives in primary political socialisation

This chapter will look in detail at the role of the family in the development and shaping of political values, attitudes, and interests. Firstly, the mechanisms transmitting family influence to political behaviour in the families of interviewees, active as well as inactive in political and civic organisations, will be investigated. Secondly, attention will be paid to interviewees´ perceptions of political narratives in their families, in other words, to the character, quality, and content of family political discussions. In this respect, I will focus on what issues are discussed, as well as on themes which are avoided in political discussion.

4.1. Mechanisms of family political influence

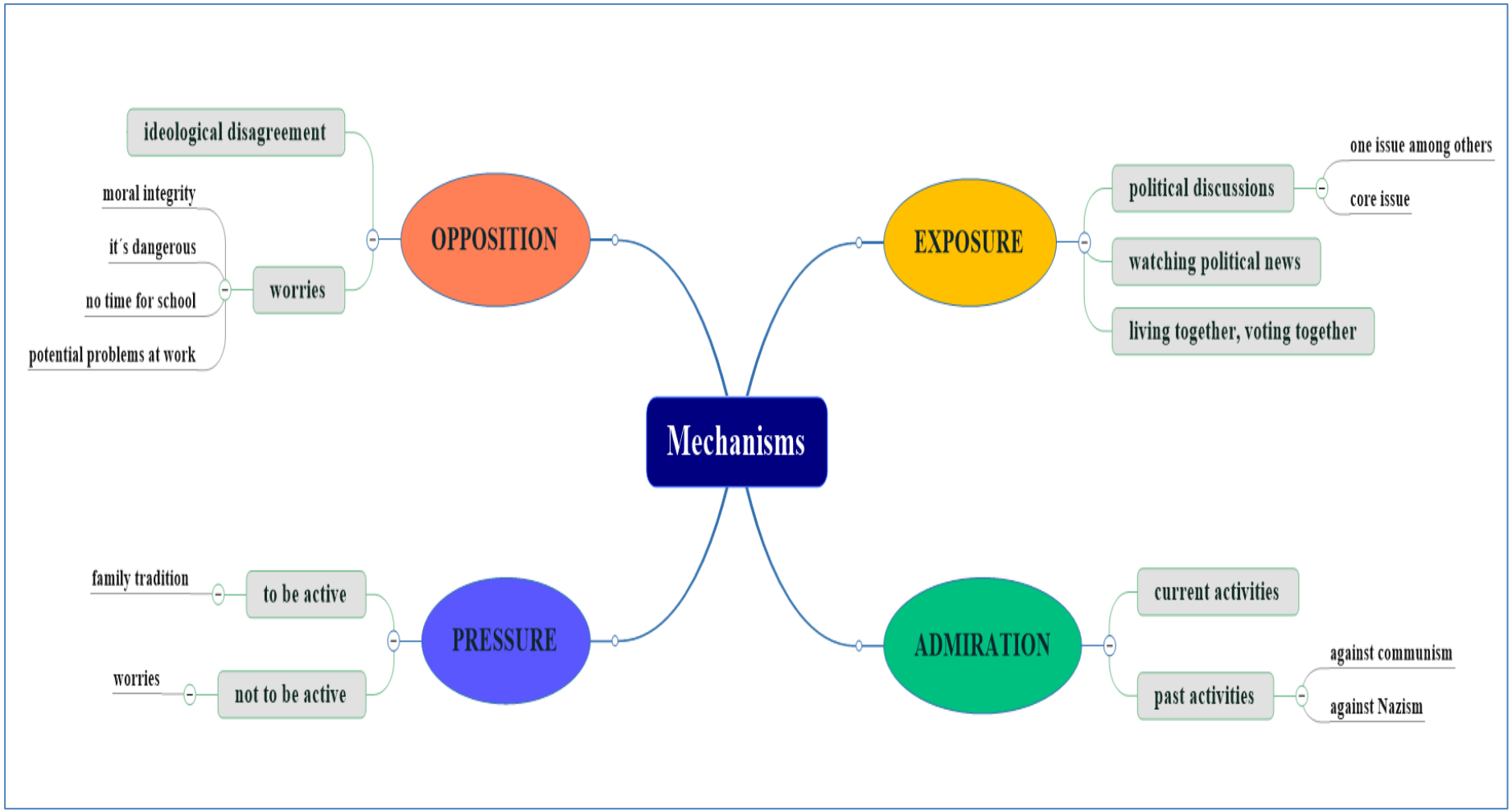
The family influenced interviewees´ life stories through various mechanisms which are summarised in Table 7 and Figure 2. For analytical purposes, the typology of Bruter and Harrison (2009:41–42) was creatively adapted to the Czech and German context.

Table 7: **Mechanisms of family influence**

MECHANISMS OF INFLUENCE	BEHAVIOUR OF PARENTS	PREVAILING NARRATIVE	
		ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERS	NON-ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERS
exposure	support	power-free discourse	discourse of ignorance, power-free discourse
admiration	support	power-free discourse	---
pressure	support, worries	discourse of avoidance	---
opposition	worries	discourse of avoidance	discourse of ignorance, discourse of avoidance

Source: created by Prokschová

Figure 2: **Mechanisms of family influence**



Source: created by Prokschová

4.1.1. Exposure

Among the people I talked to, I identified *exposure* as the prevailing mechanism. Bruter and Harrison (2009:41) defined it as exposure to political stimuli (such as discussions about politics, watching political news and debates, going to polls, and attending political rallies) in a family environment from early childhood. Children take a natural part in their parents´ activities, get inspired by them, and gradually acquire a belief that political participation, including organisational membership, is desirable (Andolina et al. 2003; Bruter and Harrison 2009; Schlozman et al. 2010).

Exposure to political stimuli appeared in interviews at different levels of intensity. In its more intensive form, it is similar to the mechanisms of *admiration* and *pressure*. The dividing line between *admiration* and *pressure* was drawn according to the positive or negative perception of parental influence by the interviewees themselves. To be more specific, certain behaviour meant support and encouragement for some, but perceived as harmful and oppressive for others.

Informants whose parents and other relatives were active in political or civic organisations were exposed to political stimuli more intensively than their counterparts with organisationally non-active family backgrounds. This pattern of family influence is represented by the story of Catholic activist Elke. Her father is the mayor of her hometown, and both her parents are active in several NGOs. They often talk with her about politics, as well as involve her in their protest activities. Elke considers their participation a positive example for her current activities in the Catholic group:

> *Oh, my dad is a politician, so for me it was inevitable to talk about politics* <laughing>. *Not necessarily global politics, but local politics. We have always discussed it, for example, during breakfast, we discussed local politics… With my parents,* [I took part] *in several demonstrations against the Iraq War and George W. Bush and against nuclear energy and nuclear weapons… and* [I attended] *a couple of demonstrations against Neo-Nazis, some on my own and some with my parents* (Elke, 22, Jena, Catholic organisation).

Students active in the political organisations I talked to noticed that they had been listening to parents´ discussions from a very young age, from between five to ten years old. Involvement in these discussions depended on their age. When they were very young, they did not often contribute to family discussions about politics because they did not know much factual information. However, they considered conversations about politics to be normal, and wanted to take part in them. Later, during their secondary and grammar school education, they participated more in these debates.

Ideological agreement in discussions was desirable, especially in families of students engaged in conservative or right-wing organisations. Left-wing interviewees marked themselves as more radical than their parents, or they posed similar opinions as their parents did at their young age before they changed their priorities, as illustrated below:

I would say that I am more left-wing than my parents, more political than them. … My parents were very engaged when they were young, and maybe their opinions were almost as left-wing as mine are now… they were also as concerned about justice as I am now, but at a certain point they did not continue with political activities, they focused more on friends and family (Sebastian, 24, Cologne, radical green activist).

The gender aspect of family involvement played an important role. In particular, fathers, brothers, or uncles were perceived by Czech and German interviewees as more interested, better-informed, more inspiring and rational discussion partners, than female family members. This way of thinking is illuminated in an interview excerpt with Jens, a politically interested student from Mannheim who discusses public affairs mostly with his father:

Jens: *My mother is present, but she does not really contribute much to the discussion. From time to time, she makes a point, but it´s more in an emotional way, how she feels about things. It is not really discussing the concepts or the concrete stuff…*

Daniela: *And with your father, do you discuss politics more theoretically?*

Jens: *Yes, logically, rationally. He is that kind of guy* (Jens, 26, Mannheim, no organisation).

Moreover, communication partners reported that they have followed political news on TV with their parents from a young age, and perceived politics as something very natural, as Theo, a Young Christian Democrat, expressed:

Yes, that was a kind of a family thing, we usually watched the news together… since my dad was watching the news every day and we all were sitting there. I wasn´t forced, I just wanted to spend some time in the evening with them (Theo, 19, Jena, centre-right party).

Under these circumstances, media content soon became an appropriate starting point for family discussions on political topics, as well as a good source of political information. For instance, Václav, a Young Christian Democrat, describes the formative influence of TV political news on his interest:

I started to be interested in politics at the age of five or six <giggling>. *In my family, we have always watched the news together. It was not compulsory, but it was a habit. Therefore, from the age of four, five years old I was used to watching political news. I was that type of kid who makes notes about everything. I made tables, for instance, about who was the chairman of the Christian Democrats or chairman of their club* <laughing>. *Thus, I gained a certain political overview and I was kind of interested in it* (Václav, 20, Prague, centre-right political organisation).

While Václav was interested in political news in general, another informant connected the beginnings of her interest to a particular historical milestone - the fall of the Berlin Wall. She was only three years old at that time, but she remembered clearly the situation in her family:

I knew that my parents were sitting in front of the television for the whole day… They had never believed that this could happen (---)[44] *and I know that I was sitting with them. … Yeah, I mean I think it was the time when I said ok, there are some people who rule the country* (Katharina, 28, Mannheim, no organisation).

It was noteworthy that the analysis revealed the opposite direction in the mechanism of *exposure* manifested in the transition of influence from children to other family members. In this respect, organisationally involved informants were successful in their efforts to change their parents´ attitudes and behaviour. This influence was realised indirectly by the gradual exposure of parents to the activities of their children.

They motivated them to take part in political meetings or demonstrations, and sometimes they managed to change parents´ lifestyle. For example, Eva, a vegan and environmental activist from Charles University, changed the eating habits of her parents who *'reduced their meat consumption to once a week'* (Eva, 30, Prague, ecological activist) by pointing out the negative aspects of mass stockbreeding production.

Moreover, parents clarified their own opinions in discussions with their politically active children. This situation is illustrated by the example of Iva, a 24-year-old feminist and left-wing activist from Prague, who describes political talks with her mother: *'We spoke about it* [my involvement] *a lot and she realised that her opinions were similar to mine. She is left wing, but I think that she is more moderate than me'.*

'Yeah, my father, he has always been so keen on discussing things. Discussions were at breakfast, dinner; we have always discussed these kinds of things' (Lukas, 23, Jena, anarchist, university politics). Lukas exemplified a typical approach to politics in highly-interested families where political talks were among the core issues and important parts of the daily routine. This pattern was visible particularly in families where parents were also active in political or civic organisations.

Nevertheless, in the mechanism of *exposure* there were highly diverse patterns of relationships to politics. Especially in families of interviewees who were not active in political and civic organisations, parents and siblings were to a certain extent interested in political issues, and politics was discussed, but not on a regular basis, which is illustrated by the following quotation:

[44] The recording of the interview was poor at this point, and it was not possible to understand what was said.

Daniela: *And would you say that your parents are interested in politics?*

Kristin: *I think not so much that we need to talk about it. They follow the news to be up to date, but I think it is not like a personal interest in it. …with my father I sometimes speak about it* [politics] *but not that much. When I start* [talking] *about it or when we watch the news together… but it´s not like that we speak about it for the whole evening, just for a few minutes. It is not a big topic in our family* (Kristin, 25, Mannheim, no organisation).

In families where politics was only one issue among many, the most attention was paid to the political situation before the elections. This interest in politics was manifested in more frequent talks with family members about political parties and candidates, and in gathering information to make a responsible electoral decision. This attempt is described by Přemysl, a politically non-active student of the University of Ostrava who explains when he is interested in politics and where he finds political information:

At the time of election, I check what is happening and is interesting, to be able to choose which party I should vote for. Mostly, I spend a lot of time on this, but I don´t deal with politics till the next elections…. You know, <pause to consider> *about three days before* [elections], *I start to google everything possible… I mean particular parties and people who are standing for them* (Přemysl, 22, Ostrava, no organisation).

Organisationally non-active students, as well as their parents, mostly considered the act of voting a citizen's responsibility, as is visible from the following testimonies. Nevertheless, this attention is paid only to general elections. Elections for the European Parliament or municipal elections are not so important to them:

Going to the polls is an absolute necessity. I think when we have democracy, voting is the absolute minimum a man should do when he is not active otherwise (Michal, 23, Olomouc, no organisation).

I perceived this [voting] *as a sort of duty… Although I am not interested in it* [politics] *and I don´t participate in it, I think that it´s the right thing to go to the polling station and decide there* (Přemysl, 22, Ostrava, no organisation).

My parents are like these good citizens, <smiling> *and take care of stuff like that* (Arnošt, 22, Olomouc, no organisation).

Similarly, students active in political or civic organisations considered the act of voting a civic responsibility. However, this activity was one among many of the possibilities of how to be a good citizen and participate in the decision-making process. Organisationally active interviewees reported a broader conceptualisation of good citizenship, which the example of ecological activist Sebastian demonstrates: *'I would never say that people are politically*

active enough because this is something you can never achieve. You can always try to be a good citizen and to be engaged' (Sebastian, 24, Cologne, radical green activist).

4.1.2. Admiration

I met with Lenka in a student café in Olomouc, where she is completing her PhD in social sciences at Palacky University. Lenka exemplifies the path to activism through the mechanism of *admiration* which Bruter and Harrison (2009:47) define as inspiration by a family member who is active in a political or civic organisation. According to them, young people from households where organisational participation plays a strong part in family history feel that their political activism is expected and welcome. Therefore, they perceive it to be natural to continue in the family participatory tradition, in the same or a different organisation.

Similarly, Lenka admits that politics plays a central role in her life because her mother was a founding member of the Czech Social Democratic Party in her hometown. Lenka describes how she and her older brother were raised in a single-parent household where they were exposed to party life on a daily basis:

> *Well, actually, from the first year of elementary school, I used to attend meetings of a local organisation. She* [mother] *always picked me up from school and we went there. I did my homework and stuff like that there* <smiling>. *Mum also took me to these events like family party trips on weekends, and so on. I grew up with this* (Lenka, 26, Olomouc, centre-left party).

Lenka took party meetings, negotiations, and electoral campaigns for granted. She did not regret the time her mother devoted to her activism. On the contrary, she admired her enthusiasm and wanted to be like her. She decided to enter the Czech Social Democratic Party at the age of 18 to follow her mother´s example: *'You know, they* [other organisational members] *have known me since childhood, so it was actually just a formality to sign the application'* she says, recalling the moment she officially joined the party.

However, Lenka also sees a disadvantage in this path to activism and mentions the lack of respect that she felt from her older party colleagues. Therefore, she had to prove to them that she was not *'...that seven-year-old girl anymore, I have a certain education and experience and my opinions are equal to theirs'.*

The analysis showed that the political engagement of family members had a positive impact on my communication partners, regardless if it was in the same organisation or in a different one. For example, an interviewee from the University of Cologne active in the Green Party spoke with pride about the involvement of his grandparents in CDU. Even though he

did not agree with the politics of the Christian Democrats, he appreciated that his grandparents had always been active citizens.

The mechanism of *admiration* was typical for families that actively protested against the communist regime. For example, Pavel, a centre-left party member and green activist, appreciated his father's participation in Catholic samizdat. He pointed to the fact that his family had the Samizdat printer at home, even though it was dangerous. Another example was Eva, an animal-welfare activist, who claimed about her parents that:

They accepted my activism very well because they had always been active. In the previous regime my dad signed A Few Sentences[45] *so it was common to be somehow politically active in the family… My great-uncle was a member of parliament for the National socialists*[46] *and he was one of the few who voted against Normalisation …* (Eva, 30, Prague, ecological activist).

Students like Pavel and Eva expressed admiration at and pride for the involvement of their relatives, and perceived them as a personal inspiration. Moreover, their families also supported them in their political activism. Discussions about politics, including the communist experience, were among the most frequent topics of conversation. In this respect, an influential part of the family political narrative was persecution during the communist regime, for example, the story of a family member who could not study or was fired from work for political reasons.

Like the mechanism of *exposure, admiration* was often mutual and reciprocal. Parental admiration of the political or civic activities of their children was manifested in many ways, such as pride, emotional or financial support, and asking for advice. These activities were context-specific, while family socioeconomic status and particularly the level of educational attainment of parents played a crucial role.

In working class families, the children´s influence was mostly direct. Parents were willing to change their behaviour not for ideological reasons, but because they wanted to facilitate the involvement of their children, for instance, by attending a political rally, voting for their party in elections, or even joining their political organisation. The last situation is described by Lukáš, whose mother works as a cleaning lady:

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[45] *A Few Sentences* (Několik vět) was a petition written by the *Charta 77* movement, and released in June 1989 demanding the democratisation of the former Czechoslovakia (including freedom of the press, religion and assembly, as well as the release of all political prisoners). About 40 000 people signed this document (Renner and Samson 1993).

[46] Eva speaks about the *Czechoslovak National Socialist Party* (Československá strana národně socialistická) which became part of *National Front* (Národní fronta) after 1945. In 1948, this party was renamed the *Czechoslovak Socialist Party* (Československá strana socialistická) and cooperated closely with the Communist Party until 1989. She speaks about voting in the *National Assembly* (Czechoslovakian Parliament) on the *Treaty on Stationing of Soviet Troops in Czechoslovakia* from 16 October 1968. Only four members of the National Assembly voted against this document (Renner and Samson 1993).

I brought my mom there [to the Czech Social Democratic Party on a local level]. *She would not have gone there without me. They* [parents] *keep away from politics. She went there because of me, to help my organisation to have more members* (Lukáš, 29, Ostrava, centre-left party, local NGO).

Organisationally active children studying at university gained the respect of their working-class parents and had a reputation as experts who *'know a lot about politics'* or who *'know how politics really works'*. They helped their parents and other family members (for instance younger siblings) to orient themselves in politics, advised them about practical issues, and sometimes even recommended which party to vote for.

An example of this is Tadeáš, a self-confident young man and the only one in his family who has studied at university. He admits that his relatives act as a *'benchmark* <he uses the English word "*benchmark"* in the Czech interview> *to evaluate if I am speaking clearly enough, because I would also like people who do not follow politics regularly, to understand what I am talking about in the media'* (Tadeáš, 23, Prague, centrist political organisation).

He further describes how he helped to protect his uncle, who owns a restaurant, from *'bullying'* by the Czech Trade Inspection Authority. He found the place where a complaint could be made about, according to their opinion, *'unjust treatment',* and their problem was quickly solved. Moreover, he advised his uncle to contact a local MP for a party for which he had voted. He said that this meeting was an exceptional experience for his uncle. Tadeáš is proud that he has managed to connect his family with politics and he continues trying to do so.

His story also demonstrates the perception of politics as a remote issue in blue collar families of politically active communication partners. As he noted:

You know, for people in my family it's always some anonymous institution <stressing the word 'institution'>*, but I told them that there are control mechanisms. You know, for my family, all the institutions, as well as politicians are very distant, I mean they are these people on TV. For them* [relatives] *it is entirely unbelievable that they can talk with them like with normal guys* <laughing>.

There was a different type of media consumption for parents and their organisationally active children in working-class families. My communication partners followed the television news channels ČT24, ZDF, or streamed world news on the Internet, while their parents found political information from tabloid sources such as Blesk, Bild and private television channels such as Nova and RTL.

For instance, Ladislav, a student of political science from Olomouc, became interested in the 2013 Czech presidential election while at grammar school, and followed it on ČT24. Now,

he uses ČT24 and public radio ČRo on his computer as background noise for 90% of his time. For example, he listens to the meetings of the Chamber of Deputies because he likes *'following how these politicians are discussing topics there'*. This multitasking is a typical pattern of news consumption in the case of politically engaged interviewees. Ladislav is the only one from his family with a university degree; his father works as a mason, and his mother is a shopkeeper. When I asked if they followed news or political debates on TV together, he answered:

Well, they [parents] *prefer tabloids like Blesk, Nova, Prima, and so on. Fortunately, we solved that because I have my own television in my room, so everybody can follow what he/she wants* <smiling>. *They watch Nova in the living room and I follow ČT24 in my room* (Ladislav, 24, Olomouc, local civic platform).

4.1.3. Pressure

Pressure is the third mechanism identified during the analysis of interviews. Nevertheless, this route to activism appeared rather marginally among the people I talked to. Some of my informants articulated that they felt *'pushed'* or *'strongly encouraged'* by their family to be organisationally active. In this case, family political heritage played an important role. Parents wanted their children to continue in the family tradition of involvement in the same organisation. Their reasons were both ideological as well as utilitarian. They believed that political engagement would bring their children contacts and, money, and enhance their career prospects.

This pathway to organisational membership was typical in a German context where involvement in political organisations was considered prestigious. The story of Elias, a CDU member, illuminates this way of thinking. He was raised in a conservative family where, as he admitted, *'many of them* [relatives] *are members of CDU, so it´s really common that you are something like pushed to join the* [Christian] *Democratic Union in the family'* (Elias, 22, Cologne, centre-right party and youth organisation). Elias did not perceive this pressure as harmful. On the contrary, his view was pragmatic, as we can see from the following testimony describing the role of his father at the start of his organisational career:

You know, my father asked them [CDU on local level]*... For me it was good because the name of my father was on the list, they knew him. He is a teacher and has a good reputation in the city. He is a member of different clubs and on the boards of different things, so he said that I could try it* [joining

CDU]. *... Now I am also involved in many clubs in* ***[47] [his hometown] *and I know a lot of people, so politics for me is a really interesting thing* <proudly>.

4.1.4. Opposition

The last mechanism is also connected with pressure. However, the direction of family influence is the opposite when compared to the mechanism of *pressure*. In the case of *opposition,* parents and other family members disagree with the political activities of children and push them to stop or mitigate their involvement.

Bruter and Harrison (2009: 43) identified mechanisms of *opposition* in families where someone poses extremist political opinions. Nevertheless, my analysis revealed that this mechanism was also present in families with non-radical political beliefs. My informants stated that their parents disagreed with their organisational membership because they were worried about their future. The reasons for these worries were multiple.

First, parents were afraid about the moral integrity of their children after their entering party life.[48] The following interview excerpt illustrates these concerns. Václav, who was raised by Catholic parents in a small village in the South Moravian Region and is active in the Christian Democratic Party in the capital, described to me his mother´s concerns:

My mum thinks that it [politics] *is very dirty. In short, her opinions are a sort of uh…you know, she is afraid…* <pause to consider> *she writes to me from time to time that I should take care. Yeah, I would say that she is afraid that a man in politics can be involved in something dirty which can destroy him. ...I often argue with her that there* [in politics] *is also something good. And what is dirty should be cleaned* (Václav, 20, Prague, centre-right party).

Second, parents did not agree with the involvement of their children because they feared potentially negative consequences for their future careers, as well as for their public image, as illuminated by the following story of a Young Conservative:

They [parents] *feel disillusionment and an aversion to politics, and they are not excited by my activities... because when somebody is active in politics, others look at him like at somebody whose intentions are not pure… they* [parents] *don´t want politics to be my job and for people to gossip about me* (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

These two partly interconnected approaches were salient, especially in the stories of the Czech students I talked to. The explanation for this might be found in the general scepticism towards politics in Czech society, where membership in a political party is often considered suspicious (more information is provided in the summarising chapter, p. 162). With this trend

[47] The name of his hometown was deleted for anonymisation.
[48] Activities in the civic sector did not raise similar concerns.

of perception of politics as something harmful, strategies to have *'peace in your mind'* and *'not stress about stuff that you cannot change anyway'* (Věra, 23, Olomouc, no organisation) are closely linked. For instance, for the sister of the organisationally active student, Alma, her involvement was an alarming example because:

> *She* [the sister] *wants to go to work, come back home from work, cook for her husband, read something in the evening, watch TV, and go to bed. This is her ideal life and my life is, for her, just chaos and pointless stress* <smiling sadly>. *She does not want to live like me* (Alma, 30, Ostrava, university politics).

Third, cautious or negative attitudes of family towards politics were related to the historical context of communism or Nazism. Some relatives who had lived under authoritarian or totalitarian regimes were aware of the fact that the future is uncertain, and that people could again be persecuted for their political beliefs and behaviour.

For instance, an interviewee from Mannheim was warned by her grandmother against membership in a political organisation. Her grandmother's parents had disagreed with National Socialism and banned her membership in Hitlerjugend. For the grandmother, it was felt as a great disadvantage because she was the only one of her classmates and friends who did not join this organisation, and she felt isolated as a result. The family faced many problems during Nazism as a result of their bravery. That was the reason her grandmother expressed the opinion that it was safer not to be engaged in politics at all because: *'she keeps saying "we have a stable regime and stable parties at the moment, but you don't know what might happen in thirty or forty years"'* (Katharina, 28, Mannheim, no organisation).

The fourth reason for having concerns was connected with the type of informants´ involvement. In this respect, the analysis showed similar patterns of disagreement as Bruter and Harrison (2009:42–43) who claim that salient concerns of family members are presented in the case or radical activism. Even very supportive parents mostly have two conditions, as the following quotation summarises: *'Don´t let them beat you or imprison you. Otherwise, you can do what you want'* (Iva, Prague 24, feminist, left-wing activist). Fear of radical activism is demonstrated in two examples from the former East and West Germany.

Lena is a far-left activist. She is a member of the youth Marxist-Leninist organisation and communist arty. Moreover, she is active in university politics, where she protested against the attempt to introduce tuition fees at the University of Cologne. As she said below, her parents have ambivalent attitudes to her activism:

> Lena: *They supported me during the education strikes, and they thought that it was good that I was active there. However, when they worked out that I was in a socialist organisation, they, ehm* <looking

for the right words> *yeah, it was a problem for them. …. I had to struggle to tell them that I was in the Communist Party, of course.*

Daniela: *So, do you talk to them about politics and about your involvement?*

Lena: *I try to avoid it* <laughing> *because we always have fights about it. My father says, yeah, that the Soviet Union was basically just another dictatorship and he compares it to the Nazi regime* (Lena, 26, Cologne, far-left party and youth organisation).

Lena´s parents disagree with her because of her ideological principles, but they are not worried about her safety. The situation is different in the case of Lukas, Lena's counterpart from East Germany. He is very active in university politics in Jena, but his engagement also includes more dangerous and controversial aspects. He is an anarchist, and an anti-Nazi and alter-globalisation activist. He has demonstrated against police brutality, as well as taking part in the occupation of buildings in Hamburg. His activities sometimes take place on the edge of the law.

Lukas´s parents are ambivalent in their opinions about his involvement. On the one hand, they are happy that he can speak his mind freely, but on the other hand, they dislike it when he gets into trouble. As he recalls, they strongly disagreed with him when they found out about his trial for disobeying police orders and insulting a policeman:

You know, I said some mean words to the police officer <laughing>*… Yeah, I did not follow his instructions and this was punishable somehow… Neo-Nazis had the right to march and I was kind of blockading them and they* [police] *said that it was against the law and we had to go away. They said it three times and then they carried me away. However, I thought that I had to do it for moral reasons* (Lukas, 23, Jena, anarchist, university politics).

The last source of parenting worries, typical for the Czech and German context, was connected to the intensity and time devoted to involvement. In other words, parents were alarmed by the fact that the political activities of their children were very time-consuming and prevented them from focusing on their studies: *'My mom, she says stuff like* <pause to consider> *"you have to study, you do not have so much time", but yes, she supports me in whatever I do'* (Maria, 26, Cologne, centre-right party and youth organisation). Maria understands the worries of her mother and admits that engagement in CDU and RCDS[49] takes a lot of her time. Sometimes she feels that she does not have enough time to prepare sufficiently for exams, and that is why she feels under pressure.

[49] *Association of Christian Democratic Students* (Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten).

Maria is definitely not an exception among the people I talked to.[50] Some of them even devote more than 40 hours per week to their *'hobby and vocation'* (Tadeáš, 23, Prague, centrist political organisation) their term for politics. For these people, their involvement is a full-time job which is unpaid, and sometimes prevents them from completing their studies. However, their activities are rewarding for them in different ways (such as gaining new skills, contacts, fun, and self-development) according to what specifically motivates them (see Chapter 6, pp. 130, 131, and 134). That is why they want to handle everything - school, friends and activism because *'you don´t go to a battle expecting to lose'* <resolutely> (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

4.2. Narratives, content and quality of family political discussions: What we are (not) talking about and why

The previous part of the chapter showed that organisationally active informants perceived family discussions as essential for the development of their political interest, knowledge, and conviction. However, the evaluation of family political talks differed according to the mechanism of influence. Now, we will investigate its role in more detail by focusing on discursive strategies in family political discussions, its climate, content and development of tensions. In this respect, Table 8 offers my original typology of discursive practices,[51] which stems from the themes identified in interviews.

[50] Nevertheless, in my sample there were also communication partners who spent just a couple of hours or less per month on political or civic activities. In these cases, their parents were naturally not worried about the time aspect of their engagement.

[51] I understand discursive practises as being *'linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics of recurring episodes of face-to-face interaction; episodes that have social and cultural significance to a community of speakers'* (Young 2009).

Table 8: **Family political narratives**

DISCOURSE	DESCRIPTION	SALIENCE OF POLITICS
power-free discourse	tolerant climate, not necessarily agreement, fun, mutual understanding, trust, discussion as a game	highly important issue vs. one among many
discourse of avoidance	the lack of mutual respect and trust, taboo issues: communist past, refugees, ethnic minorities	highly important issue vs. one among many
discourse of ignorance	the lack of interest, disgust with politics	not salient issue

Source: created by Prokschová

4.2.1. Power-free discourse: *'I respect your opinion'*

Power-free discourse was presented mainly in families where the influence was realised through mechanisms of *exposure* and *admiration* (see Table 7, p. 73). Communication partners reported that family political discussions played an important role in shaping their opinions, practicing the art of dialogue and persuasion of others. Other opinions among family members or friends were not perceived as a problem. Using Ochs´s and Taylor´s typology of family political narratives (1992), children were not only the *recipients* of political messages, but also *introducers* of new issues and the *main narrators* in conversation.

The possibility of discussion and the atmosphere of mutual understanding, support, and respect were valued more than the ideological agreement. This approach is illustrated by the testimony of Lukas, whose involvement contains radical aspects which his parents disapprove of. However, he wants to explain his motivation to them:

I think that I am able to convince them [parents] *about certain things… or they can at least understand my point of view. I wish they understood why I do that. And I think that they are starting to understand it because I spend a lot of time talking to them and explaining it to them* (Lukas, 23, Jena, anarchist, university politics).

The family discussion climate was labelled by the interviewed students as *'open'*, *'cool'*, *'unproblematic'* and *'tolerant'*. Political talks were considered a natural part of dialogue. Similarly, the discussions were connected with fun and perceived as a game with a non-zero sum which could have multiple winners. In other words, no opinion was automatically considered superior, and every family member had enough space for self-expression. This approach did not only cover political talks, but also equality in more aspects of family life

(such as decision-making, spending money, and the division of household chores in the family) as the results from Deborah Gordon´s qualitative research (2007) also indicate.

Although parental support and recognition were essential for all the people I interviewed, differences appeared according to the national contexts. *Power-free discourse* was typical, especially for communication partners from the former West Germany. Interviewees from Mannheim and Cologne felt that no issues were avoided in their families and seen as taboo, and the questions related to historical legacy were among the subjects of debate.

For instance, the period of Nazism was highly reflected in discussions in their families. Nevertheless, some interviewees stated that experiences from the Hitlerjugend or Wehrmacht were among the most sensitive issues for their grandparents, and those that they did not want to speak about. However, interviewees could discuss these topics with their parents or other relatives. Furthermore, an understanding of the causes and consequences of World War Two, as well as German guilt for the Holocaust, was the first political topic that some of my communication partners were interested in. They also discussed issues connected with Nazism in history and civic education lessons at school, (as Chapter 5, p. 104 describes) and this was an appropriate starting point for deeper talks with their relatives about this theme.

Within the atmosphere of *power-free discourse*, children were willing to understand the motivation of their parents or grandparents for their political behaviour, and were tolerant of other opinions. For example, interviewees from the former West Germany explained the opinions of their parents as being because of the era in which they had been brought up. They mentioned that their parents' conservative attitudes may have been formed because their parents came from the generation of so-called *Baby boomers*, raised at the time of the *German economic miracle* (Wirtschaftswunder), which emphasised the role of individualism and success. This is illustrated by the assumptions of the environmental activist Gita from Cologne about the origins of the political values of her father:

I would not say that my father is right-wing, but sometimes he has more of a liberal direction. … I can understand his points somehow because when he grew up it was just after the Second World War. I think that for him it´s [competitiveness] *something very good, important, but for me it´s something that has to be seen very critically, so we are not of the same opinion* (Gitta, 21, Cologne, environmental youth organisation, NGO).

Even though Gitta cannot agree with her father on certain political issues, such as competitiveness, globalisation, and capitalism, she enjoyes their discussions and emphasizes that she wants to understand and respect his viewpoints. She speaks intensively with both of

her parents. With her mother, she talks about ethical and philosophical issues *'you know, about freedom and these questions'* which she connects inherently to politics.

Understanding parental motivation was sometimes a long and painful process, especially when it was connected with the discovery of skeletons in the family history closet, as the story of Kryštof typifies. At the age of twelve, he was confronted with the fact that his parents were members of the Communist Party, because he found their party identification cards. In the following quote, he describes his own reaction:

> *You know, I approached this rather negatively. Maybe it was a type of generational conflict or I wanted to see myself against my parents, I don't know. And this right-wing environment of gymnasium in* ***[52] [his hometown] *where history was taught very conservatively also did not help… yeah, but later I found my way to the social issues and understood better the reasons of my parents and something like a reconciliation happened* (Kryštof, 26, Prague, anarchist and left-wing activist).

Kryštof was interested in the motives of his parents for entering the Communist Party. His father joined the party because of an ideological conviction, while the reasons of his mother were rather pragmatic. She had a higher chance of getting a flat as a Communist Party member. Kryštof appreciated the openness of his parents, and told me that since that time he has feelt that he can speak with them *'about everything'* including his own activism. He sees this family climate of trust as formative for his involvement. Kryštof states that he is rather exceptional among his anarchist and left-wing friends because *'others have more xenophobic or rightist parents than me and they cannot talk about politics at home'*. This brings us to the next discursive strategy.

4.2.2. Discourse of avoidance: *'They cannot talk about politics at home'*

I met with Veronika in a theatre café in the city centre of Ostrava. The activities of this student of journalism in her *'left-wing group'*[53] include, squatting, which she calls *'saving old houses because nobody else will do it apart from me'*, organising non-conformist cultural events in public spaces, and anti-racist and pro-refugee demonstrations and happenings. She seems to be very dedicated to these issues, which take a lot of her time. In the future, she wants to be a professional activist, *'to devote 100% of my paid as well as unpaid time to this'*.

Nevertheless, she is not able to share her passion with her parents, although they are interested in politics and also have left-wing opinions. According to Veronika, they belong to

[52] The name of his hometown was deleted for the reason of pseudonymisation.
[53] Veronika asked for her organisation to be referred to as a *'left-wing group'* in the thesis for reasons of anoonymisation.

the conservative Old Left and she sees herself as a New Leftist. That is why she assumes that they would not be able to find a consensus in discussions. As she says:

My parents talk about politics a lot, but I am rather in opposition with some questions, for example, those dealing with refugees and minorities. They [parents] *disagree with me and I prefer not to talk about these issues with them* <pause to consider>. *You know, it´s kind of difficult, my voice does not have enough strength or respect. That is why I am not involved in these debates and try to avoid them* (Veronika, 24, Ostrava, left-wing activist).

The interview excerpt above illustrates key features of *discourse of avoidance* which was rather salient in the families of the Czech students I talked to. From Veronika´s story, we can see that although politics is a frequent topic of conversation, issues perceived as controversial are, for the sake of *'keeping peace in the family',* omitted from discussion. Students like Veronika state that they hide their political opinions or activities from their parents because they want to avoid blame and accusations.

On the one hand, they feel that their opinions are not respected enough and their values are marginalized and overlooked in their family setting. On the other, they do not try to understand the perspective of their parents and other relatives either. *Discourse of avoidance*, appeared in families together with the mechanisms of *pressure* or *opposition*.

In the Czech context, issues with refugees and the European migrant crisis, topics dealing with the Roma minority, as well as with the communist legacy were among the more sensitive subjects of conversation. For instance, interviewees stated that they felt it to be inappropriate to speak with their parents about their involvement during communism. For some of them, it was such a taboo subject that they did not know whether their parents were members of the Communist Party or not, which the following excerpt illustrates:

As far as I know, my parents have never wanted to speak about this much. I remember that my father said that he has actually had two lives: the first during communism and the second now. Actually, we have never spoken about it much. … I don´t know how it was [parental membership in the Communist Party]. *I think that they don´t want to share this information with me. Generally, I think that this is an issue that people are quite ashamed of. They don´t want to publicly share if they were in the Communist Party or not* (Arnošt, 22, Olomouc, no organisation).

The question remains if parents had really avoided speaking about their past, or if it was only the impression of their children. In this respect, it would be very interesting to also give space to the other family members.[54] It may be possible that *discourse of avoidance* represents

[54] Nevertheless, this remains a challenging issue for future research. The aim of my thesis is not to judge who is right or wrong, but to focus primarily on life stories, their perceptions, and the interpretations of my Czech and German communication partners.

the unwillingness to talk about unpopular issues in the family in this situation, and that communication partners do not want to spoil the positive image of their parents by being too curious about their past.

Furthermore, in families where parents admitted that they were members of the Communist Party, this membership was justified in parental narratives as *'forced'*, they were not *'real communists'* and played only a passive role in the party. Surprisingly, the informants did not question these interpretations, and agreed that their parents or other relatives had no other reasonable option, as the following excerpt describes. *'My grandparents had to be members of the Communist Party but they were never active there, nobody was active'* (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

Some participants also mentioned that their parents, who used to be Communist Party members, underwent a significant reversal of opinions in the sense of *turning their coats* after the Velvet Revolution. Now, they pose right-wing opinions on the invisible role of the market, and the dangers of civil society, as well as associating left-wing political issues automatically with communist ideology, which they reject very strongly.[55] Neither in this context did interviewees criticize or oppose this behaviour of parents, which could appear contradictory in relation to their previous activities. They preferred not to speak about it with parents or judged their behaviour as *'normal'* or *'necessary'*.

Interestingly, East German communication partners did not perceive the communist involvement of family members as taboo as their Czech counterparts did. They stated that they could talk freely with their parents about their communist experience, including membership in the Communist Party, even though they felt that it was not easy for their parents to speak about it. In this respect, a positive role was ascribed to civic education at school, which focused on these issues.

4.2.3. Discourse of ignorance: *'So what? Tell me, why should we care?'*

'It´s my lifestyle that I don´t deal with negative stuff such as politics' Věra, a 23-year-old student of social sciences at the Palacky University in Olomouc, told me. She does not like the politics that she connects with negative emotions, people, and things. That is why she does not want politics to feature in her life. Věra reported that politics was not an issue relevant for conversation in her family. Nevertheless, she admitted that she was influenced by the negative attitudes of her parents towards politics, which she ascribed to the mass media:

[55] During the period of Czech democratic transformation, this discourse was represented by the former Czech prime minister and former president Václav Klaus (Eyal 2000:51; Myant 2005:249–250; Rakušanová 2007:44).

We don´t talk about it much… but you know, my family is influenced by that media stuff. I think that people always say only what they know from TV, but they don´t have their own opinion [on politics]. *... We don´t talk much about what is going on in the world* (Věra, 23, Olomouc, no organisation).

A similar pattern is presented in the family of Roman, who studies humanities at the University of Ostrava. He states that his parents read the political sections of the newspaper, and are really angry about political scandals and the migration crisis:

They say 'we cannot influence this anyway, so why should we care?'. Yes, they are dissatisfied and sceptical about it [politics]. *My sister as well, when I want to talk to her about politics, she says 'don´t bother me with this, I don´t want to speak about this because I cannot influence it at all'* (Roman, 26, Ostrava, no organisation).

However, Roman says he is different. In contrast to his relatives, he claims that he is very interested in politics. Nevertheless, he shares with them the belief that he cannot influence politics. He considers that the only people capable of influencing the political process are *'idiots just interested in money'.* This is how he describes professional politicians. His opinion of politics in general is very critical and blunt as well. That is why he would never join any political organisations, and in particular political parties, which he distrusts with the same intensity as his parents.

Věra and Roman were raised in families where *discourse of ignorance* prevailed. There, politics was considered (1) a distant issue that they felt that they did not understand well, (2) was not particularly important for their lives, (3) which they were not interested in, (4) and which was perceived negatively. Overall, we can state that the relationship to politics in families like those of Věra and Roman lies somewhere between political passivity and disgust with politics. They do not debate political issues often, including their electoral preferences, as illustrated by the following interview excerpt with Thomas from the University of Mannheim:

Daniela: *When you were a kid, did you go to the polls with your parents?*

Thomas: *No*.

Daniela: *Did your parents vote?*

Thomas: *I think they voted, but it was not a big deal... they just voted and went home.*

Daniela: *You did not speak about it?*

Thomas: *No, not very much*.

Daniela: *So, did you know, before elections which party they voted for?*

Thomas: *Not as a kid, I did not have much knowledge about the parties and party system* (Thomas, 22, Mannheim, no organisation).

This kind of discourse was present also in the families of organisationally active interviewees, such as the testimony of Eliška, a member of the Czech Social Democratic Party, shows:

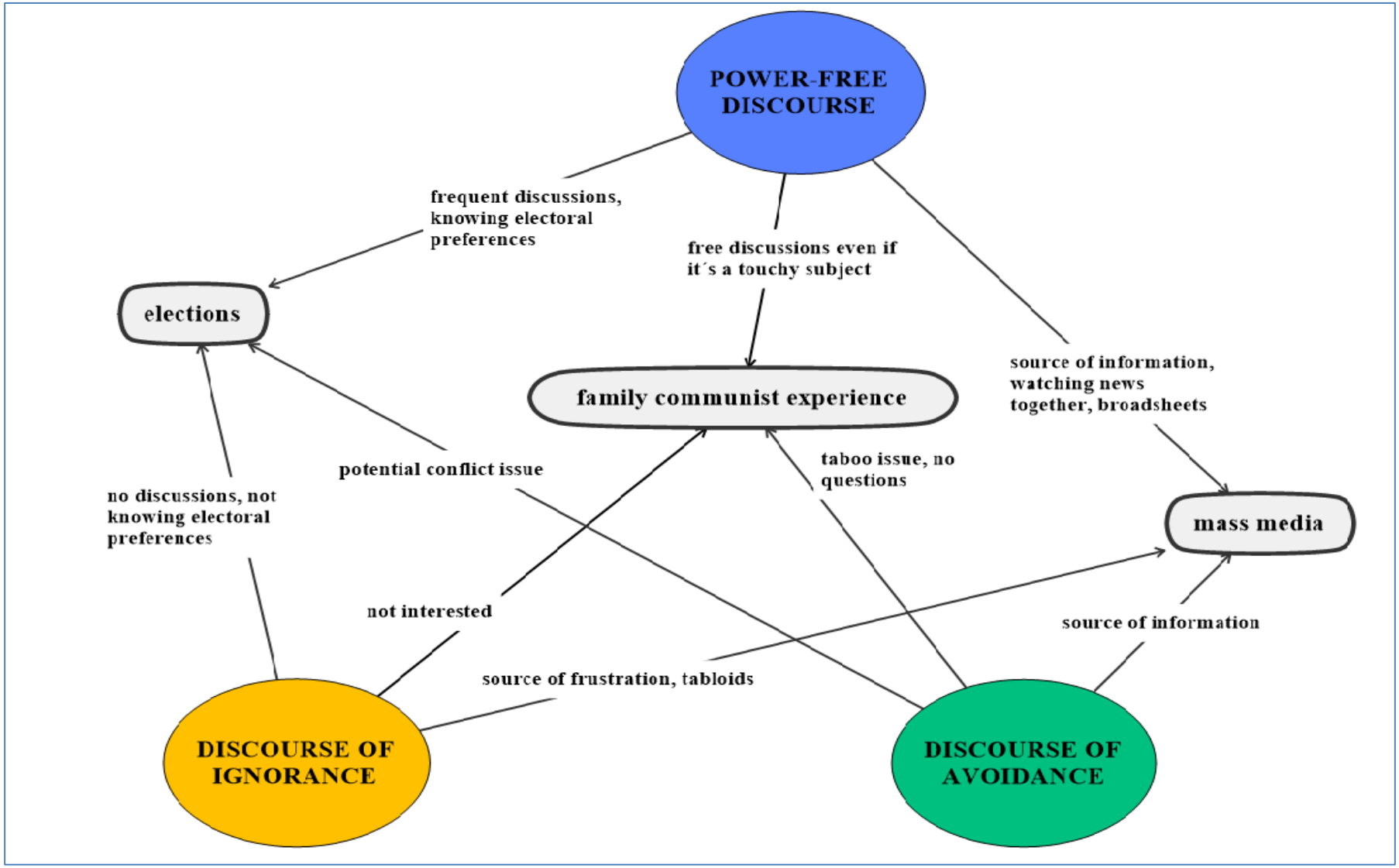
I have never discussed politics with them [parents] *but also with nobody from the family at all. But, you know, I started* [at the party on a local level] *at the age of 18 or 19, and until that time adults do not speak with kids about stuff like politics, you know, school is important* (Eliška, 26, Ostrava, centre-left party and youth organisation).

In this case, they ascribed the beginning of their political interest to other factors than family, such as school and friends. Eliška´s story also highlights another characteristic common in discourses of *ignorance* and *avoidance*. My interviewees claimed that their parents believed that political talks about general or specific issues (such as a former membership in the Communist Party, or voting preferences) are not suitable for children or even teenagers. Their reasons were multiple. They were convinced that their children were not mature enough to understand it in its complexity, were not interested in talking about it, did not have enough information, or should focus on other issues than politics because *'school is important'*.

4.3. Summary

In general, both Czech and German informants perceived a strong family influence on shaping their political views, values, and behaviour. My analysis identified four mechanisms transmitting family influence to political interest and behaviour. These mechanisms were closely connected with family political narratives, which we can demonstrate in three issues which were revealed as core in the interviews: (1) family communist experience, (2) mass media, and (3) elections. The most important differences in the perceptions of these topics are summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3: **Conceptual variations according to the type of family political narratives**



Source: created by Prokschová

In families of the communication partners active in political and civic organisations, mechanisms of *exposure* and *admiration* were particularly salient. The second mechanism was especially visible when someone from the family was politically active either in current politics or had been in the past (for instance in dissent). Interestingly, the *mechanism of pressure* was not salient among the people I talked to. They felt they were inspired, rather than pushed, to their involvement.

Organisationally active interviewees mostly reported that their parents and other relatives were well-informed and interested in politics, and significantly influenced their views on public affairs. However, even in families where parents supported their children in their activism, parents had several types of concerns depending on the intensity and kind of involvement (such as neglecting school duties or problems of safety in the case of radical activism). Organisationally active communication partners considered politics a very salient issue which closely affected their lives, and believed in their ability to influence the political process.

In their families *power-free discourse* of communication prevailed. We can typify this setting in the example of elections (see Figure 3). They considered voting a natural part of life, but not enough in itself to achieve good citizenship. In the eyes of organisational members and their families, a good citizen was one who was engaged, and paid attention to the current issues, for instance, signed petitions, demonstrated, and boycotted certain products, etc. They talked freely about their own electoral preferences and choices. For example, children knew the party that their parents voted for, and their reasons why. However, it was not important to vote for the same party and share the same political ideas.

In contrast, in the majority of families of my informants who were not active in organisations, political discussion was only one of the issues among many and the most attention was paid to the political situation before elections. Discourses of *avoidance* and *ignorance* were presented in these families more often than in families of my organisationally active interviewees. The environment of the family considered politics more or less a distant issue. They felt that they did not understand politics well, and it was not a particularly important issue for their lives. Moreover, they considered that they could not influence the political process other than by voting. This approach limits citizens' participation in elections and is referred to the *Minimalist Model of Democracy* formulated by Joseph A. Schumpeter (1942).

Analysis revealed two explanations for this fact. In families where the prevailing strategy about political talks was a *discourse of avoidance*, different electoral preferences were

considered a sensitive subject, while where a *discourse of ignorance* prevailed, family members were simply not interested enough to ask each other about their electoral choices.

Mass media played a crucial role in all family types, because it was the prevailing source of political information. We can distinguish their media consumption and influence according to the mechanisms and family narrative. Organisationally active informants stated that they had watched political news with their parents from childhood, and felt that they could freely discuss what they had seen. This was typical pattern for the mechanisms of *exposure* and *admiration* which were often interconnected. They also reported that their parents gained information especially from broadsheets and public television.

On the contrary, in families where *discourse of ignorance* prevailed, parents did not watch political news with their children, and preferred tabloids and commercial TV channels. In these family settings, media were considered not a source of unbiased information, but as creating frustration and general scepticism towards politics, because they supported a belief that the political system was corrupt and could not be trusted, as Figure 3 depicts.

Dealing with historical legacy, especially with a personal experience of communism, is the third issue in which we can illuminate differences in family political climate. To summarise, in families with *power-free* discursive strategies, communist family experience was discussed. The character of these discussions differed naturally according to the type of former involvement. If relatives had been active during the period of dissent, their behaviour was commemorated and praised. Nevertheless, in families of former communists it was also an issue of conversation. In this case, it was not an easy topic to speak about for both sides, but in the end it was worth discussing. My communication partners appreciated the openness of their parents and perceived it as a sign of trust and respect.

In contrast, in families for which *discourse of avoidance* was typical, membership in the Communist Party was either taboo or taken for granted. My communication partners did not speak about this for the sake of keeping peace in the family, maintaining their ideals about their parents, or because of a lack of interest. Consequently, some people I talked to did not even know if their parents were Communist Party members or not.

The analysis also revealed reciprocity in socialisation patterns between interviewees and their relatives. In other words, the direction of influence was not only one way, but my informants also influenced their parents and other relatives. This was typical of the *power-free discourse* of communication. This mutual influence was context-specific and varied according to the age of the informants, the type of involvement, their family socioeconomic status, and in particular their level of education.

To be more specific, parents without university education were relatively easily influenced; for example, they followed the advice of their children and voted for a particular party. They perceived their children as the gate keepers to *'real politics'*. University educated parents also agreed to change their political behaviour, but their motivation was ideologically based rather than gaining the support or admiration of their children.

5. SCHOOL AS A BRIDGE TO POLITICS: How does the school environment shape individual paths to engagement?

The following chapter analyses the influence of schools on the process of forming political commitment and motivations for membership of political organisations. We will gradually focus on all types of education, from primary to tertiary, in order to deeply illustrate how school influences political interest and individual paths to activism.

Attention will firstly be paid to secondary and grammar schools, with a special focus on the perception and experience of my communication partners of civic education programmes. We will describe the perceived quality, role and impact of civic education in Czech and German schools on my interviewees' political engagement. Moreover, the analysis will deal with the roles of teachers, friends, and the school climate.[56] The second part of the chapter will investigate the role of universities in the formation of political opinion and political recruitment. My aim is to grasp the deeper context by focusing on the role of the field of study, peer groups and the media.

5.1. Schools for democracy: a waste of time? Secondary and grammar schools in the process of political socialisation

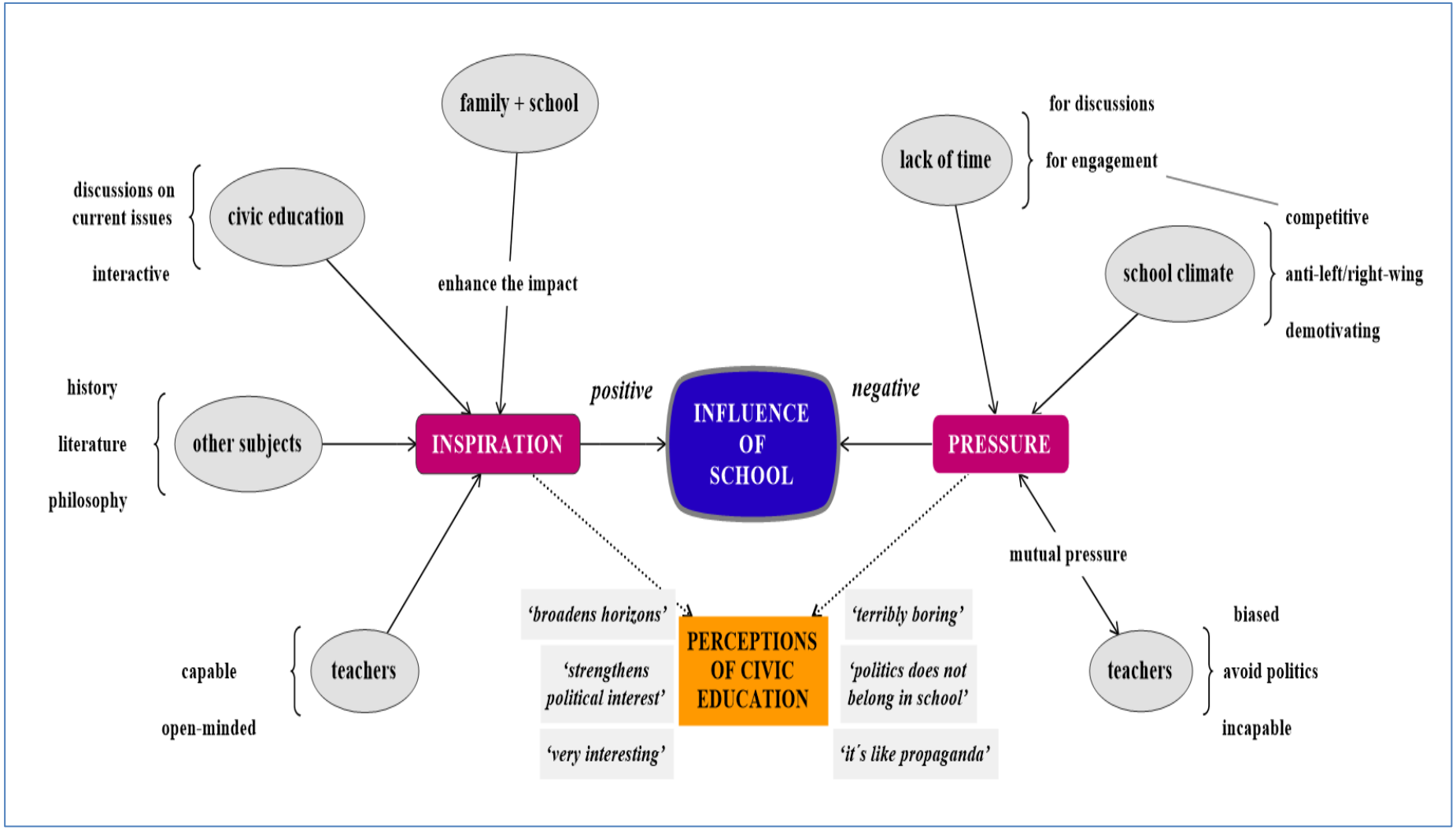
Analysis of the interviews revealed the notion of *influence* as a central analytical category in relation to civic education and the general school environment. All communication partners referred to it, although this word itself was not always used explicitly. A closer look at the nuanced qualitative data shows that the perceptions and evaluations of this category varied according to different contextual characteristics. In other words, the notion of influence had both positive and negative connotations. For instance, it was linked to *inspiration* or *pressure* in relation to national, school and family contexts.

The following sources of *influence* were identified at school: civic education lessons, teachers, the school climate and peer groups. Despite this, outside school factors, and in particular family influence, were also crucial for the perceived impact of civic education.

[56] Prevailing modes, attitudes, and standards in the classroom.

These sources were often interconnected and appeared in interviews at various levels of intensity. Figure 4 summarises the most important research findings.

Figure 4: **Perceived influence of school and civic education**



Source: created by Prokschová

5.1.1. Civic education: between inspiration and pressure

Among the interviewees, a great diversity of opinions about civic education was presented. On the one hand, they described these lessons as *'kind of inspiring'*, *'very interesting'* and *'appealing'*. On the other, they perceived them as *'a joke'*, *'really boring'*, *'like propaganda'* and *'manipulative'*.

Some Czech and German students articulated the opinion that civic education lessons were boring because they were too theoretical and disconnected from reality, as stated in the excerpts below:

Sometimes you just think that maybe the stuff they teach is too abstract for many pupils. … It´s more like very historical and very theoretical, and not what's relevant today… Like you discuss Adam Smith, for example, and his theories, but I don´t know <pause to consider> *… we didn't talk about, for example, the financial crash of 2008. … And a lot of people were upset about it, actually. We always tried to make the teacher discuss more stuff that was more up-to-date and what was relevant and occurred in life, but it didn't really work* (Jens, 26, Mannheim, no organisation).

The quality of civics is terrible <laughing>. *I am saying that because, based on my own experience…, loads of time is spent on philosophical stuff - like 80% on philosophy and 10% on politics, everything is so rushed that students or pupils don't have any thorough understanding* (Marek, 24, Olomouc, centre-right party).

The individuals I interviewed repeatedly mentioned the pressure of time (see Figure 4), which varied according to national contexts. Czech communication partners criticised the limited time for lessons about politics:

Some of my classmates wanted to talk about politics, but there [in civic education lessons] *was not enough space for this. I don't know if this was intentional, but I felt in other subjects too that there was not much time for discussions, and we had to rush through other issues because there were really loads of things to teach* (Alma, 30, Ostrava, university politics).

An interesting distinction between the Czech and German interviewees appeared in the perceptions and evaluations of civic education. German interviewees appreciated discussions and interaction in the lessons, as shown below:

It was very interesting - this was the time of the Fukushima event - how parties reacted to this topic. … We always discussed party programmes before the elections and I think the teacher was very good, the lessons were very interactive and we watched the news every day to be able to discuss the topics at school (Ingrid, 21, Mannheim, no organisation).

In this setting of *power-free discourse*, support and respect were valued more than ideological agreement. Czech communication partners, on the other hand, agreed that their

school system primarily focused on factual information about politics, as illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

At school we learned quite basic information… No, we did not debate anything. You know, [we spoke] *about this basic information, what these left- and right-politics actually meant and so on, but we didn´t discuss the political situation at home or abroad* (Věra, 23, Olomouc, no organisation).

Nevertheless, this was not prevailingly perceived negatively, because *'a person should be interested in it* [politics] *of their own accord and not be pushed into it by anyone'* (Věra, 23, Olomouc, no organisation) and *'they* [teachers] *are not there* [at school] *to ideologically indoctrinate us'* (Ondřej, 26, Prague, centre-left party, activist). This was the typical line of argument in the narratives of the Czech interviewees who were politically non-interested and non-active in any organisation, and surprisingly also in the case of some organisational members.

The Czech interviewees mostly considered civic education to be boring and ineffective in terms of stimulating their interest in politics. Moreover, they often associated this education with an inevitable degree of pressure, manipulation and propaganda, as noted by a 22-year-old bachelor student of social sciences from Palacky University in Olomouc:

This [civic education] *can become just this propaganda exercise and have a really strong influence* [on students]. *... Discussions* [on politics at school] *could possibly happen, but I don't think that any particular opinion should be promoted in any particular way … I think that it is very complicated considering how many teachers we have and how easy it is* [to promote a particular opinion]… *it would be easier to ban it* [discussions] *completely* (Arnošt, 22, Olomouc, no organisation).

5.1.2. Teachers as necessary agents of civic education

An explanation of these reluctant attitudes towards civic education may lie in the distrust of teachers, because their influence was perceived as crucial by interviewees in both countries. In this regard, five broad categories emerged as important in the evaluation of the teacher's performance. The typical pattern in Czech narratives labelled teachers as *'incapable', 'biased',* and *'apolitical'.*

The Czech participants pointed to the low qualification of civic education teachers who were certified to teach *Physical Training* combined with *Introduction to Social Sciences*. They were not convinced about the level of knowledge or capabilities of their teachers to moderate discussions and promote critical thinking.

In contrast, German communication partners mostly considered their civic education teachers *'neutral'*, *'inspiring'* and *'capable'*. They did not doubt their qualifications and

competence. Erica, a liberal-oriented student from Jena, described the role of her civic education teacher in the process of her political identification:

We had a very good teacher, we discussed politics a lot and at the age of 13 or 14 I realised that I supported one viewpoint more than the others, so I started to take part in politics through JuLis [Young Liberals] *and after that in LHG* [Liberal university group] (Erica, 23, Jena, centre-right youth organisation).

The nature of the empirical material enabled us to take a look at the other side of the coin, through the opinions of trainee teachers who were among the interviewees. Their views and experiences provided valuable insights into the dilemma between activism and professionalism, notions of neutrality, pressure, and manipulation.

Eliška feels like she is balancing on thin ice: she is a student of pedagogy and a socialist party member. At the same time, she also teaches at a primary school in a medium-sized town nearby Ostrava. As a teacher, Eliška is very sensitive to any accusations that she manipulates the political opinions of her students. That is why she tries to avoid political discussions at school as much as is possible:

Well, politics does not belong in school. Yes, [it´s all right to teach] *what the difference between right and left means and so on, but you shouldn't teach any more about politics because they* [children] *have their own opinions, and because I teach at secondary school, I know how easily you can influence those kids* (Eliška, 26, Ostrava, centre-left party and youth organisation).

For Czech and German participants, including trainee teachers, being a good teacher meant being politically neutral. Nevertheless, the perception of *neutrality* significantly differed. In the Czech context, it was often a strategy of *'being apolitical'* in the sense of avoiding politics (especially class discussions on controversial topics such as gender issues or problems concerning ethnic and religious minorities).

In contrast, German communication partners understood *neutrality* as an attempt by their teachers to refrain from pushing particular ideological viewpoints during their lessons, while not avoiding discussions on controversial issues. In addition, teachers judged civic education as having great importance, and felt obliged to inform pupils not only about factual information, but to lead them towards critical thinking and active citizenship. This approach is illustrated in a statement by Ingrid, a trainee of the *Regional Centre for Political Education* (Landeszentralle für politische Bildung) in Heidelberg, who is considering a teaching career. She sees the biggest advantage of civic education lessons not only as informing students about politics, but also in engaging them:

I think it is very important that people know something about politics, the importance of the structures, and how students can influence the political process <speaking enthusiastically>. *I am not interested in manipulating them, but just informing them about politics and what is happening there* (Ingrid, 21, Mannheim, no organisation).

The students interviewed from both countries often related the beginning of their interest in politics to their efforts to *'broaden their horizons'* and to *'see the world differently'*. Related to this, they emphasised the positive experience of studying abroad during their grammar school studies, or travelling with parents or friends.

Furthermore, participants' political interest was shaped not only by civic education teachers, but also by history, language, or literature teachers. In this regard, an interesting distinction appeared between the right on the one hand, and left and environmentally-oriented students on the other.

The former wanted to better understand historical events and their consequences. In this respect, many students were influenced by history teachers: '*Maybe I was influenced by the history teacher. Since finishing secondary school, I´ve became interested in nonfiction and stuff like the Second World War and the Cold War'* (Tadeáš, Prague, 23, centrist political organisation).

The latter focused more on philosophical or ethical questions such as issues of justice, legitimacy, and freedom, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

At grammar school, I became interested in philosophy. I read different books about philosophy and I had a teacher who got me really interested in ethical questions - I mean exploring how things are and how they should be… you know, the difference between legality and legitimacy (Eva, 30, Prague, ecological activist).

Right-wing and conservative students mentioned ancient history (such as the beginning of Greek democracy) but also recent historical events, for example, the German experience with National Socialism and the Czech communist legacy. It should be mentioned that the interest of the interviewees in the issue of National Socialism was worrying for some parents. Nevertheless, German communication partners felt no concerns when discussing issues connected with Nazism at school. Czech interviewees, on the other hand, noticed their teachers' efforts to avoid discussions on communism. This behaviour represented a *discourse of avoidance* where controversial issues were omitted from discussions.

To shed some light on the reasons for this reluctance, we show the dilemma felt by history teachers as experienced by a student of pedagogy, Ondřej. He claims that historical

explanations usually end with the Second World War because the events that followed are still uncomfortably vivid in the collective memory:

Since 1989, there has been this feeling in the population that all the people were dissidents <smiles ironically when he pronounces the word 'dissidents'>. *And you never know if you are teaching the kid of a communist prisoner or someone from a communist family. On the one hand, if you say that during communism, many crimes were committed, someone from a communist family comes to you saying 'this is not true, people had jobs and social security'. On the other, when I say that there were some good things about communism, then some right-winger comes and tells me 'you can't say that - there was no freedom!'* <laughing> (Ondřej, 26, Prague, centre-left party, activist).

5.1.3. The role of school climate

Another important finding is that not only formal education, but also school climate, was formative for interviewees' political values. For instance, some German participants described their school as focused on personal success, competitiveness, and achievement, which led to a lack of free time. For a 21-year student at the University of Cologne, Gitta, this was a factor that complicated her political participation:

I think that the focus on achievement at school is really a huge disadvantage … and yes, I think that for many people there is no time to really think about politics and develop their thoughts about it. … One teacher of mine always said that our generation is a pleasure-seeking generation, and I always said no I don't think we are a pleasure-seeking generation because there is so much pressure… <pause to consider> *that you will maybe not have enough time to be involved and politically active* (Gitta, 21, Cologne, environmental youth organisation, NGO).

Nevertheless, for Gitta political engagement in the civic sector, and later in green politics, meant a form of dealing with this kind of pressure, as she described in the following interview excerpt:

I think that it [my involvement] *always had to do with compensating for this pressure. When I was at school, I really didn't like how everything was focused on achievement and results. I took it quite personally always being compared with others and people's competitive attitudes. I always thought about psychological and philosophical ways of doing things… and when I became older, I realised that this was a kind of realisation that led me towards being interested in politics.*

A similar pattern of resistance against the school environment is seen in the story of Radek, a young social democrat. He attended a private school with a liberal atmosphere, but later, *'the screws began to turn'* as he put it. In reaction to a perceived injustice, he and his friends founded a student council where they presented their claims:

Well, we said that they [the teachers and particularly the school headmistress] *had done something wrong and we criticized this. I enjoyed it because it was fun to argue with someone who I knew was an authority* <stressing the word 'authority'>, *but was wrong* (Radek, 26, Prague, centre-left party).

Nevertheless, they faced some severe consequences for their activities:

Everything culminated during the school leaving examination where they [teachers] *gave us a hard time… the last subject was Introduction to Social Science* [civic education]. *The headmistress came to me and she threatened me, saying 'this is my subject area and I will make the test hard for you'.*

Radek explained that they felt supported by the history teacher, who had been active against the communist regime before 1989. He was strongly influenced by her *'personal example, she supported us despite the problems she had with the headmistress as a result, and could be fired at any time. It inspired me a lot and I'll always remember her. … It's interesting, she was politically quite right-wing, but she was no less honourable for this'* <laughing>.

Regarding the problematic school climate, Czech interviewees mentioned unjust treatment from their schoolmates. In this respect, one interviewee described his experience at a grammar school, where he observed a conflict between a girl from an economically disadvantaged family and her classmates:

It [the difference] *was obvious. She did not have branded clothes like my schoolmates had. … She did not even have money for the textbooks and had to copy them… You know, some kind of elite was forming in the class and they ostracized her* (Ondřej, 26, Prague, centre-left party, activist).

He also describes how they gossiped about her and taunted her. Finally, the situation deteriorated and she left the school: *'And I realised that I didn't want to live in a world like that and to be judged by poverty and class membership'* <resolutely>. This experience had a strong impact on Ondřej's decision to enter the Czech Social Democratic Party because it *'has a left-wing rhetoric and defends the poor'.*

Another kind of pressure which Czech communication partners felt was the anti-communist or even anti-left-wing school climate. For individuals from left-wing families or with left-leaning opinions, this situation was a source of stress, despite the supposed apolitical school environment, as one student active in the anarchist scene described:

The way civic education [was taught] *was so conservative and anti-communist that* [they said] *that any model of democracy without capitalism was impossible. When a twelve-year-old is in this conservative school environment, he does not have a chance, or a way of resisting* (Kryštof, 26, Prague, anarchist and left-wing activist).

The negative perception of left-wing ideology is illustrated by one interviewee's experience: at school, he was confronted with the narrative of being an unsuccessful leftist. In this narrative, to be rich meant having to try just hard enough, whereas poor people were

simply not hardworking enough, and leftist ideology was connected with communism and the discourse of failure:

You know, this ethos of success. A leftist is a man who complains because he is not successful and wants a change. A rightist is a man who is successful and does not need a change (Ondřej, 26, Prague centre-left party, activist).

When I asked him if he was criticized for his political opinions by his teachers or peers, he answered. *'Many times, actually since gymnasium. Most often it was something like "you are so clever, so why are you leftist?"'*

While some left-leaning interviewees felt marginalized in the Czech Republic, their centre-right and conservative counterparts from West Germany had a similar reaction from their classmates.[57] However, no differences in teachers' behaviour were reported. In the West German context, the dominant narrative positioned leftist politics as progressive, while right-wing ideology was sometimes connected with extremism and Nazism. In this respect, the experiences of interviewees from East Germany were not as polarising and could be located somewhere between those of the Czech Republic and West Germany.

The results also show that former Czech and German students of gymnasiums evaluated school climates as *'tolerant'* and *'without problems'*. In contrast, interviewees who had attended technical schools perceived these lessons and the school climate as *'very poor'*, *'demotivating'* or even *'ignorant',* as the following testimony illustrates. In this setting, politically interested students were teased and name-called by their peers.[58]

The environment in this Realschule[59] *was not that stimulating politically. We were like 15-year-old guys playing videogames and didn't care about anything more sophisticated, like politics or society* (Liam, 23, Mannheim, no organisation).

To conclude this subchapter; Czech and German interviewees experienced not only inspiration and encouragement at schools, but also faced various obstacles and pressures. If they were able to resist these negative circumstances, this led to strengthening their self-confidence and citizenship competences, which positively influenced their future paths towards activism. It motivated them to actively overcome obstacles and challenge authority if they felt in the right, as one interviewee's statement suggests: *'maybe that is why I am not afraid to argue with anyone when I feel that it's worth it'* (Radek, 26, Prague, centre-left party).

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[57] This tendency was even stronger at university, and will be elaborated on further (see p. 114–115).

[58] Nevertheless, the research sample contained only a limited number of students from technical schools. Therefore, any broader conclusions from this fact could not be drawn.

[59] German secondary school focuses on technical subjects and natural science.

5.1.4. Who benefits most from civic education?

I feel that everyone pressures me to have some political opinion which is kind of annoying for me because I think that actually I don't understand politics. For example, when I watch some discussions on TV, I simply don't understand many concepts and things they are talking about. Recently, I was listening to some interviews, and they were talking about the division of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and I realised that I had heard about it so many times, but the principle itself was still not clear to me (Karel, 21, Olomouc, no organisation).

This excerpt is from an interview with Karel, a student who summarised his attitude as *'politics is everywhere and it bothers me'*. He comes from an apolitical family, does not discuss politics with his parents and peers, and does not belong to any voluntary association. In the case of students like Karel, civic education policy did not stimulate their interest, give them sufficient factual knowledge, or enable their understanding of basic political principles such as the state power structures.

However, we can ask who benefits from civic education programmes. Qualitative analysis indicated that civic education is successful in combination with other factors, such as a positive school climate, politically-interested friends, membership in voluntary associations, and particularly a supportive family background, which can spark young people's interest.

In other words, positive attitudes towards participation and climates of political dialogue, regardless of the particular ideology, were necessary for the development of the patterns of self-efficacy. This is the experience of Theo, the Christian Democratic Party member who considers his family as the main source of his political interest:

This [civic education] *was also pretty interesting. It was one of my better classes and it was good… My dad is really interested in politics… both my parents think that it is always important to keep in touch with current world affairs and the news. I always ask them if this or that politician is good or bad and stuff like that… I would say they have a big influence on me. Yeah, I am really glad that they could educate me before I actually took the class, because I have learned something about the basics* (Theo, 19, Jena, centre-right party member).

Moreover, German students who previously had been interested in politics benefitted more, not only from the lessons of civic education at school, but also from the materials and programmes organised by the BPB among others, because: *'you normally don't access them* [materials about civic education from BPB]. *'I think you really have to be interested already'* (Liam, 23, Mannheim, no organisation). Interviewees were convinced that civic education was effective in deepening and stimulating political interest rather than simply sparking it off.

For instance, Jens, a student of psychology at the University of Mannheim, mentioned that his classmates, who had not been interested in politics, and informed in this field before, neither changed their attitudes, nor became more attached to politics because of civic education at school:

The ones who were interested in politics became more interested, and the ones who did not care about politics cared even less because they were <pause to consider> *like: 'What should I do with it?' They just learned what they had to learn to get a good grade and nothing more, at least it was the impression I got* (Jens, 26, Mannheim, no organisation).

Furthermore, children from apolitical families were perceived as the most vulnerable to manipulation during civic education lessons, because they had not developed their own political opinions, as illuminated in the following excerpt:

Well <pause to consider>, *I would say that there were those* [schoolmates] *who were interested before they participated* [in the civic education lessons]*, of course. Then there were those* [schoolmates] *who were not interested, and they only got some information and accepted it, and they didn't think at all about whether it was true or false and didn't reflect on it, and then there were people who didn't care about it* [information about politics] *at all* (Přemysl, 22, Ostrava, no organisation).

5.2. *Growing into the politics* at the alma mater: political socialisation at university

Iva grew up with six male cousins and she was convinced that she had no problems with being in a male dominated environment. However, due to the nature of her studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University, she paid more attention to the problem of gender inequality in private and public spheres:

In sociology we spoke about it in several courses and later on I moved to the left, and met people from the ***[60] [her organisation]*... and I profiled myself as a left-wing feminist and it was absolutely logical for me. Actually, I started to deal with these issues there* (Iva, Prague 24, feminist, and left-wing activist).

Iva lived in a dormitory with a politically interested flatmate, and she debated public issues with her a lot. After this she found politically engaged friends and associated with a left-wing group. For instance, she helped to organise happenings, and attended demonstrations. Later on, she officially joined the group, as she describes below:

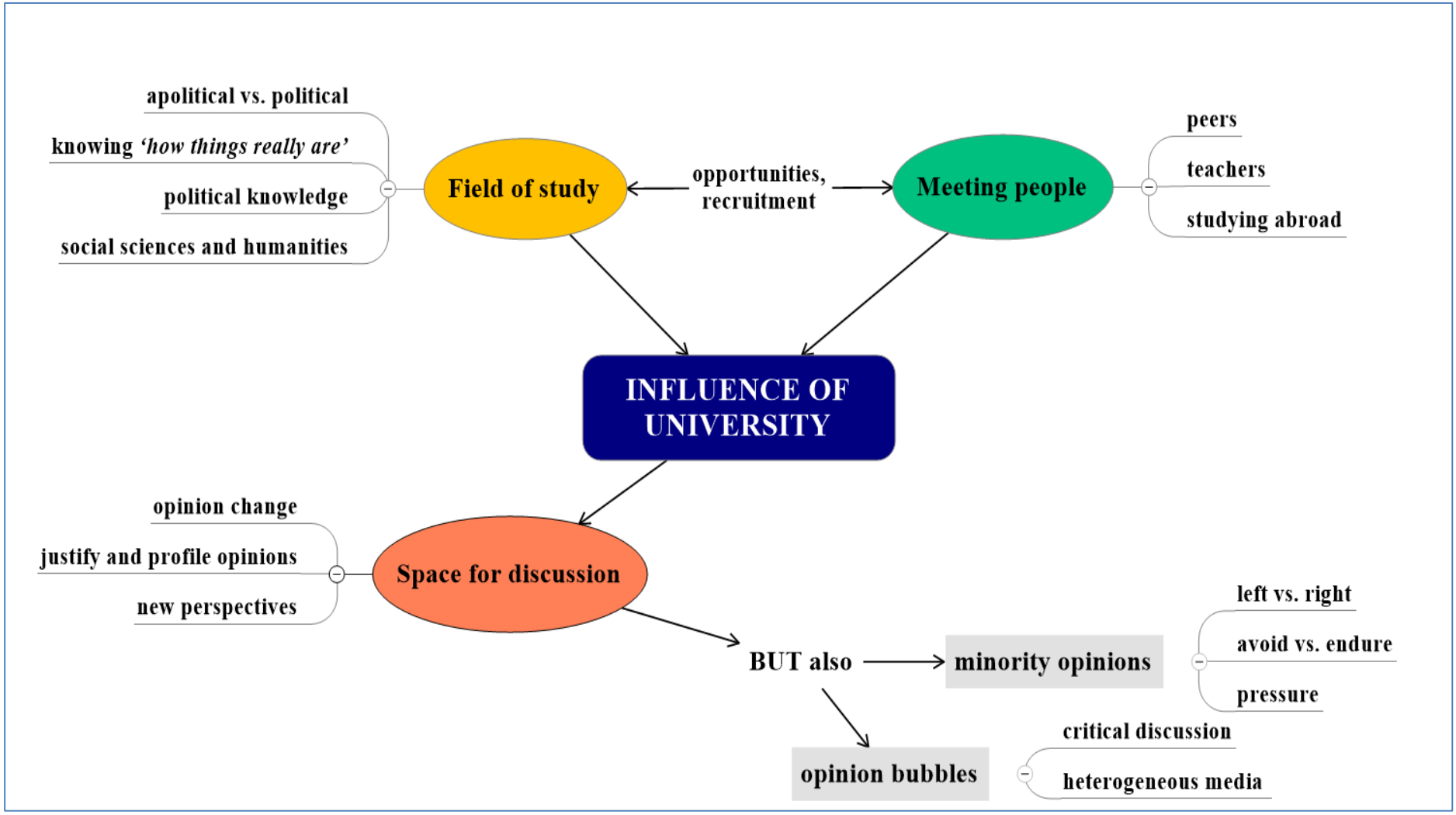
[60] The name of her organisation was deleted for the purpose of anonymisation.

You know, I found friends there… Firstly, I just went there from time to time, so I cooperated with them for a rather long time and then I started to be more systematic. Actually, it was very gradual <smiling>.

Iva´s example typifies a gradual pathway to activism combining several sources of influence connected with university. Her story shows that organisational recruitment is often a long and not straightforward process, in which university involvement plays a significant role. Friends from university, as well as the field of study, were identified as crucial in Iva´s pathway to activism. Her case reveals a typical pattern of university influence on students who were '*kind of interested in politics*' from their families and schools. They justified, profiled, or changed their opinions during their tertiary studies.

Further parts of the text will shed some light on the details, peculiarities and specifics of this process with a special focus on the field of study, social contacts and the character of political discussion at university. Key findings are summarised in Figure 5.

Figure 5: **Interviewees´ perception of university influence**



Source: created by Prokschová

5.2.1. Tell me what you study and I´ll tell you who you are

Aneta is a student of cultural anthropology at Palacky University in Olomouc. She admitted that her activities, such as helping refugees at the Hungarian borders, started because of her field of study:

Yeah, the first impulse for this was from university, because two of our teachers ***[61] *had already been there and they recommended to us to go there to see it and have our own experience. So, we went there with them… they supported us going there* (Aneta, 21, Olomouc, human rights activist, local politics).

Aneta is convinced that her academic discipline is very politically engaged. She described to me the tensions between her department and the university management. Her department supports the civic involvement of its students, and shapes their ideas in a particular direction, while the faculty officers disagree because *'they say that the university should be apolitical and not activist. I don´t think so'* <resolutely>. When I asked if her field of study had influenced her activism, she answered:

Yeah, a lot, definitely. You know, I am interested in what´s going on in the world, and cultural anthropology deals with issues which are controversial, such as refugees, Roma people, women's rights, and so on.

Many of my communication partners reformulated and re-evaluated their standpoints because of the knowledge they had gained during their studies. They became more or less radical in their beliefs, or changed their opinions significantly either freely, or as a result of direct or indirect pressure. For instance, a social democrat, Lenka, was a radical left-winger before starting university. Due to the knowledge she gained from political science courses, she moved politically more to the centre:

You know, they [political opinions] *changed also because of my lessons, and because of what I had learned from political theory. This radical left is not real, it´s too ideal just as a model, so now I am more centre-left* (Lenka, 26, Olomouc, centre-left party).

Some interviewees even claimed that because of their studies, they knew for the first time '*how things really were'.* After the information that they had learned at university, they were surprised that someone could still remain left-wing or right-wing. This conviction was visible especially in the case of future economists, lawyers, and political scientists. For instance, Radek, a student of political science and law, claims that *'if you read enough academic articles about the structure of society it is hard to be right-leaning'* (Radek, 26, Prague, centre-left party).

[61] The names of her teachers were deleted for the purpose of anonymisation.

We can demonstrate the opposite tendency in the example of Milan, who is a student of economics and a member of the Young Conservatives. He admitted that at grammar school he had belonged to the middle or middle-left part of the political spectrum, and at university he became a neo-conservative liberal:

Daniela? *And how did it happen? Did university have an impact on it?*

Milan: *Sure, yes. The school really changed me* < speaking convincingly>. *After I started at the Faculty of Economics, I changed my mind 180 degrees. You know, even during a basic course of economics I found out that I was absolutely wrong* <resolutely>. *Yeah, and it´s true that here at the university* [Prague University of Economics and Business] *they beat all the left-wing ideology from you* <smiling> (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

For Milan, this perceived ideological profiling of university posed no problem. On the contrary, he was happy about it. He was reminded of the story of when he and his fellow students were opposed to a left-leaning teacher of social politics because her opinions were ideologically not acceptable for them. They had many arguments with her, but until just before the end of the semester, as he commented: '*we had to be careful what we wrote in the final test, and to put there what she wanted to hear'.*

Iva stands somewhere in the middle, between the positions of Radek and Milan. She studies political science at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, and claims that her department is left-oriented. She admitted that this could create problems for her right-wing counterparts:

Yeah, these students who have right-wing opinions, ehm <looking for the right words>… *You know, logical and critical thinking was dominant in our department, so sometimes these students preferred to leave the department. It was not the rule but it happened. They could be somewhere where it was friendlier in that sense* (Iva, Prague 24, feminist, left-wing activist).

Nevertheless, she emphasises that her field of study enabled her to think particularly critically, to work better with information, and to structure her arguments. Iva noted that critical thinking for her meant that an opinion had to well justified, no matter if it was a right- or left-wing one. She added that she found that this happened in her department.

5.2.2. Minority report: non-prevailing opinion holders

Iva, Radek and Milan have similar political opinions to the ones which prevail in their departments. Nevertheless, further parts of the text offer a space for the stories of people who feel themselves to be in a minority concerning their opinions, and identify the strategies of how they cope with this.

I spoke to a girl who openly declared a left-wing orientation in a right-leaning department. She said that she did not have any problems with her teachers, who behaved fairly towards her, but was accused by a fellow student of '*being a communist',* even though she was a social democrat. She did not feel comfortable in this situation, but still behaved in the same manner, and did not hide her opinions and organisational activities.

Ondřej, a member of the Czech Social Democratic Party, told me that he was surprised at how many of his schoolmates from the Faculty of Education had left-wing opinions, but did not want to articulate them publicly. In other words, they chose a strategy of *avoidance*, where they hid their political opinions, voting preferences, or party affiliation: '*For example, I have a friend at university and we talked about politics and she admitted that she voted left, but she did not feel comfortable speaking about it'* (Ondřej, 26, Prague centre-left party, activist).

While some left-leaning interviewees felt marginalized in the Czech Republic, their right-wing counterparts from Germany described to me a similar pattern.[62] They explained that right-wing ideology was not socially desirable at university, and they often felt overlooked, ignored or even ostracized by their fellow students.

For instance, Erika, a student of medicine and a leader of a liberal university group, is aware that centre-right politics does not have many supporters at the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena. To illustrate this claim, she told me how her organisation sold hot wine at the university cafeteria. The profit went partly to a charity and partly to her organisation. Many student organisations sold hot wine there, but her stall had significantly fewer customers than the others. Some students even told her that they would never buy hot wine from liberals. She also felt ostracised from the student parliament: '*it was like Young Liberals would be some kind of evil people'*, she said, describing her impressions. However, she noted that the situation had become better in comparison with recent years. According to her, it was most important to persist.

The example of Erica represents a strategy of *endurance* for which actively overcoming obstacles and a high level of commitment is typical. She is very proud of the survival of her group and admits that it was not easy:

My biggest success is that we [the liberal group] *still exist. You know, I was alone in the group for three months. Yeah, it was three years ago, I gave flyers to people* [to recruit new members]. *Then one*

[62] My data are not statistically representative, so I cannot generalise about student populations in both countries. Instead of that, I have paid detailed attention to my interviewees' perceptions and feelings about their situations.

guy and his girlfriend came, and we were three <smiling> (Erica, 23, centre-right youth organisation, Jena).

I asked Erica if she was thinking of changing her university political group or leaving politics, as she was the only one in her group, and combined with her medical studies it was, as she said, very exhausting. She glanced at me in surprise, sipped her coffee and answered with conviction: '*Not at all, there aren't any similar groups! It's very important that we a have liberal party at the university'.*

Another instance is Maria, a CDU and RCDS member, who felt isolated and not welcome at student events, because she was a member of a conservative student association. Nevertheless, she changed her attitudes, mitigated some of her opinions, and tried to be more assertive in discussions, and the situation gradually became better, as she comments on here: *'Well, there are people who refuse to have any discussion… but with most people, even though they have different opinions, you can talk and they accept you and that makes things easier'* (Maria, 26, Cologne, centre-right party and youth organisation).

The case of Alma, a social work student at the University of Ostrava, is different, but illustrates well another example of the strategy of *endurance*. Alma is not in a minority concerning her political opinions, but with her activist approach. Sometimes she faces distrust or a lack of interest from her fellow university students who are, according to her, mostly passive. Alma described to me how she wanted to form a club of engaged students at the University of Ostrava. She and her friend organised the first meeting but:

No one came! <resolutely> *Yeah, really no one, maybe we chose the wrong font* [for the invitation], *maybe it was too formal or not formal enough… so we wanted to give up, but the next week there were three of us, three female PhD students, so yes, we started our club for active students* (Alma, 30, Ostrava, university politics).

She also claims that her involvement in university politics and student self-governance on a national level does not receive enough support from the university. Although she fights with scepticism, her need to be active is stronger than her doubts, because she wants to *'do something for the university. I just want* [to have] *a quality university, good legislation, that is why I am doing this. Yeah, but no one appreciates this… and you know I cannot get a PhD title for this'* <smiling sadly>.

5.2.3. Friends at university and politics: *'You need two to tango'*

Analysis revealed that peer groups at university were crucial for increasing political commitment. Many of my communication partners claimed that at university it was the first time in their lives where they were among active people who really wanted to influence politics. Their new friends enabled them to realise their ideological viewpoints. This is illustrated in the case of Kristin a non-organisationally active but politically interested student. She was born in Bavaria and before university she did not have any profiled political opinions. When she started her studies at Friedrich Schiller University, she found new friends who changed her political views:

When I came here, I got to know the people who were interested in politics and spent time with them, and then my opinions grew. Now my opinions are left-wing and green. … Yeah, for the first time in my life I am thinking about what my opinions really are (Kristin, 25, Mannheim, no organisation).

Kryštof, whose ideological viewpoint stems from Karl Marx and Marxist theorists, has had a similar experience. At grammar school he was ideologically non-profiled, as he said *'somewhere in the middle, definitely anti-communist but not very rightist'*. He speaks very excitedly about his ideological foundations and the impact of his friends at university on shaping his opinions:

Then [at university] *my thoughts started to develop because of being among my friends, mostly from the Faculty of Social Sciences* [who were] *students of sociology and philosophy. You know, we felt a great deficit in the critical theory of Marxism. This was our ideological background, but there were no courses about that, so we had to learn via self-study* (Kryštof, 26, Prague, anarchist and left-wing activist).

As *'a moment of initiation'* for himself and many of his friends, he joined student protests against university reform in 2011 and 2012, where he got actively involved and even wrote a letter to the rector.

Meeting people active in political organisations played a key role in the recruitment of my communication partners. In this respect, the story of Gitta, a student of psychology, is typical. She describes how she joined her organisation:

It wasn't intentional. At this time, I was thinking about organisations like Greenpeace, but it was not exactly the right thing and during my first week at university I met someone who was in ***[63] [her organisation]. *He told me that he was in a group which was very critical of capitalism and racism and they discussed gender questions and stuff like that and that combination was very interesting for me.*

[63] Name of her organisation was deleted for the purpose of anonymisation.

After several meetings, Gitta joined the organisation. She was very active in diverse fields, for instance, she took part in negotiations in student government, attended the demonstrations of the Bloccupy movement and was a regular at urban gardening sessions. After eight and a half months she was on the board of her organisation. A similar pattern of recruitment via a friend is exemplified by her Czech counterpart, Alma:

Actually, I started when my friend went to the first meeting of ***[64] [her organisation] *and I joined her. I met many active people there and it started to escalate. You know, they offered me further possibilities. I did not have any friends at university and wanted to meet some and gradually I was surrounded by active people* (Alma, 30, Ostrava, university politics).

'It´s always better when there are two to tango' Alma smiled, answering my question that she would have joined her organisation anyway, even if she had not been motivated to by her friend. She explains further that she would have done it, but would probably have taken a longer time to do it. This is a typical pathway of many more of the students that I interviewed. For instance, one student from Jena described to me her path to organisational membership:

I found it online. A fellow student told me that there was an association and they were looking for people. … I just checked their website and wrote them an email and they invited me (Elisabeth, 26, Jena, civic sector).

A similar path to a political organisation is exemplified in the story of Josef, from the Civic Democratic Party. He joined his organisation because of his friend who was already a member. When they spoke about politics in a pub, his friend recommended that he joined the party because they shared the same political ideas:

I think that my friend influenced me essentially. I exaggerate a bit, but without him I maybe would not be a member of my party now, but a member of a different one which is also close to my opinions (Josef, 30, centre-right party, Ostrava).

Besides political recruitment, another interesting trend was visible in the case of my organisationally active interviewees. They often identified with people five to ten years older than they were. They explained this as happening because they had different priorities and more experience than their peers:

Don´t get me wrong, but until the age of 24, I'd managed things that others had not done until the age of 35. Yeah, I have experienced a lot of stuff; I just did not go to school… <proudly> (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

[64] Name of the student organisation at the University of Ostrava was deleted for the purpose of anonymisation.

My informants noted that, with older friends, they could share their ideas and perspectives better. For instance, a 20-year-old, Pavel, who behaves more maturely than the other interviewees of his age, primarily *'hangs out with these older people':*

It´s best with people around thirty. Sometimes even people in their mid-twenties focus on things that are boring for me - I don´t mean politics, but that teenage stuff. Yeah, I feel good among the older ones (Pavel, 20, Prague, centre-left party, green activist).

Tadeáš, who studies at university and works for his organisation full-time, poses similar attitudes. Therefore, it is not surprising that he regularly meets people ten or more years older than himself. He sounds matter of fact and not boastful when he says:

I have totally different priorities than my peers and we don´t even have similar hobbies. I have more experience than they do… Ehm <pause to consider> *you know, I am the guy who employs them. I haven´t had that student life since my 20s. I did not live in the dormitory and went out twice a week for beer. Yeah, I haven´t had any type of student life, but it was my choice* (Tadeáš, 23, Prague, centrist political organisation).

The analysis also showed that studying abroad had a great impact on meeting inspiring people. The Erasmus programme was, in this respect, repeatedly mentioned. Schoolmates and friends from different political cultures enabled my interviewees to have different perspectives on their involvement, which gave them new impulses for their work:

The Erasmus at Sciences Po was very important for me. It was mostly not about the content of the study, but more about meeting people. I really met loads of anarchists and radical leftists there and that was a great inspiration for me (Radek, 26, Prague, centre-left party).

Another student described her experience from her Erasmus stay in the Netherlands. She is convinced that activism starts with discussion, the ability to give your own opinion and the willingness to be active. In this regard, she compares the attitudes of Czech students with their Dutch counterparts: *'Yeah, the Dutch were active during the lessons and here* [the University of Ostrava] *they are happy if they can just sit and be silent. It´s a miracle when they give their opinion'* (Alma, 30, Ostrava, university politics).

5.2.4. Living in a bubble and how to step out of it

Organisationally active interviewees admit that they are often surrounded by friends who pose similar opinions, are university educated, and active in political or civic organisations. Many of them compare their friendship circle to living in a bubble, as the following statement summarises:

Yeah, there is a bubble of relationships and friendships and I have friends connected with my activism. So, exposure or confrontation to a different environment <long pause to consider> *…uh, you know, I*

don´t have many friends who have different opinions or criticize my activism, it is only when I go to ***[65] [his hometown] (Kryštof, 26, Prague, anarchist and left-wing activist).

My informants evaluated this situation ambiguously. On the one hand, they admitted that living in a bubble was easy for them because they had finally *'found fellows who see things similarly'* (Ladislav, 24, Olomouc, local civic platform) which they had missed before starting university. For instance, Ladislav, who is a student of political science, told me:

Yeah, I need a mate to discuss politics with. Here, in a bubble of people who study political science it´s totally different. I think this is the reason I enjoy my studies, it´s hard, but this [friendship] *helps me a lot*.

On the other hand, interviewees agreed that bubbles can bring rigid opinions, which they want to avoid because *'it is always a danger to live in your own world and lose contact with people who think differently'* (Sebastian, 24, Cologne, radical green activist). Moreover, they claim that like-minded friends sometimes cannot give them useful feedback, and instead just confirm their opinions.

According to the interviewees, the best way of overcoming this situation is to find friends or lead a dialogue with people with different points of view. In this regard, the analysis revealed differences according to the type of political motivation. The strongest tendency to create an opinion bubble showed people with high ideological commitment. In contrast, informants who entered a political or civic organisation particularly to enhance their career prospects, find new contacts and friends, or enjoy social events, had less troubles making new friends across the political spectrum, or among politically non-active and non-interested people. The next chapter, page … provides more information about this issue.

However, in certain situations, people are not willing to accept the opinions of their discussion partners. The following paragraphs focus on three circumstances where discussion was not valuable for the interviewees, and explain why the dialogue ended.

First, my communication partners claimed that they did not have any problems discussing politics with people who had different opinions, but they had to pose *'acceptable opinions'* in the sense of non-radical ones.[66] *'This is the boundary I cannot cross. I mean certain opinions* [are] *ok, I can discuss them, but the others* [opinions] *not anymore'* <smiling, but resolutely> (Aneta, 21, Olomouc, human rights activist, local politics). The prevailing narrative in this respect is summarised in the following statement:

[65] The name of his hometown was deleted for the purpose of anonymisation.

[66] The perception of what is a radical opinion differed according to personal political views. For instance, for far-left activists, their own opinions were not radical, but the interviewees from a conservative background naturally had different points of view.

It's not a problem for me. I mean, I cannot blame anybody for having different opinions than I have. Of course, I try to persuade them in discussions… but it's ok. The only problems for me are the Nazis and far-right people. This is something I could never do [tolerate] (Lena, 26, Cologne, far-left party and youth organisation).

One interviewee even told me that she broke off a friendship because she completely disagreed with the girlfriend of a friend:

I could not be friends with a person who was so far-right. This spoiled my image of him. She [his girlfriend] *was extreme right and then I said I was sorry… and now we don´t see each other anymore* (Gitta, 21, Cologne, environmental youth organisation, NGO).

Second, my communication partners mentioned the case of speaking with someone who was already convinced that only their own opinion was right, and they saw no sense in further discussion. They understood it also as a matter of mutual respect as described by Iva, a student from Charles University:

I respect the opinions of my friends and they respect mine. All of a sudden, you know, that it´s pointless trying to persuade them so I do not cross this boundary (Iva, Prague 24, feminist, left-wing activist).

At first sight, this approach seems to be similar to *discourse of avoidance*, where people stop talking about sensitive subjects because it is not comfortable for them. However, when we look deeper, we find the characteristics of *power-free discourse* instead. Communication partners do not avoid discussions about politics and confrontations with different opinions, but in certain situations they just stop making an effort to persuade their discussion partners. Furthermore, they admit that debate with their opponents can be very inspiring because they can step out of their own bubble.

Third, my informants refused to discuss matters with people whom they considered too radical or uninformed in formulating their opinions. The last possibility happened in particular in the case of friends without a university education, as one student from the University of Mannheim, who is politically interested but not organisationally active, mentioned.

I have many friends who don't share my opinions, for example, my friends from Realshule. They are all working and don't know about university and studying. Actually, I really disagree with most of them. When we had discussions, it put a strain on my nerves, so I decided to stop talking about politics with them (Liam, 23, Mannheim, no organisation).

Another important way of stepping out of a personal bubble is by following heterogeneous political opinions in the media. For example, Lena, a far-left activist, follows many sources of information except '*classics such as Marx, Engels and Lenin'* because *'I want to know a lot'.* She also reads mainstream newspapers and tabloids because:

You always have to know what your enemy is writing. …. And I do read papers like Bild because you have to know what they are writing, and how present they are in the population (Lena, 26, Cologne, far-left party and youth organisation).

Lena´s testimony typifies the tendency of ideologically clear-cut interviewees who often labelled their opponents, in more or less an exaggerated way, as enemies. The following quote offers a more moderate approach.

I follow everything. For example, I follow Spiegel online because I want to know what academics think and on the other hand, what neoliberals think. And sometimes they have some good thoughts (Alexander, 24, Cologne, Green Party and ecological activist).

5.3. Summary

This chapter focused on the school environment - from secondary school to university studies - in the process of secondary political socialisation, and its impact on organisational membership. It explored the experiences of my interviewees with school-based civic education, as well as the role of teachers, peers and the field of study at university, in creating and developing political motivation, commitment and active citizenship.

Firstly, the analysis revealed the different perceptions and evaluations of civic education by Czech and German participants. German students were mostly satisfied with the quality of their civic education. They also positively evaluated the approach of their teachers, who tried to be neutral in the sense of opinion plurality, and by welcoming different points of view.

This was manifested in not avoiding controversial subjects in discussion, as well as by stopping the dialogue when it was obvious that the discussion quality had disintegrated, and had failed to achieve mutual persuasion. Interviewees stated that this setting of *power-free dialogue* typified by mutual trust, understanding, and the absence of pressure to feel, speak, or do certain things in politics, supported their self-confidence as engaged citizens.

In contrast, Czech interviewees were more distrustful and pessimistic about civic education programmes. They agreed that their school system restricted the focus on factual information about politics, so that it was neutral in the sense of the *apolitical* school environment. Interviewees felt an avoidance of class discussions on controversial subjects, which was justified by a lack of time. In this *discourse of avoidance*, political discussions did not belong in schools, partly because teachers were considered *'manipulative'* and *'unqualified'* by students.

Czech participants complained of ideological indoctrination and ostracisation of left-wing attitudes, despite the supposed *apolitical* school environment. A similar pattern of isolation

and marginalisation by their schoolmates was described by centre-right and conservative students from the former West Germany. Nevertheless, this tendency was not particularly strong in the case of interviewees from the former East Germany, which was probably caused by the post-communist context.

Another core research finding was that not only formal education influenced the communication partners. Political profiling was seen also as a product of unintended consequence, such as questioning school authority, the school climate and the ability to resist school pressure. Moreover, qualitative analysis indicated that civic education lessons were beneficial in combination with other factors, including inspiring teachers, an open school climate, politically interested peers, membership in voluntary associations and a supportive family background. In other words, exposure to a wide range of participatory political stimuli in family, school and among peers was crucial for creating self-confident and engaged citizens.

My in-depth interviews underscored that civic education is successful in the case of people who had a previous interest in politics. For instance, if my informants were exposed to a participative-based environment in the family, at school and among peers, they perceived politics as a close issue which they were able to influence. Bruter and Harrison (2009:41–42) term this the *mechanism of exposure*.

Secondly, the analysis dealt with various factors which stimulate political activism in the university environment. In contrast to secondary and grammar schools, no communication partners questioned the fact that, politics belonged to university, and speaking about political issues on campus and during lessons was legitimate. University students were perceived as adults with formed opinions, who were difficult to manipulate. Therefore, there was no need to protect them against ideological indoctrination, for instance, through the restriction of political discussions. In contrast, my organisationally active informants considered the university environment a space for free discussion (see Figure 5, p. 111).

Moreover, university was seen as a place where their initial political interest from family and school was accompanied by meeting *'the right people'* (such as friends, fellow students and teachers), finding an inspiring field of study, attending a motivating seminar, or a particular political event (such as a demonstration or a strike).

These factors, varying in their intensity, resulted in certain cases in organisational membership. In particular, they had a strong impact in combination with interviewees´ previous political interest and as a result developed citizenship competences. For these students, university meant a space where they could *'grow into politics'*, because it offered

them political opportunities, new stimuli including political knowledge, social capital, a supportive climate for activism, and time for extracurricular activities.

At faculties of social sciences and humanities, students had more opportunities for gaining political knowledge and discussing politics during their lessons. This pattern was visible especially among students of political science, law, journalism and economics, who reported that their field of study motivated their activism. However, these departments were also seen as ideologically profiled. This finding was not perceived as a problem, especially when a student displayed the same political opinions as prevailed in his/her department. Some interviewees even claimed that their field of study opened their eyes and now they *'could see the truth'*. However, these students also had a tendency to think rigidly and shut themselves in their opinion bubbles.

Nevertheless, I also spoke to people for whom the image of university as a platform for critical discussion was a more normative expectation than a real experience. For instance, my informants who posed *'unpopular opinions'* did not feel comfortable in articulating their political views. According to the national context, for the Czech interviewees, it was mainly a case of having left-wing opinions. They had experienced an anti-left narrative since being at secondary or grammar school, which was typified in the quotation: *'you are too clever to be leftist'*. At university, they saw that left-wing people were automatically associated with communism and the discourse of failure. Similarly, right-wing and conservative German interviewees received feedback that their opinions were not cool and progressive enough. Sometimes they even had a problem keeping their organisations alive and finding partners for cooperation.

Another piece of core research finding describes the benefits of social ties and meeting *'the right people'* by profiling personal opinions and through political recruitment. However, the creation of opinion bubbles was also connected with that process. Discussions with people holding different opinions, as well as diverse media consumption, were identified as factors contributing to bridging opinion differences. Both enabled the understanding of opponents' points of view and their destigmatisation. However, discussion was not possible with people who were (1) ideologically too far from their opponents, (2) strongly convinced about their own truth, and (3) perceived as aggressive or uninformed in promoting their own political thoughts.

6. TO BE OR NOT TO BE INVOLVED? What drives young people to join political and civic organisations?

The following text examines the motives of university students to be involved with organisations, as well as portrays their reasons for refraining from joining organisations. It extends existing theories of political motivation into new categories and frames them in the life stories and pathways to politics of young activists. It also deals with various forms of organisational recruitment and motivation stimuli for collective political action. Moreover, the analysis shows how the perception and understanding of politics differ according to the types of political motivation.

6.1. Typology of political motivation: idealists, doers and pragmatists

The analytical findings show that the reasons for engagement are related to three main drivers of political motivation, which allows us to categorise the students into three main categories: (1) *idealists* (2) *doers* and (3) *pragmatists* (see Table 9). The notion of influence, in terms of the perceived ability to influence the political process, emerged as a central theme that steered the analysis presented in this chapter.

Table 9: **Typology of political motivation**

Categories of political motivation		**Explanation**
IDEALISTS	*inner-oriented idealists*	influence of the need to satisfy self-development and personal growth
	outer-oriented idealists	influenced by the desire to realise abstract ideals on local, national, international levels
	card-carrying members	strong commitment to a particular organisation
DOERS	*problem-solvers*	influenced by the necessity of finding solutions for (abstract, general) problems or situations
	local patriots	influence of a situation in one's own town/village: not motivated by ideology but by the needs of the local community
	common-spirit seekers	seeking fun, investing in community, building friendship and solidarity
PRAGMATISTS	*power-seekers*	influenced by the desire for power, respect, authority
	young professionals	influenced by career prospects considerations: desirable addition to CV, opportunity to learn new skills, job opportunities inside and beyond the organisation

Source: created by Prokschová

6.1.1. Idealists

'You believe that you can make a real change… that the world will be a better place.'
(Linda, 30, Ostrava, far-left party)

The idealistic approach represents a normative dimension of politics with the emphasis being on the influence of ethical principles, as the following quotation illustrates:

I do this because I believe that this is in line with my convictions… as the saying goes: 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing'.[67] *When I know something bad is happening somewhere, I try to learn about it so I can change it* (Eva, 30, Prague, ecological activist).

In other words, *idealists* are active in politics because of their need for moral fulfilment. Their engagement is connected with searching for answers to current philosophical, ethical, or psychological questions and dilemmas. Bruter and Harrison (2009) called this group *morally motivated*, as well as Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) and Handy et al. (2009) *value-based citizens*.

Young people with an idealistic orientation prevailed in my sample, but an explanation for this may lie in the fact that expressing idealistic values may be considered socially desirable. Idealists often focused on ecological issues in my interviews, for example, on environmental protection, animal rights, and air pollution. They perceived political engagement in a broader sense as, *'the chance to stand up for your rights, help others, change something and influence people'* (Elisabeth, 26, Jena, civic sector).

People from conservative backgrounds who expressed idealistic orientations tended to perceive their engagement as a duty, motivated by an obligation to their family, political party, or religion. Christian democrats in the Czech and German context stated in their interviews that their religious faith played an important role in their activism.

The church often figured as a connective mechanism to politics in two ways. First, these participants met someone through the church who then recruited them to join political events. In both countries, this person, often belonging to their peer group, was already active in the Christian Democratic Party or, for instance, was their priest. The second instance was the role played by religion in providing a moral compass to distinguish right from wrong, and to help them to overcome ethical dilemmas. Dominika, who worked to support refugees and homeless people, and also worked with young children as a hospital volunteer, describes the role played by her faith in her activism:

Well, it [religious faith] *is the guiding concept in my life. Yeah, they* [my activities] *stand on Catholic foundations, taking care of people who are in need. … I mean that I try to help them, but not because I*

[67] This is a quote from Edmund Burke, the 18th century British philosopher and politician.

expect a reward. Actually, when I work with homeless people, for instance, I don't expect them to show me gratitude. Service should be motivated by mercy and not the desire for gratitude (Dominika, 25, Olomouc, Catholic activist).

This idealistic conceptualisation of politics differed significantly from the process-oriented understanding of politics among *pragmatists,* who focused on abstract principles (such as mediation of interests, distribution of power and negotiating compromises). In contrast, for *idealists*, political activity provided the means of self-realisation. They wanted to *'live politics'* as Dominika explains:

Daniela: *When I say politics, what does this mean to you? What do you associate this with?*
Dominika: *For me, it* [politics] *is actually some kind of worldview* <pause to consider>. *Yeah, it's the way I see the world. And my activities are some kind of application of politics, but in practice, not in theory. You know, I am not guided by any specific political programme* <smiling>, *but I aim to live my politics.*

The interviewed *idealists* expressed a strong moral commitment to politics. They were willing to sacrifice time, money and energy for their political convictions and the organisations to which they belonged. They were also more radical in their beliefs than *doers* and *pragmatists*. At the start of their political involvement, they had high expectations and, after experiencing the reality of the political process, these sometimes resulted in disillusionment and disappointment. This was illuminated by the response of a student who had been active in local politics since joining the University of Ostrava. I asked her if she was satisfied with her involvement:

It's hard to say because when you enter this [politics], *you are young and believe that everybody is just waiting for someone like you* <laughing>. *Yeah, you believe that you can make a real change, that they* [party members] *are waiting for someone exactly like you, that the world will be a better place* <smiles sadly>. *But you slowly find out that it is not like that, this is not like in a fairy tale. Most disillusionment is caused by the people in your party who go out of their way to trip you up… and so you lose your ideals. So, now after ten years I look at it differently* <speaking with resignation> (Linda, 30, Ostrava, far-left party).

However, there is great diversity within the group of idealistic students. Their motives are subtle and diverse, and they express their moral commitment in different ways. For conceptual clarification, I distinguished the following three subtypes of idealists.[68]

Firstly, for *inner-oriented idealists,* politics is closely related to individual incentives such as self-development and personal growth that manifest in the aim of becoming a better person or a better citizen. Moreover, it is connected with self-realisation and inner fulfilment. In other

[68] We should take into account that these subtypes partly overlap each other in some cases.

words, political activity means, for these interviewees, a space where they can positively influence their own behaviour. The previously mentioned interviewee, Dominika, started being active as a volunteer at grammar school during her late adolescence, and described herself at this time as:

Searching for the meaning of life, clarification of some <pause to consider> *profound issues like death and so on. Yeah, it was something like my initiation period… You know, I just tried to find something in my life deeper than just going to school, but maybe I am making myself sound loftier than I actually was* <modest smile> (Dominika, 25, Olomouc, Catholic activist).

Politics as self-realisation may also fill the gaps of their own identity crises, because it empowers them in their struggle with societal pressures or their own vulnerabilities and weaknesses. This is illuminated by the story of a political science student and former Green Party member, Christoph. When I asked him the reasons for his involvement, at first he shied away from disclosing his reasons, but after a few minutes of hesitation, he decided to share his story:

Actually, it was really personal <hesitation> … *but never mind, I will tell you. I thought a lot about what to do with my life. I had made music for a very long time and planned to study music - I really loved it. Everything was alright, but I thought: 'Well, when I get older and look back on my life, I want to know that I have changed something… I want to have the feeling that I did something good' … That moment of realisation happened when I was around seventeen. So, I stopped planning a career in music … and started an intensive course in political science* (Christoph, 22, Cologne, former party member).

Party membership and political science studies provided him with the fulfilment that he had longed for. Later, Christoph realised that party membership was not the right path for him and he decided to become an analyst specialising in conflict studies, and inter- and intra-state wars. Five years later, he is very satisfied with his choice of direction. He considers his studies as a way of being politically active without the disadvantages of organisational membership.

Besides this, the crises of personal values experienced during adolescence are formative in terms of being motivational stimuli. Personal events forced a change in behaviour in the case of Eva, an ecological activist. She definitively decided to stop eating meat after the death of her beloved pet:

The death of my dog, which I had had for my whole childhood, was the last impulse. At that moment, I realised that I was mourning this animal, but at the same time I had been paying no attention to the terrible conditions in factory farms. Suddenly I felt like such a hypocrite, and decided that I did not want to be contributing to this [meat production] (Eva, 30, Prague, ecological activist).

Left-wing students from Germany repeatedly mentioned in their interviews that to be active meant for them to be critical, which was important for their self-perception and could serve as a therapeutic outlet for their concerns. This was illustrated by a radical left-wing activist from Friedrich Schiller University who described his political consumerism:

I am vegan. I buy fair trade and organic products, but I don't think this really changes anything. It's not that I buy them, and think this makes the world a better place <ironically>. *It* [the global economy] *is a self-serving system, I know that. There is not much I can do about it except being critically aware of this and talking to people about it* (Lukas, 23, Jena, anarchist, university politics).

From the previous excerpt, it is evident that Lukas was not led to his political engagement by pragmatic reasons. On the contrary, his consumption choices were rewarded by his desire to engage and have a clean conscience as a result. A German activist, Alexander, expresses a similar train of thought:

I engage in all these initiatives, not only because I want to change the world [but] *because I want to know that at least I am trying to do something. I want to make peace with myself because I cannot sit doing nothing. Every time I do nothing, I feel some kind of panic* <laughing>. *... So when I am engaged, I think about how perhaps I am changing the world just a little bit… Yeah, so it's also a kind of therapy for myself* (Alexander, 24, Cologne, Green Party and ecological activist).

The second category, *outer-oriented idealists* aim to realise their own abstract ideals and ethical principles on a local, national or international level. Their main motivation is to effect change in their environment, in contrast to their inner-oriented counterparts, concerned for the relief of their own consciences. *Outer-oriented idealists* tend more towards expressive politics and feel obliged to alter their consumer choices in order to reflect their ethical principles. They often participate in political consumerism in the form of boycotts or, vice versa, buycotts of certain products (such as politically motivated vegetarianism or veganism). In contrast, *doers* and *pragmatists* keep their private and public lives relatively separate.

Sebastian, a student of journalism at the University of Cologne, exemplifies this connection between politics and daily routine. He is a member of several ecologically focused NGOs, as well as being very active in the university's communal garden. Sebastian describes himself as a politically motivated vegan. He also eats friends' and fellow students' leftover food, which I witnessed at the university cafeteria where, after our interview, he finished off a couple of friends' lunches.

He is also a regular dumpster diver, collecting expired food from large containers at the back of supermarkets. By these means, he aims to reduce his consumption as much as possible because, as he says *'the less I have to buy the happier I am'* (Sebastian, 24, Cologne,

radical green activist). Sebastian buys only the equipment for the communal garden and, once a year, several items of second-hand fair-trade clothing. He participates in the free economy by sharing furniture, books and food among people in the neighbourhood, which he describes here:

It's based on trust; you bring some stuff and take some stuff. … For example, both my mobile phones and computer are from my flat-mate.[69] *She bought new stuff and gave me her old ones. Probably alcohol is my biggest budget item apart from rent* <laughing>.

Moreover, he is very interested in climate justice and wants to reduce his carbon footprint by not flying. However, this presents him with a dilemma: on the one hand, he considers that a *'good citizen should resist the temptation to fly'*, and on the other, he wants to travel the world while he is young.

Overall, Sebastian's life is heavily politicized. He realises the disadvantages of this dedication to his politics. Sebastian devotes more than 30 hours per week to his activities and finds it difficult to devote enough time to his studies. Sometimes he is afraid that he lives in a bubble of like-minded politically active friends and feels isolated from *'the normal world'*. However, he finds his activities very fulfilling because he lives in accordance with his principles. That is why he wants to become a professional activist after leaving university. *'I am not worried about money. Money will come somehow'* he smiles, as he envisages his future.

A noteworthy difference appeared in my sample with reference to political consumerism among *outer-oriented idealists* according to the national context. The Czech idealists I interviewed were not as committed or even radical in their political consumerism as German idealists. Sometimes their ethical intentions conflicted with their hedonism, as an interviewee from Charles University pointed out:

For instance, the clothing boycott fails because I really like fashion. Of course, I perceive it as an ethical problem, but I can't help myself. It´s similar to vegetarianism. I don´t agree with mass stock breeding production and try to buy stuff in farmers´ markets, but I really like eating meat (Iva, Prague 24, feminist, left-wing activist).

Although Czech communication partners often boycotted certain products for political reasons, they did not connect it to all aspects of their life (choice of field of study, future plans, and personal image) in the way that their German counterparts did. The more cautious and sceptical approach of Czech interviewees can be characterised by a quip by Eva, a vegan and animal right activist: *'nobody's a saint, everybody has a computer from China'* (Eva, 30,

[69] During our interview, Sebastian regularly checked his two smartphones, which looked quite expensive.

Prague, ecological activist). In this respect, the Czech idealists I talked to often pointed out the necessity of a systematic change in global capitalism, without which political consumerism realised on an individual level is ineffective.[70]

Members of the third category, *idealist-card-carrying members* expressed the greatest pride in their organisational membership compared to the other categories of idealists. They also devoted extensive time and effort to their party or NGO, especially during electoral campaigns or demonstrations. They even sometimes described their organisation as a family. This considerable personal attachment to their organisation and its principles was manifested, for instance, in wearing symbols (such as badges, T-shirts) and open proclamations of loyalty. *Card-carrying members* wanted to visually identify themselves with their organisation, as Eliška, a social democrat describes:

> *I like wearing an orange T-shirt, you know, my party's T-shirt.*[71] *I am certainly not ashamed of this and people know that I am politically active. For instance, during the regional election campaign there were some leftover leaflets and we stuck them on the fence of our house to advertise the party: they were everywhere!* <proudly>. *You know, we were not ashamed* (Eliška, 26, Ostrava, centre-left party and youth organisation).

For *card-carrying members*, an important impulse for entering politics was often the admiration of a certain political idol. In this respect, Czech interviewees named the presidential candidate and conservative politician Karel Schwarzenberg, former president and dissident Václav Havel, right-libertarian Petr Mach or the former prime minister and chairman of the Social Democratic Party Jiří Paroubek. German informants mentioned, for instance, Che Guevera, Tony Blair and Angela Merkel.

6.1.2. Doers

> *'It doesn't matter if the pavement is orange or purple, as long as it gets built.'*
> (Eliška, 26, Ostrava, centre-left party and youth organisation)

The second category of task-oriented young people lies between ethically-driven idealists and professionally-motivated pragmatists. By comparison, *doers* are the least ideologically-profiled and the most emphasise the realisation of practical goals. They focus on the easiest way of getting something done and do not spend much time discussing abstract principles and theoretical problems. The group of practically-motivated young people in the sample is

[70] Nevertheless, this line of argument may also be interpreted as an excuse for their reluctance and passivity in political consumerism.

[71] Orange is the trade-mark colour of the Czech Social Democratic Party, even though red is traditionally associated with socialism.

heterogeneous, but they have one aspect in common: a shared understanding of political influence as a change or improvement in the current situation.

Analysis revealed three subcategories among the *doers*. The first type of *doers* is termed *problem-solvers*. As the name of this subcategory suggests, for them activism means finding a solution for a particular problem in their sphere of influence. After solving this problem, some of them cease their engagement, some are engaged periodically and others continue long-term and become more ideologically-profiled. A typical *problem-solver,* Pavel describes his first experience with politics at the age of thirteen:

There was a park near my school… and they [developers] *wanted to chop down the trees and replace them with tennis courts and other nonsense. You know, that is why I started to be publicly involved*

(Pavel, 20, Prague, centre-left party, green activist).

Pavel's involvement was facilitated by the Facebook social network already in existence at that time. Via Facebook, he met other people who disagreed with the local developer's plans and they arranged to meet personally to protest against the proposed development. Even though their effort was only partially successful (instead of tennis courts, a golf course was built), this compromise motivated Pavel to take part in further activities. Later, he supported or directly joined other groups critically focused on issues with which he disagreed. For instance, he was active in student protests against university reform in 2010. Gradually, his increased activity cumulated in party membership. Nevertheless, even as a party member he deals with solving particular problems rather than being concerned with ideological issues.

The second subcategory was labelled *doers: local patriots* who emphasise solving practical issues which have a local character. They are active in local politics, which they understood in the sense of being outside party politics. For them, politics in villages or small towns is *'just about people, not parties. It doesn't matter if the pavement is orange or purple as long as it gets built'* (Eliška, 26, Ostrava, centre-left party and youth organisation). The author of the previous quote, Eliška, typifies one pathway to activism. *'It just fell into my lap'*, she laconically describes her entrance into local politics, and adds:

It's true that I have always been interested in politics, but mostly in what happens directly around me, here in the village. I like to organise stuff for kids, like for International Children's day. You know, to make something happen: people meet each other, chat to each other.

I met with Eliška in the restaurant of a newly renovated community centre in her hometown, with a population of 4000 people, which has a village-like character and lies near the city of Ostrava. Eliška's clothes reflect her words; she wears a track suit because after our

interview she will go to train the local children, an activity she has been doing voluntarily for several years.

A similar pattern of local patriotism is seen in Lukáš' story. He is a traditionally-minded social democrat who devotes a great amount of free time and energy to building an open air-museum in his hometown. He creates replicas of original Wallachian wooden buildings such as a school, church and bell tower. Lukáš is proud of his efforts because everything he and his friends have built was made with their own hands without the support of European or state money, as he explains:

Rather than begging for some gifts of mercy <ironically>, *my hardworking skilled friends and I will do it ourselves* <speaking in south Moravian dialect>. *Actually, we will pay for it by ourselves or organise a* [local] *fundraising campaign among the Wallachian people.*

The above quote shows how important it is to local patriots to be financially independent, and that they perceive doing things autonomously as an essential part of their activism. The gratitude expressed by, and his feeling of obligation to the local community, motivated Lukáš to continue in his efforts. Local patriots have a sense of duty in common with conservative and religiously oriented idealists. Lukáš does not try to hide his feelings when he describes the generosity he experiences in sourcing the finances for his museum:

You know the worst thing? That these entrepreneurs or people who have money never give anything, but retired people do give. These elderly ladies gave me one thousand crowns and said 'boys, you are so skilful, keep up the good work'. This is so touching, yeah, its very moving. I feel that we are obliged to give back something to these people with our activities <spoken with sincerity>[72] (Lukáš, 29, Ostrava, centre-left party, local NGO).

The interviewed Czech *local patriots* also stress their independence from the centre, which sometimes has the character of critically distancing themselves from the capital city. They believe that on a local level they can influence the political process more directly and effectively. They claim that in contrast to people from Prague, they *'are working with real problems, people and situations'* and make it clear that they did not enter politics as a career to earn a lot of money. Among the Germans I talked to, this negative perception of the centre vs. periphery was not as visible.

The third subcategory of *doers* is *common-spirit seekers*. They share a strong feeling of belonging to their organisations with *idealist-card-carrying members*. Unlike *card-carrying*

[72] The interviewee speaks in the south Moravian dialect. To capture the specifics of his language, the following interview excerpt is quoted also in the original Czech version: *„A víš, co je nejhorší? Že to dávajů důchodci, ti podnikatelé, ti co majů, nic nedajů, ale ty babičky dajů po tisícovce - hoši vy jste tak šikovní, pokračujte - a to je tak dojemné… A to člověka vezme tak za srdíčko a cítíme takové to povinování jim to vracet v podobě té činnosti…"*

members, this devotion does not stem primarily from a strong commitment to organisational principles, but from the social dimensions of activism, including friendship ties, common activities in their political group (such as meetings, demonstrations, summer camps, trips) and the absence of a strong hierarchy. To summarise, socialising prevails over ideology. Nevertheless, a certain degree of ideological congruence is also important for them. This group has been referred to as *social-minded* young people by Bruter and Harrison (2009).

Politics for *doers: common-spirit seekers* means *'taking part in something significant and to change something'* (Maria, 26, Cologne, centre-right party and youth organisation) with like-minded friends and having some fun at the same time. All these aspects were experienced by Lenka, a social democrat, during her staying at an international socialist summer camp in Malta. She colourfully describes her feelings of pride and solidarity:

I wanted to cry. It was so moving, when, from all over Europe they started to sing Bella Ciao … It was such a strong feeling of belonging, that you are not just a group of five or a hundred [people] *like in the Czech Republic, but that you share something with a Swedish guy or an Italian girl. Yeah, it was very international. For instance, there were some people from Israel and Palestine and they shook each other's hands and hugged each other* <speaking enthusiastically>. *You could feel that you were part of something bigger. It excited me and touched me* (Lenka, 26, Olomouc, centre-left party).

Although the social dimension of activism was more significant among the left-wing interviewees, people from the right end of the spectrum also considered it important. Even those communication partners, who praised hierarchy and order in politics appreciated the informal relationships in their organisation, which could be seen as somewhat inconsistent. '*They* [formalities] *are pretty undemanding. For instance, during my application process, we just chatted informally about my opinions on politics'* recalls a conservative student, Matěj, of his political recruitment; he goes on to describe the benefits of his involvement:

Of course, there are official activities like the general meetings and other meetings, but there is also loads of stuff like team building. For instance, we went to play a laser game or we went to the pub to chat about politics <speaking enthusiastically> (Matěj, 19, Prague, centre-right party, conservative activist).

Regarding informal ties in the organisation, using informal rather than formal terms of address was considered as a sign of equality and team spirit among members of the Social Democratic Party.

When I first came to the youth meeting [Young Social Democrats], *there were these officials from the city. But all the people were using the informal you to address each other so it was open, like a family* (Eliška, 26, Ostrava, centre-left party and youth organisation).

In this respect, some communication partners regretted that using the informal you to address each other was not possible at all levels of organisational hierarchy, for example, with the vice-chairman or chairman. They considered it against the founding egalitarian principles of the party as illuminated by the following interview excerpt:

You know, all the leftists use the informal you to address each other in Germany, everywhere. There is no formal you among party members. But interestingly, it still exists in the Czech Republic. Yeah, it is not possible to say just 'hey, my mate Bohouši', or 'comrade Bohouši ',[73] *what do you think about this or that?' I really wish we could use our language to show that we are all equal in our organisation, and that there is no hierarchy* (Ondřej, 26, Prague centre-left party, activist).

6.1.3. Pragmatists

'But in politics, people talk about other stuff apart from Goethe.'
(Tadeáš, 23, Prague, centrist political organisation)

Compared to *idealists*, *pragmatists* enjoy political negotiations and meetings. Although ideological congruence with their organisation was important for them, it was not the most salient feature of their activism. As their first priority, *pragmatists* wanted to join a political organisation and searched for a suitable one. In contrast to other groups of politically motivated interviewees, they did not express disillusionment or frustration resulting from their political engagement. This can be attributed to the absence of high expectations at the beginning of their involvement and by the fact that they were aware of negative aspects, as shown below:

Well, of course, there are negotiations and sometimes quite tough ones, but I have never had any illusions about politics, that politics is an association of honest people <smiling>. *I have always known that politics is not only about the good stuff, but* [also] *about getting into the old boy's club, nepotism, bargaining and so on.* (Marek, 24, centre-right party, Olomouc).

I don´t want to sound arrogant and superior about my knowledge, but you know, I did not expect anything else from politics. I think that all the bad things that people think about politics are true and it´s even worse <smiling> (Radek, 26, Prague, centre-left party).

To be more specific, Radek faced several problems for not agreeing with the main party line. Although he was under great pressure during the inner-party confrontation, the so-called *Lánský putsch,* he found positives because of what all of the people's characters revealed, as he explains further.

[73] Ondřej is speaking about Bohuslav Sobotka who was a leader of the Czech Social Democratic Party at the time of the interview.

Now it seems quite easy, but everybody had to give his or her opinion on it and for several days we didn´t know how it would end. Well, there were people who showed moral flexibility <smiles ironically>. *On the other hand, there were others who, although it seemed that everything was screwed up, were not afraid to speak openly and criticize, even though they knew that afterwards they would be gone. You know, it showed the best about some, and the worst about others.*

Pragmatists conceptualised politics as a process. This process-oriented approach emphasised rules, control mechanisms and the distribution of power. Tadeáš, a pragmatic young member of a political think-tank, explains how he understands politics to be:

Yeah, there are loads of definitions, but for me [politics] *means a way of establishing how we are going to live here together. That's why we have to first negotiate the rules according to which we will live* (Tadeáš, 23, Prague, centrist political organisation).

Tadeáš' main activities in his organisation are communication with the public, personal leadership and project coordination. He is very satisfied with the content of his work because he considers it as practical and professional. He would like to become a professional politician, and someone who *'can lead, rather than just talk, think and write. What I see very clearly among the politicians I meet is that some can think, speak and write, but they cannot lead people and so it ends up as a catastrophe'* <laughing>.

This is a very typical view among the interviewed *pragmatists* concerning political *idealists*. They perceived *idealists* at best as impractical intellectuals, and at worst, as incompetent amateurs. *Pragmatists* define themselves in opposition to *idealists* by labelling their own attitudes as *'realistic'* and *'rational'*, which is illustrated by the words of a member of the Young Conservatives:

Well, I understand politics as being the difference between ideals and reality. You know, ideals are very nice, but when it comes to the rough reality of politics, ideals sometimes have to go be put aside. But there is a problem that loads of people cannot acknowledge, which is this <speaking loudly>. *... It will always be like that 'real' politics and not 'ideal' politics* (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

Later, he recalls his experience with *'real'* politics. At a party congress, he supported a colleague from the same organisation because this colleague had supported him, despite the fact that they disagreed on point of principle. This political deal was uncomfortable for him, but he perceived it as a necessity because they were both conservatives. He admitted he would find it harder to make that same deal with communists or social democrats. However, within his organisation *'it was basically a petty issue so I thought I would just grit my teeth and get on with it'*.

Strikingly different views on politics between *idealists* and *pragmatists* are clearly visible in Tadeáš´ description of his interviews with the presidential candidates for the first direct presidential elections, which he conducted. One of these candidates was Vladimír Franz, an unconventional intellectual, composer, artist and university professor. A video recording of this interview is still available on the internet and portrays the nature of the clash between their two perceptions of politics well.[74]

On one side of the table, there was the casual, bohemian presidential candidate Franz, whose face and hands were entirely covered in tattoos. Opposite him, a generation younger, sat Tadeáš in a tailored suit with a serious, concentrated expression. When Tadeáš asked him about his attitudes to the European Union, Franz broadly conceptualised the notion of European integration, citing the Old and New Testaments, as well as the Tractatus Pacis of Jiří z Poděbrad.

It was obvious that Franz had a deep knowledge of historical and cultural phenomena. Nevertheless, he seemed to be confused and uncertain when he was speaking about practical questions such as The European Fiscal Compact and The European Social Charter. Finally, Franz lost his temper and expressed his dissatisfaction with how the interview was being conducted, and that he considered it to be biased because *'he was not an economist but that he dealt with culture'*. When we met, Tadeáš laconically commented on his interview with Franz.

> *Yeah, I tried to test him* [Franz] *a bit with questions about international issues, European integration and the like… Later after the presidential elections, we met again and he was fine.*[75] *We spoke informally and he said to me about our interview 'but you know, for me, Europe means mainly Goethe' and I said something like 'yeah, but in politics, people talk about other stuff apart from Goethe'* <smiling>.

The category of *pragmatists* is described in the literature as *professionally-minded members* (Bruter and Harrison 2009:24) or *utilitarians* (Handy et al. 2009). Nevertheless, my analysis for the purpose of a more nuanced differentiation distinguished the following two subcategories.

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[74] For ethical purposes, I would like to note that I am fully aware of the fact that this interviewee can be identified by the inclusion of this information, despite his first name being changed. Although he is very active in the media, he agreed to reveal his identity in his informed consent form. The information presented about the interview offers a substantial insight into the mind of a pragmatically motivated young man.

[75] Even though Vladimír Franz finally felt no hostility towards him, many of his supporters labelled Tadeáš on Facebook as *'young, arrogant and rude'*. Some of them even threatened him with physical violence via social networks, for his behaviour in the interview with Franz. However, they did not carry out their threats, and Tadeáš said that he was not afraid because he had only faced verbal attacks.

The first, *pragmatists: power-seekers,* understood political influence primarily in terms of power. Politics for them meant a practical realisation of power in the sense of controlling people, things, and situations. Moreover, they understood political power as *'the rules of the game'*, the goal of which is to *'divide and conquer'* (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation). *Pragmatists* also applied this point of view to the international situation, as one student active in a centre-right organisation in Ostrava told me when we discussed the Ukraine crisis and the Russian annexation of Crimea.

You know, when you negotiate with Putin about something, of course, you can have certain ideals. But, you cannot speak with him from this point of view. I mean this activist sense <pronounced pejoratively>. *Yeah, it isn't possible. However, you have to sit there and negotiate with him* (Šimon, 23, Ostrava, centre-right party).

Pragmatists: power-seekers also emphasised order and hierarchy. In this respect, they appreciated that their political organisations enabled them to climb the career ladder *'very fast and very high'* (Elias, 22, Mannheim, centre-right party and youth organisation).[76] In fact, many of them had attained relatively high positions in their organisation. Their political activities were important for them as an opportunity *'to be important'* and *'gain respect'*, as described by Elias further:

I was thinking I would like to do something interesting or something important. ... Actually, it [politics] *is interesting because of power… if you are in politics you have power. I am a guy who would like to be powerful* (Elias, 22, Mannheim, centre-right party and youth organisation).

Power-seekers praised a Machiavellian approach to politics. Although no one I talked to openly mentioned Niccolò Machiavelli, they spoke about *'the end which justifies the means'*. Instead of Machiavelli, the fictional character of the unscrupulous politician Frank Underwood from the HBO series *House of Cards* was mentioned with a considerable level of sympathy and admiration:

You know, many psychologists would say that he [Underwood] *is a maniac, but in politics, you cannot be successful if…* <pause to consider >. *Anyway, it's true that he* [Underwood] *killed or ordered the killing of loads of people, but he does it for power, not for money. When you have power, you also have certain responsibilities* (Šimon, 23, Ostrava, right-wing party).

The second group of *pragmatists* is called *young professionals*. These informants were politically motivated mainly by external incentives such as career opportunities within or beyond their organisations. For them, their engagement meant, above all, a valuable addition

[76] *Doers* and *idealists* also mentioned climbing the career ladder of an organisation quickly. Nevertheless, they have never seen this as their priority. On the contrary, they connected a high position with pressure, significant responsibility and stress.

to their CV. Nevertheless, young people were reluctant to openly admit this as their main motivation, because it may not have been seen as a socially desirable answer.

I also think that it [political involvement] *is important for you, for your career and stuff like that. Nobody wants to say that but I can see it as a very important thing there* (Albert, 19, Jena, university politics).

Among the important features of their involvement, *young professionals* also mentioned learning skills such as leadership, cooperation, the art of public speaking and management, which could positively influence their future career prospects. This is illustrated by a quotation from the interview with Jonas, a law student and RCDS member. He entered the organisation on his cousin's recommendation and has never regretted this step. Less than a year after joining, he has learnt a lot and reached a very good position:

I think I am learning a lot about how to lead people, how to hold discussions, how to plan things and [I understand more clearly] *my own opinions, but I am also learning to listen and acknowledge other people's opinions and to find compromises* (Jonas, 20, Mannheim, centre-right youth organisation).

Furthermore, political engagement provides *young professionals* with the opportunity to network on a national as well as international level. Some interviewees talked about their internships in the national or European Parliament, where they worked as assistants to MPs, or about the summer camps of their organisations. In this respect, members of well-established political organisations (such as social-democratic, Christian-democratic or green parties) have better opportunities and choices. However, as Eliška, a young social democrat said:

Every political youth organisation can be very good. No matter if you are a young communist, a young conservative or a young TOP 09 supporter,[77] *it's really good to network with your peers because those are the people you are going to have to work with for the next 30 or 40 years* (Eliška, 26, Ostrava, centre-left party and youth organisation).

It is also worth pointing out that *young professionals* are not so sharply ideologically driven as, for example*, card-carrying members* or *outer-oriented idealists.* That is why it is less problematic for them to cooperate with people from different areas of the political spectrum, even though this cooperation often happens for purely pragmatic reasons. However, they also often maintain friendships with people with different political opinions. To illustrate this ability to get along with everybody, one pragmatic and one idealistic interview excerpt is provided for comparison:

[77] To capture the specifics of Eliška´s language in the description of youth party organisation, the following interview excerpt is quoted also in the original Czech version: „*Kterákoli mládežnická organizace, která je zaměřená na politiku, je velmi dobrá, ať to je mladý komár, mladá konzerva nebo mladý topkař. Je dobré si udělat tu síť mezi těma vrstevníkama, protože s něma budeš spolupracovat dalších třicet nebo čtyřicet let.*"

Pragmatic: *Cooperation with these organisations* [referring to Amnesty International] *is terribly important, because they will support you then. You know,* '*keep your friends close and your enemies closer'* (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

Idealist: *These people* [referring to Young Conservatives] *have different values to me. I would find it very difficult to make a friend like that* (Pavel, 20, Prague, centre-left party, green activist).

As another motivating factor, *professionals* stated that their organisations function for them as *'playgrounds'*, providing *'great training'* and *'talent incubators'* for adult politics. In this respect, we should mention that in the literature, voluntary associations are referred to in the Tocquevillean approach as *'schools',* or by van Deth (2008:11–12) as *'schoolyards'* for democracy. Interviewees appreciated that in their political groups they could try many things without having great responsibility. This claim is proved by the following words of students from Prague and Jena:

The good thing is that that no one expects anything from you. You can do what you want and basically it's like playing (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

You get the opportunity to learn loads of things and nobody gets angry at you for making mistakes as they would in a real job (Albert, 19, university politics, Jena).

In this *'playground'*, they can learn to overcome shyness, gain self-confidence and improve their image in order to become the young politicians of the future. *Professionals* were the most formal of all the interviewees in their speech and appearance. They avoided using expressive words in our conversation, overused English jargon, and some of them wore suits to our meetings.

Nevertheless, a quick change of image may lead to a role conflict. Some of these people feel like they wear a mask and sometimes it feels difficult to stop performing in this role. Therefore, we will end this subchapter with the story of Václav, who is wrestling with this dilemma. Václav comes from a small South Moravian village, as is clear from the accent in his formal language. He was raised in a Catholic family and calls himself a conservative Catholic. It is not surprising that he has been very active in the church and local youth Catholic organisation since he was a child.

At the age of 18, he entered the Christian Democratic Party. He openly declares that this decision was influenced by the fact that he planned to study diplomacy and expected *'that this* [party membership] *could provide good training, something practical. I hope that diplomacy will be my job one day and that the Christian democrats will be connected with this*' (Václav, 20, Prague, centre-right party). His life and politics are connected in many respects. Besides

his studies and party membership, he works for a parliamentary group of the Christian Democratic Party, and he is an assistant for one of their MPs. These activities are demanding in terms of his self-presentation:

It cultivates me, for instance, in my speech… Yeah, for example, I sometimes realise that I speak a bit differently with the kids in my parish. You know, somehow politically or more formally <apologetic smile>. *And it cultivates my thinking, behaviour and so on.*

Nevertheless, Václav realises the unforeseen results of this *'cultivation'*. As he admits, he sometimes fights with his pride and feels like a man with two faces. On the one hand, he is a modest, friendly village guy and on the other he is a self-confident, successful young politician in Prague. In my interaction with Václav, I felt both personae to be simultaneously authentic.

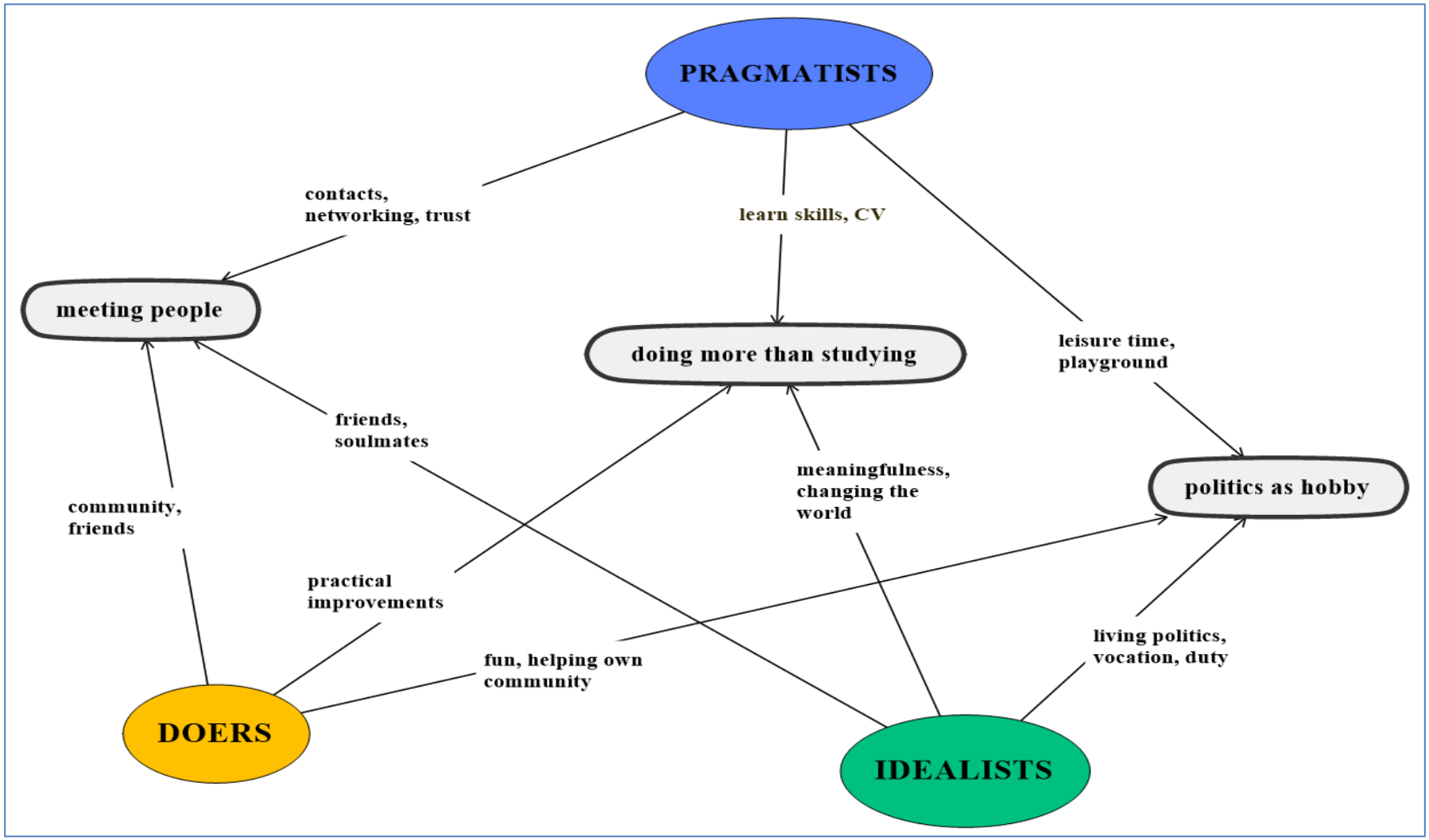
Sometimes, when I go to my village and walk along the street where I live, I say to myself 'I am so cool because I work for the Chamber of Deputies' but then I realise that I do not want to be like that [speaking frankly]. *...Sometimes, it's really hard to stay humble and I know that sometimes I seem very proud.*

Václav feels the difficulty of switching between a professional and leisure mode. He admits that the more he continues to be active in politics, the more this environment will shape him. He is afraid that eventually, even in his parish, he will come across as *'that professional guy from Prague'*.

6.1.4. Conceptual differences in the typology of political motivation

I will now illustrate further the differences among the diverse types of political motivation, using examples of interviewees' perceptions of certain notions. In other words, *idealists*, *doers* and *pragmatists* repeatedly identify the same concepts as important, but their perception and the meaning they attribute to these concepts differ significantly for each kind of political motivation. The figure below depicts these variations.

Figure 6: **Conceptual variations according to type of political motivation**



Sourrce: created by Prokschová

For example, almost all communication partners stated that *'meeting new people'* is one of the advantages of their political activity. Nevertheless, each group ascribed different meanings and used different language in connection to this. *Pragmatists* talked about gathering valuable contacts and networking, while *doers* emphasised making new friends.[78] However, all the groups had one aspect in common: meeting new people on either a friendship or professional basis was connected with trust, which was essential for cooperation. Even the *pragmatists: power-seekers* praised the *'trustworthy'* and *'reliable'* people they had met in politics.

Similarly, Figure 6 shows that *'doing more than studying'* was important for all communication partners from different motivational backgrounds. With a certain degree of pathos, *idealists* connected this with finding a deeper meaning of life, clarification of their own values, or dealing with a crisis of identity. However, this theme was the most crucial for *doers.* These interviewees tried to find extra activities because university alone could not provide them with sufficient fulfilment, an idea exemplified by the story of Alma, who is very active in student politics.

Alma comes from a small village where she is very busy taking care of her younger siblings, helping her parents with their small family farm, and has many other village-based activities with her family and friends. Recalling her early experiences after moving to Ostrava (the capital of the Moravian-Silesian Region with a population of almost 300 000) a fragile brown-haired Alma says of herself:

What would you like to do in the city? Plant a flowerbed in front of the halls of residence?! Yes, I tried it, but it didn't last long <laughing> *and I wanted to get more involved* (Alma, 30, Ostrava, university politics).

She further describes her feelings of boredom and loneliness in the first months of university. In her own words, she *'didn't like just sitting in lectures and wasn't interested just in my course'.* Therefore, she took the initiative to find some other activities. She started to be active in university politics, first at university level and then at a national level. Moreover, she worked voluntarily, tutoring children and helping deaf people. She likes these activities because they are not ideologically profiled and deal with practical problems where she can see progress happening relatively quickly.

When *pragmatists* talked about their political activities in relation to *'doing more than studying',* they particularly meant learning skills, meeting new people and obtaining useful

[78] Nevertheless, we should take into account the potential influence of self-stylisation. *Pragmatists* were maybe just more open to admitting this.

experience to help them find a job.[79] This pattern of thinking is typified by Milan, a student of economics and member of the Young Conservatives, when he explains why it is important to be politically active.

I think that young people might be interested in politics, but they do not have enough experience to get involved in politics on a professional level. ... These people [his fellow students from the university] *think that VŠE* [Prague University of Economics and Business] *will guarantee them a job. ... I think that a university degree alone doesn't guarantee this, and that is why it is important to do something more than studying* (Milan, 24, Prague, centre-right party and youth organisation).

Similarly, they mentioned the possibility of *'gaining an insight'*. They wanted to understand the political process, and *'how society really works… who are the actors, how to democratically organise a group of people*' (Alexander, 24, Cologne, Green Party and ecological activist).

The third theme salient in all kinds of political motivation was the perception of *'politics as a hobby'* (see Figure 6). This issue was particularly important for *doers: common-spirit seekers* who emphasised the fun aspect, and for *idealists: card-carrying members* who perceived politics as their '*hobby and vocation'* and a form of self-realisation. When they had to stop or interrupt their public activities due to study obligations or personal circumstances, they felt the *'lack of activism'* and intensely missed their involvement.

In general, my informants stated that they liked their political engagement. This was especially typical for interviewees with a high level of engagement and for those who considered themselves successful in politics.[80] However, there were exceptions. One such exception is Pavel, who represented an anti-pragmatic approach to politics. He quickly reached a good position in party politics as well as in the non-profit sector. Despite the amount of time and effort he devoted to his engagement, he actually dislikes politics, as he describes below:

Daniela: *What are your reasons for being politically active?*

Pavel: *Well, it´s certainly not my hobby* <smiling>. *You know, I'm not going to make a career in it because I do not like politics and I do not want to enter it actively* [on a professional basis]. *Actually, it* [politics] *takes a lot of time. Other people go fishing or something, and although I do this in my free time, I can't say that I particularly enjoy it* <laughing> (Pavel, 20, Prague, centre-left party, green

[79] We should mention here that, across their political motivations, interviewees realised that their engagement could facilitate their prospects in the labour market. However, *idealists* and *doers* did not state it as an important factor in their activism. Some of them perceived it as a nice bonus, while others insisted that *'they are definitely not in politics to make a career'.*

[80] However, it is difficult to prove causality in this relationship. In other words, it is questionable if people who like politics are, therefore, more active and successful in it, or if their enjoyment of politics increases with a higher degree of activism. These factors are most probably mutually strengthening.

activist).

Pavel's dislike of politics did not stem from the disillusionment caused by his engagement in real politics. While he disagreed with certain negations and compromises which had the character of political bargaining, he stated that he had not had any illusions beforehand. Pavel entered politics because he wanted to promote certain ideas and values, as according to him, *'politics is about values'*. In contrast to some other interviewees, he behaved very modestly and with a capacity for self-reflection during our interview. For instance, he admitted his shortcomings, such as a relatively poor theoretical background in politics, and laziness, which prevented him from building a more successful career.

6.1.5. Mixed motivations - the diversity of reasons for political engagement

We should take into account that the reasons for activism are not clear cut. Mixed motivations were presented particularly among actors who were engaged in more than one type of political activity, for instance, those who were active in political parties as well as in civil society. In this regard, it is not surprising that motivation differs according to the character of their activities.

This variation in the motivational dimensions of political action is illustrated by the experience of Aneta, a student of cultural anthropology at Palacky University in Olomouc. She actively helped refugees at the Hungarian border, took part in anti-Nazi demonstrations in Olomouc and has long been active in local politics. For each of these activities, she is motivated by different incentives, as illuminated by the following interview excerpt:

Daniela: *Can I ask you to summarise why you are active in politics?*

Aneta: *Well, it depends* <smiling>. *Ok, for example, in the case of these refugees, I was so pissed off. Let's say that it bothered me a lot* <smiling> *that these people* [refugees] *live in such poor conditions and people here* [in the Czech Republic] *totally panicked for no reason. So, I felt very strongly that someone had to do something, to sort this out, that it is very, very important to do something about that* <speaking loudly> (Aneta, 21, Olomouc, human rights activist, local politics).

Aneta expressively described her strong moral commitment to helping refugees. Similarly, she spoke about her activities against Neo-Nazism, including counter-demonstrations and blockades. Her main reasons for this involvement were purely ethical. She is an *outer-motivated idealist* who wants to *'do something that is important'* regardless of the potential consequences, such as verbal clashes with Neo-Nazis and even with police during

demonstrations. This incident resulted in her being fined, which she considered highly unjust because of her good intentions.

In contrast, she more calmly describes her activities in local politics in her village, which are in her own words *'not so extreme'* <smiling>. She is motivated by *local patriotism* manifested in *'the effort to participate in the life of my own village'*. The story of Aneta suggests that motives for involvement, as well as intensity of commitment, vary according to the context of young peoples' activities.

Twenty-three-year-old Lukas also exemplifies the mixed motivations driving political engagement. He is very active in university politics at Friedrich Schiller University Jena which, although it is very time-consuming, he feels is not sufficiently appreciated or respected by his colleagues and the university management. However, he claims that his engagement is useful because:

It's necessary for people to speak their minds about what is going on in the education system and the structures in which they are operating. Yeah, it is necessary for us to represent the needs of students who elected us… I have to represent the students in confrontations with the university and against the government… We need much more investment into the education system so we have to push for more money (Lukas, 23, Jena, anarchist, university politics).

This interview excerpt shows that Lukas sees himself as a student representative who can articulate students' practical demands. In this regard, he is a typical *doer: problem-solver*. In fact, he feels that he is activist-oriented and prefers direct political action such as blockades, building occupations, demonstrations against Neo-Nazism and police brutality. He estimates that he takes part in approximately 20-30 demonstrations per year. These activities gave him inner fulfilment, self-realisation and energising relief from the tiring negotiations and bureaucracy with which he struggles as a student representative, so in this respect, Lukas is an *inner-oriented idealist*.

Students like Aneta and Lukas are, due to their large-scale activism, labelled in the literature as *civic omnivores* (Hustinx et al. 2012:106). They creatively combine conventional and unconventional modes of participation (for instance, party membership, participation in demonstrations and civil society involvement) and are mostly satisfied with their engagement. They see themselves as independent actors[81] and feel that their voices are heard because they think that people in political parties have more real political power than in the civic sector.

[81] People from NGOs valued their personal as well as financial independence. They appreciated that, compared to parties, their organisations functioned more on grass-roots principles where *'you just come and say I'll do this and you do it… and decisions are consensual, you know, to let everybody do what he or she wants, to achieve a common goal'* (Iva, 24, Prague, feminist, left-wing activist).

They are convinced that participation in civil society and party politics is not mutually exclusive but complementary, as a young activist Pavel describes:

It has always been debated if politics should be conducted in [party] *offices or on the streets. … In a party, you know, there is real power to enforce something but when you make a lot of noise in the streets, you enforce it as well anyhow* <laughing> (Pavel, 20, Prague, centre-left party, green activist).

The analytical findings showed that motives for activism differed according to the nature and ideological profile of involvement. People in political parties (particularly in right-wing and conservative ones) tended to express rather pragmatic attitudes, while interviewees active in left-wing political groups, ecological organisations and grass-root types of activism predominantly stated ethical purposes for their political action. They perceived politics and their own activism as *'a natural part of life without which I cannot imagine a satisfying existence'* <giggling> (Kryštof, 26, Prague, anarchist and left-wing activist), *'a way to feel empowered* (Lukas, 23, Jena, anarchist, university politics), *'a form of self-realisation which I just really enjoy'* (Iva, 24, Prague, feminist, left-wing activist).

Nevertheless, this claim contains a certain level of simplification. A closer look at the nuanced interview data shows that *pragmatists* can also be found among leftists, while some conservative respondents expressed a high degree of political idealism. An example of someone from this latter group is Matěj, a member of a centre-right political party and its youth organisation, from Prague. His example demonstrates that political idealism and lifestyle politics are not confined to left-wing and environmental activists.

Matěj is just 19, but he wants to look older, which is probably why he came to our meeting dressed in a suit and adopted very formal gestures and hypercorrect language. He calls himself *'young regarding my age but in fact I am an old conservative',* pointing to his values, religious fervour and worldview. People like Matěj stated that they have always been interested or even fascinated by the world of politics and just waited for the right moment to join their organisation. For some of them, this moment was reaching the age of majority; for others, political recruitment was triggered by special events such as electoral campaigns or the influence of a charismatic political idol.

Matěj's story typifies this pathway to organisational membership. His first experience with political activism was during the campaign for the first direct vote for the Czech president in autumn 2012. His inspiration, he states, was his admiration of centre-right candidate Karel Schwarzenberg, about whom he speaks with such a degree of respect that it conveys devotion to a father-figure. He calls Schwarzenberg *'the duke'* or familiarly just

'Karel'.[82] '*Yes, Karel, he is a person who I just fell for'* commented Matěj on his attitudes towards Schwarzenberg. He entered politics at secondary school and considers the campaign period as *'one of the most exciting times of my life'* and recalls further details:

You know, I have always been fascinated by the world of politics… and I started to be quite politically active. As a volunteer, I started at the stall of TOP 09 [centre-right party]. *We* [he and his friends] *offered badges and leaflets to people and showed posters. … It was an amazing campaign. You know, Karel Schwarzenberg was depicted as an admiral standing there* [on the boat] *and these orange rats* [symbolizing social democrats] *were fleeing the boat* <describing the electoral poster> (Matěj, 19, Prague, centre-right party, conservative activist).

Matěj´s motivation for political action is mixed. From the enthusiastic description of his involvement during the electoral campaign and the high degree of his identification with the party, he clearly represents a typical case of *idealist: card-carrying member*. When it comes to his image, he falls into the category of *pragmatic: young professional*. Nevertheless, he is also a *doer: common-spirit seeker* because he strongly appreciates the sense of belonging, being with like-minded people and fighting for a group cause, as he describes:

Yes, it was [clear] *from the mood of the public. For example, you entered the metro and half the people were wearing the 'Karel for president' badge - that was really great!*

6.2. Why do young people refrain from engaging? Reasons for avoiding organisational membership

In the previous subchapter, we illuminated the motives of people who were engaged in political and civic organisations. The following section will shed light on the opposite issue - the reasons why people avoid joining political groups. It focuses also on interviewees who considered organisational membership and finally decided not to join any political group. Moreover, I also examine the motives for leaving a political or civic organisation.

The classical approach of Verba et al. (1995) mentions three main reasons why people are not politically active. They *'cannot'* participate because they lack the resources, *'do not want'* to get involved due to a lack of interest, or *'nobody asked them'*.

In my analysis, these motives were also visible. Nevertheless, further reasons for unwillingness to join political or civic organisations appeared among my communication

[82] These expressions represent the typical narrative of Schwarzenberg's supporters. In this regard, we should not disregard Karel Schwarzenberg's canny electoral public relations and marketing team. For example, mottos such as *Jedu v tom s Karlem* (I´m going with Karel), *Na pivo s Karlem* (Let´s go for a beer with Karel) were widespread during the campaign. Furthermore, marketing focused on the younger generation: for instance, Karel Schwarzenberg (born in 1937) was visually presented in campaign materials as a punk, complete with a mohawk hairstyle.

partners. These identified reasons were subtler, context-sensitive and usually combined several factors. We will turn our attention to the most important factors.

Some people I talked to were not interested in politics at all or expressed very negative attitudes to politics. It is not surprising that among the main reasons for organisational inactivity, *'lack of political interest'*, *'disgust with politics in general'*, *'having other priorities'* and particularly the notion that *'politics is a remote issue which they are not able to influence'* appeared. As shown in Chapter 4, these people often come from politically disengaged family backgrounds. Their reasons, which convey fatalism and resignation, are illuminated in the interview excerpts below:

Joining an organisation? That's not for me! <resolutely> *On the one hand, I am not interested in it* [politics] *and on the other, I do not want to be engaged. Yeah, I have other stuff to do and when I see how people* [in politics] *become so blinkered… you know what I mean, they are incapable of compromise* <critically> (Karel, 21, Olomouc, no organisation).

You know, people mostly have no insight into this [politics]. *For example, I have no idea how things work in political parties* (Věra, 23, Olomouc, no organisation).

Yeah, I am kind of an anti-idealist or sceptic if you like. I think that I cannot change anything there. We [the common people] *cannot see into the workings of it… If I joined a party, I would have to promote my vision of things and they would outvote me so I wouldn't be able to change anything. And you know, do I really need this?* <rhetorical question> *I can use my time more effectively* (Roman, 26, Ostrava, no organisation).

This scepticism was expressed particularly towards political parties. Public initiatives, however, were seen in a more favourable light as organisations able to solve particular problems, mostly of a local character, and to offer something *'which people need and which they understand'* (Michal, 23, Olomouc, no organisation). On the one hand, interviewees connected the civic sector with decentralisation and non-conformity. On the other, they perceived politics realised outside political parties as less relevant and *'weaker',* compared to what they identified as *'real politics'*.

The issue of time appeared as significant in the analysis. It was connected with *'having other priorities than politics'* in terms of how to spend leisure time. In this regard, organisationally non-involved informants stated that it was very difficult to combine university studies with part-time jobs, internships, hobbies, and on top of everything else to find time for political activities. Others admitted that they had time but were just too lazy to do anything more than studying.

Moreover, a perceived lack of *internal* and *external efficacy* was revealed as a crucial issue in their reluctance to join a political group. In other words, my interviewees felt that their effort would not be sufficient to influence the political process at a local or national level and that the government was not responsive to their demands and needs.

For instance, Roman, a student at the University of Ostrava, who comes from a small town in South Moravia, describes to me the story of his friend who is *'like these Southern people in the US who admire the Confederation. ... You know, it would be bullshit to say that he is a Nazi, he is* <pause to consider> a *conservative'* (Roman, 26, Ostrava, no organisation). They discuss politics a lot, but only agree in opinion on Islam. Roman explains further:

Once, he suggested to me: 'Ok, let's run in the communal elections!' and I said to him 'Are you fucking crazy?! You want to fight against Islam in ***[83] [his hometown] *where no Muslim person has ever been!* <laughing> *... Tell me, what would we really be doing there* [in the municipal council]*? You would be deciding about the building of sandpits and bicycle paths'* <laughing>.

After a while he speaks more seriously, explaining:

You know, all this stuff is important. I am glad that the central government doesn't decide everything and we can do it on our own, but I don't want to actively participate in this, it makes no sense to me.

It was repeatedly shown that, among those who perceived politics as something carried out remotely by men in black suits known from their appearences on TV, politics had a very bad reputation. This impression also carried over to regular party members who were considered the *usual suspects,* and in politics just for their own personal gain, ideologically blinkered and boxed in to following regulations and toeing the party line.

In this line of argument, people often consider themselves as too young to sit for hours in meetings and fully commit themselves to a particular ideology. Party membership was associated with narrow-mindedness and conformity to the official party line at all costs, necessitating the betrayal of your own political opinions. Furthermore, party membership was understood as a life commitment:

...a way of labelling myself to show I really share their beliefs, which is why, although I am interested, I couldn't join the party because I cannot agree with some of their beliefs (Elke, 22, Jena, Catholic organisation).

Some interviewees mentioned that they were interested in one issue taken up by the party, but did not agree with all the parts of the party programme, so they wouldn't fit into the party *'box'*, a feeling expressed by a psychology student at the University of Mannheim:

Let's say I agree with the Green Party on a lot of issues, but there are many more that I totally

[83] The name of his hometown was deleted for reason of anonymisation.

disagree with. So, I couldn't join a party without feeling bad about supporting things that don't feel right to me (Jens, 26, Mannheim, no organisation).

The quotations above show that at least some young people reflect very responsibly on questions of party membership. They are interested in politics, follow political events closely online, or less often in traditional media, but for normative reasons they do not want to join organised politics. Some of my communication partners actually investigated joining a political organisation, but changed their minds during the recruitment procedure.

One such interviewee is Liam, a 23-year student at the University of Mannheim who feels *'sympathy for social democrats'* and repeatedly visited SPD meetings with his friend, a party member. Liam, however, was not satisfied with what he saw and after four meetings he decided not to join the party. He disliked not only the people in the party, but also the highly formalised, boring and hierarchical party approach. He explains his disappointment:

It was really annoying, because there were some… <looking for right words> *really nice guys and then some* [were] *maybe a bit arrogant, or a bit strange*. *It was also the way they structured the meetings. There was an agenda, so first we went through that point by point. So, if you want to say something, you raise your hand and they write you on a list. But there is no discussion, you can't respond directly because there are five other people scheduled to talk before you* (Liam, 23, Mannheim, no organisation).

This viewpoint appeared repeatedly in the analysis among those respondents who decided to leave their party or cancel their membership. The human element also played a crucial role: interviewees complained of arrogant career-seekers and expressed disillusionment at the exhausting negotiations and political compromises. Another target of criticism was the demand for absolute ideological conformity, as Christoph, a former Green Party member, explains:

I was a little bit idealistic… <pause to consider>. *Yeah, I wanted to change stuff and wanted to engage politically based on my ideals. Then I realised that membership in a party does not really mean promoting your own ideals but to conform to your party and always promote party opinions with no space for your own opinions* <speaking sadly> (Christoph, 22, Cologne, former party member).

He further describes how marginalized he felt from his former colleagues:

These guys had been in the party for a really long time and their voices were important. But as a newbie, your voice was not important, and nobody cared about what you thought.

In fact, a combination of reasons provided the background to the decision not to enter, or to leave the party. A *conflict of interests* was another salient issue that emerged from the analysis. This topic was particularly crucial for interviewees who were considering a career in political science. For future political analysts in particular, engagement in party politics was

perceived as a problem. For the sake of their reputation, they wanted to be considered impartial or independent.

Sometimes they wrestled with a dilemma between their desire for political self-realisation versus the need to take a neutral stance befitting their role as an observer. On the one hand, they considered organisational membership *'a natural part of life'* (Christoph, 22, Cologne, former party member) and wanted to *'openly articulate their opinions on public issues'* (Iva, 24, Prague, feminist, left-wing activist). On the other hand, they did not want to be bonded too tightly to any particular ideology.

Similarly, future journalists, lawyers and teachers among the interviewees were afraid of a possible *conflict of interest*. In this respect Liam's testimony is symptomatic:

I work part-time as a journalist. I can't really combine being a journalist with being active in the political [sphere]. … *It was a basic choice for me, either you are active in politics, or you work as a journalist* (Liam, 23, Mannheim, no organisation).

Besides the fact that he does not intend to join a political party, he also wants to restrict his other political activities, for instance, participation in demonstrations. As an example of this need to separate himself from collective political actions, he recalls an anti-Pegida demonstration. Although he had planned to participate, he changed his mind, fearing that he could encounter people there from either side whom he would later have to interview. This cautious approach to public involvement was concisely summarised by a non-politically-active student of psychology *'I prefer to keep my distance'* (Přemysl, 22, Ostrava, no organisation).

Some people kept their distance from left-wing activism, in particular, because of the risk this posed for job seeking. They feared that if the human resources departments of multinational corporations found out about their participation in anti-globalist or anti-capitalist protests, their chances of being hired would be ruined. For this reason, some interviewees were afraid of being photographed or recorded during demonstrations. For instance, Ondřej, a member of the Czech Social Democratic Party, was worried that his future employers would search for this information about him.

When I look for a job, they can google me and say, 'well, well, that's ***[84] [his surname] *and he wants to increase taxes and have progressive taxation and he wants to work for me. I will create a profit and then pay higher taxes because he wants it'* (Ondřej, 26, Prague, centre-left party, activist).

[84] His surname was deleted for the purpose of anonymisation.

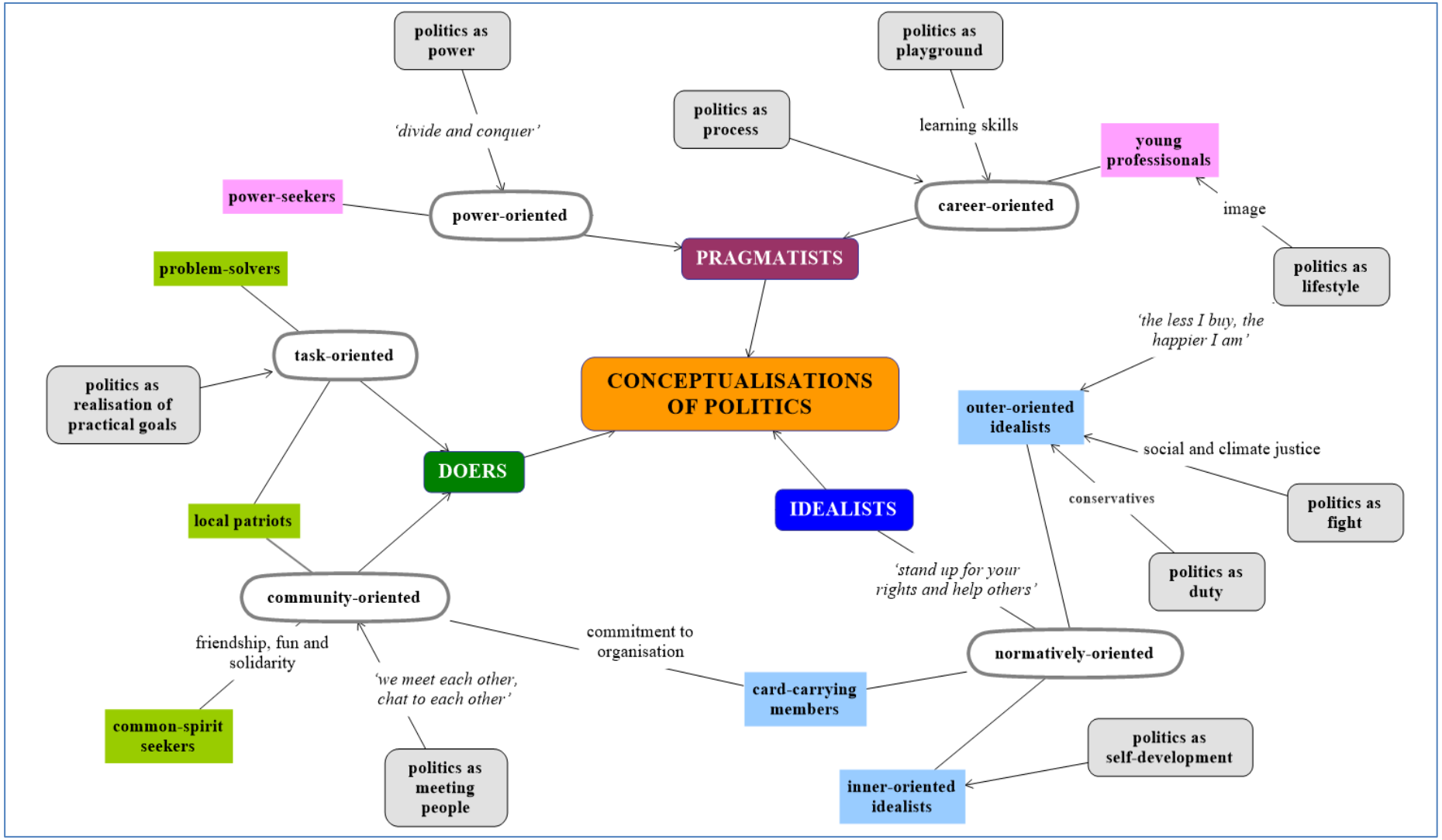
However, German communication partners felt that engagement in conventional politics (particularly with major parties such as SPD or CDU-CSU) could increase their credibility as a future employee candidate.

6.3. Summary

This chapter has examined the motivation stimuli driving people to join political organisations, as well as the reasons for refraining from political groups. I provided a personal typology of political motivation. I distinguished between *idealists*, who emphasise the moral dimension of political action, *doers*, who the resolution of a particular issue of local or national character is crucial for, and *pragmatists*, who perceive politics as a hierarchical process of the distribution of power.

When *idealists*, *doers* and *pragmatists* talk about the same notion, they do not necessarily share the same understanding. Although they stated that they were in politics for the benefit of *'meeting people', 'doing something more than studying'* and *'having fun',* the degree of their moral, ideological, and career commitment varied sharply amongst duty-hobby-vocation. In other words, where one person sees his/her engagement as an opportunity to gain valuable contacts and skills, another perceives this as a chance to find soulmates or profound personal fulfilment. Figure 7 summarises the main findings by highlighting the differences in conceptualisation of politics among *idealists*, *doers* and *pragmatists* and their subtypes.

Figure 7: **Different conceptualisations of politics according to political motivation**



Source: created by Prokschová

The analysis offered valuable insights into how communication partners place themselves in relation to politics. In this respect, *idealists* and *doers* find self-fulfilment either primarily in helping others, or in their self-realisation. In contrast, *pragmatists* understand their involvement particularly as a unique opportunity to learn skills which will facilitate their future careers.

Figure 7 also depicts how perceptions of politics partly overlap in certain cases. For instance, *idealists: card-carrying members* and *doers: common spirit seekers* share an emphasis on the social dimension of their political activities. However, they differ in the nature of these social ties. For *idealists: card-carrying members*, commitment to their organisation is crucial and they are ideologically driven, while the *doers: common spirit seekers* prioritise the community aspect. Their friendships, common activities and fun mean more to them than ideology.

Moreover, Figure 7 shows that lifestyle-politics is an issue reserved not only for *idealists*. *Outer-oriented idealists* connect it with their consumption behaviour, which they understand as a form of political self-expression. In other words, they use their lifestyles to perform their politics. In contrast, *pragmatists: young professionals* perceive politics as a lifestyle, constructing their image as up-and-coming young professionals by adopting formal dress, gestures and language.

Furthermore, the analysis showed the following reasons for inactivity (see Figure 8). It is not surprising that lack of political interest and willingness to sacrifice one's own time and energy are among the main reasons for not joining political or civic groups. The analysis, however, revealed several subtler motives that go beyond Verba et al. (1995) typology.

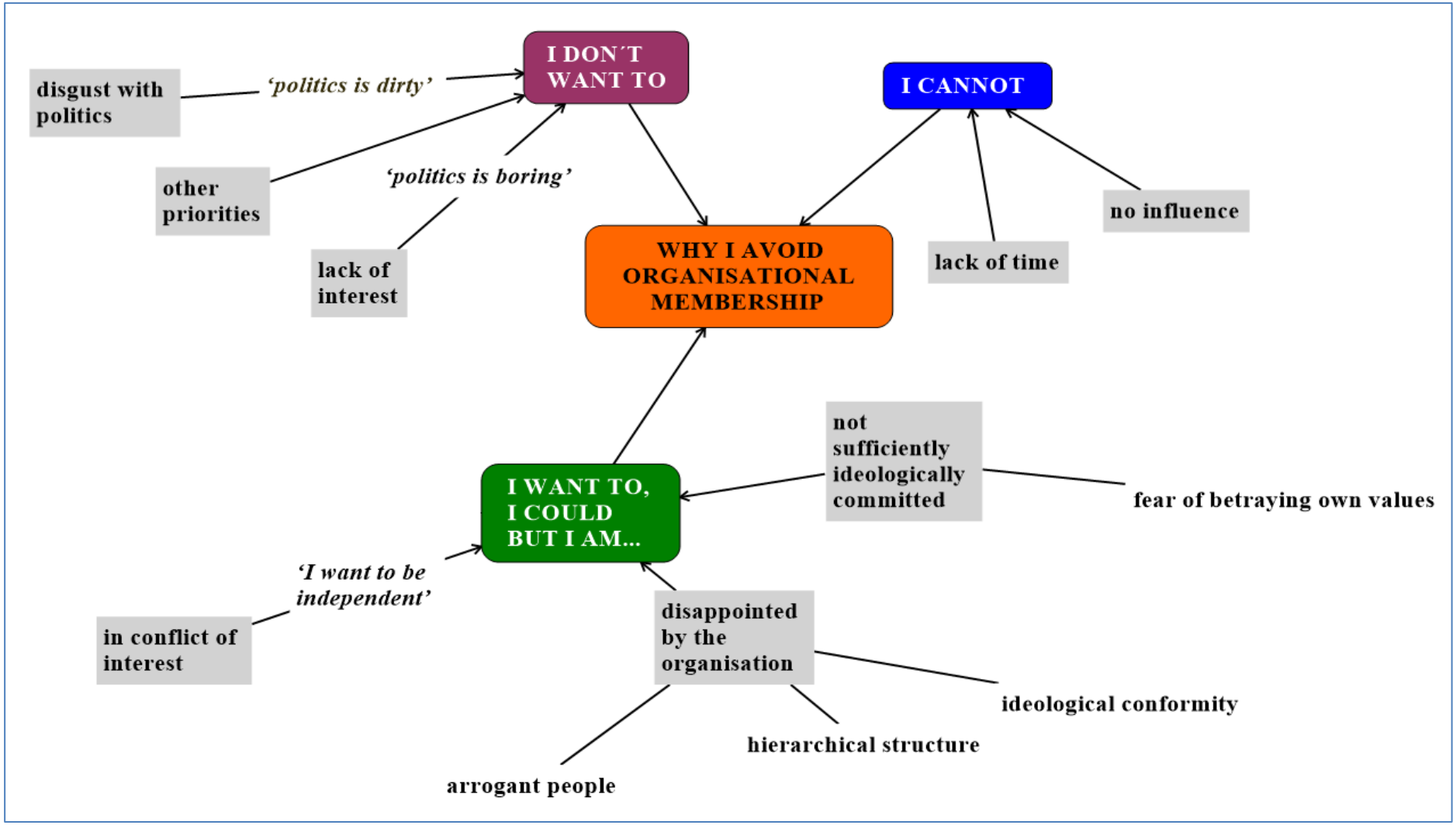
First, interviewees feared the ideological commitment required by organisational and especially party membership. They felt they had insufficient ideological congruence with certain political issues, and as a result were afraid of betraying their own principles.

The second factor concerned budding political analysts, journalists, and teachers who feared conflicts of interest and thus preferred to be *'ideologically impartial'* by maintaining a distance from politics.

The third significant reason was disillusionment with routine organisational practise. This was typical for interviewees who wanted to join political or civic groups, but changed their minds, as well as for those who left their organisation. In particular, they criticised the hierarchical structure of their former organisation, tiring negotiations, arrogant attitudes among other members, and the demand for rigid ideological conformity (see Figure 8).

These results indicate that even young people who were highly interested in politics and had the resources to engage avoided organisational membership. The riddle of organisational inactivity was more complicated than was expected.

Figure 8: **Reasons for avoiding organisational membership**



Source: created by Prokschová

7. SYNTHESIS: The role of political socialisation, motivation and self-efficacy in the pathway to politics

Political participation takes place in a societal context, not in isolation, and political motivation is a multidimensional phenomenon (Corrigall-Brown 2012; García-Albacete 2014; Quintelier 2013; Verba et al. 1995). That is why it is difficult to distinguish *'that moment'* when the flash of interest changes into a long-standing political commitment. Behind the decision to join a political group, there are various interconnected internal and external motivational stimuli and incentives given by family, school, friends, university, and wider socio-political circumstances.

The aim of synthesis is to summarise the most significant of these, and put them into the context of the existing theory. To achieve this goal, I will introduce the results of my analysis of the biographical trajectories of my interviewees (covering the origins of activism, triggering motives, everyday modes and practices of political involvement, and an understanding of their own involvement and future plans). In relevant cases, I will highlight the differences between the Czech and German pathways to activism and perceptions of politics.

For this purpose, I will introduce the patterns, mechanisms and narratives of primary and secondary political socialisation and describe how they are transmitted into motivations for organisational membership. I will focus on the effect of external influences such as family, peers, school and university. Furthermore, I will describe the individual reactions to these influences, which cover the strategies of *endurance* and *avoidance*. Moreover, attention will be paid to the paths to activism termed as *growing* and *being thrown* into politics, as well as the reasons people refrain from organisational membership being introduced.

In the thesis, I have creatively applied the approaches from Western literature for political motivation and socialisation to the Czech and German context to find out the personal and societal circumstances behind joining political organisations. I focused especially on the mechanisms of primary political socialisation formulated by Bruter and Harrison (2009), Dalton´s modes of citizenship (2008), the types of political culture defined by Almond and Verba (1963), bonding and bridging social capital of Putnam (2000) and Fukuyama (2002) and the *Civic Voluntarism Model* and reasons for political inactivity formulated by Verba et al. (1995).

7.1. External and internal influence: between encouragement, pressure and silence

Influence emerged as the central theme guiding the analysis of political motivations and pathways to activism. It is a common thread in the life stories of my interviewees. In this respect, I distinguished two main kinds of influence, *external* and *internal*. The first includes influential people and circumstances during the process of primary and secondary political socialisation. For instance, it covers the influence of family, school, friends and peers, as well as mobilising events and recruiting processes. In other words, *external influence* answers the question of *'What influences me?'*

In contrast, *internal influence* deals with the question of *'What do I influence?'* It is the notion of self-efficacy[85] which is a trust in your own ability to act politically (Kahne and Westheimer 2006; Pollock 1983). A citizen with a sense of self-efficacy believes that, he/she is capable of and entitled to influence the political process and create what is termed by Almond and Verba as *participant culture* (1963) and by Jenkins et al. (2015) as *participatory culture*.

Such a citizen understands not only the functioning of the political system, but also his/her role in it. He/she reflects critically on the political system and considers the normative dimensions of political life, such as the legitimacy of the system and each person's rights and duties (Almond and Verba 1963; Jenkins, Ito, and Boyd 2015). Moreover, he/she is able to resist pressures from his/her surroundings. To summarise, self-efficacy builds participation and political commitment. People who have a greater sense of *internal efficacy* are more likely to be politically engaged (Almond and Verba 1963; Kahne and Westheimer 2006; Pasek et al. 2008).

As the subheading suggests, three modes of *influence* were distinguished: *encouragement*, *pressure*[86] and *silence*, which will be elaborated on with the use of narratives and mechanisms in further parts of the text.

[85] In further parts of the text, the term *internal efficacy* as a synonym for *self-efficacy* is also used.

[86] The border between *encouragement* and *pressure* is very subjective and narrow. It depends on modes of communication, the level of mutual respect and the sensitivity of communication partners. For analysis, the perceptions of my interviewees were essential.

7.1.1. Encouragement

Two mechanisms of *encouragement* were identified in the analysis of political socialisation. They were *exposure* and *admiration* (see Chapter 4, pp. 70–77). First, *exposure* to a wide range of participatory political stimuli was crucial for the creation of a sense of self-efficacy and active citizenship. In other words, if my informants were exposed to a participative environment in the family, at school and among peers, they perceived politics as a familiar issue which they were able to influence and should do so.

The second mechanism, termed as *admiration,* was a stronger variation of *exposure*. Analysis revealed this mechanism to be present, especially among the informants whose parents were politically active (either in current politics or in the dissident movement during communism). Similarly, particularly admiring a political idol, friend, or teacher was also stated as formative.

Interestingly, in both mechanisms the political profiling of informants´ families and friends was not crucial. Instead of this, positive attitudes to participation and an open climate of political dialogue, regardless of a particular ideology, were necessary for the development of *internal efficacy.*

Encouragement was accompanied by a *power-free dialogue* in the family and at school. This political narrative was typified by mutual trust, understanding and an absence of pressure to feel, speak, or do certain things in politics. In other words, *power-free dialogue* was characterised by openness as well as tolerance of different opinions.

At school, this approach was labelled as an *open classroom climate* (Gainous and Martens 2016; Wood et al. 2018). In this setting, students were encouraged to talk freely about their opinions, and also about controversial issues, which created a participatory school culture (Quintelier 2013). *Open school climate* was considered the most efficient strategy in civic learning, because it fostered self-efficacy and showed students how to deal with opposing political standpoints, which was necessary for participatory democracy (Campbell 2008; Gainous and Martens 2016:264).

In contrast, frontal teaching, which emphasised learning facts over critical thinking, led to what Russel Dalton (2008:169) termed as *duty-based citizenship* and according to Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963:17, 20) *subject political culture*. In this kind of political culture, citizens with a strong knowledge of the political system, but underdeveloped self-esteem, prevailed. They obeyed the law, but did not try to shape it, were loyal to the system,

but did not question its legitimacy, voted in elections, but did not join a political organisation (Ibid.:118).

My informants, who were raised in families where a *power-free dialogue* dominated, expected to continue in this pattern of communication with their teachers, peers, and party companions. If it was not possible, they felt discriminated against and oppressed, and mostly dared to protest, despite there being negative consequences. For instance, they experienced clashes with authoritarian teachers or with leaders in hierarchical organisations. In other words, the family environment led, in their case, to the setting of personal boundaries and self-confidence manifested in later life.

In that participative-based environment, my interviewees also influenced their relatives, teachers and peers politically. To illustrate this reciprocity, we can focus on the cases of families where two variations of this behaviour were observed according to the level of educational attainment of the parents.

First, the parents without a university degree were relatively easily influenced. For example, they changed their lifestyle habits (e.g. stopped eating meat), voted for a certain party, attended a political rally, or even joined an organisation. They were willing to do this because they wanted to support the political activities of their children. Furthermore, they considered them to be experts who knew what was going on in politics and trusted their opinions. My communication partners played the role of gatekeepers to politics because of their university studies and organisational membership.

Second, patterns of reciprocity were visible also in the case of university educated parents, but were noticeably different. Parents with a university degree made their political choices more often according to ideological principles, rather than through the support of their children.

7.1.2. Pressure

The mode of *pressure* was perceived the most negatively. It was an oppressive form of influence for my interviewees and was manifested in the mechanisms of *pressure* and *opposition* (see Chapter 4, pp. 83–86).

Pressure had many nuances. In this respect, communication partners talked about *direct pressure*, which they understood as someone asserting their will and power over them by forcing them either to do or not to do something. Furthermore, they mentioned *indirect pressure,* realised in the form of *strong encouragement* which was perceived as harmful. My

interviewees also felt that this mode of *pressure* was reciprocal, similar to *encouragement*. In this respect, they mentioned the power to assert their own will over other people.

Two justifications for *pressure* were made in situations where my informants felt pushed towards engagement by their families. First, *traditional,* where relatives insisted on continuation of the family tradition of political engagement, which was particularly visible as a pathway to activism in conservative families. Second, *utilitarian*, based on emphasising the advantages and incentives of organisational membership (such as job opportunities, learning new skills, and useful contacts). Both justifications only appeared in the German context.

In contrast, the perspective of young Czech interviewees was quite different. Czech communication partners were discouraged from politics because their engagement was seen as harmful for their reputation and future career prospects, or people close to them were worried about their moral integrity (see *mechanism of opposition*, p. 83). Moreover, some communication partners mentioned that they were even warned by their family about openly articulating their political views. Their relatives were afraid of the negative consequences for the interviewees´ careers, and of a potential change of democratic regime, because *'you never know what might happen in thirty years'*.

The main explanation for Czech political alienation, mistrust and dissatisfaction was attributed in the literature to the ideological emptiness of Czech political and specifically party life. In this respect, there was an important shift from a prevailing enthusiasm after the fall of communism in 1989, to disillusionment being manifested in lower party membership and voter turnout, which was referred to as the *post-honeymoon effect* (Císař 2008; Lebeda and Vlachová 2006; Linek et al. 2017). This was characterised by vague and shallow political programmes and an orientation to immediate profit instead of coherent and long-term strategies (Brunclík and Kubát 2014:176).[87]

Interviewees also referred to pressures from their field of study and from schoolmates, which were country specific. An anti-left school climate was described by Czech interviewees, while their German counterparts told me about an anti-right environment at their schools. In this atmosphere, it was difficult to reveal personal opinions if they differed from the prevailing milieu.

[87] This notion was reinforced by the so-called *Opposition Agreement*, which was the cooperation between two rival parties - the ČSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party) and the ODS (Civic Democratic Party) - in 1998. The *Opposition Agreement* was perceived as a betrayal of voters because the above mentioned centre-left and centre-right parties insisted before the election that they would never cooperate. It created the notion that political ideology does not matter and the pragmatic sharing of power is crucial (Linek 2010). The weakness and instability of political parties resulted in a decline of confidence in political institutions and lower voter turnout (Cabada and Tomšič 2016).

The following strategies to overcome this situation were used. First, some communication partners *avoided* openly declaring their political orientations or organisational membership in a climate with opposing opinions. For instance, I spoke to a conservative student in a liberal department and an individual who possessed post-material values in a material family. Neither of them wanted to be in the minority with their political opinions and, therefore, they decided to hide these opinions. More attention will be paid to the strategy of *avoidance* in the following subchapter.

The second strategy I termed as *endurance* and it is based on bridging opinion differences and finding compromises. This effort was quite successful from a long-term perspective. Moreover, my results, in accordance with the findings of Kahne, Westheimer (2006), show that exposure to a certain kind of pressure fosters and strengthens a belief in their own abilities and stimulates political activism. This unintended consequence shows that pressure, usually perceived as harmful, may have also a positive impact on individuals.

7.1.3. Silence

The causes of the mode of *silence* are a lack of interest or even negative attitudes towards politics, as well as the avoidance of potential conflicts. In this respect, my analysis identified two political narratives connected with *silence* - *discourse of ignorance* and *discourse of avoidance*. Neither set a positive discussion climate because communication was mainly top-down or not present at all.

In *discourse of ignorance*, people were not often willing to talk about politics and to participate in public affairs because of their negative attitudes to politics. If politics was discussed, expressive language and generalisations, such as *'everybody steals in politics'*, were used.

Discourse of ignorance was characterised by a lack of interest in politics, which was seen as a remote and complicated issue which ordinary people could not understand and influence. Furthermore, politics was perceived as dirty and corrupt. These negative attitudes were shaped by political scandals portrayed in the tabloids and private media. Behind *discourse of ignorance*, the conviction about negative *external efficacy*, which was a belief that the government was nonresponsive to the demands of citizens, appeared. In other words, participants were convinced that they did not have to take an interest in politics, when politicians did not care about people like them.

For *discourse of avoidance*, the existence of a certain taboo issue (such as a communist past or migration crisis) and hiding personal political opinions or blurring them was typical. In this setting, communication partners did not articulate their opinions because they were afraid of the possibility of potential problems with friends and teachers, as well as having arguments with parents and other relatives. Another explanation for their reluctance was that they did not want to spoil the positive image of their loved ones by reopening sensitive subjects from their past.

In this respect, communist heritage was one of the most salient taboo issues in the Czech context of family and school. Interestingly, for my East German informants this topic was not taboo. They stated that even though their parents had been active in the Communist Party, they openly spoke about their political past with their children and some parents regretted their own engagement. The explanation for this difference may lie in a better system of civic education in Germany, which also tackles the controversial issues of modern history such as communism and Nazism. Germany is also successful in coping with the Nazi legacy (Reichel 2001; Ehmann and Rathenow 2000) and in addition has a functioning model for dealing with the communist past.[88]

The analysis also revealed that *discourse of avoidance* is not only about avoiding controversial political issues in conversation, but also about not talking to certain people. In other words, it was important what we talk about, as well as with whom we do talk about politics, and with whom we don don´t. In this regard, my results pointed to a context-specific use of political narratives. For instance, in a personal social bubble, *power-free discourse* was realised, but stepping out of the bubble, the narrative changed to a *discourse of avoidance* or *discourse of ignorance*. To summarise, different communication styles were applied among different groups of people.

The danger of this approach is that it leads to discussions which just take place in personal opinion bubbles of like-minded people from similar social backgrounds, where individuals with different opinions are excluded from the conversation. In the literature (e.g. Fukuyama 2002; Putnam 2000) this process is called *bonding social capital* which is considered an obstacle for democratic political involvement because of its intolerant and oppressive character.

[88] For instance, *The Federal Authority for the Archives of the GDR State Security Service* (Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR) has existed since 1992 in Germany. It is considered an efficient institution and inspiration for similar offices in the Central-European context (Vávrová 2011; BStu 2019).

This approach was particularly visible in the case of very ideologically committed people with an *idealistic* political motivation. In other words, it appeared among interviewees who focused on how things should be and who were not willing to make ideological compromises. That is why they often avoided discussions with people who possessed different opinions, and considered them enemies.

However, even very ideologically driven communication partners were interested in what their counterparts thought, but were not willing to talk to them. Analysis revealed that the media succeeded at least in bridging opinion differences by being aware of what the *'enemy'* thought. Online media and social networks especially played an essential role by helping them step out of a personal bubble.

This strategy was salient in the case of highly politically interested but not ideologically blinkered interviewees. They preferred diverse media consumption consisting of foreign resources, public media, and broadsheets. In contrast, their non-interested counterparts opted for private media and tabloids, and were not interested in the foreign sources of political information. Furthermore, informants not so interested in politics only paid attention to the media which conveyed their political preferences. In this respect, the interviewed Czech and German students closely resembled each other.

To summarise, the role of media was essential but contradictory, and based on the level of political interest and commitment. On the one hand, in the case of politically interested communication partners, the media played the role of an information channel and a bridge between different opinions. On the other hand, in the case of politically disinterested people, media was identified as a reason not to be active in politics. By creating a negative construct of political reality, the media supported their disillusionment and distrust in politics.

7.2. The role of family and school in creating political commitment

Family and schools promote a sense of *internal political efficacy* (Kahne and Westheimer 2006:289). This ability was identified in my analysis as a connective mechanism between primary and secondary political socialisation. The role of the family is crucial in forming patterns of political motivation and a sense of *self-efficacy* in the early stages of life (García-Albacete 2014; McIntosh et al. 2007; Quintelier 2013). Analysis showed that the majority of organisationally active interviewees from both countries had been confronted with politics at

home since early childhood, and had modelled their political behaviour based on what they had seen in their families.

Nevertheless, most of them reported that their serious political interest started during their grammar schools studies between the ages of 13 and 18. In other words, we can see that the family gave them their first impulse, and a participative-based family setting played an encouraging role in the formation of political commitment and activism. The later school environment (including formal and informal education, and ties with peers and teachers) had a great impact on further profiling of political commitment and patterns of citizenship.

This finding is in accordance with the current state of research in socialisation theory (e.g. Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Urbatsch 2014), which shows that socialisation agents change over time and are gradually either replaced by each other (Quintelier 2013) or complemented by each other (García-Albacete 2014). In this respect, my interview data somewhat confirms the second option. Although the influence of family was weaker in the later life of my informants, it was not fully diminished but complemented the other socialisation agents and still remained an important piece of the puzzle.

School is one of the important milestones in the pathway to politics. Formal civic education, as well as informal interactions with teachers and peers, enhances a sense of self-efficacy which fosters political and civic engagement, democratic culture and social cohesion (García-Albacete 2014; Kahne and Westheimer 2006; Pasek et al. 2008).

In accordance with findings of Stolle and Hooghe (2005), Quintelier (2013), Wood et al. (2018), the data shows that the impact of school in creating political commitment was particularly beneficial in combination with other factors, including inspirational teachers, an open school climate, politically interested peers, membership in voluntary associations and a supportive family background,[89] which the results of further studies also show (e.g. Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Morales 2005).

However, just having a motivating school environment or coming from a politically interested family was mostly not enough to generate and maintain an interest in politics. My data showed that communication partners, who had more of these characteristics in combination, had a higher propensity for self-efficacy and active citizenship.

Moreover, the analysis showed several interesting distinctions in civic education. First, data revealed that students of gymnasiums in particular were satisfied with civic education.

[89] Nevertheless, other results (e.g. García-Albacete 2014) show that civic education is particularly beneficial, not only for students from very active family backgrounds, but also for their counterparts from the least engaged environments. Surprisingly, according to the analysis of García-Albacete (2014) civics lessons were the least efficient for children from moderately interested families.

Nevertheless, it did not necessarily mean that gymnasiums provided a better quality of civic education. Put in the context of the existing theory, an explanation might also lie in the fact that this type of school is mostly attended by children from families with a higher socioeconomic status, which is a crucial predictor of political interest and participation (Castillo et al. 2015; Kudrnáč 2017).

Second, differences between Czech and German interviewees appeared in relation to the perception of school-based civic education, which had further consequences for their activism. My communication partners believed that a good teacher should not promote his/her political preferences among students, and should be *'neutral'*. Nevertheless, a country-specific understanding of *neutrality* at school was reported.

Czech informants perceived a *neutral* school as an apolitical environment in which it is better and safer to avoid political talks and discussions. They feared propaganda and manipulation. That is why they were convinced that school should focus on a knowledge-based dimension of education. Therefore, a *discourse of avoidance* prevailed in the teaching of civic education in Czech schools, and was legitimated by pointing to the concept of *neutrality*.

Analysis revealed that an absence of trust stood behind the *discourse of avoidance* in Czech schools. The Czech students I talked to did not trust their civic education teachers, who were seen as crucial agents for the formation of opinions. They doubted their competency and capability of leading discussion about politics.

Moreover, they distrusted other pupils and students who were seen as *'easy to influence'* because of their young age, lack of knowledge and experience. Nevertheless, this situation changed rapidly in the case of universities. My interviewees did not doubt that politics belonged there. University professors were seen as competent enough to speak about politics, and students were perceived as able to resist potential pressure.[90] In contrast to their Czech counterparts, German communication partners defined a *neutral school environment* as a space for critical discussion from which politics was not excluded, but no political standpoints were favoured.

Recent data from an ISSP survey in 2016 indicates that the Czech general public would probably support a *power-free discourse* in civic education. According to ISSP representative findings, the majority of Czech respondents considered that political discussions should rightfully take place at school. Only one third of respondents supported the contradictory

[90] Surprisingly, this conviction was also shared by students who felt under pressure from the university environment, manifested either by their peers, teachers, or the field of study.

statement. Moreover, just 22% of the population agreed that civic education reminded them of political propaganda from the communist era.

7.3. Paths to activism: *growing* vs. *being thrown* into politics

'Of course, there are many things that influence you. You know, many discussions with friends and I read many materials and books. Your inner self has been forming somehow, it's very gradually becoming aware of your political self' (Matěj, 19, Prague, centre-right party, conservative activist).

Analysis confirmed the thoughts expressed above conservative activist, Matěj, from Prague. My results show that the path from initial interest to organisational membership is indeed usually long and not straightforward, which is in accordance with previous studies of political activism (e.g. Bruter and Harrison 2009; Corrigall-Brown 2012; Lichterman 1996; Quintelier 2013).

Matěj's involvement represents a typical pathway to organisational membership from the experiences of my communication partners, which I have termed as *growing into politics*. This is by realised gradually entering the political world, mostly with a supportive family background and social network where activism is perceived as something natural and desirable.

Growing into politics was a typical path to activism, particularly for interviewees who were exposed to the *encouraging* mode of influence during primary and secondary political socialisation. Previous organisational experience and politically active peers facilitated the further engagement of the young adults I talked to, because they were more visible and often asked to participate. To summarise, interviewees with a politically active background, political knowledge and experience proved to be quite easily mobilised into political activism.

In contrast, there is another pathway to activism, which I labelled as *being thrown into politics*. This is a typical pattern of organisational recruitment, especially among informants who were exposed to modes of *silence* or *pressure* in their family and school. In their case, joining a political group was a very rapid process, without prior development of a strong commitment. The triggering moment to join the organisation was not affected by the individual family history, as in the case of *growing into politics,* but rather a particular mobilising event (such as a demonstration, student protest, or presidential election). In their case, the first motivation behind joining an organisation was *'to do something interesting/important'*, *'get to know new people'*, *'have some fun',* rather than the long-term political conviction which crystalized in organisational membership.

Through both ways of political recruitment, the university environment played a particularly strong role. University enabled my interviewees to *'grow into politics'*. To be more specific, it provided them with a space to think about their political viewpoints by giving them a theoretical framework and background. Due to university experience, many of my communication partners changed their existing opinions, either through radicalisation or mitigation. Several interviewees studying political science or economics even reported that their field of study gave them scientific justifications for their arguments and showed them *'how things really are'*. The others were *'thrown into politics'* by university. They realised for the first time in their lives what their opinions really were and assigned certain political ideologies to them.[91]

Studying abroad was also a formative experience during university. The people I talked to claimed that it *'broadened their horizons'*. More than study experience, it showed them different ways of activism and modes of communication. In this respect, Czech interviewees mentioned more participatory university culture being present than they were used to at their alma maters (typified by a power-free discussion climate and the active engagement of fellow students).

7.4. *Voters* vs. *activists*: conceptualisations of citizenship

My interview data showed that citizens´ sense of *internal efficacy,* together with the intensity of political commitment, strongly affects the notion of citizenship. For the people I talked to with a low sense of *self-efficacy*, being a good citizen meant voting in a general election. They perceived the act of voting as their only chance of influencing the political process.

In contrast, individuals with a high level of *internal efficacy* and political commitment considered voting in elections one way of political expression among many others. Their conception of citizenship was based on action. According to them, a good citizen was an active citizen who participated in a wide range of political activities (such as organisational membership, attending a political rally, political consumerism and lifestyle politics). The types of activities depended on a left-right political orientation and, of course, on individual preferences. This finding corresponds with Dalton´s typology of *duty-based* vs. *engaged*

[91] The typology of *growing* vs. *being thrown* into politics tackles organisationally active and politically highly-interested communication partners. Of course, for the rest of the people I talked to, university did not mean having such a formative experience.

citizens (2008:169) or with the *participatory* vs. *legal* conception of citizenship formulated by Ellen Quintelier (2013).[92]

Nevertheless, the analysis indicated that elections have wider consequences for the political engagement of the people I talked to. For some informants, elections were a triggering moment for their activism. They gathered information in order to make a responsible choice. The others got involved in campaigning and were influenced by a common spirit. They proudly displayed political symbols such as bags, in order to be publicly identified with their candidates. In this respect, Czech interviewees mentioned the first direct presidential elections as very salient to them.

Self-efficacy also helped to reduce the costs of participation. I spoke with highly politically interested people who did not join any political organisations because they feared a clash of interests. Several budding political scientists, teachers and trainee journalists claimed that engagement would tie them to a certain political group and not allow them to be *neutral*. That is why communication partners were afraid that organisational membership could lower their chances of employment in public service, media or the business sector.

Nevertheless, the other interviewees were convinced that a good citizen was an engaged one, regardless of the costs. They believed in their own ability to handle pressure and joined a political organisation despite potential clashes of interests or other obstacles. They publicly shared their political preferences, for instance, in newspapers or on social networks, and were convinced that organisational membership would not cause significant problems for them.

To illustrate this view, we can focus more deeply on cases of trainee journalists. Two contrasting concepts of being a good journalist appeared in the interviews. According to the first, a journalist has to be particularly neutral in the sense of not preferring certain political viewpoints, and not being connected to any particular political party or movement. The second concept does not perceive neutrality as the highest value. Instead of this, it emphasises transparency in the sense that the public knows about potential connections to certain political ideologies and organisations.

[92] The *engaged* or *participatory* mode of citizenship is also called *active* or *critical transformative* citizenship in the literature (Wood et al. 2018:260).

7.5. *Hobby*, *duty* and *vocation*: typology of political motivation

The sense of citizens' *internal efficacy* appeared as a conditio sine qua non in the pathways to political activism, but it was not enough on its own. The analysis also revealed the following preconditions facilitating membership in a political organisation: (1) a high level of commitment, (2) a minimal level, at least, of ideological conformity with the organisation, (3) favourable circumstances for participation which could transform commitment into engagement and (4) meeting organisational incentives[93] with the type of motivation.

In further parts of the text, I will illustrate these preconditions using a personal typology of political motivation, which is also an important outcome of this thesis. In this respect, I substantially elaborated on the current typologies of political motivation. For instance, I was inspired by the work of Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison (2009), Femida Handy et al. (2009) and Ellen Quintelier (2013). My analysis revealed three main types of motivation: *idealists*, *doers* and *pragmatists* with a variation of subtypes (see Table 8, p. 87).

Idealists are focused on the normative dimension of politics, moral commitment, vocation and principle of duty. Personal identity (based, for instance, on gender, sexual orientation, or student status) and global issues (such as environmental problems, sustainability, or social inequalities) are their strong mobilising forces. In accordance with the results of the study conducted by Quintelier (2013) a group of *idealists* differed according to their sense of duty in relation to their ideological profiling. To be more specific, the ecologically-oriented people I talked to perceived a responsibility to their environment, the planet and animals, while conservatives felt obliged to their country or to God.

In contrast, *doers* emphasised the practical dimension of politics and were mobilised around specific issues often connected with their current living conditions (such as solving a particular problem in their neighbourhood). Moreover, they preferred the social aspects of politics (such as friendship ties and fun) over ideology.

The third group of the people I talked to, I labelled as *pragmatists*. They saw politics as being defined as process, hierarchy, control mechanisms and the distribution of power. Their main motivation was learning new things (for instance developing leadership skills and the art of public speaking) and gaining useful contacts that could enhance their career prospects in party life or outside of politics.

[93] Analysis showed that people can be motivated by *internal* (a good feeling, conviction, self-fulfilment) or *external* (money, position, admiration) incentives.

Differences among types of motivation are illuminated by the understanding of the concept of power. For *pragmatists*[94] it is salient to have power in the outer sense, to control people, situations and things. In this perception, power is connected with the pressure to assert one‘s own will. In contrast, *idealists* understand power in the inner sense as not being powerless. In other words, they perceive power as the ability to resist pressure from their environment. They do not want to impose power on others, but use it for their own good feeling and conscience.

Considering the costs and benefits played an important role in joining a political group, especially in the case of pragmatically motivated communication partners. *Idealists* and *doers* were also aware of the pros and cons of organisational membership, but they approached their engagement more intuitively and enthusiastically. Even though the costs (e.g. the sacrifice of study and free time, potential problems at work and school, or social isolation) were seen as being higher than the measurable benefits of engagement, for *idealists* there was something extra - inner fulfilment and a strong moral commitment.

Politics played the role of a moral compass for *idealists* from both ends of the spectrum. Their lifestyle choices (such as consumption, fashion, image, choice of friends, or even partners) were strongly interconnected with their engagement. In other words, their lifestyle was typified by their political self-expression, which Micheletti and Stolle (2012) described as *lifestyle politics* or *life as a political project*. It is no surprise that high political commitment was associated with a certain level of dogmatism because politics was an essential part of life, rather than just an interesting hobby, for these interviewees.

A heavily politicized life was ascribed predominantly to left-wing people in the literature (e.g. Bennett 2009; Portwood-Stacer 2012; Soper 2007), but my analysis revealed that it was typical for both ends of the spectrum. The key factor was not value orientation but the level of political commitment and time spent with politics. Nevertheless, the forms of life politics differed.

In a conservative and right-wing environment, *to live politics,* was associated with an image of professionalism and success, typified by formal dress, language and gestures. Moreover, some informants emphasised conservative values, living according to Christian principles, the importance of a traditional family and the principles of duty.

In contrast, their left-leaning and environmentally-oriented counterparts preferred informal manners and emphasised the absence of hierarchy in their organisations manifested

[94] This aspect is clearly visible in a subtype of pragmatists called *power-seekers* (see p. 138).

by using the informal you, bottom up communication and consensual decision-making. They practised many forms of political consumerism such as boycotts and buycotts of certain products for political reasons, and a sustainable way of life. In this respect, German interviewees were more enthusiastic about *lifestyle politics*, while in the Czech context having rather cautious attitudes and expressing a need to make systemic changes, rather than individual consumers' choices, were reported.

Nevertheless, *lifestyle politics* in the form of political consumerism also appeared in the case of some left-wing communication partners with a low level of commitment. To be more specific, it was revealed particularly among *doers*. In their case, it was more about a certain image or fashion than a way of life-long or internalized political principles. However, we should keep in mind that the boundary between the former and latter was very subjective.

7.6. Reasons for refraining from organisational membership

Literature mentions that organisational membership corresponds with value profiling, the strength of political conviction and, the sense of connectedness, as well as having enough resources, interests and being targeted by political mobilisation channels. On the contrary, the absence of these factors figures in refraining from or cancelling membership of political or civic groups (e.g. Lichterman 1996; Quintelier 2013; Verba et al. 1995). These patterns of disengagement were also found in my data.[95] Nevertheless, more heterogeneous reasons for a lack of willingness to join political or civic organisations appeared among my informants. These identified reasons were subtle and context-sensitive, usually combining several factors.

First, the thesis found that people were motivated to join a political group in particular by *internal efficacy* (faith in their ability to influence the political process). Of course, they mostly believed in *external efficacy* (responsiveness of the political system to their demands); but it was not their main motivational stimulus, but an issue taken for granted. Politics was something familiar to them, which they were interested in and they believed that they could make a difference in.

In contrast, both types of efficacy were among the salient reasons for refraining from organisational membership. In other words, my analysis showed that a belief in the lack of one's own ability to influence the political process, as well as the conviction that the

[95] For instance, a lack of time was mentioned as the salient obstacle of organisational membership. My interviewees stated that it was also the excuse teachers and parents gave for why they avoided deeper political discussion.

government was nonresponsive, was crucial in explaining a reluctance to join a political group.

In this respect, my findings are slightly in contradiction with the results of Pollock (1983: 407), who claims that a low level of *external efficacy* does not mean refraining from participation. To be more specific, people who believe that the political system is not responsive to their needs do not enter traditional political parties, but can be active through unconventional modes of engagement. In contrast, for my interviewees with a low sense of *external efficacy*, politics was something distant and uninteresting, which was carried out by men in black suits. They voted in the elections even though they were not convinced that it would make any difference, and they were certainly not willing to spend their time and effort on unconventional types of participation.

Second, there was also another group of non-organisational members. In contrast to the uninterested ones described above, they were partly or very politically interested, and some even considered joining organisations. These people avoided associational membership, not because they were apathetic, nihilistic or alienated from politics, as appeared in the literature (e.g. Henn and Weinstein 2006; Pfaff 2005; Putnam 2000; Stein 2013; Twenge 2014).

Instead of this, they were afraid of a long-lasting commitment and ideological conformity, which they connected with membership in political organisations and especially with party politics. In this sense, they were afraid of living in an ideological bubble and, therefore, they wanted to *'keep their distance'*. They feared a strong hierarchy and rigid party structure, and said that they were too young to be in politics.

In fact, the testimonies of several communication partners who cancelled their party membership confirmed these concerns. They felt overlooked by deserving members and claimed that their voices were not heard enough. My informants often said that they were exhausted by lengthy and pointless negotiations, and from being judged by their age and not according to their ideas and real contributions.

The analysis also showed that the level of disillusionment with party life and criticism was influenced by the type of political motivation. *Idealists* had more radical opinions, higher expectations and were less willing to compromise than *pragmatists* and *doers*. Moreover, *idealists* interpreted behaviour which was perceived by others as common as harmful and oppressive. Therefore, *idealists* cancelled their party membership more often than their counterparts with pragmatic or doer political motivations.

8. CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter will introduce the most important research outcomes, innovations and contributions to the new knowledge in the field of sociology. Furthermore, it describes their implications and recommendations for practice and possible avenues for further research. The dissertation thesis aimed to identify the political trajectories of young people´s organisational involvement by answering the main research question ***'How and why do Czech and German university students get involved in political and civic organisations?'***

Based on qualitative analysis of a unique dataset of 60 semi-structured interviews with university students in the new and old German federal states and in the Czech Republic, it can be concluded that *internal efficacy* was identified as core in forming political commitment and motivation among the young generation.[96] My research identified a precondition of engagement: a belief that citizens are capable of influencing politics, and that their voice should be heard and taken seriously which is promoted via mechanisms and narratives of primary and secondary political socialisation.

In this respect, the thesis identified *influence* as a core factor of political socialisation and offered an original classification of the modes of influence which were identified as reciprocal. The notion of influence had both positive and negative connotations. It was linked to *encouragement*, *pressure* and *silence* in relation to national, school and family contexts. Another contribution was the original typology of political narratives and its connection to the mechanisms of socialisation.

The first mode*, encouragement*, consisted of the mechanisms of *exposure* and *admiration.* Both mechanisms provided a wide range of motivating stimuli in family and at school. *Encouragement* was accompanied by a *power-free dialogue* typified by mutual trust, understanding and an open climate of political dialogue in the family and school, regardless of the particular ideology. These features were identified as crucial for development of the *internal efficiency.*

Nevertheless, just having a politically active family background, motivating school environment, politically interested friends or being a member of a voluntary association was generally not enough to generate and maintain an interest in politics. My research indicated

[96] Of course, *external efficacy* (responsiveness of the political system to citizens´ demands) is also useful, but it was not recognised as the main motivational stimulus, but an issue taken by my interviewees for granted.

that interviewees having more of these characteristics in combination had a higher propensity for *self-efficacy*.

The second mode, *pressure*, was perceived the most negatively because it meant an oppressive type of influence and was connected with the concept of power. This mode was manifested in the mechanisms of *pressure* and *opposition* and was accompanied by the *discourse of avoidance*, for which the existence of certain taboos and hiding your own political opinions was typical. In this respect, communist heritage was one of the most salient taboo issues in the Czech context of family and school. Moreover, in the Czech environment my informants complained about anti-left-wing pressures, while in the German context similar complaints appeared from right-wing positions.

Two strategies of dealing with various forms of pressure have evolved. The first was to *avoid* political talks or blur your own opinions. The second was to *endure* by articulating your own position and trying to bridge opinion differences, which proved to be more successful from a long-term perspective.

For the third mode, *silence*, the mechanism of *opposition* and discourses of *ignorance* and *avoidance* were typical. In this mode of influence, my interviewees did not want to be involved in politics for numerous reasons such as non-interest in public affairs, disgust with the political scene, and the perceived complications of politics or fear of potential problems stemming from their involvement.

The thesis also elaborated on the types of political motivation of new categories from which I refined the existing typologies. I distinguished *idealists*, who emphasised the moral dimension of political action, while *doers* focused on particular issues of local or national character, and *pragmatists* perceived politics as a hierarchical process of the distribution of power. In this respect, *idealists* and *doers* find self-fulfilment either primarily by helping others, or in their self-realisation. In contrast, *pragmatists* understand their involvement particularly as an opportunity to learn skills useful for their future careers.

Similarly, I extended the reasons for refraining from membership of political organisations into subtler categories. For instance, people did not want to join political groups because of a fear of long-lasting commitment or betraying their own principles. Another reason was political disillusionment, as well as a perceived clash of interests, as in the case of future journalists, teachers and people who aimed to work in state administrative departments.

Another contribution of the thesis is my original typology of the paths to activism covering *growing* vs. *being thrown* into politics, which have practical implications, for instance, in recruiting new members. *Growing into politics* was visible particularly in the case

of interviewees who were exposed to political stimuli during primary and secondary political socialisation. These communication partners had been tackled by political mobilisation channels more easily than their counterparts who had been *thrown into politics* without previous political experiences and a strong commitment.

Moreover, I paid attention to the understanding of political neutrality, which could have a practical impact on civic education policy. Czech communication partners perceived a school environment where facts dominated over opinions as *neutral*, whereas for their German counterparts *neutrality* meant a space for free and critical discussion. In this respect, German interviewees mentioned that their teachers also paid attention to the controversial issues of modern history. In contrast, Czech informants emphasised the knowledge-based dimension of civic teaching and were not satisfied with the quality of their civic lessons.

8.1. Practical implications and recommendations of the dissertation

Based on my research findings, I offer recommendations in the following areas (1) civic education policy and (2) recruitment to political organisations. I have focused on these two areas because civic education builds long-term democratic values, recruits new members and keeps the existing ones. At a time of decreasing willingness to join political parties, this issue is a very topical one.

Firstly, I suggest the Czech Republic should be inspired by some aspects of the German education policy, drop the pretence that Czech schools are *apolitical* organisations and focus instead on ideological balance, pro-democratic values and the development of citizens' competencies. I suggest supporting a climate of open discussion on current political issues to enhance students' critical and analytical skills.

I agree with the results of Wood et al. (2018) from New Zealand that the best way to teach civic education is at the intersection of cognitive (knowledge-based) and affective (based on emotions, feelings, and attitudes) competences. The stories of German interviewees, in accordance with the findings of previous civic education studies (e.g. Kahne and Westheimer 2006; Pasek et al. 2008; Quintelier 2013), prove that a combination of frontal teaching alongside practical experience (such as community-based projects, meetings with local

politicians, volunteering, and fundraising) is the most efficient way of encouraging political engagement, commitment and *internal efficacy.*[97]

Special effort should be paid to civic education at technical schools to reduce inequalities in participation. Moreover, the civic education curriculum should be redesigned to more effectively address the differences between genders, and amongst ethnic and religious minorities (Niemi and Junn 2005:150) which is currently very topical in relation to e.g. international migration.

In accordance with Niemi and Junn's (2005:151–152) recommendations, we should introduce more *'real politics'* into the curricula and not *'avoid controversial issues'*. In the Czech and East German context, this particularly means discussing modern history and tackling the communist legacy. In this respect, my results pointed to teachers' fear of dealing with controversial issues during civic lessons. They were afraid of the negative reactions of parents, and accusations of ideological indoctrination.

Deeper discussion and cooperation with families is desirable because it can overcome concerns on both sides. Nevertheless, participants from the civic sector and founders of the school also should be involved. These participants could arrange interesting guest speakers for school discussions, as well as organise excursions and provide financial support for civic education projects. Furthermore, in response to complaints about the over-full curriculum, an increase in the time and financial resources devoted to civic education in the Czech Republic would be appropriate.

Moreover, special efforts should be made to improve the standards of civic teaching at faculties of education, for instance, an introductory course in civic education should be compulsory for all trainee teachers. This change could encourage the teaching of civic education at secondary and grammar schools not as a specialized, separate subject but instead woven into other parts of the curriculum in a more interdisciplinary fashion. Moreover, a platform for teachers of civic education that provides a space for exchange, networking and continuing professional development opportunities should be established (Preissová Krejčí et al. 2016).

Secondly, I have several recommendations dealing with organisational recruitment based on information from interviews with party members and former members. Above all, political

[97] Like Kahne, Westheimer (2006) I am also convinced that school-based civic education programmes should particularly support *internal efficacy* but not automatically the *external*. Schools should lead young people to critical thinking, provide them with enough factual information and not automatically teach them that the existing political system is responsive to their demands. Uncritical promotion of *external efficacy* may lead to the thin ice of the worries about the propagandistic character of civic education.

parties should be aware of the fact that different types of political motivation need different incentives to motivate people to join organised political action. To address potential newcomers, social incentives (such as common spirit, organisational events and creating new friendships and social ties across generations) should be emphasised. In this regard, interviewees wanted to introduce a programme of mentorship where an experienced party member tutors a newcomer. This possibility was particularly of interest to pragmatically motivated communication partners who saw this as an opportunity to learn new things, share experiences and network effectively.

I would also recommend improving inner and outer party communication to enhance their image. Parties should be less formal and more inclusive, and look after of the priorities of different target groups as well as decrease hierarchy and appropriately use social networks to recruit and inform. Moreover, they should establish rewards for recruiting members to political organisations and recognise new members in party newsletters. In accordance with the recommendations of Cross and Young (2008), it is more effective to recruit people who are active in civic society organisations than citizens without any experience of organisational membership.

8.2. Limitations of the dissertation and challenges for further research

My study design has several limitations that stem from its qualitative nature. Above all, it cannot achieve the criteria of statistical representation and generalisation. Furthermore, the nature of the findings is subjective and relies on self-reported data. Therefore, problems with selective memory, exaggeration, attribution, and giving socially desirable answers may appear. Nevertheless, the aim of this thesis is not to judge who is right or wrong but to focus primarily on the life stories, their perceptions, and interpretations of my Czech and German communication partners.

In spite of these limitations, based on comprehensive analysis of personal qualitative data, the thesis offers implications for understanding the nature of youth engagement. The presented insights into political motivation, the mechanisms and narratives of primary and secondary socialisation and perceptions of school-based civic education in the two countries offer theoretical starting points for future qualitative and quantitative studies in other regions and countries by covering different population segments.

To be more specific, it may provide grounds for a transnational project across EU member states. This would facilitate, for instance, the study of best practices in teaching democracy in the Central European context, or comparisons of civic education programmes between Western and post-communist democracies.

Academic research in this field should also focus not only on university students, but on young people in general, and address the issues of ethnicity and gender. Future research should investigate differences among German federal states as well as pay particular attention to socioeconomically disadvantaged regions in both countries. The next avenue of research should also give space to the voices of more members from the same households, to effectively trace the different modes of family political socialisation. Another valuable stream of research would be addressing civic education teachers in order to capture their perceptions, evaluations and expectations regarding civic teaching.

Moreover, using different data collection methods would be appropriate. For instance, participant observation would be valuable for a comprehensive elaboration of the organisational recruitment process. Similarly, experimental methods should serve well to assess the efficiency of civic education with a special focus on different types of secondary and grammar schools.

Further research of secondary political socialisation may include the role of the field of study at universities (such as law, political science and economics) in profiling political opinions. Moreover, regarding political narratives, an inquiring pathway of investigation would focus on opinion bubbles. At the time of a divided society, it is particularly topical to research and trace who talks or does not talk with whom about politics, how and why.

The last proposed line of research is to describe the role of image in politics in connection with political profiling. This issue also focuses on examining which political orientation (e.g. political profiling on a left-right or liberal-conservative scale) and behaviour (e.g. specific forms of political consumerism, attending political rallies), and under what circumstances, is seen to be desirable, cool or popular in politics for young people.

To conclude, at a time of rising populism and distrust in traditional politics, identifying the sources of young people´s political commitment and motivation to join a political group is a topical concern. I hope that my research will contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon in the context of new democracies in Central Europe.

This would not have been possible without my communication partners. I am deeply grateful for their time and willingness to share their life stories and pathways to political activism with me. Their paths to public engagement were sometimes long and winding, but

regardless of their political profiling, it was the story of building citizens´ self-confidence against various forms of pressure and uncertainty, as well as the developing of interest, devotion and critical thinking against passivity and apathy, which were so inspiring for me.

An uncritical and passive society easily accepts radicalism in all its forms. In contrast, increasing the political commitment and engagement of people supports and develops democracy and its norms. I am very happy that I have met enthusiastic young people from political parties and civic society organisations who are an essential part of this process.

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10. APPENDICES

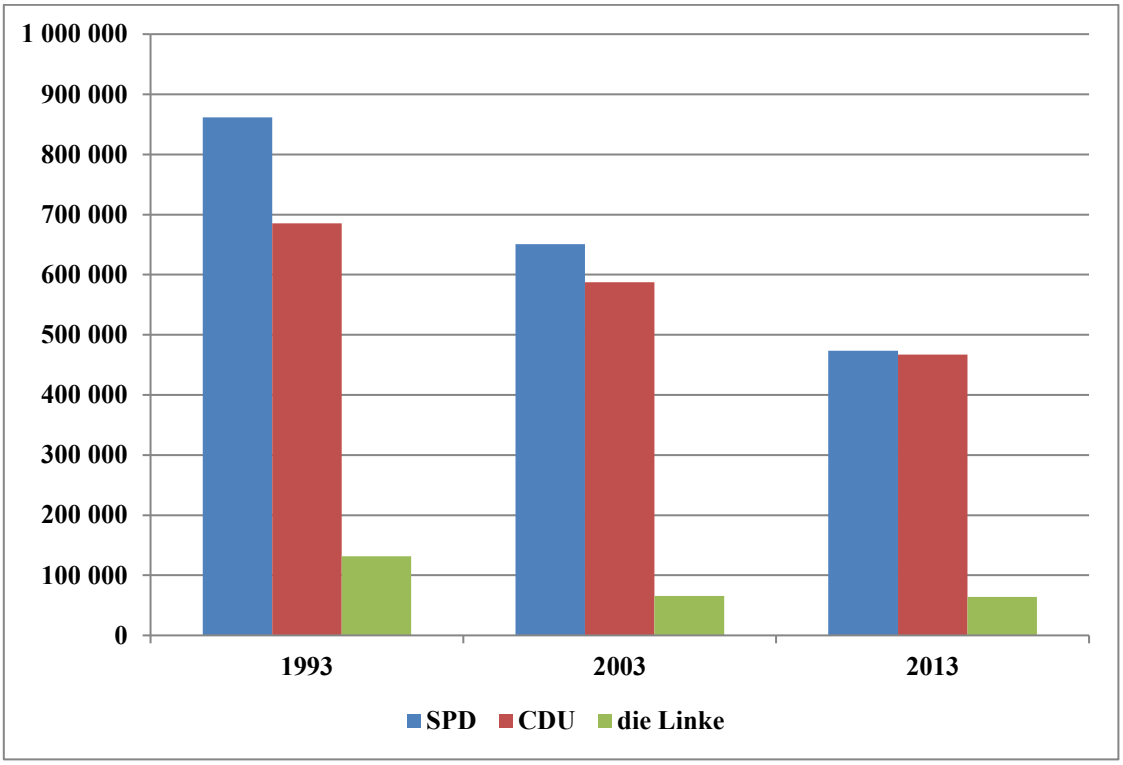
10.1. Development of party membership in the Czech Republic and Germany

Table 10: **Development of party membership in the Czech Republic and Germany between 1993 and 2013**

Year	Czech Republic	Germany
1993	438 802	2 051 476
1994	340 514	2 005 553
1995	337 151	1 940 421
1996	318 651	1 887 633
1997	303 851	1 847 065
1998	301 339	1 842 969
1999	298 110	1 823 180
2000	282 001	1 768 237
2001	271 352	1 723 676
2002	254 741	1 681 263
2003	200 319	1621216
2004	233 455	1 558 530
2005	181 269	1 533 461
2006	180 060	1 480 389
2007	175 529	1 450 890
2008	136 204	1 425 467
2009	166 949	1 426 859
2010	163 749	1 390 647
2011	158 055	1 358 777
2012	147 644	1 334 276
2013	139 261	1 334 620

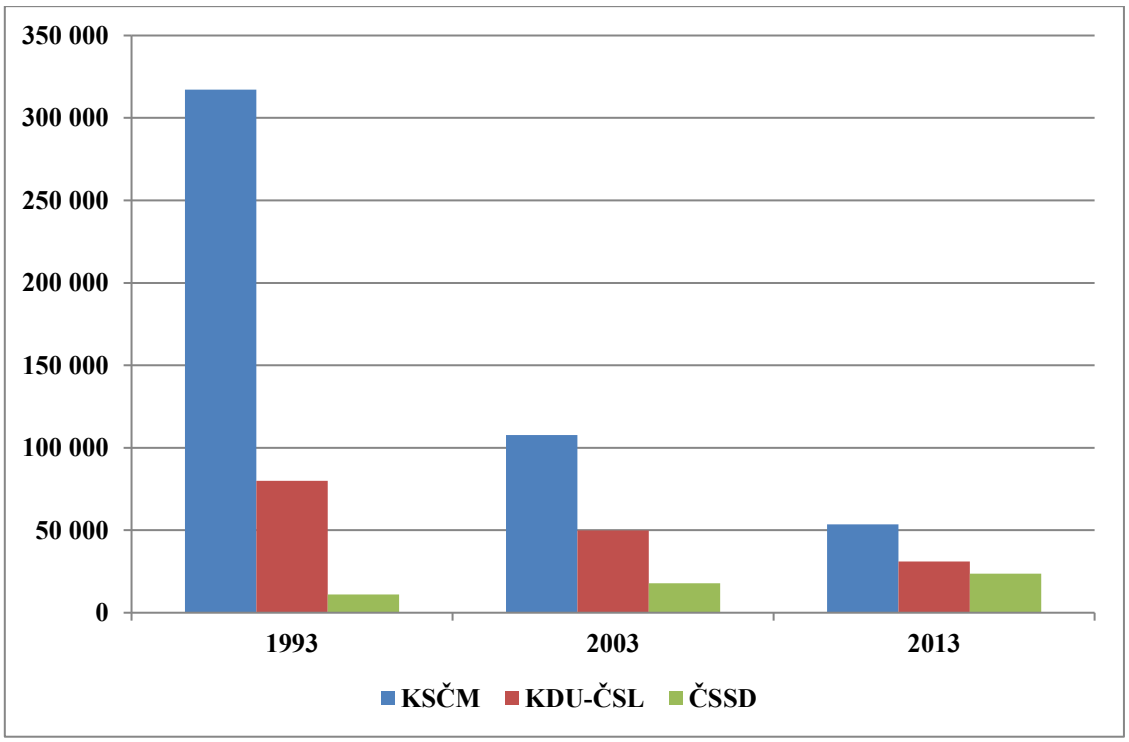
Source: created by Prokschová based on data from MAPP Project Data Archive (Linek 2014; Spier 2014)

Figure 9: **Decline in membership of selected German political parties**



Source: created by Prokschová based on data from MAPP Project Data Archive (Spier 2014)

Figure 10: **Decline in membership of selected Czech political parties**



Source: created by Prokschová based on data from MAPP Project Data Archive (Linek 2014)

10.2. Request for interview[98]

Dear …[99],

I am writing to ask you if you would be prepared to take part in an interview about your political activities, attitudes and public engagement in …[100] for the purpose of my doctoral thesis.

My name is Daniela Prokschová and I am a PhD candidate in sociology at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University and a graduate student at the Department of Political Sociology at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

My PhD thesis is called *Contextualizing Student Political Participation: Comparison of the Czech Republic and East and West Germany.* The aim of the thesis is to describe, compare, and contextualize the sources of political motivations, and the paths to organisational membership of selected Czech and German university students.

For the empirical part of my thesis, I would like to conduct interviews with Czech and German students active in political or civic organisations. That is why I would like speak to you about membership in your organisation, and your political activities and interests.

I can assure you that all the data will be processed for academic purposes only, and you will be able to give permission of whether the interview can be cited with your name and affiliation or will be in an anonymous form. The interview is qualitative and will be in the form of a structured discussion, which will take approximately 40-60 minutes.

I would be very grateful if you would be prepared to take part in this interview.
Thank you in advance for considering your participation in the interview.

Best regards,
Daniela Prokschová
daniela.prokschova@gmail.com

[98] This is an example of my request for an interview with an organisationally active student. Each request was personalised for each student.
[99] The name of the student.
[100] The name of the organisation.

10.3. Informed consent form

Name of the interviewee: ……..

Date of the interview: ……...

I gave an interview to **Mgr. Daniela Prokschová**[101] for her **PhD research entitled** *Contextualizing Student Political Participation: Comparison of the Czech Republic and East and West Germany.*

The aim of the thesis is to describe, compare, and contextualize the sources of political motivations and paths to organisational membership of selected Czech and German university students.

This interview can be used for the purposes of analysis within the PhD research and can be cited in publications or public presentations of the research results*:

(1) **with my first name and affiliation**

(2) **in an anonymous form**

Archived and used for the purposes of other research and other researchers:

(1) **with my first name and affiliation**

(2) **in an anonymous form**

(3) **used only by the researcher named in this form**

Interviewee´s signature

……

** Please select one option.*

[101] A PhD candidate in sociology at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague and a graduate student at the Department of Political Sociology at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

10.4. Guideline for a research interview[102]

Paths to activism and triggering moments

(1) How long have you been interested and why did you become interested in politics?

(2) What or who influenced your paths to political or civic activism?

(3) When and why did you enter your current organisation?

(4) Could you describe how you joined your organisation? Was it an easy process, or were there any obstacles?

(5) Have you changed your political opinions during your life? If yes, please describe to me how?

Primary and secondary political socialisation

(6) Are your family members or friends interested in politics?

(7) Have any of your family or friends been politically active? If yes, please describe to me how?

(8) Do you discuss politics at home, with friends, or at university? Do you agree on political issues? Is important for you to have the same opinions as your discussion partners?

(9) How do your family and friends perceive your political activism? Do they support you or, vice versa, discourage you?

(10) Did you politically influence anyone from your family, friends, or your acquaintances? If yes, please describe to me how?

(11) Did your secondary or grammar school environment (such as teachers, schoolmates, civic education lessons) influence your political interests and paths to activism? If yes, please describe to me how?

(12) Which role do university and your field of study play in your political activities?

Organisational membership

(13) Are you satisfied with your political or civic group? Why/why not? Do you want to change anything in your organisation?

(14) What are the advantages and disadvantages of your engagement?

[102] This is an example of my guidelines for an interview with an organisationally active student. The questions were personalised for each student according to the character of his/her organisational membership.

(15) Could you tell me about your recent activities inside and beyond your organisation? What has been your biggest political success, or failure?
(16) How much time do you devote to politics per week or per month?
(17) Is it easy for you to be organisationally active or do you face any obstacles for your engagement? Do you speak about your activities in your family circle, among your friends, or at university?
(18) Have you ever been a member of a different organisation/s?
(19) What are your future plans? Do you want to continue in your activism? If yes, please describe to me how?

Conceptualisation of politics and citizenship

(20) What do you think of when I say the words: *politics*, and *political engagement*?
(21) What does your engagement mean to you?
(22) What should people do to be *good citizens*? Do you think that there are any obligations or responsibilities of *good citizenship*?

Are there other important aspects of your public engagement that have not been mentioned yet?

Information about the interviewees

(23) How would you describe your political orientation?
(24) How old are you?
(25) What are you studying? What is your level of education (BA, MA, and PhD)?
(26) Where do you come from?
(27) What are your parents' occupations?

10.5. Information about the interviewees

Table 11: **Information about the interviewees**

No.	Country	City	Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Type of organisation	Organisation	Political orientation[103]	Intensity of engagement	Field of study
1	West Germany	Cologne	Maria	F	26	old	Christian democratic	conservative-right	high	social sciences, law
2	West Germany	Cologne	Florian	M	28	old	liberal party	liberal-right	medium	social sciences
3	West Germany	Cologne	Alexander	M	24	both	Green Party and activism	left-liberal, environmental	high	social sciences
4	West Germany	Cologne	Norbert	M	27	old	social democratic	centre-left	low	humanities
5	West Germany	Cologne	Christoph	M	22	none	none (former Green Party member)	green	low	social sciences, law
6	West Germany	Cologne	Gitta	F	21	new	green initiative	green-left	high	social sciences

[103] In the category of *political orientation*, I used descriptions of my communication partners of their own political profiling.

7	West Germany	Cologne	Lena	F	26	old	trade unions	communist, socialist	high	foreign languages
8	West Germany	Cologne	Finn	M	27	old	communist	left-liberalism	high	social sciences
9	West Germany	Cologne	Aaron	M	19	both	NGOs, trade unions	far-left	medium	social sciences
10	West Germany	Cologne	Sebastian	M	24	new	green initiatives	green, communitarian	high	social sciences, economics
11	West Germany	Mannheim	Elias	M	22	old	Christian democratic	conservative-right	medium	informatics
12	West Germany	Mannheim	Jonas	M	20	old	Christian democratic	conservative-right	high	business, informatics
13	West Germany	Mannheim	Ingrid	F	21	none	non-active	left-green	none	social sciences
14	West Germany	Mannheim	Kristin	F	25	none	non-active	left-green	none	social sciences
15	West Germany	Mannheim	Katharina	F	28	none	non-active	not fixed	none	social sciences

16	West Germany	Mannheim	Jens	M	26	none	non-active	centre-left	none	social sciences
17	West Germany	Mannheim	Thomas	M	22	none	non-active	not fixed, left-green	none	social sciences
18	West Germany	Mannheim	Liam	M	23	none	non-active	left-libertarian	none	social sciences
19	West Germany	Mannheim	Johann	M	29	none	non-active	left	none	humanities
20	West Germany	Mannheim	Heidi	F	24	new	university politics	far-left, green	low	natural sciences
21	East Germany	Jena	Lukas	M	23	new	university politics, activist	anarchist, green	medium	social sciences
22	East Germany	Jena	Elisabeth	F	26	new	NGO	left-green	low	social science, foreign languages
23	East Germany	Jena	Otto	M	26	both	social democratic	centre-left	medium	law, economics
24	East Germany	Jena	Erica	F	23	old	Christian democratic	liberal	high	medicine

25	East Germany	Jena	Laura	F	27	new	NGOs	left-green	medium	foreign languages
26	East Germany	Jena	Elke	F	22	new	catholic NGO	left, centrist, liberal	medium	medicine
27	East Germany	Jena	Oliver	M	22	new	catholic NGO	centre-right	medium	natural sciences
28	East Germany	Jena	Albert	M	19	new	university politics	liberal-green	low	social sciences
29	East Germany	Jena	Theo	M	19	old	Christian democratic	centre-right	medium	social sciences
30	East Germany	Jena	Anne-Marie	F	25	new	NGO	left-green	medium	humanities
31	Czech Republic	Prague	Pavel	M	20	both	social democratic, green	left-green	high	technical field
32	Czech Republic	Prague	Tadeáš	M	23	new	liberal	liberal-conservative	high	social sciences
33	Czech Republic	Prague	Eva	F	30	new	environmental	liberal-green	high	social sciences
34	Czech Republic	Prague	Iva	F	24	new	social democratic, feminist, NGOs	social-democratic	high	social sciences

35	Czech Republic	Prague	Milan	M	24	old	liberal-conservative	liberal-conservative	medium	economics
36	Czech Republic	Prague	Matěj	M	19	old	liberal-conservative, conservative activist	centre-right	high	humanities
37	Czech Republic	Prague	Radek	M	26	old	social democratic	left	medium	social sciences, law
38	Czech Republic	Prague	Ondřej	M	26	both	social democratic	far-left	high	pedagogy
39	Czech Republic	Prague	Kryštof	M	26	new	anarchist	New Left, anarchist, radical democracy	high	social sciences, humanities
40	Czech Republic	Prague	Václav	M	20	old	Christian democratic	conservative-right	high	social sciences, humanities
41	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Alma	F	30	new	university politics	liberal-green	medium	social work
42	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Přemysl	M	22	none	non-active	liberal, centrist	none	social sciences

43	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Eliška	F	26	old	social democratic	left	high	pedagogy
44	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Patrik	M	29	new	NGOs	left	low	social work
45	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Lukáš	M	29	both	social democratic, local NGO	Old Left	high	humanities
46	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Veronika	F	24	new	local NGO	New Left	medium	humanities
47	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Josef	M	30	old	liberal-conservative	liberal-conservative	low	economics
48	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Linda	F	30	old	communist	far-left	medium	humanities
49	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Šimon	M	23	old	liberal-conservative	liberal-conservative	high	social work
50	Czech Republic	Ostrava	Roman	M	26	none	supporter of anti-Muslim group	centrist	none	foreign languages, history
51	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Lenka	F	26	old	social democratic	centre-left	high	social sciences
52	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Ladislav	M	24	both	local politics	centre-right	medium	social sciences

53	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Marek	M	24	old	Christian democratic	centre-right	low	political sciences
54	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Dominika	F	25	new	catholic NGO	centrist	high	social work
55	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Věra	F	23	none	non-active	negative attitudes to politics	none	humanities
56	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Aneta	F	21	new	local politics, pro-refugees, green	liberal left	medium	humanities
57	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Ivana	F	21	none	non-active	non-interested, political apathy	none	social sciences
58	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Arnošt	M	22	none	former member of the libertarian party	centre-right, libertarian	none	social sciences
59	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Karel	M	21	none	non-active	negative attitudes to politics	none	social sciences
60	Czech Republic	Olomouc	Michal	M	23	none	non-active	not fixed, alienated	none	social sciences

Source: created by Prokschová

10.6. Example of verbatim interview transcription

Verbatim transcription of an interview with Gitta, a 21-year-old student at the University of Cologne and environmental youth organisation member and activist. The interview took place on 23rd June, 2013 in Mannheim, Germany and was one of the first interviews I completed for use in my dissertation. To limit space, redundant parts have not been included, and this information has been marked in the transcription.

D - Daniela *(interviewer)*
G - Gitta *(interviewee)*

D: *My first question is why are you interested in politics? Is there a reason?*
G: Yes, because when I was at school I already really did not like this idea that everything was focused on achievement and output, and for me it was always personal, this comparison and the competitive reactions of others, and I always thought about the psychological way and philosophical way, and in the beginning I never thought about politics, but when I became older I realised that this was a kind of realisation of such questions, so I started to be interested in politics.
D: *And how long have you been interested*?
G: Maybe since 19 or 20. It was a slow process so I don´t know the exact age.
D: *And was it connected with your start at university?*
G: No, it was more connected with the start of my voluntary work in an institution where children live without their parents… you know, who do not have parents any more. And I started… the whole pressure from school was gone, it was not about the results, it was about personal growth and I started to reflect more on such things.
D: *And was it during your grammar school or at university?*
G: No, it was between my last exams at school and the start of university.
D: *And what about your family, was anyone politically active, like your parents, grandparents?*
G*:* No one and we did not speak much about politics, but I had very long and intensive discussions with my mother about philosophical questions, so maybe in an indirect way.
D: *And these philosophical questions you mentioned, were they somehow connected to the political stuff?*

G: I think that you can connect every philosophical question to politics, it was like more about, what do I think about the nature of human beings, what do I want and I realised that this competiveness never leads to an appreciation of human beings, and this was maybe the point… We talked about freedom and these questions.

D: *Were there political activities in your family or any particular interest?*

G: Interest, of course, but not engagement, no political work in parties, organisations.

D: *Do you have the same political opinions as your parents or siblings?*

G: I am quite close to my mother in my opinions, but they are not the same and with my father not really. I can understand his point somehow because when he grew up it was just after the Second World War, and I think for him it´s [competitiveness] something very good, important, but for me it´s something which has to be seen very critically so we are not of the same opinion.

D: *So, your dad is more conservative or on the right?*

G: That´s something I would not say because he, for example, on the gender question is absolutely not conservative as he works at home… <thinking and speaking German> so I would not say that my father is more or right-wing but sometimes he is more in a liberal direction.

D: *Now, can we speak about membership in your organisation. How long have you been a member?*

G: Eight and half months.

D: *So, you are quite new there.*

G: Yeah, very new.

D: *And why did you join* ***[104] [her organisation]?

G: It wasn´t intentional. At this time, I was thinking about organisations like Greenpeace, but it was not exactly the right thing and during my first week at university I met someone who was in *** [her organisation], but I did not know about it… He told me that he was in a group which was very critical of capitalism and racism and they discussed gender questions and stuff like that and that combination was very interesting for me. And when he told me that they are independent in the party, it was very appealing to me because I didn't want to work for a political party.

D: *And what about your membership in other organisations? You talked about that voluntary work but something else...*

[104] The name of her organisation was deleted for the reason of anonymisation.

G: Not in the organisation but I work at… <pause to consider> I work with children who have problems with school and who have a migration background, and it´s for me also political work, but not in a political organisation, but it´s for me <pause to consider> … I think it´s the most political work I do because you can realise there a lot. And I am in a working team of critical psychologists; we sometimes have long debates in our team. And this is also political work for me so.

D: *Do you study psychology?*

G: Yes.

D: *Can we say that some of your friends recruited you to your organisation?*

G: They were not a friend at that time, but yes, we can say this.

D: *Then you went to the first meeting and you decided to stay?*

G: Yeah.

…

Daniela and Gitta are speaking about the cooperation of her organisation with other participants and about the organisational funding.

…

D: *Do you have any favourite politicians, you know, a political idol?*

G: I do not have a favourite politician, I don´t think it´s important to have a favourite politician because I mean I would be glad if there were parties which were totally good [fitting] to my opinions and if I elected them they would realise my ideas… Yes, I think it´s important to have a political opinion, to develop your opinions, but I do not think it´s really important to have a favourite politician.

D: *Are you member of the Green Party as well?*

G: No.

D: *And do you want to be?*

G: No.

D: *So, what about the activities of your organisation during the last year?*

G: (---)[105] <pause to consider> Yes, there were different things at the beginning [of the year], there was an election campaign, so we did a lot for this. Then we participated in many things like the foundation of a campus garden with some vegetables or something like that… You know, like the idea of urban gardening. We supported many campaigns like the Blocupy campaign, we took part in demonstrations and then there was something at university

[105] The recording of the interview was poor at this point, and it was not possible to understand what was said.

like…<long pause to consider> ehm like minus points. You know, this is a very restricted thing for students, if you fail in some of the exams, then you can be exmatriculated. So, we attempted to abolish these minus points and this was very successful.

…

Gitta and Daniela are speaking in detail about the system of minus points. Furthermore, they speak about the practical aspects of Gitta´s organisation such as the number of members, frequency of meetings and the decision-making process.

…

D: *What does membership in your organisation mean to you? I mean the advantages or disadvantages.*

G: I can start with the advantages. I think, <pause to consider> … I think that I see much more inside, you know, because [for example] about gender questions and stuff like that I would not have been so involved and I really changed my opinions on those questions because I am just more informed. I think that it is really good to hear more different opinions because in *** [her organisation] there are many people who are very close to my opinion but not the same. And you learn to defend your point of view and it´s very good… If you are really inside the group and there are many opinions, you can see the difference and you can really develop your thoughts.

D: *So what are your opinions on gender issues, for example?*

G: When I started in *** [her organisation], I did not feel discriminated against for being a woman, not at all, not a bit <smiling>. For example, I don´t know if it´s in your language too but there are always two forms for women and men, for example, der Schüler and die Schülerin.

D: *Yes, we have it too*.

G: But there was [mainly used] only the world der Schüler. [Before] I did feel discriminated against, you know, I am female and I can go to school and now I am studying at university so why feel discriminated against? But then I realised that it is the same when you say the words a scientist or an academic. I would never think of women like that and I realised that it is really hard because we have totally internalized bad [images and understanding] of women. You know, there is a really bad kind of sensibility for language and what is behind that. I have read a lot of texts for my studies and when I read the word scientist I automatically thought that he was a man.

D: *So, do you think that apart from the language in Germany, there is discrimination? I mean if the gender issue is a big problem?*

G: I think, it´s always a big problem but I think it has two sides. On one side you have enough… ehm <looking for the right words> places at university for women, so there are not only the men there. But the other side, which is more important for me, women have to change their minds. They have to see that it is not just about the chance to study, but also to work [in their field of study]… For me it´s always about the decision to have a family or work, why is this decision always on women, why not on men? <speaking loudly> It´s the same, they both have to decide. That´s something we should change in our minds and something we have to work on. I think that there are still jobs where women are paid less than men and so I think this is a problem. Yes, it is <resolutely>.

D: *Do you think that women´s perception of politics is different than men´s? Do they act differently in politics, like have another political style*?

G: Yes, of course. I think it´s really a problem. We talk openly about this in psychology, because I think that the expectations are still very (---)[106] typical. <thinking> You know, women don´t give their opinion in a very strong way and they always to find some kind of balance in the discussions. I think that this can be positive, on the one hand, but restrict developing their thoughts, on the other.

….

Daniela and Gitta are speaking further about feminism, women in politics as well as about quotas for women in general and in Gitta´s organisation.

….

D: *Now, we can leave the topic of women in politics and focus on your political engagement and future plans. So, how did you personally engage in politics last year, in your organisation or in any other way?*

G: Last year was more about organisational tasks, but it´s good for me to get into the processes. When I started, there was an election campaign and I worked on it and then I worked in the campus garden. You know, this is also political for me and as I said before, politics is also the work with children, because… <looking for the right words> you know, this is about integration and I think that integration is very important in Germany. This is like ehm… that we can change something and it´s not so much about the organisation, it´s an indirect way of politics and this is for me very important <convincingly>.

D*: Do you think that politics is also very important for your private life? And are politics and privacy connected for you?*

[106] The recording of the interview was poor at this point, and it was not possible to understand what was said.

G: Yes, I would say so.

D: *And did you, for example, take part in any demonstration or did you sign any petitions?*

G: Yes, for example, I signed a petition against the abolishment of social sciences and took part in One Billion Rising, it was a demonstration against violence against women.

…

Gitta is speaking in detail about the demonstration *One Billion Rising*.

…

D: *And what about, for example, boycotting any products or any companies?*

G: Yes, I do. I really boycott a lot of products? <laughing>

D: *Ok, so which one and why?*

G: I don´t buy from any shops, I only buy in second-hand shops. This [I have been doing for] a very long time, almost three years.

D: *So, it was quite a long time before you joined your organisation.*

G: Yes, because when I started to work in that organisation where we work with kids, I thought that I can´t wear the things that are made by children in Bangladesh. I saw many documentaries about it.

D: *And what about, for example, food products?*

G: I am vegetarian and I try my best to be vegan, but I sometimes <Gitta shows white stains in her nails> it would be good to eat/drink milk products.

D: *And do you boycott any food products, of course, meat, but I mean any labels?*

G: <pause to consider> More like shops. I do not buy in Aldi and Lidl, because I think that the working conditions are bad there and also in the countries, where their products come from. [And I also boycott] Müller, this is the German company which supported NPD and others companies which somehow worked with far-right parties. …. [I also boycott] Amazon. I don´t buy anything from the Amazon… they allowed people to sell their products in a very unfair context. I don´t want to have anything in common with a company which does that <resolutely>.

D: *And, do you buy, for example, leather products, I mean leather shoes or anything like that?*

G: I don´t buy leather products.

D: *Ok, so what about your political activities in the future? Do you have any plans? Would you like to be active, for example, after university?*

G: I am not sure right now, but there are always possibilities to do something… <pause to consider> I think that in the future, I really want to work somewhere which deal with social issues and it should always have a political background too.

D: *And would you like to be more active in your organisation?*

G: Yeah.

D: *I was surprised when you said that you have been there for just eight months and you are on the board.*

G: I was also surprised <smiling>. Everyone can be on the board. You know, I think they were right when they said to me that I would gain a lot of experience. Now, I have to answer many e-mails and really have to think about it. I am getting more into the structure of the projects and it´s very hard to get an overview because there are so many things to deal with at the same time.

D: *Ok, and please tell me, how much time does your political organisation take from your schedule weekly or monthly? Just estimate.*

G: I will try to calculate it <laughing>. I mean it also takes time to read all the e-mails because there are like 20, 30 e-mails a day. Sometimes, especially in the case of like now with the social sciences and we have a meeting once a week and it´s like five hours or something.

D: *That meeting took five hours?* <surprised>

G: Yeah, we meet at 7:30 p.m., it sometimes ends at 11 p.m. but sometimes when we discuss a lot, it takes longer. It [my activities] depends on how many e-mails I have to answer, if I have to write invitations for our next meetings, you know, I don´t have much time.

D: *Do your political activities have any disadvantages for you, because we spoke only about advantages?*

G: Yes. I mean, I did not realise it at the beginning, but I was a little bit scared of responsibility. I was so new there [in my organisation], very young and not so experienced. Well, I was a little bit scared that the others could influence my opinions too much <apologetic smile>. But it´s not like that. Sometimes, I feel that [I have certain tendencies to it] when I admire someone and I think that what he or she says sounds good… but I can reflect it and sometimes not change my opinions.

D: *And is your opinion often in line with the majority of your organisation? I mean, do you mostly agree with the majority of your colleagues when you discuss something?*

G: It depends. I think we have made some basic decisions which are the same like… <pause to consider> Sometimes we discuss a lot and there are many different opinions and we try to make compromises. Sometimes it´s a bit difficult.

D: *Now we will leave the topic of your organisation and we will focus on your opinion about politics. So, do you think that young people can influence politics a lot?*

G: Yes, <laughing> and I think ehm…. they can influence and change it. [For me] it is that change, when you make other people think differently and to be more sensitive to important questions. So, I think that maybe you can´t always see the big results of your work, but you can always change things and influence some people to think more deeply.

D: *And do you think that young people in Germany are politically active enough?*

G: I think that the pressure on achievement at school is really a huge disadvantage… I think when you have school from 8 a.m., then you have to have a hobby to be an interested person and yes, I think for many people there is no time to really think about politics and develop their thoughts about it. One teacher of mine always said that our generation is a fun generation and I always said no I don´t think we are a fun generation because there is so much pressure… <pause to consider> that you will maybe not have enough time to be involved and politically active. And I think that it [my engagement] always had to do with compensating for this pressure.

D: *And what should people do to be good citizens?*

G: I think, it´s very important to show your opinions through the demonstrations, but what is also important is that you should do it in some <looking for the right word> constructive way because any kind of violence in a demonstration is very wrong. Some people think that a threat is a good way of enforcing things. Yeah, but I think it´s very wrong because you have a good goal, for example, that people should be treated equally in justice and people [at a demonstration] should show it in their behaviour. This is very important <resolutely>. I think that sometimes if you want to sell ideas like freedom or peace, you cannot act in absolutely the opposite way, I think it´s not convincing. So, it is very important to show that we are ready to realise our ideas.

D: *And what about your friends? Do you have friends mainly in your organisation?*

G: Yes, some but some are not politically active at all. I have known them for years and I know that they are very good people but [politically] uninterested…

D: *And do you speak about politics with your friends who are not in your organisation and have different political opinions?*

G: Yes, I speak. I always have discussions about politics with people <laughing>. I have friends who I have known for years, but they are not interested [in politics]. I also had a friend who was in a relationship with a girl who was very far-right and that is why I ended the

friendship because this something I could not… You know, I could not be friends with a person who was so far-right. This spoiled my image of him. She [his girlfriend] was extreme right and then I said I was sorry… and we don´t see each other anymore.

D: *Do you have also friends in other political student organisations?*

G: I have not been at university so long… From my first year at university, there was no one I knew in the party or in the group. There weren't any opportunities [to make friends among them].

D: *You mentioned the extreme right. Would it be a problem for you?*

G*:* Yeah <resolutely>.

D: *And what about the opposite end of the political spectrum? What about die Linke, for example?*

G: <Pause to consider> I do not like them… Ehm, I would have a very huge problem with anyone who supports political violence. I would not care about the part of the political spectrum he or she is on, but about the violence.

…

Gitta and Daniela are speaking further about political extremism, as well as about the advantages and problems of direct democracy.

…

D: *And what about media? Do you read newspapers regularly or watch TV?*

G: Yes, as often as I can. In the weeks when I have exams, sometimes I read the newspaper once a week and then I feel bad, very bad… But what I always try to do is to read neutral articles first, because I try to be informed firstly about the problem and then I try to read different opinions about it. I am afraid to be influenced by opinions which are too close to my own.

D: *And what kind of newspapers do you read, for example?*

G: As for the Internet I always read Tagesschau. This is not always [in line with] my opinion, sometimes it is more conservative than I am but there are many texts. And for example, I read Greenpeace magazine and one scientific magazine, but there are also political issues and die Zeit.

D: *Online or in paper form?*

G: In magazine form. And sometimes [I read] Süddeutsche Zeitung.

D: *So, do you read more newspapers online?*

G: Yes, and also because of the paper.

D: *And do you buy any newspapers?*

G: Sometimes I buy Süddeutsche Zeitung, but not very often and sometimes I read die Tageszeitung online, it´s very left-wing and I try to combine different sources.

D: *And do you watch political discussions on TV or in radio?*

G: I don´t have a TV. Yeah, there are sometimes discussions, maybe if I had a TV… But I am not very convinced about the quality of these discussions, because they very often interrupt each other or are very personal.

D: *Now, we can come back to the discussions about political issues. You said that you discuss these issues with your colleagues in your organisation, and with your friends. Is there anyone else you discuss politics with? For instance, what about family?*

G: Family, yes <smiling>. I discuss these topics with my father and with my mother also some questions, because I think that my parents are influenced by the media a lot and I do not trust the media as much as my parents. I don´t know if they trust them, but they are very much influenced by them.

D: *Ok, do you try to persuade them?*

G: Not in the same way as when I was a teenager <laughing>, because I respect them but yes, I try [to persuade them] about things which are very important for me.

D: *So, could you say that you speak about politics often?*

G: Yes, but I try to think [keep in my mind] that personal ties and friendship are very important… and to respect the feelings of others.

D: *And what do you think about the role of morality in politics? Is it an important issue for you?*

G: <pause to consider > …ehm, everyone should develop very high moral standards, but I think that politicians have very a high responsibility and they also have to realise the moral needs of people…

D: *Do you think that in practical politics, like in negotiation, moral issues are important? Do you think that there are the same moral standards in politics and normal life?*

G: I mean because of the fact that politicians have to speak for the whole population, it should be stricter because it influences people. If they made a decision which is ethically bad, they have to carry… handle the consequences of this decision.

D: *If I understood it correctly, you think that the moral standard of politicians should be higher than the moral standard of the common population because they are more responsible?*

G: Yeah.

…

Daniela and Gitta are speaking about problems and specifics of German politics.

…

D: *Thank you very much for your answers. Now, I will ask you briefly some questions about you. How would you describe your political orientation?*

G: Green.

D: *Ok, which party did you vote for in the last election?*

G: Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.

D: *Did you vote in all elections? I mean federal elections, the Landtags of various states, local elections, and European elections?*

G: Yes, for the Bundestag, for the Bundesland, but not for the European Parliament.

D: *You are 21 and will be 22-years-old, am I right?*

G: Yeah, in two weeks.

D: *Where do you come from?*

G: I was born in *** [her hometown]

D: *Does your family still live there?*

G: No, they moved.

D: *What´s the level of your education? Is it BA?*

G: Yes, BA.

D: *Are you studying psychology?*

G: Yeah.

D: *Do you believe in God? Are you a religious person?*

G: No.

D: *Do you want to add anything? Are there any aspects that we haven´t mentioned? We can add them now.*

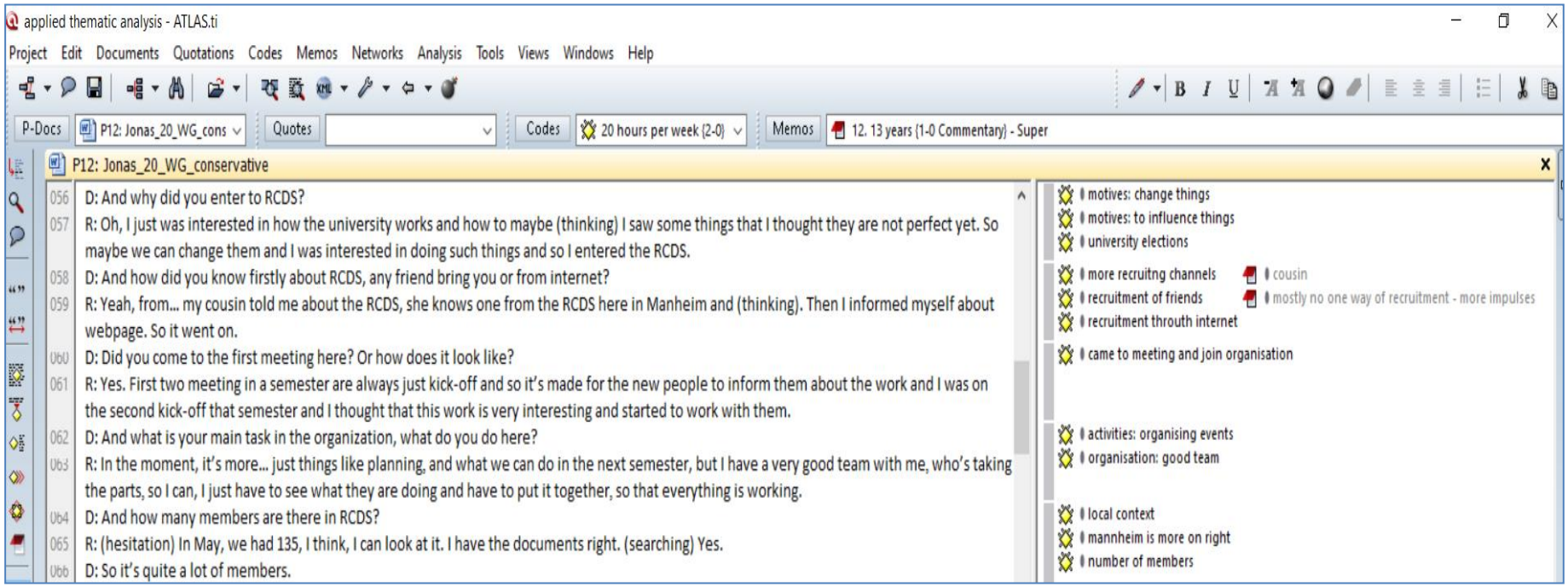
G: No, maybe via email.

D: *Ok, so thank you.*

10.7. Example of the applied thematic analysis

The applied thematic analysis is demonstrated in the excerpt from an interview with Jonas, a 20-year-old student at the University of Mannheim and a conservative political organisation member. Figure 11 depicts the process of the initial coding of the interview transcription. In this part, I coded my interviewee´s political motivations and his organisational recruitment. Moreover, I focused on activities in his organisation and in a local context at the University of Mannheim (the codes and my notes, the so called *memos,* are visible on the left side of the screenshot).

Figure 11: **Screenshot of initial coding of the interview with Jonas**



Source: created by Prokschová in Atlas.ti, file P12_Jonas_20_WG_conservative

In the phase of initial coding, 1749 codes were created across all the interviews. These codes were further sorted into so called *families* according to their meaning. For this purpose, analytical tools of Atlas.ti, termed the *code manager* and *family manager* were used. In order to be more specific, an output from the *code family* of *motivation* which contains 100 codes in 255 quotations about political motivation in alphabetical order, is shown.

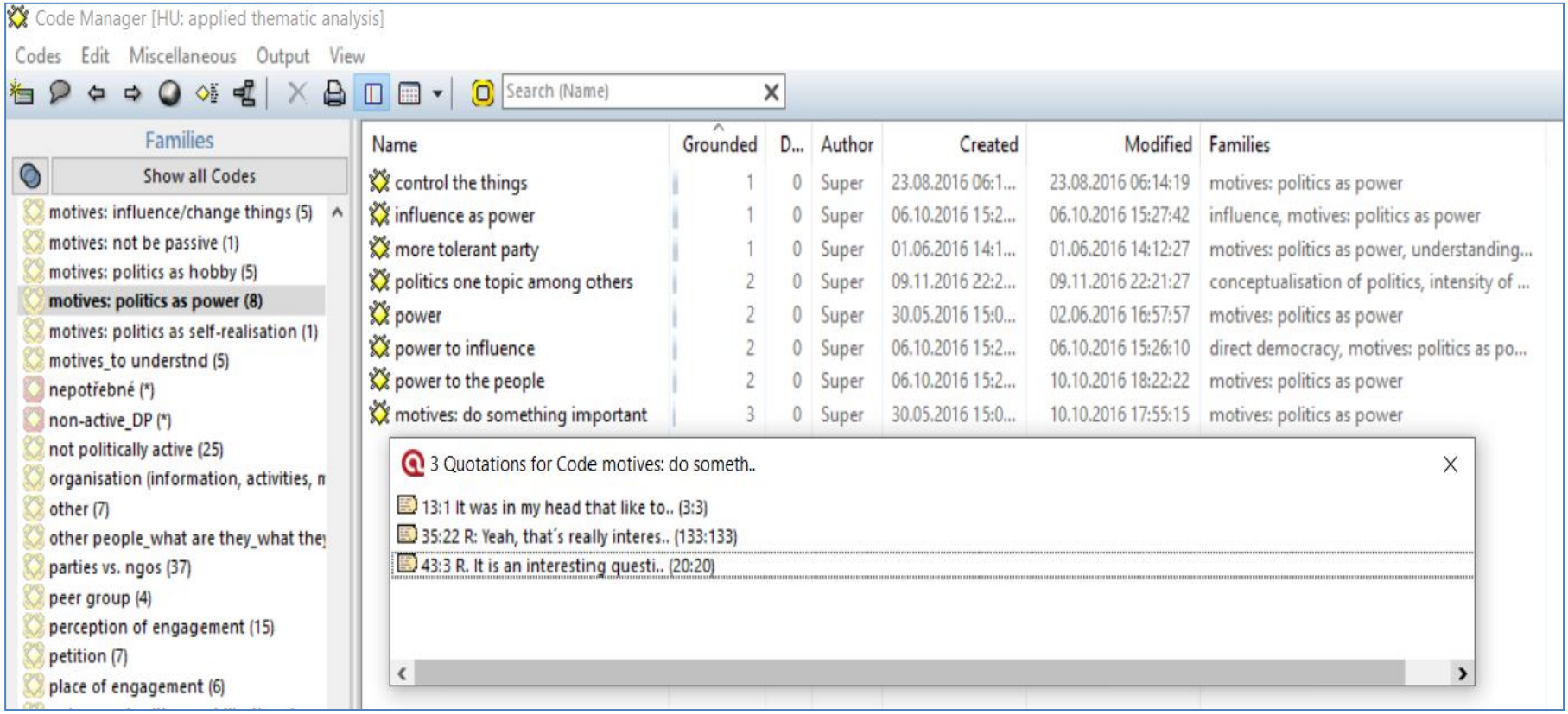
Figure 12: **Screenshot of the output of political motivations**

Code Family: motivation
Created: 2017-04-20 16:56:58 (Super)
Codes (100): [active because environment] [affirmation] [becoming part] [bigger picture] [claim that he/she is idealistic] [control the things] [cost-benefit analysis] [CV] [different motivation for different types of action] [different idea vs. reality] [divide and conquer] [do something more than protest] [do something more than school] [does not expect gratitude] [does not use contacts] [don´t be passive] [don´t want to do certain pragmatic things] [ethical questions] [example] [fulfilling] [fun] [fun - not important] [fun important] [he/she is idealistic] [help other people] [his/her activity connect to organisation] [hobby] [how society works] [ideas go apart] [ideological congruence] [I am standing here and cannot help myself] [improve politics] [influence as power] [inner motivation] [instrumental-pragmatic] [job opportunities] [justice, equality] [keep the promise] [leadership] [learn things] [meet people from the party] [meeting people] [mental health] [missed it] [moral motivation] [more tolerant party] [motivation organise things for kids] [motivation: faith in god] [motives to engagement: personal connection with problem] [motives: change things] [motives: do it for university] [motives: fascination by politics] [motives: good for reputation] [motives: important for career] [motives: improve party] [motives: it is a duty] [motives: keep informed] [motives: leader] [motives: life crisis] [motives: particularly political idol] [motives: politics is MINE] [motives: to change things = entering organisation] [motives: to do something important] [motives: to do something meaningful] [motives: to give something back] [motives: to influence things] [multiple reasons to join organisation] [networking] [no idealism] [no resource motivation] [not make career] [not pragmatic] [own party = the lesser evil] [party membership = clear choice] [personal growth] [politics one topic among others] [power] [power to influence] [power to the people] [practical motivation] [pragmatics] [principal attitude] [realistic view] [reasons why active: don´t believe in representative democracy] [self-realization] [small changes] [social motivation] [something what makes sense] [source of motivation] [systematic approach] [taking part in something bigger than me] [the difference between legality and legitimacy] [to learn skills] [understand thing] [understand what happened during Nazism] [utilitarian motivation] [vocation] [volunteering: give something back] [you can come very fast very high] [you should know your enemies]
Quotation(s): 255

Source: creadted by Prokschová in Atlas.ti, code family_motivation_output_ HU_applied thematic analysis

Figure 13 offers a screenshot of the code manager showing all the codes in families in alphabetical order (see the right column). In the right hand column, family *motives: politics as power* is highlighted and the left hand part of the screenshot offers an overview of the eight codes which this family consisted of. Below there is a list of three quotations for the code *motive: to do something important*.

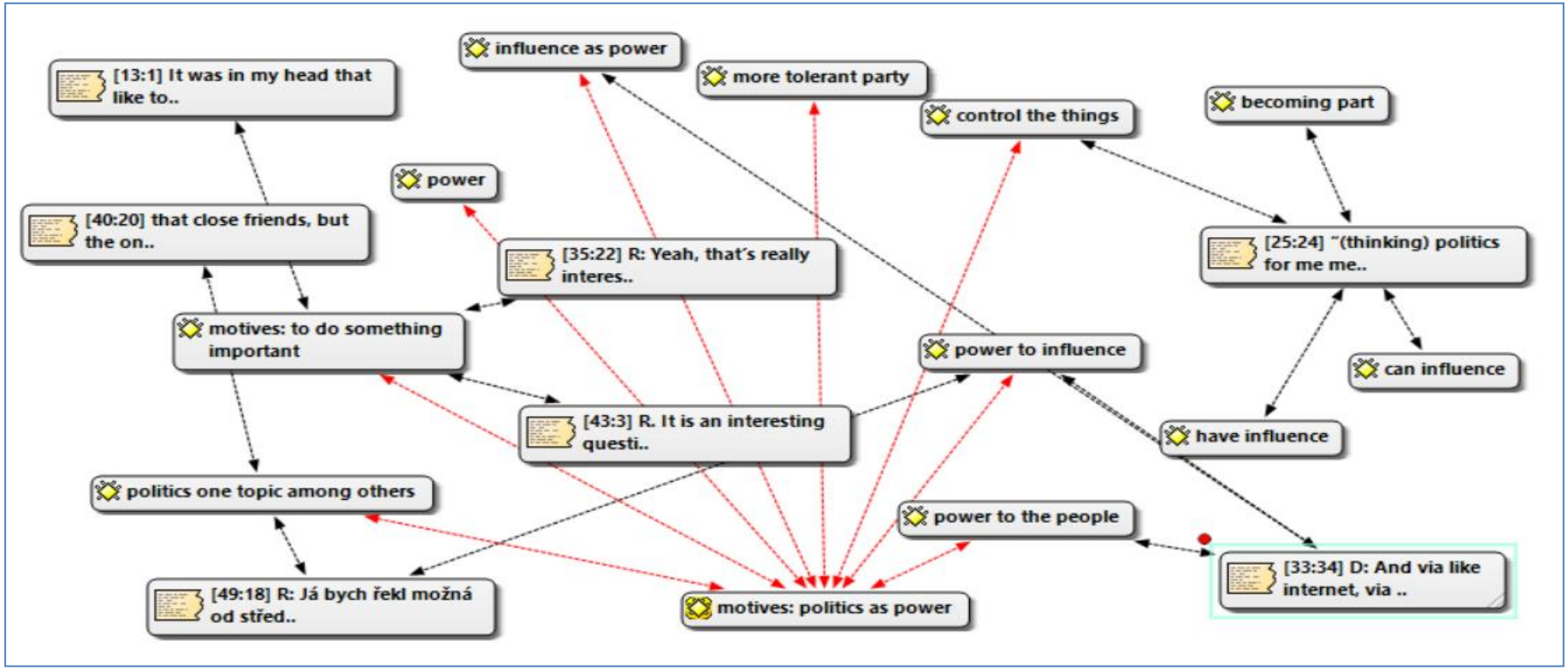
Figure 13: **Screenshot of the code manager in Atlas.ti**



Source: created by Prokschová in Atlas.ti, file interviews_code manager HU_applied thematic analysis

Then I constantly compared and recontextualised the coding families into bigger analytical units, and finally connected them into the logical and coherent narratives. To see the connections between the codes, I created schemes and diagrams. For instance, Figure 14 offers a network view of family *motives: politics as power* including the codes and quotations.

Figure 14: **Screenshot of network view in Atlas.ti**



Source: created by Prokschová in Atlas.ti, file interviews_family manager HU_applied thematic analysis