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**Abstract**

Employing the Twenty Statements Test and a framework of self?motives (self?esteem, self?efficacy, authenticity), this paper examines the self?concept of Ukrainian doctoral students while means–ends decoupling takes place at the state level. The latter implies that the practices of state policies are disconnected from the state’s core goal of creating public welfare. Data are taken from a survey of 125 doctoral students at one Ukrainian university and supplemented with 30 personal interviews within the sample of respondents. The findings reveal that in the Ukrainian case, means–ends decoupling at the state level causes institutional complexity, which results in means–ends decoupling at the organisational level, which in turn leads to cultural complexity. Institutional and cultural complexities experienced by doctoral students trigger them to sustain means–ends decoupling at the individual level. The main decoupling for most Ukrainian PhD students is that doctoral education neither increases their employability nor contributes to the development of science, economy or

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society. Means–ends decoupling at all levels results not only in a severe diversion of financial and human capital but also has a negative impact on individuals' well?being, hindering their personal and professional development and evoking a sense of meaninglessness, alienation and cognitive dissonance. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)