

# **Sociologický časopis**



## **Czech Sociological Review**



**Volume 42 (2006): 3**

# Sociologický časopis Czech Sociological Review

*Vydává Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky*

*Published by the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic*

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**Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review** (ISSN 0038-0288). Objednávky přijímá Postservis, Poděbradská 39, 190 00 Praha 9, tel. 800 104 410, e-mail: predplatne@prstc-p.post.cz a redakce. Objednávky do zahraničí přijímá redakce. Vychází 6 čísel ročně (4 česky, 2 anglicky). Cena 66 Kč bez DPH, v zahraničí 3 € (3 \$), Slovensko 66 Kč, roční předplatné v ČR 396 Kč.

Časopis je citován v *Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences (CC/S&BS)*, v počítačové databázi *Social SciSearch* a v aktuálních oznámeních *Research Alert*, publikacích Institute for Scientific Information, USA. Obsah časopisu (od roku 1993) je uveřejněn na internetu na URL <http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/>

**Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review** (ISSN 0038-0288) is published bimonthly (4 issues in Czech, 2 issues in English) by the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Orders: Czech Sociological Review, Jilská 1, 110 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic, e-mail: sreview@soc.cas.cz. One issue costs 3 \$ (3 €).

The Review is cited in publications of the Institute for Scientific Information, *Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences (CC/S&BS)*, *Social SciSearch* and in *Research Alert*.

Contents of the Review (since 1993) are published on the Internet URL <http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/>

Podávání novinových zásilek povoleno ŘPP Praha, čj. 1043/95 ze dne 20. 3. 1995. MK ČR E 4901.

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ARTICLES

- Stein Ringen: The Truth about Class Inequality* ..... 475
- Petr Matějů, Anna Vitásková: Interpersonal Trust and Mutually Beneficial Exchanges: Measuring Social Capital for Comparative Analyses* ..... 493
- Natalie Simonová, Dominik Antonowicz: Czech and Polish Higher Education – from Bureaucracy to Market Competition* ..... 517
- Pavel Machonin, Milan Tuček, Martin Nekola: The Czech Economic Elite after Fifteen Years of Post-socialist Transformation* ..... 537
- Dagmar Dzúrová, Lado Ruzicka, Eva Dragomirecká: Demographic and Social Correlates of Suicide in the Czech Republic* ..... 557
- Radka Dudová: Old Obligations in the Modern World: The Father as Provider before and after Divorce* ..... 573

REVIEW ESSAYS

- Michael L. Smith: Unequal Chances in Education: Educational Inequalities in the Czech Republic. Edited by Petr Matějů and Jana Straková* ..... 591

JUBILEE

- Jiří Večerník (Ivo Možný, Stein Ringen, Tim Smeeding and Lee Rainwater)* ..... 599

REVIEWS

- Timothy A. Byrnes – Peter J. Katzenstein (eds.): Religion in an Expanding Europe (Zdeněk R. Nešpor)* ..... 605
- Branko Milanovic: Worlds Apart: Measuring International and Global Inequality (Jiří Večerník)* ..... 608
- Maurizio Bach – Christian Lahusen – Georg Vobruba (eds): Europe in Motion. Social Dynamics and Political Institutions in an Enlarging Europe (Christian Lequesne)* ..... 610
- Sandrine Devaux: Engagements associatifs et postcommunisme – Le cas de la République tchèque (Markéta Sedláčková)* ..... 612

ANNOTATIONS

- Sociological Studies 2005/2006* ..... 617

# Sociologický časopis Czech Sociological Review

(ISSN 0038-0288) vydává Sociologický ústav Akademie věd ČR v Praze. Vychází 6x ročně (4 čísla v češtině a 2 v angličtině). Časopis je impaktován v *ISI Journal Citation Reports*.

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(ISSN 0038-0288) is published 6x annually (4 issues in Czech and 2 issues in English) by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague. The review is impacted in the *ISI Journal Citation Reports*.

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## The Truth about Class Inequality\*

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**Abstract:** A strongly recommended conclusion in sociology about trends in class inequality has been summarised by Goldthorpe as a high degree of 'temporal constancy and cross-national communality'. This conclusion, here called 'the stability thesis', was first challenged by Ringen in 1987 and again, on more methodological grounds, by Ringen and Hellevik in two papers published in 1997. These challenges resulted in a process of debate and reassessment. It is now possible to sum up and conclude. The stability thesis rests on empirical results from odds-ratio readings of mobility table data. The authority of this methodology is re-examined in terms of normative significance and statistical validity. Mobility table data which have generated stability thesis findings are re-analysed with the standard gini-index methodology in the study of inequality, then yielding different findings which contradict the stability thesis. The main conclusion is that the stability thesis can now be considered overturned.

**Keywords:** social inequality, social justice, social reform, class analysis, social stratification.

*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review*, 2006, Vol. 42, No. 3: 475–491

In a paper published in *Citizens, Families and Reform* [Ringen 1997], I challenged what had become a strongly recommended conclusion in sociology about trends in class inequality (in a body of literature that for convenience I will refer to as 'the class inequality literature'). The paper was a product of three years of collaborative work with Ottar Hellevik. A separate paper by Hellevik with a similar criticism was published simultaneously in *Acta Sociologica* [Hellevik 1997]. These criticisms resulted in a process of debate and reassessment [Marshall and Swift 1999; Hellevik 2000; Ringen 2000; Marshall and Swift 2000; Swift 2000; Kivinen et al. 2001, 2002; Hellevik 2002b; Ringen 2005b]. It is now possible to sum up that debate and reassessment and offer some conclusions.

\* This is a revised version of a paper presented to the Department of Sociology seminar at Oxford University on 31 October 2005. As ever in this project I am grateful to Ottar Hellevik for close and fruitful co-operation.

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## The stability thesis

In the first edition of *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* [Goldthorpe et al. 1980], the authors followed trends in class inequality and social mobility over a period of roughly fifty years leading up to 1980. The final conclusion was that in spite of a massive thrust of upward social mobility 'no significant reduction in class inequalities was in fact achieved'. That conclusion was repeated in the second edition of the book [Goldthorpe et al. 1987: 328]. This I call 'the stability thesis'.

The stability thesis was subsequently confirmed and re-confirmed in further analysis on British trends: '... the terms of the competition between the classes has shown little sign of change' [Heath and Clifford 1990: 15]; '... we have found that substantial absolute rates of upward and downward mobility coexist alongside relative class mobility chances which have remained largely unchanged ... in most of [the twentieth] century up to the present day' [Marshall et al. 1997: 59]. In a new development, the thesis was found to apply not only over time within countries such as Britain but also in comparisons between countries, including between the European countries with recent historical experience of democracy and those with experience of communist authoritarianism: '... in most countries there has been little change in socioeconomic inequality of educational opportunity [Shavit and Blossfeld 1993: 19]. Across advanced societies '... there are more opportunities for mobility now than in previous decades. However, the distribution of these enhanced opportunities across classes is quite another matter' [Marshall et al. 1997: 3]. In *On Sociology*, Goldthorpe argued that years of '... technical advances in social mobility research have ... led to empirical findings on temporal constancy and cross-national communality' in the relevant kind of class inequality, and that this 'might be regarded as the main achievement to date of class analysis as a research programme' [Goldthorpe 2000: 163, 257].

Much is obviously *not* at issue: the existence of class inequality in Britain and elsewhere, the fact of upward social mobility over time in Britain and elsewhere, the fact of social difference in many dimensions between European and other countries. Rather, the stability thesis says that, in spite of everything that has changed over time and everything that is different between countries, one thing at the heart of social life has remained remarkably stable over time and constant in space, and that is class inequality.

## The challenge

Class analysis is, among other things, an analysis of social inequality through the prism of class. My background was a different one: the analysis of social inequality through the prism of income distribution and poverty [Ringen 1987, 1988, 1997; Ringen and Uusitalo 1992]. My research has been, as is the class analysis in question, on trends over time and differences and similarities in space and has coincided with the class analysis in the periods covered and the kind of countries com-

pared. It is also similar in that it relies on the analysis of large data sets, often data sets carefully rearranged for comparative robustness. However, my conclusions were totally at odds with those of the class analysts. I had consistently recorded changes over time and differences in space. That record is confirmed in other work on income distribution [e.g. Atkinson 1995; Atkinson et al. 1995]. In poverty research, a separate stability thesis was suggested, starting with Townsend's *Poverty in the United Kingdom* [1979] and in further work under that inspiration (incidentally, inspired by a concept of relative poverty, which has many similarities to the concept of relative class inequality that has been used in parts of the class inequality literature [e.g. Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992]). However, that proposition has been effectively refuted, and the evidence now firmly indicates that poverty rates typically show patters of change over time within countries and of difference between countries, including rich countries [Ringen 1988, 1997; Atkinson 1998; UNDP annual; UNICEF 2005] (see also [www.lisproject.org](http://www.lisproject.org)). The body of literature I refer to here I will for convenience call 'the income inequality literature'.

The class analysis in question is highly technical in methodology. For its conclusions it rests crucially on the reading of mobility table data through odds-ratios. A major advantage of that methodology is argued to be '... that these ratios constitute the elements of log-linear models' [Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992: 56]. Hellevik's background for our joint project was as a methodologist and as the author of textbooks in statistical methodology [Hellevik 1984, 2002a]. He was sceptical of some uses of log-linear regression analysis in sociology, which he saw as a complicated and impenetrable way of doing what could usually be done using simpler and more transparent techniques. Although for a reason other than mine, he was therefore also distrustful of the research underpinning the stability thesis.

Hellevik and I resolved to join forces to re-investigate the class inequality research and the stability thesis. This research had long been under criticism from others [e.g. Pahl 1989; Sorensen 1991; Holton and Turner 1994; Crompton 1996; Saunders 1990, 1995, 1996]. However, much of that criticism, certainly from fellow sociologists in Britain, had failed to penetrate the methodological complexities of the research being targeted and had therefore had limited impact. We decided to go back to the basics and explore the methodological foundations.

Empirical research on class inequality and mobility consists in the reading of mobility tables. If we are interested in trends or differences in inequality, which is the issue here, we need to observe consecutive mobility tables to see if some display less or more inequality than others. Figure 1 shows two simple mobility tables of class background and educational attainment for two imaginary populations of 1000 people. The question here is whether different displays of data such as these show the same or a different degree of inequality.

A mobility table contains two sets of distributional data. The first set consists of two marginal distributions, say, the proportion of the population with a working class background, a middle class background, and so on, and the proportions that finish education at the basic level, that go on to secondary education, and so on. The

**Figure 1. Two class-education mobility tables, imaginary populations**

	Table A			Table B		
	O-R association = .58 Gini distribution = .26			O-R association = .58 Gini distribution = .17		
	Low educ.	High educ.	N	Low educ.	High educ.	N
High class	100	200	300	48	252	300
Mid. class	250	150	400	156	244	400
Low class	250	50	300	197	103	300
N	600	400	1000	401	599	1000

O-R association =  $\frac{1}{4}\ln(\text{odds-ratio high class/low class})$ .

Gini distribution estimated from Lorenz curve of share in higher education to each class.

Source: Hellevik [1997], Ringen [1997].

second set consists of the conditional distributions in the space defined by the two marginals, say, those originating in the working class and finishing education at the basic level, those originating in the middle class and going on to university education, and so on.

Marginal and conditional distributions are related. If something changes in the marginal distributions, something has to change also in the conditional ones. If, for example, the number of places in higher education is increased and those places are taken up, the new students have to come from somewhere, so that a higher proportion of people from at least one social class, possibly several or all, will end up in higher education.

Everyone agrees that mobility tables contain data on inequality, but the story of inequality cannot be read directly out of the table, the data need to be interpreted. For example, if again the number of places in higher education is increased and new students are recruited from all classes by background (as in Table B compared to Table A in Figure 1), is the result more or less inequality?

The interpretation of mobility tables that is behind the stability thesis is based on the following logic. The marginal distributions are seen to display social structure, class structure and the structure of education in our case. Inequality, or at least some kind of inequality, lies not in the social structure but in how people are distributed within that structure. Therefore, only the conditional distributions contain data on the relevant kind of inequality. Furthermore, some of the information contained in the conditional distributions is really structural data in disguise, for example, the effect in the conditional distributions that follows directly from changes in the marginal distributions. Therefore, the correct reading on trends in inequality is to identify changes in the conditional distributions after 'subtracting' or controlling for those changes that follow directly from changes in the marginals: '... the pattern of association net of the effects of the marginal distributions' [Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992: 56]. For example, if yet again the number of places in higher edu-

**Figure 2. Class association and class distribution of higher educational attainment in Britain by birth cohort**

	Birth cohorts			
	1930–39	1940–49	1950–59	1960/later
O-R association	.46	.43	.50	.44
Gini distribution	.24	.20	.15	.11

Higher education = O-level equivalent and higher. The proportion in the cohorts (all classes) attaining that level of education increased from 28% in the 1930–39 cohort to 68% in the 1960/later cohort.

Source: Heath and Clifford [1990], Hellevik [1997], Ringen [1997].

cation were to increase, there would by this logic be no effect on the relevant kind of inequality unless one could identify changes in the conditional distributions beyond those that come directly as a result of the added number of places. The odds-ratio technique is said to be ‘margin-insensitive’. (The methodology is explained in Chapter 2 of Erikson and Goldthorpe [1992]) In the example in Figure 1, both tables by this measure show identical degrees of inequality.

This may look impressive, but it is in fact a bizarre way of reading mobility table data for the purpose of interpreting inequality. If we are interested in changes in inequality, why remove from our vision certain changes in inequality because they are changes that have a certain cause, in this case changes in inequality which follow directly from changes in the social structure? Why not do the obvious thing and read the whole picture? The odds-ratio reading appears partial. Intuition suggests that it would be safer to interpret the message contained in the table through a complete analysis that reads all the data.

That is what we proceeded to do. Instead of odds-ratios we adapted the standard technique in the income inequality literature of gini-indices estimated from Lorenz curves to the analysis of mobility table data. (The technique is explained in Hellevik [1997] and Ringen [1997].) That reading interprets mobility table evidence by taking note of both marginal and conditional distributions. As can be seen in Figure 1, this reading shows there to be less inequality in Table B than in Table A.

From these examples we moved on to real data. We took the case of class background and educational attainment, one of the associations that had been found to remain roughly stable over decades in Britain [Heath and Clifford 1990]. We re-analysed the British mobility data in which our colleagues had read stability of class inequality. We kept everything the same except the statistical technique. We read the same mobility tables with the same data for the same country for the same period.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the two ways of reading the same data give totally different results. In the period covered, the overall level of educational attainment in the population increased sharply. While the odds-ratio reading shows stable in-

equality (or at least no clear trend up or down), we saw in our reading of the same data a straight, sharp and remarkable reduction in class inequality of educational attainment.

What then is the true story of class inequality, stability, and similarity or change and difference?

### Why the question matters

The terms of the debate were set in my book *The Possibility of Politics*. Here I observed, by way of conclusion, that my findings '... count as rather encouraging ones for the strategy of seeking to attack social inequalities via legislative and administrative measures of a piecemeal kind' [Ringen 1987: 207]. That was a riposte to the first edition of *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, in which the authors had observed that their findings '... count as rather grave ones for ... the strategy of seeking to attack social inequalities via legislative and administrative measures of a piecemeal kind' [Goldthorpe et al. 1980: 252]. This debate is above all about substantive issues in social policy. Crudely, if the stability thesis is true, the welfare state is in vain.

The class inequality literature has produced a string of dismal conclusions to that effect, following the lead of *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* in 1980. For example, with support in the stability of odds-ratios as reproduced in Figure 2, the authors concluded: 'Neither the meritocratic reforms of the 1944 Act nor comprehensive reorganisation can, in this respect at least, be said to have succeeded' [Heath and Clifford 1990: 15]. And further, '... the advantaged social classes have been able to outmanoeuvre the social reformers.... Legislation may change the rules of the game, but the players who are most motivated to succeed may be able to adapt their strategies so that they succeed in the new game just as they did in the old' [Heath et al. 1992: 220, 241]. The consequence '... of post-war economic growth was not that it facilitated egalitarian reform but rather that it obscured its failure. The reformers underestimated the resistance that the class structure can offer to attempts to change it: or, to speak less figuratively, the flexibility and effectiveness with which the more powerful and advantaged groupings in society can use the resources at their disposal to preserve their privileged positions' [Goldthorpe et al. 1987: 328]; '... the post-war project of creating in Britain a more open society, through economic expansion, educational reform, and egalitarian social policies, has signally failed to secure its objective' [Marshall et al. 1988: 138]; '... the impact of educational reforms on changes in educational stratification seems to be negligible. Nowhere have they reduced inequalities of educational opportunity between socioeconomic strata' [Shavit and Blossfeld 1993: 21]; 'Have mobility opportunities in these societies become more equal in these societies? The findings ... suggest that the answer to this question is in all four cases negative' [Marshall et al. 1997: 57]. (The cases/periods being West Germany 1976–91, Poland 1972–91, Czechoslovakia 1984–91 and the USA 1973–91.)

Beyond policy implications, methodological questions arise. When two methods for the analysis of the same data give different results, there is something unresolved that needs to be sorted out. In this case, two bodies of literature on social inequality tell contrasting stories. Either we find a way of reconciling those differences or we must conclude that the best available social research is inconclusive on major social trends.

Finally, there are broader theoretical implications. There is one outlook on modern social history that may be referred to as 'the liberal theory', which by and large assumes that macro-sociological progress is genuine, for example, that economic modernisation tends to follow through to improved life chances for more people. One expression of this theory is a belief that social mobility is equalising in that it causes class-linked inequalities of opportunity to be steadily reduced. This is the main competing view to the one under discussion here and to the broader theory that is under attack from the stability thesis school. 'If the foregoing results are sound, they cast serious doubts on the arguments advanced by liberal theorists of industrialism' [Marshall et al. 1997: 54]. In *On Sociology* (especially in Chapter 8), Goldthorpe dismisses the liberal theory (as represented by, for example, Blau and Duncan [1967], Treiman [1970] and Kerr [1983]) on the argument, again underpinned by stability thesis observations, that its predicted 'withering-away of class ... has yet to be observed' [Goldthorpe 2000: 163]. What then remains is a dark undertone not only about the futility of the welfare state but more basically about the very idea of progress.

These claims on odds-ratio evidence are in hindsight astonishingly strong. The stability thesis is treated as an established fact, so much so that not only is it the 'main achievement' of class analysis, but it is an achievement of such dignity that 'the focus of theoretical effort in the field should now be ... to explain' that constancy and communality [Goldthorpe 2000: 257]. The implications for social policy are 'grave', egalitarian reform has generally been a 'failure', whole post-war projects have 'signally failed', and across a range of countries educational reforms have 'nowhere' reduced inequalities. No less than the liberal theory in all its glory stands naked and accused.

All this rests on a single and specific way of reading mobility tables and on that methodology alone: through odds-ratios. Similar strong claims have been made for that methodology. Log-linear models '... have emerged as the sociologist's most flexible yet powerful means for the analysis of mobility tables [and represent when] applied ... to investigate the more detailed features of relative rates [a] technical innovation' [Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992: 56–7]. This is a methodology that makes it '... possible to specify the intrinsic association between variables after purging out nuisance variability in marginal distributions' [Grusky and Tienda 1993: vii]. 'Under the logistic response model, differences in background effects ... cannot result from changing marginal distributions of either independent or dependent variables because such changes do not affect the [measure]' [Mare 1981: 75]; '... logit models [reveal] the "pure" association between origin characteristics and educational attainment [Breen and Jonsson 2005]. What is said to give this methodology its unique-

ness of power is that it produces 'margin-insensitive' measures of origin-destination associations.

Where the confidence in this methodology alone and the importance of its findings comes from is something of a mystery. It is a very difficult and convoluted way of reading data and there are very good reasons to mistrust the methodology both on its measurement validity and its normative significance.

One thing is presently *not* at issue: the usefulness or power of log-linear analysis in general, or of any other statistical technique for that matter. This is less a discussion about statistics than about the *usage* of statistics. (But for follow-ups on logistic versus linear regression techniques in general, see Hellevik [2003, 2005].)

### Normative significance

The value reference shared by everyone in this debate is egalitarianism. The Hellevik-Ringen reading of mobility table data is easily interpretable and not controversial. Provided the destination side of the table represents attractive positions, it is a measure of class inequality in the attainment of those positions. From an egalitarian perspective, this is information of obvious normative significance. Class inequality thus measured persists in the data referred to here, but not on a stable level. Figure 2, for example, shows it to have been reduced in line with the extension of educational opportunities.

The odds-ratio reading is, however, anything but easy to interpret. Just what is it that is being measured by odds-ratios in class mobility tables?

The answer has been a bit unclear and shifting. It was first thought that a particular reading of *class* inequality was sufficient for general pronouncements on *social* inequality. This was the interpretation in the first edition of *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, hence the grave implications for 'social inequalities'. This position was, however, abandoned, even in the second edition of that book. Class inequality has now become, more modestly, precisely a matter of *class* inequality. In the next stage, following the results of Hellevik's and my re-analysis, and in the exchange that took place over those results with Marshall and Swift, that position also was abandoned in favour of a yet more modest view, according to which there are several kinds of class inequality and both ways of reading mobility tables are correct, albeit in respect to different kinds of inequality.

That is a step towards clarification, but only a first step. In a subsequent paper, Adam Swift goes back to methodological first base yet again and asks 'precisely what it is that class analysis using odds ratios does and does not tell us' [Swift 2000: 664]. Here he underlines the 'limitations' in this kind of class analysis and how it is a 'narrower, or more carefully specified, research programme than some had realised' [ibid.]. The consequence of this clarification is that odds-ratio readings are interpreted so as to not tell us much or anything at all of normative significance about inequality: '... everybody can be getting better off, there can be more chances of upward mobility, the gaps between the positions that members of the ... groups

tend to end up in can be getting smaller, the distribution of opportunities to achieve absolute levels of goods can be getting more equal. More equal also can be both the distribution of opportunities to achieve [a specified standard of living] and the distribution of opportunities to buy goods. All this can happen without any increase in social fluidity between class positions' [ibid.: 667].

If that adds some further clarification to what is being measured, the next question is what it really *means*. 'I have attempted to justify the normative significance of the findings of mobility analyses ... involving odds ratios. But I've not sought to conceal the complexities involved in such a justification. ... To those who care about equality, but who also care about the distribution of things like opportunities to buy goods, social fluidity is an important part of the story. But it is only a part. A complete analysis of the distribution of *those* opportunities would involve reference to the size of the gaps between class positions as well as the extent of movement between them' [ibid.: 675]. In other words, the 'complete analysis' would be the kind of analysis Hellevik and I conducted, which consists of reading all the distributional data in the mobility table. For the rest, the 'important part of the story' is that odds-ratio readings tell us *something* about *some* differences in *some* kinds of opportunity. Not about social inequality as such, not about class inequality as such, not even about class inequality of opportunity as such.

It now turns out, according to Swift, that this research programme was never about inequality in a normative meaning after all, or at least not primarily so, but that it was always 'explanatory rather than normative'. What then gives odds-ratio readings significance is that they 'contribute to the explanation of these class-related phenomena' [Swift 2000: 676].

According to this interpretation, the two series of statistics in Figure 2 would seem to be not alternative readings of class inequality, not even different kinds of inequality, but one reading on inequality and one on an element in the explanation behind it. Together these data would then show a reduction in class inequality in spite of no weakening of the force of one contributing cause of inequality.

But that is not Swift's interpretation. He finds that the odds-ratio reading uncovers a contributing explanation, but at the same time he interprets it as a measure of inequality, albeit only one kind of inequality. This one thing is both an explanation of inequality and itself a kind of inequality.

The logic would appear to be the following. Young people go through their early lives in search of education (or other attractive positions). We know that of those who started out in a lower social class a smaller proportion attained a higher level of education than those who started out in higher social classes. That difference is explained, in part, by what is measured by odds-ratios. What might justify calling that 'class inequality' would be a credible assumption that those who move along the road from origins to destinations with the label of 'lower class' are treated or affected differently in that process from others in ways that make it more difficult for them to attain the desired position or destination. Inequality is a normative concept. It refers to differences that are objectionable, in our case from an egal-

itarian point of view. If young people from lower social classes are blocked from fulfilling their aspirations, that would indeed be a case of class inequality.

However, to justify that conclusion and interpretation it is not enough to establish that what odds-ratios tell us has the force of a contributing explanation of class-related phenomena. It needs to be established that it is a special kind of explanation. Swift's conclusion is persuasive as far as it goes, but he has only established that we are on to an explanation of class inequality, not that it is a class inequality explanation of class inequality.

In a contingency table, a measure such as the odds-ratio uncovers whether there is a statistical association between the independent and the dependent variables and suggests the strength of that association. That there is a statistical association between class of origin and educational attainment in the displays in Figure 1 and in the real British data in Figure 2 is clear and obvious. But it is *not* clear and obvious that this association is a case of class inequality.

From analyses of mobility tables we are able to identify associations descriptively but nothing more. We may well think that an observed association hides a causal link from, in our case, class to education. That inference is supported by the fact that class comes first and education later, but it is still just an inference. All we *know* is that there is an association. However carefully we analyse mobility table data, from that analysis we *know* nothing about the mechanism(s) through which the inferred causality might work. In the class inequality literature it is said to be class inequality, but that is just a postulate.

If we have a firm theory of causality, we can take contingency table associations as evidence of the causal force. For example, if the independent variable is vaccination or not and the dependent variable the incidence of the disease the vaccination is against, we can take the association between vaccination and incidence as good evidence of the effectiveness of the vaccination. We can do that, in spite of having no observations about how the vaccine works in a patient's immune system, because we are on safe ground in assuming that that is where it does its job.

In the analysis of class mobility tables, we have no such firm theory to fall back on. We simply do not know through what mechanism(s) class background is supposed to cause differences in educational attainment, or at least there is no theoretical agreement on this.

A mobility table is a simple organisation of data: marginal and conditional distributions clearly laid out. Those data as they appear on a sheet of paper, say, in Figure 1, or as they usually appear with more finely grained decompositions of the marginal distributions, can be analysed with great statistical precision. That is certainly being done in the class analysis literature, with ever increasing technical sophistication.

However, the simplicity of the mobility table is deceptive. An organisation of data that looks simple on paper is in effect a snap-shot compilation of information about life-course movements over a very long period. The mobility table looks two-dimensional, but in fact there is a third dimension in it, the dimension of time. If

the destination is educational attainment, there may typically be fifteen to twenty or twenty-five years between the positions of origin and destination. If it is occupational attainment, the table may cover a span of forty to fifty or sixty years. Over a life-course a myriad of things happen to individuals which may contribute in various ways to their success in life, for example their educational attainment.

In the class inequality literature, the assumption is that everyone is equally motivated to seek higher education but that something descends upon them in the process and shuts or opens doors to people, all depending on their class backgrounds. Halsey has likened it to 'loaded dice' and suggested that what we are reading is those loadings [Halsey 1977].

However, all we have to go by in support of that assumption is an observed association. In this case that observation does not do much for us since it does not sit on any firm theory. The same observation is in conformity with utterly different assumptions about the mechanisms that may be at work. The important alternative theory to the one postulated in the class inequality literature is that the statistical association between class and education is a result of self-selection rather than of dice or other treatments or influences manipulated by someone else. If young people originating in different classes are differently motivated for higher education, or if there are differences in ability that are correlated with class, a statistical association between class and education might well reflect *equality* between the classes in the attainment of what their members themselves aim for, or fairness of treatment according to ability.

Socially differential motivation (or ability) might still be seen as a form of class inequality if we think that a lower level of aspiration (or skill) in young people from lower social classes is itself a legacy of class, but class legacy is not the only or obvious interpretation. We might for example more modestly take it as an inescapable evolutionary fact. Or it could be the result of informed and rational choice [cf. e.g. Boudon 1974; Gambetta 1987].

The point here is that from the observed association we cannot tell which theory to trust. You or I might want to believe one rather than another, but the mobility table offers no help in substantiating such beliefs. If we have no firm theory of causality *a priori*, no reading of the mobility table can adjudicate afterwards between alternative possible theories.

This is by and large a re-statement of prior criticism by, in particular, Peter Saunders [Saunders 1990, 1995, 1996]. That criticism, however, has pretty much been ignored in the class inequality literature (although not by Swift [2000]). Goldthorpe, for example, in *On Sociology*, where the stability thesis is 'the main achievement to date of class analysis', deals with it by not mentioning it.

To sum up so far:

1. Yes, it is established that there is class inequality of educational attainment (which of course comes as no surprise to anyone).
2. Yes, it is established that there is an association between class and education as measured in mobility tables (which is also pretty obvious).

3. No, it is not established that a class-destination association is a case of class inequality in a normative meaning. That has been postulated but not established.
4. Hence, the only established evidence on class inequality from mobility table analysis is that generated by Hellevik–Ringen type readings.

## Validity

A final mystery now remains to be solved. If the odds-ratio measures a cause of inequality and the Hellevik–Ringen reading the resulting distributions, how can the force of the cause have been stable when the result has changed? The question has perhaps become a rather academic one of little substantive importance since we now know that the class-destination association does not contain established independent evidence on class inequality. But it still merits consideration, not least because this is where the whole discussion started.

We are forced back yet again to the question of what odds-ratios measure. If we believe that they measure the mechanism in the process from origins to destinations that produces class inequality in the distribution of attainment – in other words, Halsey's loading of the dice – the answer is that the cause cannot have maintained stable force when the resulting distribution has changed. That is simply mathematically impossible. If the loading of the dice is the same, the result will be the same. If the result changes, the loading of the dice will have changed. No difference in wording can get around that obviousness. If instead of 'loaded dice' we believe, for example, in the 'class bias of selection', 'relative inequality', 'relative opportunity', or 'fluidity', the necessary conclusion is the same.

However, the combination of a stable causal force and a changing distributional outcome is not totally impossible. If the odds-ratio measures not the mechanism but the force of one among several causes that together produce the distributional result, the force of *that* cause could still be stable. That is perhaps Swift's interpretation, something that underlines again the 'narrowness' of the research in question. If anything, then, what has been established is the stability of one contributing cause of class inequality, which on the one hand is not a class inequality explanation, and on the other hand matters next to nothing for class inequality in the final distribution.

But in truth this solution, even if not impossible, feels outlandish and incredible. For example, going back to Figure 2, it would seem entirely implausible, in the face of the changes in the class distribution of educational attainment displayed there, to suggest that class inequality of opportunity has nevertheless been unchanging, yet that is the standard interpretation of data such as these in the class inequality literature. The obvious starting hypothesis must be that when the class distribution of a good changes, the class-destination association will have been modified. We should want pretty solid evidence to overturn a hypothesis of such apparent obviousness. No evidence of such persuasiveness is, however, provided. First, the narrowness of evidence on offer does not seem to be persuasive even on

its own terms. Second, even the narrow evidence as it stands does not serve to disprove the intuitive hypothesis. The reason is that odds-ratio evidence is not proof of stability, or not in the class-destination association.

There is undisputed evidence of the stability of odds-ratios in time and space. However, just as class-destination evidence is not sufficient to establish the facts of class inequality, odds-ratio evidence is not sufficient to establish the facts of the class-destination association. The argument in the class inequality literature is that the odds-ratio method has a unique quality and power. It is supposed to tell the truth about the associations hidden in the conditional distributions in the mobility table with an authority that is superior to other ways of analysing the data. That authority comes from the idea of 'margin-insensitivity'. 'Odds-ratios are able to capture such net associations because they are margin-insensitive measures' [Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992: 56].

In fact, however, odds-ratios are *not* margin-insensitive. If margin-insensitivity is at all a meaningful statistical concept, the most that could be said is that odds-ratios are margin-insensitive *under certain conditions*. The reference in statistical theory is that '... the cross-product ratio is invariant under row and column multiplications' [Bishop, Fienberg and Holland 1975: 14]. That is something, but it falls short of meaning that margin-insensitivity is a general quality of the odds-ratio measure.

Statistical associations in contingency tables can be measured in different ways. While the odds-ratio is a log-linear measure, the difference in proportions, for example, is a linear measure of the same thing. How various measures of association behave under changing marginal distributions is a pretty open question and certainly not something that can be pinned down as general margin-insensitivity. Experiments show that both log-linear and linear measures of association sometimes respond to changes in the marginals and sometimes not, all depending on rather complicated constellations of conditions [cf. Hellevik 2002b; 2003]. The postulated uniqueness of the odds-ratio measure, supported by the argument of margin-insensitivity, is simply a myth that has grown out of a simple statistical observation, the meaning and significance of which has been badly exaggerated and given credence by having been repeated by authors who refer to each other. The odds-ratio is one of several available measures of association and not one that, for the present purpose, stands out from all others in authority.

If we return to Figure 2 and re-estimate the class-education associations using the difference in proportions (again between high and low class) instead of the odds-ratio, we get a different result from the odds-ratio reading. The associations across the four birth cohorts are now: .40 – .40 – .42 – .33 [Hellevik 2003]. This is not radically different from the odds-ratio results but sufficiently different to overturn the conclusion. From these data we would have been unable to conclude that the association has remained stable and we would have had to conclude that the force of the causal factor measured is weaker at the end of the period than at the beginning. There is from a methodological point of view no less reason to trust these results than the odds-ratio results.

## Conclusion

Some recent class sociology in the tradition under scrutiny here suggests that confidence in the stability thesis is slipping [Breen 2004]. (See also a recent review in Breen and Jonsson [2005]). That may be a result of new observations that do not fall in line with earlier ones, or of a greater emphasis on exceptions in international comparisons, such as the case of Sweden, or variations within overall stability trends. This kind of re-assessment is welcome but is of no consequence for the present discussion. The argument here is that there never was stability of class inequality in the data as analysed, and that odds-ratio observations are not conclusive for this purpose. The same measure for the same purpose does not become more conclusive just because it begins to draw a more agreeable picture.

If we now go back to the beginning of the research programme, we see that the conclusion that 'no significant reduction in class inequalities was in fact achieved' was, from what we now know, not supported by the evidence that was referred to. That evidence contains no established independent information about class inequality. The alleged margin-insensitivity in odds ratios has turned out to be a red herring and odds-ratio evidence to have less authority than had been ascribed to it. A more correct conclusion might have been 'that no significant reduction in the power of one contributing cause of inequality was in fact achieved'. That may not be insignificant, but it is not a conclusion about class inequality – all the less so since there is now other and clearer evidence of changing inequality in the same data. In recent political parlance, excessive and unsubstantiated conclusions and inferences were drawn from a dossier that had been (inadvertently, no doubt) sexed-up.

The consequences of this reinterpretation are far-reaching. First, that original and powerful conclusion about 'class inequalities' can now be considered overturned. It is, to be clear, overturned on its own terms. It is now also in question from new findings within its own framework, but those new findings would not have been necessary to overturn the original conclusion. The more correct conclusion about 'one contributing cause of inequality' is no match. It is not the stuff of a stability thesis that anyone but methodologists, and hardly even they, would be able to get excited about. It is not a finding with grave implications for social policy or a basis for dismissing any post-war project or any other programme of reform as failures (unless one thinks that egalitarian reform is not about equality at all but only about a narrow and specific contributing cause of it, which is not a class inequality cause and which the evidence shows is easily overridden by other causes). Nor is it a launch pad for much of an assault on any competing theory of, say, openness in society or historical progress.

Second, since the odds-ratio reading does not provide established independent evidence on inequality, the Hellevik–Ringén reading, which indisputably does, stands unopposed. As a result, the apparent discrepancy between the class inequality literature and the income inequality literature is reconciled and the assault on liberal theory from one body of that literature refuted. The best available social

research speaks with one tongue on these major social trends, and both speak a language that is in conformity with the liberal theory.

To sum up, the stability thesis was never the truth about class inequality, the grave conclusions for social policy were never supported by relevant evidence, and the liberal theory was never under credible challenge. When, in *On Sociology*, Goldthorpe argues that 'the focus of theoretical effort in the field should be to explain' the observed constancy and communality, he is suggesting to class sociology that it dedicate itself to explaining what has not happened.

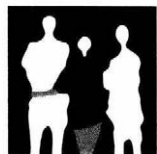
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## Interpersonal Trust and Mutually Beneficial Exchanges: Measuring Social Capital for Comparative Analyses\*

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**Abstract:** There are at least two significantly different approaches to the conceptualisation of social capital. Advocates of the most influential stream define social capital primarily as an attribute of societies, as an innate characteristic of the social environment based on the high degree of interpersonal and institutional trust facilitating people's co-operation. Adherents of the other stream define social capital in terms of mutually beneficial exchanges based on social connections and informal networks allowing individuals to achieve their own particular goals. The former approach prevails in 'western' countries, while the latter one prevails in the study of social change in post-communist societies where social capital drawing from interpersonal trust seems to be rather low. The aim of this article is to contribute to the conceptualisation and measurement of social capital, with a special emphasis on its role in post-communist societies. The authors attempt to develop a measurement model for the two distinct dimensions of social capital mentioned above. The measurement model for the two dimensions of social capital is developed and tested by confirmatory factor analysis. The authors proceed by testing the hypothesis that social capital defined as trust is only weakly linked to social stratification, while social capital defined as a person's involvement in mutually beneficial exchanges shows significant variation between groups defined by relevant stratification variables. The analysis was performed on the data from the Social Networks survey carried out in the Czech Republic in 2001 under the International Social Survey Programme.

**Keywords:** social capital, trust, social networks, mutually beneficial exchanges, stratification variables

*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review, 2006, Vol. 42, No. 3: 493–516*

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\* Work on this paper was made possible thanks to the support of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, Grant No. 403/03/340, for the project 'Economic, Social and Cultural Sources of Educational Inequalities and the Determinants of Life Success: Stage One in a Longitudinal Study' (first author) and to the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Grant No. 1J 005/04-DP2 'Unequal Access to Education: The Extent, Sources, Social and Economic Consequences, Policy Strategies' (second author). The first draft of the paper was presented at a meeting of the ISSP in Mexico City.

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## Introduction

Some forty years ago, the role of human capital was recognised alongside physical capital as a major factor contributing to economic output. Though the idea has been around for decades that social relationships and networks play an important role in economic success at both the micro and macro level, the concept of social capital only originated in the 1970s, in the work of Glenn Loury [1977], who objected to the narrowly defined understanding of human capital in neo-classical economic theory. It was not until the 1980s, however, that Pierre Bourdieu [1985] and James Coleman [1988] successfully brought social capital to the wider attention of the social sciences.

Like the pioneering scholars in the field of human capital, who started out with loose measurement instruments and somewhat weak conceptual models that were designed to assess the contribution of human capital to economic growth, the well-being of nations, and the life-success of individuals, the proponents of social capital have gradually realised that the explanatory power of the models developed to examine the role of social capital depends not only on their complexity and sophistication but also on the validity, robustness (reliability), quality and comparability of the indicators used to measure the variations in social capital among nations in sociological and statistical surveys. We are evidently at the very beginning of this process.

Though there has been an enormous effort on the part of individual scholars [e.g. Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000a, 2000b; Portes 1998; Woolcock 1998, 1999, 2000; Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Narayan 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999; Narayan and Cassidy 1999] and institutions (e.g. World Bank, EBRD, OECD) to demonstrate the concept's potential for understanding differences in economic growth between nations and in the life-success of individuals, true cross-national and 'cross-system' comparative research in this area is still in its initial stage.

The aim of this article is to contribute to the conceptualisation and measurement of general social capital, with a special focus on post-communist societies in East-Central Europe. We assume that in these societies social capital operates in specific historical and social circumstances, and we will attempt here to develop a measurement model for two distinct dimensions of social capital: one defined primarily as an attribute of societies that facilitates people's co-operation; the other as the capacity of an individual to participate in informal networks based on mutually beneficial exchanges. From this perspective we propose a new measurement instrument for further analysis of the effects of stratification variables in the economic and institutional development of post-communist countries.

## The conceptualisation of social capital

Social capital can broadly be defined as a network of social relations based on a variety of forms of 'trust' and 'reciprocity' that can lead to a wide range of private and public outcomes. This simple definition serves a number of purposes, but most im-

portantly it draws attention to the 'sources' of social capital (i.e. the network of social relations) and their 'origins' (i.e. norms of trust, reciprocity, participation, co-operative behaviour), and it highlights the theoretical and empirical complexity of a construct that has received widespread attention from sociologists, political scientists, and economists.

Irrespective of disciplinary focus, however, the formulation of a consistent theory of social capital continues to be complicated by the existence of two different yet equally useful and theoretically rewarding conceptual and methodological approaches:

- a) Social capital defined as mostly an 'attribute of an individual', as a person's potential to activate and effectively mobilise a network of 'social connections' based on 'mutual recognition' of proximity (in a social space) and maintained by symbolic and material 'exchanges' (Bourdieu). In this context, social capital has the properties of a 'private good', which individuals accumulate and use to achieve their own goals and personal advancements.
- b) Social capital defined as mostly an 'attribute of a society', as a quality of networks and relationships enabling individuals to 'co-operate' and act collectively (Putnam). Within this framework, social capital is based on a high degree of interpersonal 'trust', as well as on the 'trustworthiness' of the public and political institutions that establish and uphold the 'rule of law', making all kinds of exchanges transparent and safe. For these reasons, social capital has the properties of a 'public good', facilitating the achievement of higher levels of efficiency and productivity; hence this form of social capital is often associated with economic growth.

Once the construct of social capital is distinguished from its outcome(s), it becomes even more obvious that there are several major difficulties in reconciling the above-mentioned conceptual approaches to social capital, which consequently affect measurement. First of all, it appears that economists, who search primarily for factors that account for differences in economic growth and the economic well-being of nations, often tend to prefer Putnam's interpretation of social capital as a public good, while sociologists, who strive to explain the reproduction of inequality, are more inclined towards Bourdieu's and Coleman's conceptualisation of social capital as a private good. Though there are exceptions to this rule, as far as measurement through proxy variables is concerned, economists are more likely to use the level of trust and social participation, while sociologists apply variables assessing a person's social esteem (prestige) and his/her position in power structures and involvement in informal networks and exchanges. This depends largely and independently on whether or not a particular approach is elaborated or applied in empirical research in either advanced capitalist, transitional or developing countries. Needless to say, neither of the two measurement strategies is satisfactory.

Second, most of these studies aim at investigating a specific life domain, such as civic, political or social engagement, or the size of networks, etc., which provide fragmentary information about the distribution of social capital [Van Der Gaag and

Snijders 2005]. The distribution of social capital as either a private or a public good consequently affects the access and use of such social capital in attaining certain goals [Lin and Dumin 1986]. Therefore, social capital is context-specific in the production of returns.

Third, there is another issue that makes measurement rather difficult; namely, the difference between the wealthy societies of North America and Western Europe and the countries emerging from a communist past (hereafter 'transforming' societies). Grief's categorisation of institutional restructuring indicates that developed countries with well-established institutions and a high level of generalised or interpersonal trust and co-operation in achieving 'common goals' may contribute to the explanation of economic performance and growth of a relatively stable society [Grief 1994]. The explanatory power of such a construct decreases when applied to transforming societies whose institutional restructuring is often characterised by the existence of corruption, state failure, and the existence of a grey economy (i.e. negative social capital), accompanied by a low level of generalised trust [Grief 1994].

### **Does the 'synergy view' offer a solution?**

There have been attempts to solve the problem of duality in the conceptualisation of social capital. In the 'synergy view of social capital', Woolcock refers to 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital. 'Bonding social capital' (also known as 'defensive' social capital) is generated by strong, close ties between individuals, which allow them to meet their basic needs in the face of negative externalities. These strong ties are most often formed within families, clans, or close groups of neighbours. They mainly serve as a 'backup' to the members of such groups, for instance, providing food or money if a member is laid off.

'Bridging social capital' (also known as 'offensive' social capital) is defined by large groups of people that exist at various levels of society. These groups (most often taking the form of professional organisations and associations) work to further the goals of their members, often helping them to find jobs or helping to increase the dispersion of knowledge within such organisations, allowing members to achieve their goals and improve their socio-economic status.

Woolcock's view of social capital offers a plausible theoretical solution. However, the problem of different approaches to measurement remains. In order to begin any cross-national comparative work we must be able to develop measurement strategies for two distinct forms of social capital – one operating beyond the reproduction of inequality and the strategies that individuals and families develop in order to succeed in life (particularly during times of social change), the other explaining why in some societies people co-operate more easily and more effectively than in others. This is a fundamental problem that must be discussed before we turn our attention to the 'cultural problems of measuring social capital'. Deeper dimensions and fine-grained problems of measurement will emerge once we begin to formulate

questions and items for questionnaires. However, this stage of comparative research still appears to lie well ahead of us.

## **Social capital in transforming societies**

Many scholars argue that socialism destroyed the most important norms of trust: institutional (i.e. the basic trust in formal institutions of governance) and generalised trust (i.e. the extent to which people trust their fellow citizens). For instance, Kunioka and Woller [1999] examined the power of social capital in the democratic transition in Eastern Europe and postulated the dictatorship theory of missing social capital, according to which dictatorship destroys both forms of trust. After the collapse of a dictatorship, the remaining 'negative social capital' inhibits institutional and economic development. Simply put, the prevalence of negative social capital is not conducive to the development of generalised trust, and the lack of generalised trust hinders economic growth [Paldam and Svendsen 2001].

In addition, the deep changes in the social structure in transforming countries, accompanied by increasing socio-economic inequality, drew the attention of scholars to other mechanisms that also generated changes in social stratification and inequality: social mobility (especially towards economic and political elites), growth of income and wealth differentiation, changes in factors determining life-success, etc. The theory of various forms of capital has therefore also been applied within a different context and research framework.

Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley [1998], who made one of the most important contributions to the research on the post-communist transformation, argue, for example, that pre-communism, communism, and post-communism are three different stratification regimes, defined by the dominance of different types of capital. Post-communism, in their view, is a historically unique system of stratification in which cultural capital (represented by higher education, providing a person with greater flexibility) is dominant. However, the transition to post-communism involves quite a complicated shift from the socialist rank order system, in which social capital, institutionalised as political capital (represented by a person's position in the Communist Party hierarchy), is dominant, to capitalist class stratification, where economic and cultural capital play strategic roles in the life-success of individuals [Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley 1998].

Like other scholars of social stratification in transforming countries, Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley [1998] argue that during a transition people tend to convert devalued forms of capital into new, more valued forms. This is the way that individuals prefer to cope with changes in the social structure. 'In a post-communist transition, for example, those who are well endowed with cultural capital may be able to convert their former political capital into informal social networks, which can then be usefully deployed to take advantage of new market opportunities' [ibid.: 7]. Table 1 depicts the role of different forms of capital in different types of societies.

**Table 1. Determinants of social structure in different types of societies**

Type of Societies	Type of Capital		
	Economic	Cultural	Social
Baseline model 'ideal type' of modern capitalism	+++	++	+ (Rational social network)
Pre-communist Eastern Europe (before 1949)	++	++	+++ (Traditional status honour)
Classical (Stalinist) model of socialism (mid 1949s – mid 1960s)	–	+	+ (Institutionalised as political capital)
Reform model of socialism (mid 1960s – 1989)	+	++	+ (Institutionalised as political capital)
Post-communism (1989 –	++	+++	+ (De-institutionalised and rationalised as social networks)

Note: *Economic capital*: economic and financial assets; *Cultural capital*: education and skills; *Social capital*: participation in various kinds of networks.

Source: Eyal, Széleányi and Townsley [1998: 23].

Other analyses based on comparative surveys [Eyal, Széleányi and Townsley 1998; Hanley, Matějů, Vlachová and Krejčí 1998] have corroborated the hypothesis that the real beneficiaries of the transformation are those who have been able to effectively combine the accumulated political capital of the past (nomenklatura cadres, communist technocrats) with cultural capital (education, knowledge). 'Political capital' makes it possible to build social networks and maintain useful ties (social capital). 'Cultural capital' leads to greater flexibility and a better capacity to put all these assets to work under new circumstances.

It should be clear from what has been said above that in transforming societies the concept of social capital is one of the key issues for research. It aims to understand the process of social change and its consequences for people's career mobility and life chances, while in advanced countries, the same concept, though defined differently, is used to contribute to the explanation of cross-national variance in economic growth and overall well-being.

Therefore, the debate on measurement strategies for social capital should begin with an elaboration and the operationalisation of the two different concepts of social capital (as an attribute of individuals and a factor determining life-success vs. as an attribute of societies facilitating co-operation and contributing to economic growth), each drawing from different socio-economic and political environments and circumstances and thus focusing on different processes, relationships, and out-

comes. The context cannot be isolated from the measurement of social capital. Omitting this important aspect when building measurement strategies, particularly in transforming societies, could result in potentially very strong explanatory variable(s) being concealed, while theoretically (and historically) less grounded variables with potentially less explanatory power are measured. Finding a solution to this problem should in fact precede the debate on the cultural dimension in the measurement of social capital, which of course also requires attention.

### **Measurement strategies applied in transforming societies**

There is a general agreement that, at least at this stage, social capital can only be measured indirectly, through either distal or proximal indicators. The distal indicators refer to the outcomes of social capital that are not directly related to its key components (e.g. life expectancy, health status, crime rates, participation rates in tertiary education, family income, job growth) [Stone 2001]. Conversely, the proximal indicators are directly related to the major concepts of social capital, such as trust, reciprocity, and participation. In almost all research on social capital, the measurement of various levels and dimensions of trust and community participation prevails in some form. This has been the case of the majority of comparative surveys carried out both in advanced and transforming countries. This fact determines which research questions can be addressed by analysis.

As far as transforming societies are concerned, there are only a few empirical studies focusing on social capital and its role in economic growth. Rose [1998a, 1998b] and O'Brian [1998] have studied social capital in Russia to show the role of informal networks in the development of the strategies people require to cope with a social system in which formal organisations fail to operate fairly. In such a situation, the position of an individual in a given social hierarchy is one of the most important factors in obtaining necessary services. Only a few members of the lower classes are thus capable of obtaining much-needed goods and services. Since bribery is a fact of life in Russia, one can never be sure that one is not going to be out-bribed by one's neighbour for some necessary service [Rose 1998a].

O'Brian also attempts to determine what strategies are used by Russians when faced with negative externalities (a shortage of elementary goods and services, a paralysed market, pervasive corruption, etc.) and to what extent they participate in community-wide activities. His survey is constructed to provide data on the levels of trust between individuals and the varying levels of social networks. His study shows that failing infrastructure systems in the Russian countryside have pushed individuals towards closer family ties. And since the government is not taking any direct action to create functional social institutions in these areas, informal co-operation among villagers remains the key coping strategy. Despite the fact that there is evidence that stronger bridging social capital would benefit these villagers greatly in the form of increased access to markets, they would rather concentrate on their

profit-making enterprises than risk expending energy to attain a common good and receive nothing [O'Brian 1998].

Russia is certainly an extreme case among the transforming countries. With regard to East-Central Europe, in a study titled 'Social Capital in Transition: A First Look at the Evidence', Raiser, Haerpfer, Nowotny, and Wallace [2001] addressed the role of social capital in economic growth based on recent comparative surveys. They use a variety of measurements to determine the levels of social capital in transforming societies and to show how the available primary data sources<sup>1</sup> can be used to address the question of the role of social capital in economic growth. Their analysis is limited by the fact that each of these surveys measures a different aspect of trust and form of social participation. By combining slightly different views of the three data sets, the researchers build groups of indicators and test their robustness and potential biases. Given that their sets of indicators allow for measuring either the formal or the informal dimension of social capital based on trust and social participation, the main results of the analysis contribute to the debate on the role of formal and informal social capital in economic growth. The lack of indicators for participation in networks based on mutually beneficial exchanges prevented them from addressing the role of this particular type of social capital in the transformation of the social structure and the determination of life-chances.

As far as the principal findings are concerned, by running a series of regressions, the authors found that there is no aggregate correlation between the level of anonymous trust (trust between two individuals who do not know each other) and the GDP growth of a particular country. This result contradicts the conclusions from studies focused on developed Western countries. The analysis reveals, however, that civic participation is positively correlated with GDP growth. The authors argue that civic participation generates knowledge externalities, lowers transaction costs, and provides better enforcement. In addition, consistent with the data from Russia, trust in public institutions is positively correlated with growth. The analyses also confirm the notion that higher levels of civic participation lead to higher levels of public trust (often called generalised trust). However, since both of these results are positively correlated with GDP growth, it is difficult to determine the causality between the three variables. Owing to the lack of variables that can be used to measure the informal dimension of social capital consisting in interpersonal networks, the first comparative analysis of social capital in transforming societies examines only its formal aspects.

More recently, Fidrmuc and Gerxhani [2005] compared the stock of social capital in the older European Union member countries with the new member countries, claiming that social capital defined as a public good (i.e. leading to economic growth) can be achieved through economic and institutional development in transforming countries. Using six indicators of civic participation, social networks, and

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<sup>1</sup> The World Values Survey – WVS, the New Democracy Barometer – NDB, and EBRD's Business Environment Survey BEEPS.

altruism, the data show that such determinants of social capital as education and income tend to have similar effects on civic participation and access to social networks in both of these regions. However, occupation and employment status show more profound differences between these two regions. In the new EU member countries people in white-collar jobs tend to show a higher level of civic participation, and thus also access to social networks, than those in older EU member countries.

Finally, the role of the informal network dimension of social capital raises fundamental questions about measuring instrumental actions (gaining resources) and expressive actions (maintaining resources). There are three measurement instruments that capture resource collections in exchange networks that, to the best of our knowledge, have not been used in transforming societies. First, based on a theory of social resources, a 'name generator' instrument provides informative data describing informal relationships and resources<sup>2</sup> [Van Der Gaag and Snijders 2004]. Second, a 'position generator' measures access to network members' occupations, which are traditionally associated with occupational prestige. The access is measured by analysing the strength of the role of informal networks (i.e. family members, friends, acquaintances)<sup>3</sup> in access to occupations. That measurement technique is useful mainly for cross-population comparisons related to prestige [Van Der Gaag and Snijders 2004]. However, social relationships are more systematically measured with a 'resource generator' instrument. This instrument asks about access to specific social resources covering several domains of life.<sup>4</sup> The focus on possessing or mastering particular skills is suitable primarily for within-population comparisons [Van Der Gaag and Snijders 2005]. While all of these instruments put emphasis on the strength of the informal exchange network dimension of social capital, their major limitation is the focus on the general population only.

### **What should be the next step?**

In order to proceed further in the analysis of social capital and its role in social and economic development so as to overcome the existing problems, especially with regard to its measurement, the effort should concentrate on four issues:

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<sup>2</sup> The measurement is based on asking subjects questions such as whom do you contact for help; whom do you contact to obtain help to find a home; whom do you contact to obtain help with small jobs, etc.

<sup>3</sup> The measurement is based on asking subjects whether he/she knows a family member in a particular occupation. If not, then the subjects are asked about a friend in that occupation. If not, then the subjects are asked about knowing an acquaintance in that occupation.

<sup>4</sup> The measurement is based on providing subjects with a number of skills and resources and asking him/her if he/she knows a family member who possesses the given resource or masters the given skill. If not, then the subjects are asked if they know a friend or acquaintance who possesses the given resource or masters the given skill. The examples are: Do you know anyone who owns a car, can work with a PC, knows a lot about governmental regulations, has good contacts with a newspaper, radio or TV station, etc.

1. tracing the use of potentially suitable indicators of various dimensions of social capital in existing comparative surveys;
2. creating scales that represent distinct dimensions of social capital and assessing their reliability in different social and cultural systems;
3. analysing the relationships between the main dimensions of social capital in different systems;
4. assessing relationships between the main dimensions of social capital and other relevant variables (e.g. political efficacy and other relevant political attitudes, a person's position in the class structure and social stratification, etc.).

As for post-communist countries, the research agenda should begin with an attempt to develop measures of social capital that make it possible to assess the degree and effects of the involvement of 'weak social ties' (networks in Bourdieu's sense) in shaping people's life-chances (job and career mobility, access to highly valued resources, etc.). To achieve this goal, two sets of indicators should be developed:

- a) indicators of social capital stemming primarily from a current and/or past position in the social and power structures (positional social capital);
- b) indicators of a person's active involvement in building networks based on the mutual recognition of usefulness and various kind of exchanges.

Research in this direction is not yet very well developed, though some indicators have already been used to measure this particular dimension of social capital. For example, in order to assess the feasibility of measuring a person's participation in networks based on informal exchanges (in Bourdieu's definition) a set of questions was developed and used in the Social Stratification Survey carried out in 1993 in five post-communist countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia (see the Appendix for the wording of the questions PRVHLP, GETHLP and IMPORT).<sup>5</sup>

Variables created from these questions proved the existence of a latent variable representing relevant dimensions of social capital strongly related to one's position in the social structure (social status, prestige, esteem) and political capital (party membership, political participation). At the same time, social capital assessed by this particular measurement strategy proved to be a significant predictor of the respondents' adaptive strategies during the first years of transition and, consequently, also the change in the level of their income between 1989 and 1993 [Matějů and Lim 1995]. Matějů and Lim conclude that social capital played a significant role in improving life-chances within the 'bureaucratically co-ordinated' segment of the labour market and particularly in the private sector. They also show that the convertibility of social capital has been an important element in the transformation of the social structure because it is a significant instigator of both functional advancement and a person's entry into the entrepreneurial class. Therefore,

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<sup>5</sup> The questions assessing the subjective evaluation of a respondent's involvement in exchange networks were ultimately posed only in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

the convertibility of social capital considerably increased the chance of former cadres maintaining their income privileges [Matějů and Lim 1995].

Based on the theoretical discussion above, we propose the following hypotheses to be further elaborated and tested, though – owing to some limitations that will be discussed further on – we cannot address all of them empirically at this stage and in this paper:

- H1: Social capital defined as generalised trust and social capital defined as a person's involvement in mutually beneficial exchanges are two distinct dimensions of social capital that cannot be amalgamated under a single measure of general social capital.<sup>6</sup>
- H2: There is more variation between countries with regard to the degree of social capital defined as generalised trust than with regard to social capital defined as a person's involvement in mutually beneficial exchanges.<sup>7</sup>
- H3: Social capital defined as generalised trust is spread out evenly among different social groups while social capital defined as a person's involvement shows significant variation among groups defined by stratification-relevant variables (education, socio-economic status, prestige, and social class). We expect that social capital based on mutually beneficial exchanges is sensitive to such attributes of an individual that are or can become an asset in the exchanges.<sup>8</sup>

## **Data and the measurement model**

This analysis of the two dimensions of social capital is based on the data from Social Network Survey (SNS) carried out in the Czech Republic in 2001 under the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). A sample of 1200 randomly selected respondents represents the Czech adult population aged 18 years and older.<sup>9</sup>

Our initial goal was to develop a measurement model that would confirm (or reject) the existence of two separate dimensions of social capital (hypothesis H1). In order to achieve this objective, we focused on six questions, three of them assessing the degree of generalised trust and the remaining three questions asking respondents about their participation in informal networks based on mutually beneficial

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<sup>6</sup> In this article, hypothesis H1 will be tested on the Czech data.

<sup>7</sup> In this article we can only provide preliminary evidence supporting the assumption that social capital defined as generalised trust shows significant cross-national variation among countries.

<sup>8</sup> Like hypothesis H1, this hypothesis will also be tested only on the Czech data.

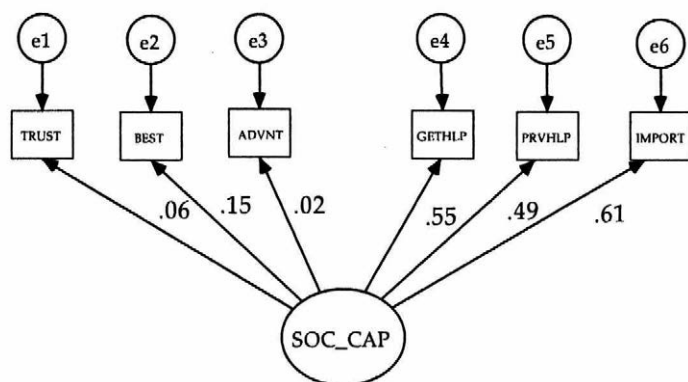
<sup>9</sup> The data set included a series of weights that are necessary for descriptive purposes but are less important for research utilising multivariate designs. In order to assess the effects of weights, we performed the main analysis twice – with and without weights – and found that the results did not differ substantially. For this reason, we present the results using unweighted data.

**Table 2. First order correlations among indicators of social capital**

	TRUST1	TRUST2	TRUST3	EXNET1	EXNET2	EXNET3
TRUST1	1	.129	.319	-.034	.096	-.009
TRUST2	.000	1	.214	.009	.108	.154
TRUST3	.000	.000	1	-.062	.076	-.038
EXNET1	.249	.761	.036	1	.347	.252
EXNET2	.001	.000	.010	.000	1	.448
EXNET3	.755	.000	.199	.000	.000	1

Upper diagonal cells: Pearson correlation; lower diagonal cells: Significance (2-tailed)

**Figure 1. Measurement model for social capital – a single factor model (standardised solution)**



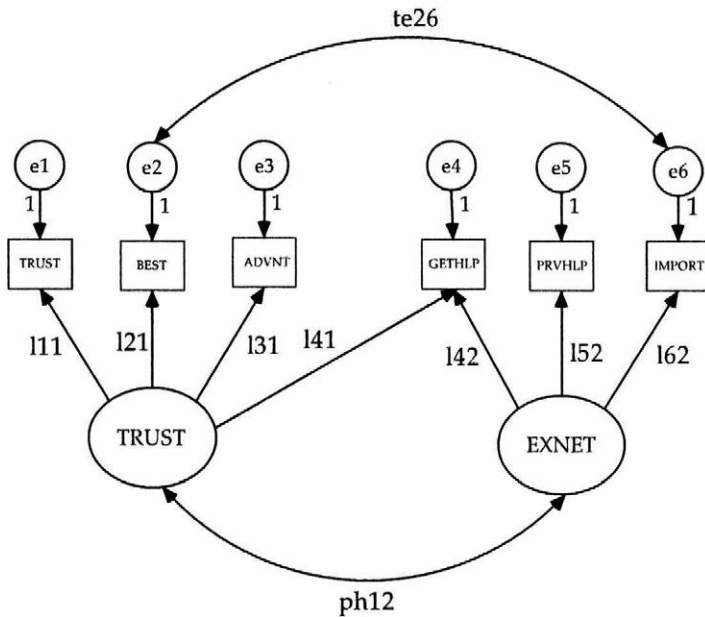
Chi-square = 214.294 (9 df),  $p = .000$   
GFI = .937, BIC = 319.918, RMSEA = .144

exchanges.<sup>10</sup> The wording of the questions and the distributions of answers are shown in Appendix 1. The answers to these six questions were recoded so that the higher the value the higher the level of trust or participation (in practical terms it meant reversing the scales of the variables BEST and IMPORT).

The correlation matrix in Table 2 presents some interesting results from the initial analyses. The variables representing trust (TRUST1, TRUST2, TRUST3) and the variables indicating the participation in informal networks based on mutually

<sup>10</sup> This set of questions was taken from a research project conducted in 1994 by the Department of Social Stratification at the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

Figure 2. Measurement model for social capital – two factors solution



beneficial exchanges (EXNET1, EXNET2, EXNET3) proved the existence of two separate latent variables; thus two conceptually distinct forms of social capital served as the basis for our first structural equation model (Figure 1).

The counter-hypothesis about the existence of only one factor (one dimension) of social capital was tested using confirmatory factor analysis. The results displayed in Figure 1 show that the one-factor hypothesis had to be rejected because the model assuming only one underlying dimension fitted very poorly (chi-square = 214.29,  $df = 9$ ).<sup>11</sup> Owing to the unsatisfactory fit, the one-factor model was replaced with subsequent models, which contained two latent independent variables representing two dimensions of social capital: TRUST, defined as generalised trust between members of society, and EXNET, defined as participation in mutually beneficial exchange networks (Figure 2).

Table 3 displays the statistics of fit and the individual parameters of three different models based on a two-factor solution. The first two-factor model (M1) was tested without correlations between measurement errors, without correlations between factors, and without factor loadings across dimensions (Table 3, M1). The test of Model 1 resulted in substantial improvements in the fit of the model when compared to the one-factor model, but its values were not satisfactory (chi-square = 49.7,  $df = 9$ ).

<sup>11</sup> To test different models of measurement, we applied confirmatory factor analyses, for which we utilised the Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) software, version 4.0.

Table 3. Statistics of fit and parameters of two factor models (M1, M2 and M3)

Parameter / index	M1			Model M2			M3		
	Estim.	S.E.	Stand.	Estim.	S.E.	Stand.	Estim.	S.E.	Stand.
$l_{11}$ (trust – TRUST)	1.807	0.316	0.505	1.849	0.316	0.518	1.822	0.307	0.526
$l_{21}$ (best – TRUST)	1*	–	0.276	1*	–	0.276	1*	–	0.285
$l_{31}$ (advnt – TRUST)	2.477	0.539	0.668	2.412	0.461	0.651	2.295	0.428	0.640
$l_{42}$ (gethlp – EXNET)	1.125	0.129	0.546	1.171	0.133	0.568	1.149	0.130	0.556
$l_{52}$ (prvhlp – EXNET)	1*	–	0.511	1*	–	0.511	1*	–	0.510
$l_{62}$ (import – EXNET)	1.157	0.137	0.598	1.140	0.131	0.590	1.146	0.133	0.592
$l_{41}$ (gethlp – TRUST)	0*	–	–	0.862	0.231	0.199	0.718	0.191	0.170
$te_{26}$ (e2 – e6)	0*	–	–	0.137	0.027	0.183	0.132	0.027	0.177
$ph_{12}$ (TRUST – EXNET)	0*	–	–	–0.013	0.008	–0.095	0*	–	–
Statistic of fit									
Chisq	49.7			3.556			6.031		
df	9			6			7		
p	0.000			0.737			0.536		
GFI	.985			.999			.998		
RMSEA	0.064			.000			.000		
BIC*	–14.11			–38.98			–43.60		

\* For BIC we applied the original formula (see e.g. Knoke and Bohrnstedt [1994]).

Model 2 (Table 3, M2) was therefore tested with correlations between measurement errors ( $te_{26}$ ), correlations between factors ( $ph_{12}$ ), and with one-factor loading across dimensions ( $l_{41}$ ). This model resulted in a very good fit (chi-square = 3.6,  $df = 6$ ). Since the correlation between the two latent variables of TRUST and EXNET in Model 2 is not statistically significant ( $r = -0.10$ ), we decided to constrain a covariance parameter by changing the correlation between these variables to zero (Table 3, M3). The constrained parameter improved our model (chi-square = 3.6,  $df = 7$ ) and increased the BIC index, which is sensitive to parsimony. The goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was .99 and the root mean square of error approximation (RMSEA) was .00. These values indicate a good model-to-data fit. Therefore, Model M3 was accepted as the best measurement model, confirming our hypothesis that TRUST and EXNET are two separate dimensions of social capital. The factor scores from this model were consequently used to calculate latent dimensions of the social capital TRUST and EXNET.

Figure 3, which shows the means and 95% confidence intervals for the variable TRUST by country, confirms the part of our hypothesis (H1) claiming that social capital defined as generalised trust shows significant cross-national variation among

Figure 3. Means and 95% confidence intervals for the variable TRUST by country

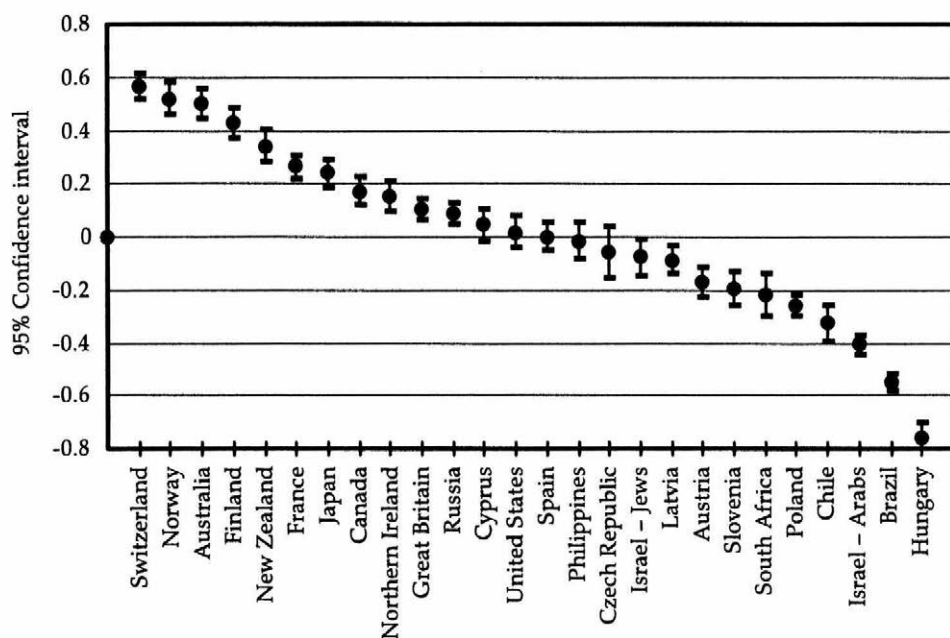
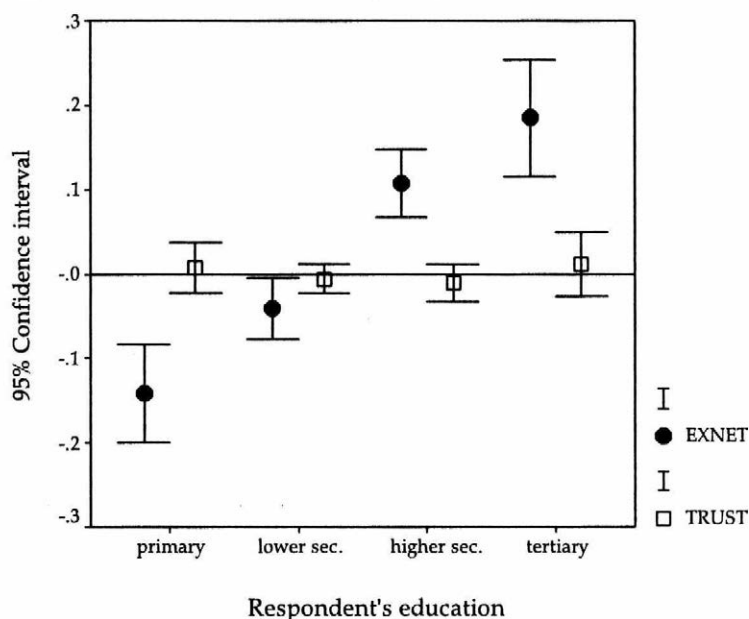


Table 4. Analysis of variance of the variables TRUST and EXNET (Czech Republic)

	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>TRUST</b>			
EDUC	0.023	0.560	0.642
EGP CLASS	0.184	4.672	0.000
PRESTIGE (quint.)	0.042	1.024	0.394
ISEI (quint.)	0.109	2.687	0.030
<b>EXNET</b>			
EDUC	4.136	27.140	0.000
EGP CLASS	2.254	14.963	0.000
PRESTIGE (quint.)	1.858	11.818	0.000
ISEI (quint.)	1.632	10.317	0.000

**Figure 4. Means and 95% confidence intervals for the variables TRUST and EXNET by respondent's education (Czech Republic)**

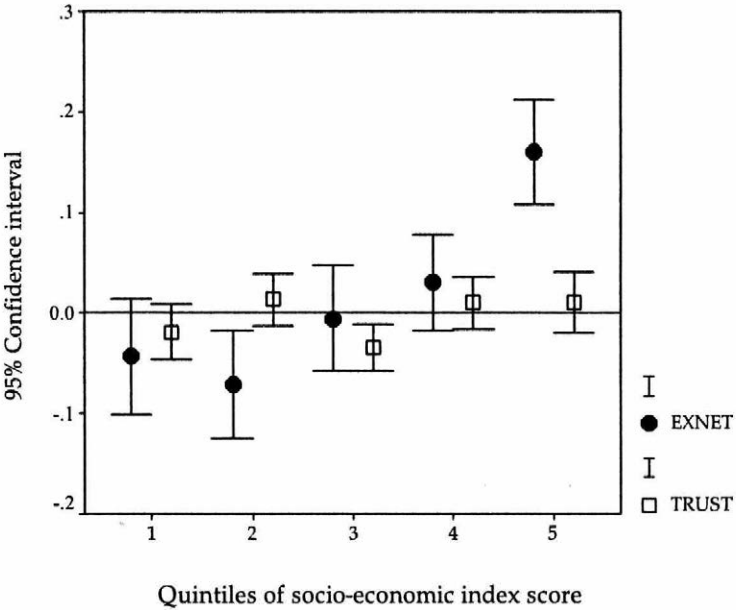


countries. In Switzerland, Norway, Australia, Finland, and New Zealand, the values for the variable TRUST are significantly above the average, in contrast to countries, such as South Africa, Poland, Chile, and Hungary where the value for the same variable TRUST is significantly below the average (social capital stemming from trust in these countries is quite low). The Czech Republic, along with Spain, Latvia, and the United States, shows an average score. Owing to the fact that no other countries, except the Czech Republic, posed questions about participation in exchange networks, the extent of the differences between countries in this respect cannot be assessed.

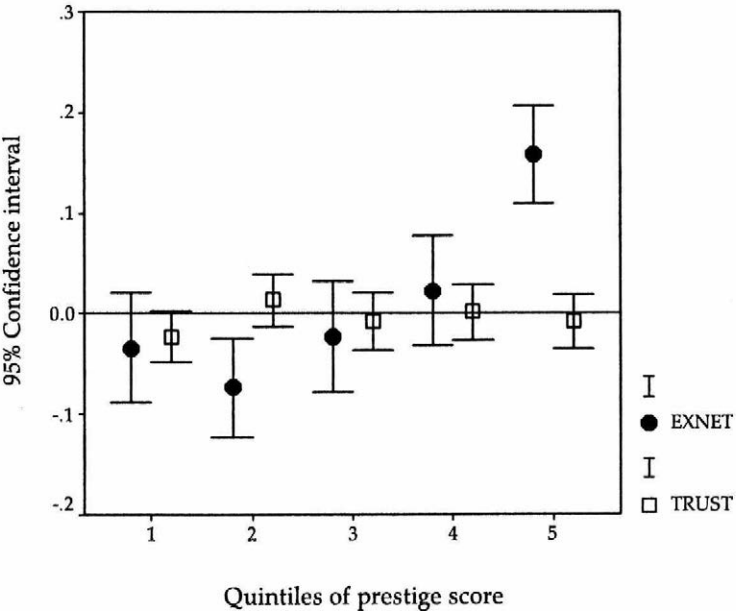
The subsequent hypothesis (H3), stating that the impact of stratification variables on the two dimensions of social capital (TRUST and EXNET) is different, are addressed in Table 4. The results of the analysis of variance of the variables TRUST and EXNET in categories defined by education (EDUC), social class (EGP), prestige (PRESTIGE), and socio-economic status (ISEI) confirm that the variation of the variable TRUST among categories of these variables is much smaller than the variation of the variable EXNET across the same groups. The effects of education and prestige on TRUST are not statistically significant ( $F = 4.67$  and  $F = 2.69$  respectively) in comparison to the influence of these variables on EXNET ( $F = 27.14$  and  $F = 14.96$  respectively).

Figures 4 through 7 illustrate in detail the different effects of the stratification variables on TRUST and EXNET. Figure 4, which shows the means and 95% confi-

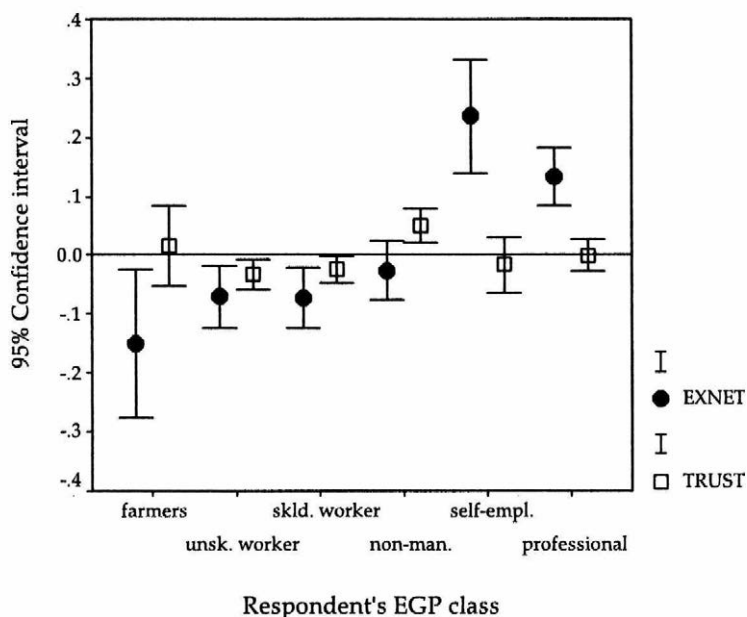
**Figure 5. Means and 95% confidence intervals for the variables TRUST and EXNET by quintiles of the International Index of Socio-economic Status (Czech Republic)**



**Figure 6. Means and 95% confidence intervals for variables TRUST and EXNET by quintiles of the international index of prestige (Czech Republic)**



**Figure 7. Means and 95% confidence intervals for the variables TRUST and EXNET by respondent's social class (Czech Republic)**



dence intervals for TRUST and EXNET for groups defined by a respondent's education in the Czech Republic, convincingly confirms our hypotheses about the role of education in participation in exchange networks; the higher the education level of the respondent, the greater the participation in exchange networks. In contrast, the achieved level of education shows practically no effects on the level of generalised trust (TRUST).

To examine the effects of socio-economic status<sup>12</sup> on the variables TRUST and EXNET, we divided the score of ISEI into quintiles. The results, displayed in Table 4 (analysis of variance) and in Figure 5, support the hypothesis that TRUST is only weakly linked to socio-economic status, or in other words, it is more or less evenly dispersed across categories of socio-economic status, whereas the participation in exchange networks is highly associated with a person's socio-economic status.

Similarly, Figure 6 presents the means and 95% confidence intervals of the variables TRUST and EXNET for groups defined as quintiles of prestige, measured using the International Standard Index of Occupational Prestige [Treiman 1977]. In agreement with our hypothesis, the higher the respondent's prestige, the greater the participation in exchange networks. It is worth noticing particularly the position of

<sup>12</sup> Socio-economic status is measured using the Standard International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status developed by Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman [1992].

the highest prestige group (fifth quintile), which is far above the other groups. These results strongly support the assumption that high prestige (particularly in those based on mutually beneficial exchanges) is a highly valued 'symbolic asset' in social networks, one through which people are able to exert their influence in social relations and, in exchange, receive a support or asset they are seeking.

And finally, Figure 7 shows the effects of social class on TRUST and EXNET. From Figure 7 it is apparent that a respondent's social class has a greater impact on EXNET than on TRUST. TRUST is equally distributed among the members of different social classes.<sup>13</sup> There are some interesting findings pertaining to social class and its effects on participation in exchange networks. For instance, the self-employed respondents participate in these networks the most, even more so than professionals; that deserves attention in future research. Furthermore, there tends to be no, or very little, difference in participation in exchange networks between the working class, the lower class and the middle class: unskilled, skilled, and non-manual workers show almost the same low level of participation.

To sum up, we attempted to develop a measurement model for the two distinct dimensions of the construct of social capital, one defined primarily as an attribute of societies based on generalised trust, the other defined as the capacity of an individual to participate in informal networks based on mutually beneficial exchanges. Using the confirmatory factor analysis, we tested and confirmed the proposed model of social capital. We proceeded by testing the hypotheses that social capital defined as trust was only weakly linked to social stratification variables of education, socio-economic status, prestige, and social class, and thus the presence (or absence) of trust is fairly evenly distributed among social groups, while social capital defined as person's involvement in mutually beneficial exchanges showed significant variations among groups defined by relevant stratification variables. Our hypotheses were confirmed. Owing to the lack of comparative international data on participation in exchange networks, we were not able to test the hypotheses about the extent of differences between countries regarding the two dimensions of social capital. Nevertheless, the existence of such a difference was clearly confirmed.

## **Conclusion**

Research on social capital is in its early stages and much work still needs to be done on designing proper instruments for its measurement. There is no doubt, however, that the research already conducted has proven the existence of two important characteristics of social capital: 1) it has the capacity to contribute to explaining economic growth (especially in advanced countries), and 2) it has the capacity to shed light on particular determinants of life-success (particularly in transforming societies).

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<sup>13</sup> We applied the EGP class schema developed by Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero (see e.g. Erikson and Goldthorpe [1992]).

The problem of transforming (post-communist) societies basically lies in the contrary effects of the two forms of social capital. Social capital in Putnam's interpretation is essential and necessary for social co-operation, for it allows the emerging market to function. As George Kolankiewicz puts it: 'It is essential as the non-contractual element in the contract when the legal underpinnings to the market are far from completed or remain (necessarily) ambiguous. Trust provides the element of predictability which is absent given the low stock of formal rationality in the system' [Kolankiewicz 1996: 447]. Paradoxically, the potential of this particular form of social capital derived from generalised trust seems to be somewhat weak in the post-communist countries. By contrast, the 'strength of weak ties' [Granowetter 1973], or, in other words, social capital that derives from informal networks and exchanges, thereby allowing people to develop specific coping strategies that facilitate the accumulation of social capital and form class structure, may actually hinder – at least temporarily – the effective functioning of market mechanisms and, consequently, economic growth.

This is why, particularly in transforming societies, it will be important to develop research strategies that take into consideration the particular socio-economic and historical context of these countries; only by doing so we can significantly improve the measurement of both forms of social capital. The findings from our research, though it is in many respects rather in its initial stage, implicitly call for more effort in conceptualising social capital and for testing various strategies of its measurement.

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## **Appendix: Distributions of variables**

### **TRUST: There are only a few people I can trust completely**

1. Agree strongly	27.6
2. Agree	51.4
3. Neither agree or disagree	11.0
4. Disagree	9.0
5. Disagree strongly	1.0
Total	100.0

### **BEST: Most of the time you can be sure that other people want the best for you**

1. Agree strongly	2.8
2. Agree	20.1
3. Neither agree or disagree	34.8
4. Disagree	35.9
5. Disagree strongly	6.5
Total	100.0

### **ADVNT: If you are not careful other people will take advantage of you**

1. Agree strongly	15.3
2. Agree	48.7
3. Neither agree or disagree	21.2
4. Disagree	13.3
5. Disagree strongly	1.5
Total	100.0

### **PRVHLP: How often, because of your job, the office you hold, or contacts you have, do other people (relatives, friends, acquaintances) turn to you to help them solve some problems, cope with difficult situations, or apply your influence for their benefit?**

1. Never	20.4
2. Seldom	32.6
3. Occasionally	32.2
4. Quite often	11.5
5. Very often	3.3
Total	100.0

**GETHLP: And what about you? When you are in a difficult situation, do you think there are people who could intervene on your behalf?**

1. No, nobody	11.9
2. Very few	55.1
3. Some	27.7
4. Quite a few	4.5
5. Very many	0.9
Total	100.0

**IMPORT: How important a role do useful contacts play in your life?**

1. Essential	7.4
2. Very important	9.7
3. Fairly important	28.2
4. Not very important	41.0
5. Not important at all	13.7
Total	100.0

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## Czech and Polish Higher Education – from Bureaucracy to Market Competition\*

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**Abstract:** This article aims to compare two aspects of the education systems in two East European countries. As the political history of the Czech Republic and Poland in the past fifty years is similar, the authors compare the countries' development in tackling educational inequalities and attempt to evaluate their policies and reforms from the beginning of socialism to date. Despite many similarities and identical outcomes in the past (no effect in lowering levels of educational inequalities), these countries undertook two different approaches to the transformation of higher education after 1989. The specific current developments in higher education in the Czech Republic and Poland have been caused by conservative and reserved legislation in the former and the creation of new, very liberal rules for establishing non-state higher education institutions in the latter. As there emerged a considerable difference in the number of higher education institutions in each country, the authors show the negative impact on educational inequalities and the social consequences of the enormous increase in the number of students and private universities. Despite different approaches, the countries face many similar problems, such as quality assurance, a shortage of staff, and information asymmetry. These problems seem to be sharper in Poland, but it is only a matter of time for the Czech Republic.

**Keywords:** education system, educational inequality, higher education, market competition

*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review*, 2006, Vol. 42, No. 3: 517–536

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\* The core institutional support for this article was provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (Grant 1J005/04-DP2: Inequality of Educational Opportunities: The Extent, Causes, Social and Economic Effects, Solution Strategies) and by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (Grant 403/06/1241: Educational Mobility and Educational Inequalities in the Czech Republic between 1936 and 2004).

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## **The bureaucratic nature of the education systems in the Czech Republic and Poland**

After the onset of socialism in Central Europe in 1948, the Czech and Polish education systems underwent changes that with some simplification can be referred to as a process of 'sovietisation'. By approximating the Soviet model of education system (e.g. the introduction of unitary compulsory primary education, the abolition of tuition fees and private schools altogether, social origin becoming subject to scrutiny), the Czech Republic, Poland and other socialist countries strove to attain 'equal access to education'. This was to ensure that all social classes were represented in secondary and especially higher education to a degree that reflected the proportion of each class in the population. Governments believed this would ensure the 'accessibility of all educational forms to all citizens regardless of their social standing' [*Historická statistická...* 1985: 39]. It must be said at the outset that this intention failed.

Poland and the Czech Republic had very similar educational policies and experienced similar institutional reforms after the Second World War. Consequently, they saw almost identical developments in the structure of the education system and in educational inequalities, and to date the problems they have been facing remain very similar. Socialist education systems were shaped by the structure of the socialist economy (high priority given to heavy industry, resulting in an emphasis on technical and vocational education) and by the nature of its political ideology (central planning as opposed to free market competition, and the use of quotas in relation to student numbers and subject enrolment). A new intelligentsia was to be drawn from the working class and the peasantry by enabling them access to secondary and higher education, as one of the foci of educational policy was the transformation of the social structure. Educational inequalities as such were regulated by means of egalitarian social policy and resource redistribution. More specifically, education at all levels was provided for free (including textbooks and school aids), 'social scholarships' were granted to the politically privileged for admission to higher education, and social origin, place of residence ('territorial advantage') and nationality (Czech vs. Slovak) were subject to political scrutiny in the admission procedure.

However, as the above-mentioned mechanisms of positive discrimination were not rigorously adhered to, their actual impact on how well represented 'desirable' groups were in the student population was questionable. Higher education in particular resisted such intervention. Traditional full-time study programmes (as opposed to evening and distance-learning programmes) especially defied efforts to establish the proportional representation of social classes. Out of the total number of people that graduated from higher education in Poland between 1945 and 1973, 34% were from working class families, 23% from peasant families, 40% from families of the intelligentsia, and 3% from the former middle or upper classes. However, secondary and post-secondary school graduates represented just 20% of the working population in 1972, of which 10% were the children of peasants and less than 10% were the children of workers [Adamski and Bialecki 1981].

In both the Czech Republic and Poland general post-war developments and the unification of the education system resulted in an objective increase in the average amount of time spent in the education process and in the democratisation and expansion of secondary education, the introduction of evening and distance-learning programmes for economically active members of the population (at both the secondary and post-secondary levels) and the emancipation and even positive discrimination of women. However, the education systems in both countries preserved the intergenerational reproduction of education, and were unable to thwart the traditional process of transmitting educational aspirations and cultural capital. These political aspirations failed to materialise, especially in higher education. The political tools of communist ideology sanctioned the strong dependence of a child's educational career on the decisions made by a child's parents: manual occupations and the levelling of income were glorified in general. Owing to limited income differentiation, the significance of education in the status attainment process decreased or was entirely eliminated. The working class with inconsistent social status (relatively rich) was not interested in education, as financially it simply did not pay off. The system of positive discrimination (assigning points according to social origin, etc.) proved ineffective unless accompanied by individual aspirations. Bureaucratic measures aimed at scrutinising students' social origin were the easiest tool for regulating admissions, but they were short-sighted in their approach to the complex nature of social reproduction.

Self-selection for a certain type of school was more significant than selection based on 'objective' school reports and admission procedures. Not even the often greater weight given to points accorded for social origin and to students coming directly from employment over points based on school results induced any significant change [e.g. Adamski and Bialecki 1981]. The established distribution by social origin based on secondary school type self-selection (by parents or children) was less pronounced later in the transition between secondary and higher education institutions. As the Czech experience shows, the lower social strata's self-selection was also fuelled by the limited income differentiation. There was no compensation for the 'cost' of education except its cultural value and potentially higher social prestige (though prestige scales were socialism-specific, with manual occupations held in higher esteem than intellectual ones).

Another factor in this kind of self-selection was that higher education institutions in the Czech Republic and Poland primarily admitted students from secondary grammar schools. Parents with lower or low education feared the consequences of a potentially unsuccessful transition, and an abstract general education ('this sort of education will provide our child with no skills') represented a somewhat insecure investment that they tended to shy away from [Adamski and Bialecki 1981; Goldthorpe 1996]. Conversely, among the higher social strata, the threat of social descent signified a bigger risk than this kind of insecurity. Adamski and Bialecki also point out the limited awareness among vocational school students of possible occupational choices, their limited ability to assess their own potential, their inade-

quately formulated interests, and their highly stereotyped occupational choices. In the lower social strata, educational choices are guided by occupational choices. These are in turn negatively affected by poor awareness of the range of occupations that exist, which results in lower educational attainment.

### **The development of educational inequalities – international comparisons**

In keeping with official egalitarian ideology, socialist governments claimed that there would be a decrease in inequalities in access to education in socialist countries, not only compared to the past but also compared to other, non-socialist countries. Available empirical evidence of educational inequalities in Czechoslovakia and Poland indicates that no actual long-term decrease occurred. In a long-term perspective, inequalities in socialist countries were no lower than in the West. East-West empirical comparisons demonstrated over time not only that the level of educational inequalities was the same in Poland and the United States [Meyer, Tuma and Zagórski 1979] and in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Netherlands [Matějů 1990], but also that inequalities in Poland were lower than in Austria [Haller and Mach 1984], lower than in Finland and Norway [Pohoski, Pontinen and Zagórski 1978], and lower than in the United States when using the Treiman classification [Meyer, Tuma and Zagórski 1979]. However, other studies showed higher inequalities in socialist countries, for example in Czechoslovakia and Hungary compared to the Netherlands [Boguszak, Matějů and Peschar 1990], in Poland compared to Norway and Finland, when social origin was represented by the father's education [Pohoski, Pontinen and Zagórski 1978], and in Poland compared to the Netherlands, when social origin was determined by the father's occupation [Mach and Peschar 1990]. Research on educational mobility exchange has not show any differences between, for example, Poland and the Netherlands (except among younger cohorts), although higher fluidity was reported in Poland [Peschar, Popping and Mach 1986].

It remains a question, however, whether these inequalities formed in the same manner in both types of socio-political system, despite the more or less identical levels of inequality. So far the search for the sources of inequalities has shown that there are differences between socialist and capitalist countries, at least in the diminished impact of potential and aspirations in Eastern countries and the increased role of social capital in education allocation. Education did remain a value and a prerequisite of prestige and success attainment, but its significance weakened and, in an environment where 'non-manual work is no work' was the catchword, it acquired the nature of a useless and unprofitable hobby (at least for certain strata). However, the degree of coincidence between the process of education and social status attainment and the principles of meritocracy, then and now, is not directly quantifiable, and to pursue such a discussion would verge on speculation.

Another as yet unresolved issue is whether and how educational inequalities developed under socialism, that is, whether the official proclamation that thanks to

state socialism these inequalities decreased can be confirmed. It has been proven [e.g. Haller and Mach 1984] that after the Second World War and the establishment of socialism inequalities decreased, education levels grew significantly, and occupations became increasingly dependent on education, and the overall significance of education, equality and meritocracy grew. The access of lower strata to education improved, especially in the early post-war years (at the onset of socialism). But inequalities increased again in the 1970s in Poland and Czechoslovakia [Haller and Mach 1984; Matějů 1993; Wong 1998; Hanley 2001; Simonová 2003], which made it clear that state socialism was incapable of regulating status allocation and inequality in the long term. There is no unequivocal conclusion about the actual impact of the socialist system on social origin and a child's educational dependence, and individual studies have shown just partial and temporary changes. Nevertheless, in a long-term perspective the effects appear to have been just short-term, temporary oscillations, dependent on the current social policy and overall political developments; they had no permanent impact and did not represent any steady development towards greater equality and justice, resulting in inequality levels lower than in Western countries.

Nevertheless, some studies have shown [e.g. Mach and Peschar 1990] that the connection between a father's occupation and a son's education was closer in the pre-socialist cohorts than in the socialist ones, suggesting that this system did have a positive impact on the development of educational inequalities. The debate remains, however, whether the initially reduced impact of social origin can be ascribed to the rapid expansion of the school system as a direct consequence of general post-war industrialisation [Boguszak, Matějů and Peschar 1990; Nieuwbeerta and Rijken 1996; Hanley 2001], or, for instance, to the quota interventions in admissions to secondary [Kreidl 2001] and post-secondary schools. However, the secondary to higher level transition did not display any significant changes, and instead the trade-off between the moderate decrease or stability in inequalities and the significant increase of downward as opposed to upward mobility in men was observed [Matějů 1986]. The hypothesis about the positive impact of socialist educational policy seems most forcefully opposed by the argument that the general increase in educational levels and dynamic industrialisation represented the strongest influence in Eastern and Western countries. That is why similar patterns of socio-economic reproduction have been found in some comparisons, for example, between Poland and the Netherlands [Mach and Peschar 1990].

### **The impact of socialist educational policy on the development of higher education after 1989**

Leaving aside issues of methodological inconsistencies, varied classifications (specifically with regard to the father's occupation), and diverse data sets, several general conclusions can be drawn regarding the developments in the approach to higher education in the Czech Republic and Poland in the past fifty years. All em-

pirical evidence shows that, although it was not the explicit intent of the socialist governments, socialism definitely brought about greater gender equality in the transition to higher education. After an initial decrease in the 1950s and 1960s, socioeconomic inequality either remained unchanged or began to grow again (in the 1970s and 1980s), its overall level was thus more or less stable. Moreover, as the number of people with complete secondary education, that is, the number of potential post-secondary students, increased, and the proportion of those admitted to study remained unchanged (for example, the proportion of higher-education achievers in Poland from the end of the Second World War until 1987 was 9–12% of each cohort), the probability of admission to higher education decreased. While each cohort did have more opportunities to study (the influence of social origin on the attained level of education decreased over time), the manner in which opportunities were allocated remained unaltered [e.g. Nieuwbeerta and Rijken 1996].

During the socialist period, the parents' education was more important than the father's class position for making a successful transition from secondary to higher education [Heyns and Bialecki 1993; Matějů 1993]. According to Matějů, Řeháková and Simonová [2003], after 1989, the impact of the parents' education remained unaffected, while the impact of the father's class increased dramatically. The authors claim that this development was primarily the result of the significant decrease in relative chances among children of unqualified and semi-qualified workers, compared to the children from other social classes, and in their view, inequalities caused by the impact of social origin only began to grow after 1989. However, the use of different data and different methodologies have indicated that the father's education remained crucial after 1989, while the father's class has shown no inter-cohort changes, and overall inequalities in access to higher education have been stable or decrease since 1989 in comparison with the 1970s and 1980s [Simonová 2003].

Secondary school selection has become the crucial point in the educational careers of Czech and Polish students. In both countries, past and present, it has been what determines whether or not an individual can continue to study to a significantly higher level. Although the number of people with the secondary school-leaving exam increased through the years, a quarter of all women and almost half of all men born between 1960 and 1969 in Poland finished school with lower vocational education, that is, without the secondary school-leaving exam, a prerequisite for applying to higher education institutions [Heyns and Bialecki 1993]. Sadly, for the Czech Republic the figures were even higher. Fortunately, when the centrally planned economy was abandoned, educational aspirations and secondary and post-secondary educational opportunities grew significantly. The current higher demand for higher education is the consequence of the growing economic payoff of education and a social ideology that stresses education as an important means of preventing social exclusion.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, analysts at the OECD have been pointing out the inevitability of a transformation in higher education, noting the shift away from

elite to mass higher education, and the need for the diversification of higher education (the introduction of non-university higher education, bachelor degree programmes, etc.) [Čerych 2002]. The Czech and Polish governments have taken different approaches to this problem, as will be noted below. The problem of higher education funding had begun to emerge. Some authors (and politicians) consider multi-source financing the best way to expand the education system further, along with the development of a competitive economy. Some authors [Tomusk 2000] view the introduction of tuition fees for lucrative study fields (business, law) as a new mechanism of reproducing state nobility.

## **Two routes to excellence**

Despite their similar pasts, the Czech Republic and Poland undertook two different approaches to the transformation of higher education after 1989. In the Czech Republic, the Higher Education Act of 1990 created room for the democratic control of universities. The act was intended as a demonstration of good will on the part of the new state authorities, but the new act's (No. 172/1990) ratification by the Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic was also meant to introduce the principles of a market economy into education. 'It put substantial decision-making power back into hands of the university and its faculty and students. The law emphasized academic rights and freedom as important principles of democracy, and envisioned democracy in terms of self government and autonomous decision-making within higher education communication' [McMullen and Prucha 2000: 63].

This entailed a return to a system of autonomous academic institutions based on principles of self-government. Academic freedom was meant to promote independent knowledge and creativity. Despite being a great historical achievement in a political perspective, the Act failed to create a legislative framework for establishing private universities or colleges. There were no legislative obstacles to setting up private institutions of higher education, but the Act did not establish a legal procedure for applying for 'state accreditation' to legitimise the instruction offered and to guarantee recognition by the state of degrees awarded. This seriously undermined the development of private sector institutions, because for them accreditation plays a vital role in reassuring students about the quality of the knowledge and skills the institution is offering them.

This somewhat conservative and reserved legislation made the situation of higher education in the Czech Republic very different from that in Poland. In September 1990, just twelve months after the communist state was abolished, the Polish Parliament also passed a Higher Education Act, which paved the way to the emergence of free, liberal and autonomous higher education in Poland. It granted greater autonomy to universities by restoring decision-making power to the rectors and the academic senates and giving them back the authority to manage and govern the university. Luckily, despite the communist past, cultural barriers had al-

**Table 1. Institutional development of the education system in Poland and the Czech Republic between 1996 and 2002**

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Applications for state approval (cz)				13	20	19	19
HEIs with state approval (cz)				5	9	11	2
Applications under consideration (cz)				8	11	8	14
Polish private HEIs (pl)	115	148	158	181	206	239	258

*Source:* Beneš, Huisman and Šebková [2003: 51].

lowed the academic community to remain strong, and liberal universities had an important impact on the direction the changes contained in the Act of 1990 ultimately took [Jablecka 1994: 14].

A crucial feature of the Polish act not enacted in the Czech Republic was the creation of new and very liberal rules for establishing non-state higher education institutions. The new legal framework soon appeared to be a driving force for dynamic growth and differentiation of higher education institutions. The 'marketisation' of Polish higher education was of course nothing new, as similar institutional changes in higher education were seen elsewhere in Europe, and in New Zealand and Australia at the beginning of 1990s. However, among East-European Countries it was a radical move toward a market approach, and the two major forms of this approach distinguished by Gareth Williams, privatisation and the creation of quasi-markets [1997: 277], were adopted in the region. Given that Poland and the Czech Republic employed two considerably different approaches to establish new systems of higher education, there also emerged considerable differences in the number of higher education institutions (HEIs), as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 compares the institutional development in Poland and the Czech Republic, illustrating the two different paths of development. In the case of the Czech Republic, it also reveals the strong need for alternative means of providing higher education. Despite the 'unfriendly' legislation, there is a growing number of institutions offering their services on the market without state accreditation. Moreover, it is very likely that private universities and colleges that are already well rooted do not need any 'state accreditation', as they have managed to attain and enjoy a good reputation independently and have already earned enough credit to operate successfully on the market.

By contrast, it is striking that in Poland private sector institutions are the driving force of the entire education system. According to Bronisław Misztal [2000] these changes may be a 'beacon' of the Polish transformation. Such a phenomenon, illustrated in Table 2, is in its scale and scope unique for the post-communist countries.

**Table 2. Numbers of higher education institutions in Poland and the Czech Republic**

Academic Years	Numbers of HEI (state + non-state)		Number of non-state HEI	
	Poland	Czech Republic	Poland	Czech Republic
1991/1992	117	24	10	0
1992/1993	124	23	18	0
1994/1995	161	23	56	0
1995/1996	179	23	80	0
1996/1997	213	23	115	0
1997/1998	246	23	146	0
1998/1999	266	23	158	0
1999/2000	287	23	174	0
2000/2001	310	31	195	8
2001/2002	344	41	377	17
2002/2003	377	57	252	33

*Source:* Higher Education Institutions and Their Finances in 1999; GUS (The National Statistics Office) [2001]; Wasielewski [2001], UIV (Institute for Information in Education).

What is even more fascinating is that the private sector of higher education does not fit in with the overall picture of privatisation in Poland. It neither emerged out of destroyed (bankrupted) state institutions nor from the transfer of ownership from public to 'foreign hands', which was the most frequent occurrence in other areas [Misztal 2000]. On the contrary, from the very beginning, private universities and colleges grew freely, despite the existence of well-established public universities. This has been possible because the private institutions seem to differ considerably from public ones in terms of the students they target. They play a role that is complementary to the state universities, broadening the participation in higher education, but not forcing any public universities out of business.

Private institutions are generally much smaller in size than the public ones, which gives them greater flexibility to adjust their course selection to meet their clients' needs. Although there is no single model for private universities, three predominant types of private institutions can be distinguished:

1. Higher education institutions established in small cities or cities without academic traditions. Apart from a few exceptions, they do not enjoy an outstanding reputation, but they are more focused on vocational training. These schools usually target local students who cannot afford – economically, socially or culturally – full-time study at public universities. These institutions can also be found in the Czech Republic.
2. Higher education institutions established in big academic cities. They also play a slightly different role than public universities, having a more vocational orien-

**Table 3. Changes in Polish and Czech higher education**

Academic years	Number of HEIs		Number of students		Number of academics		Average number of students per teacher	
	Poland	CR	Poland	CR	Poland	CR	Poland	CR
1990/1991	112	24	403800	118194	64500	11839	6.3	10.0
1991/1992	117	23	428200	113654	63200	11958	6.8	9.5
1992/1993	124	23	495700	117637	63000	12105	7.9	9.7
1993/1994	140	23	584000	127137	65300	12561	8.9	10.1
1994/1995	160	23	682200	136566	67100	12625	10.2	10.8
1995/1996	179	23	794600	148433	67000	12890	11.9	11.5
1996/1997	213	23	927500	166123	70400	12969	13.2	12.8
1997/1998	246	23	1091800	177723	74100	13216	14.7	13.4
1998/1999	266	23	1274000	187148	77000	13292	16.5	14.1
1999/2000	287	23	1431900	198961	77800	13592	18.4	14.6
2000/2001	310	31	1584800	209298	79900	12791	19.8	16.4
2001/2002	344	41	1718700	223008	86000	13641	20.0	16.3
2002/2003	377	57	1800500	243765	88500	13846	20.3	17.6

*Source:* adapted from Wasielewski [2003] and GUS (The National Statistics Office) [2001], and UIV (Institute for Information in Education).

tation and attracting students who do not pass the entrance exams in public full-time courses.

- Higher education institutions, which are small, expensive and consequently elite. These institutions often have an outstanding reputation and target high-quality students from upper-class families.

The emergence of a private sector had a profound influence on the provision of education in the public sphere. The Higher Education Act (1990) not only created the institutional environment for establishing private universities and colleges, it also helped the public institutions to develop a wide range of alternative forms of teaching, such as part-time and evening courses. Article 70 in the Polish Constitution states, 'education in public schools is free of charge', but in the articles that follow it allows schools to charge for 'certain educational services'. In practice this means that full-time studies at public universities are free, but part-time students and those who take evening courses have to pay tuition fees, and this has given rise to a very profitable business for universities. The exact same situation exists in the Czech Republic. Public universities have consequently turned to engage more in commercial activity, which has helped save them from bankruptcy. The emerging

private sector, along with the commercial turn in the public one, has led to a dramatic increase in student numbers. But at the same time, owing to a shortage of academic staff, it has had a negative impact on the quality of teaching (see Table 3).

### **A higher education market – a problem or the solution?**

Numerous scholars have inquired into the the background to the education boom that occurred (in the 1990s) in the post-socialist countries and have sought explanations for the rapid growth in the number of students. One of the most common findings in such research is the increasing value that higher education has for the development of a professional career. Before 1989 the value of higher education was heavily neglected by a system that maintained a dogmatic attachment to and glorification of 'manual work'. In the public opinion, shaped by the state's aggressive propaganda, the universities were generally perceived as places that attract and are comprised of people with no plans or real prospects for professional career development. The collapse of this system in 1989 ushered in revolutionary changes, the socialist myth was gradually debunked and trust restored in the value of academic education. Some leading researchers claim that it is possible to observe positive interdependence between education and income [Danecki 1997; Domanski 1994; Matějů and Kreidl 2001]. In the unstable transitional period at the outset of the transformation (1990–1995), obtaining a higher education degree that would help a person to secure employment and financial stability was extremely important [Rutkowski 1996]. Higher education became an essential component in a person's professional career development, and when obtained by ambitious and hard working individuals it provided certification of a high level of competence and the ability to work. Since 1989 the Poles and Czechs appear to have adopted the belief that the time of meritocracy has arrived and that what really matters now is education. Moreover, higher education has gradually come to be perceived as a wise long-term investment in personal development that is likely to have a positive effect on a person's salary and social position in the near future [Domański 2000; Danecki 1997; Večerník 2001].

### **Problems with the Polish and the Czech reforms**

The Polish and Czech approaches to the reform of higher education have differed significantly. Polish policy appears to be more market-oriented, while the Czech approach accords the government a stronger position. In both countries policy has on the whole liberated higher education institutions from bureaucratic control, but the pace of the process has been considerably different in each country. Poland experienced much more spontaneous and rapid growth, unlike the Czech Republic, where the process has developed gradually and in a more (government-) controlled manner, and this has led to a number of distinctive features that reflect the differences between them. But they nonetheless have (at least) three major problems in com-

mon: 1) difficulties measuring the quality of services provided; 2) the information asymmetry in the higher education market, and 3) a shortage of academic staff.

It was the traditional state universities that felt compelled to raise the issue of quality assurance because they are the institutions that would suffer most from a decline in education standards. It has never been clear however what authority should be responsible for assessing the quality of teaching and research. The introduction of market forces in the 1990s led to an increase in the number of tertiary educational institutions (particularly in the private sector) and to a public sector with an increasingly more commercial orientation. Consequently, (particularly in Poland) there has been an enormous concern about a deterioration of the quality of teaching and research. Academics expressed a strong will to sort out the problem by using peer review groups. However, in practice it turned out that they need legal power to enforce educational standards on higher education institutions [see also Sorensen 1993]. In both countries the private sector is quite young and still struggling to exist. Meanwhile, the educational market is becoming more and more competitive, as the demographic 'low tide' is approaching the age of university entrance. It is strongly tempting for private sector institutions to take advantage of the situation and make empty promises in order to attract large numbers of students. In this particular situation the market is failing to secure customers (students) their rights owing to the asymmetry of information (one of the market failures, see Kay and Vickers [1988]). Higher education institutions can take advantage of the students' lack of knowledge about the quality of teaching offered and mislead them. This situation exists in both countries, but in Poland, owing to the larger number of higher education institutions and students, the problem of teaching quality is becoming a major political issue.

The first problem in common is the issue of introducing quality assurance measures. In the Polish context a significant breakthrough was the establishment of the National Commission of Accreditation (*Państwowej Komisji Akredytacyjnej* (PKA)), which has been granted legal recognised and endowed with formal powers. The Commission evaluates the performance of higher education institutions and is accountable to the minister of education. It inspects both universities and non-academic institutions and reports its recommendations to the ministry. When it identifies inappropriate practices that may be detrimental to the quality of service provided, the Commission may recommend suspending enrolment for a year or even closing a department or institute. An Accreditation Commission was also set up in the Czech Republic, mainly for the purpose of monitoring the performance of private institutions in terms of how well they fulfil the objectives outlined in their application for a license to found a school. It shares many of the features of the Polish PKA, and both commissions are confronted with the important dilemma of whether to tighten state control and introduce uniform standards for teaching, or whether to increase institutional autonomy and foster the growth of non-traditional institutions, programmes and teaching methods. This dilemma remains a high profile issue and has not yet been solved in Poland or the Czech Republic.

The second problem concerns the deficit of information about the performance of higher education institutions. As long as there is a stable and limited number of well-established HEIs, students can rely on information about an institution's reputation. But with a rapidly growing number of institutions operating in a competitive environment, a clear need for an independent source of information emerged given the mass of unverified and sometimes completely contradictory information HEIs produce about the quality of their services. There are almost two hundred private HEIs in Poland and the number in the Czech Republic has increased from none in 1999/2000 to 33 (!) in 2002/3. In response to this chaos, league tables began to appear, a well-known practice in Anglo-Saxon countries. League tables are a weighted combination of performance indicator scores, where the total is used to rank institutions such as schools, universities and hospitals [Bowden 2000: 41]. They increasingly started appearing in newspapers and magazines, focusing on different aspects of the performance of HEIs. Of course, the results of the national league tables are compared and discussed (sometimes even questioned and rejected by the academic community) because the selection of performance indicators cannot cover the wide range of academic activity. Despite the growing controversy over the assessment of the performance of university and non-university institutions, it has become increasingly clear that league tables are now an important public relations issue. For many they are a new way of providing and presenting impartial data and more detailed information on universities and their decisions. Despite all the criticism that has been voiced to date about league tables and how they are constructed, and regardless of all the statistical evidence produced against them, league tables evidently represent a widely recognised and accepted ranking in the system of higher education. The tables also dispense with any false egalitarian beliefs in the equality of academic degrees and help employers recognise the differences between institutions. League tables and accreditation commissions are equally important and have a complementary role. The commissions have power and authority over whether an HEI can participate in the higher education market, whereas league tables establish a hierarchy among HEIs by ranking them according to objective criteria.

A shortage of academic staff is the third problem that both the Czech Republic and Poland face and their governments need to address. The rapid growth in the number of students has necessitated the employment of more professors, doctors and junior academics in order to retain the same quality of teaching. The number of students per academic teacher has risen to a very high level, which must have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and research. This problem is partly illustrated in Table 3. Earlier it affected mostly Poland, but in recent years the problem must also be faced in the Czech Republic. In both countries the average number of students per academic teacher has reached a dangerous level and further growth seems likely into the future. Unfortunately, owing to budget restrictions there is little hope that this situation is going to change in the near future. In addition, it takes at least a few years to educate junior academics with doctoral degrees, not to mention professors.

Therefore there is another important dimension to the problem of a shortage of academics. The almost four hundred higher education institutions (especially in the private sector) require a large number of academic staff, which is simply unavailable. The high demand for education (and the money to be made out of this) makes the private institutions try to employ staff from the public universities, which are not willing to share their staff with the competitors. This has caused an enormous conflict between the private and public sector. Despite protests from the latter, most academics teach overtime in private schools and some are employed by several institutions at once. This pattern has become widespread, particularly among academics who have given up research and devote themselves solely to teaching. On the other hand, academics' salaries are humiliatingly low in relation to their qualifications and social status, and thus the opportunity to hold an additional job in the private sector is a sweet temptation that few academics can resist. The forthcoming act on higher education will likely reduce these problems by establishing a limit for the number of positions (probably two) an academic can hold.

Ironically, despite the different approaches Poland and the Czech Republic have taken to the reform of higher education, both countries face very similar problems and differences are mainly related to scale or scope. Neither the liberal approach (Poland) nor the conservative one (Czech Republic) succeeded in preventing a decline in the quality of teaching, an asymmetry of information, and a shortage of academic staff. However, in Poland all these issues have already become extremely damaging to higher education, despite desperate measures taken by the government. To be fair, it must be said that mass higher education (despite all the advantages) has caused massive problems. The Czech government can still have one without the other, but it must learn from the Polish experience and take action to prevent damaging side effects.

### **(In)equalities in higher education**

The liberalisation of higher education was intended to create educational opportunities and to open new tertiary education institutions to those who want to study. In 1989/90 the indicator of scholarisation brutto among 19–24 year-olds was as low as 12.1% in Poland, and in 1994/95 25.4%, but in the academic year 2001/02 it had reached a level of 45.2% in the same age group [Wasielewski 2003; *Education...* 1996, 2003]. This unquestionable progress appears to be a singular Polish phenomenon, as is evident from a comparison with figures for the Czech Republic: in 1994/95 net education enrolment was 22.4% and was almost unchanged in 2001/2002 at 23.1% [*Education...* 1996, 2003]. As mentioned above, there are at least two types of study in Poland and the Czech Republic, and they correspond, on the whole, to two major categories – paid and unpaid. In Poland there are approximately 1 700 000 students, of which more than 1 200 000 are required to pay for their education because they have either chosen to enrol in a private school or attend part-time or evening courses. Only 400 000 students enjoy full-time status and can benefit from the 'luxury' of free education.

In the Czech Republic, the figures are reversed: the number of students at private HE schools was 7891 in 2002/03, at public schools 235874. In other words the commercial form of study plays only a complementary role. Their existence does not make any significant contribution to widening access to higher education. In this respect higher education in Poland and the Czech Republic seem to have little in common. Enrolment in Czech higher education remains under state control (funding), and therefore since 1989 the indicator of scholarisation brutto has barely changed. According to Peter Scott [1995: 11] the most important and only permanent features of mass higher education systems are that they seem to be endlessly open and radically reflexive. In this perspective, Czech higher education remains an elite activity in the hands of the government. Unless the government significantly increases the higher education budget, there is little hope that the level of participation of students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds will increase in the near future. This policy appears to be the opposite of Polish policy, where a significant increase in student numbers (from 400 000 to 1 800 000 students) may indicate that the doors of higher education are opening wide to people from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, in practice these changes have only made the system slightly more fair, leaving much to be desired in terms of achieving equal opportunities. Despite the liberal policy and the widening access to academia there are still 'wicked issues' and unsolved problems concerning equal opportunities in higher education. This is illustrated by the strong connection between social position, specifically the father's education, and the type of studies to which students successfully obtain admission [Domański 1994]. The differentiation line is between free and paid higher education, separating the 'privileged' from the 'unprivileged'. Those from the first group are able to choose whatever they like to study (the school and type of studies), whereas the latter can only choose what is left.

There are at least two stages in the process whereby the higher education system reproduces social inequalities – social background and the father's education. A person is twice as likely to study in a free, public HEI if he or she is from an urban background than if he or she is from a rural area. This division is even sharper and more distinct when we take into consideration that geographic background has even greater impact on the possibility of a student's enrolment in well-established academic centres (which are generally well respected) – such as, in the case of Poland, Warsaw, Krakow or Toruń – rather than in new ones (which tend to be less well respected) – such as Szczecin, Zielona Góra, or Częstochowa. The mythological nature of 'free education' and equal opportunities has been revealed in research by Ewa Świerzbowska-Kowalik [2000: 12] showing the strong impact of geographic background on students' enrolment. This means that the students who get the best education are mainly those who come from an urban background, where they have wider access to extra courses providing specific preparation for entrance examinations, well-equipped libraries, cultural events, and internet access. These circumstances may even sharpen existing inequalities instead of reducing them.

In the Czech Republic, this problem was not as serious. The increase in the inequalities in access to higher education that occurred after 1989 was caused by the

substantial decrease in the odds of children from manual workers' families entering higher education. The odds ratio between unskilled and semi-skilled workers on the one hand and professionals on the other dropped from 0.37 to 0.26. The socio-economic dimension of inequalities is therefore a crucial one [Matějů, Řeháková and Simonová 2003].

A similar issue worth considering is the impact of the level of the father's education on his child's chances of pursuing higher academic study. There seems to be no doubt that there is a strong, visible link between the father's education and the educational path of his children. In Poland, children whose fathers have higher education have twice the chance of enrolling in full-time higher education as those whose fathers have only secondary education in Poland. The impact is even stronger when those whose fathers have vocational education (four times less likely to attend full-time studies) and primary education (almost nine times less likely) are taken into account. This basically means that access to higher education, in particular to full-time study, which entails a considerably higher quality of teaching (e.g. more hours and smaller groups) and no tuition fees, depends heavily on not only geographic background, but also the father's education. According to Małgorzata Dziubińska-Michalewicz [2002: 36–37] and Witold Rakowski [2000], this division becomes much sharper in relation to popular subjects, such as law, management or sociology. From this perspective, equal opportunity is nothing but wishful thinking.

In the Czech case, the effect of the father's education remained unchanged in the period after 1989. However, this does not mean that access to higher education is equal among children whose fathers have different education levels. The odds ratio of children whose fathers had attained a tertiary education and those whose fathers had attained no more than lower secondary education (an apprenticeship) was constant in the years between 1948 and 1999: the odds of children of more educated fathers are 4.65 times higher. The relationship between children whose fathers had secondary and whose fathers had tertiary education was also constant but less (the odds are 2.16 times lower for children of less educated fathers) [Matějů, Řeháková and Simonová 2003].

## Conclusion

Poland and the Czech Republic were both communist countries and had a highly bureaucratic system of higher education with a totalitarian nature. Despite this shared historical background, Poland and the Czech Republic chose different approaches to the reform of their systems of higher education.

In the case of Poland, the government's reforms were clearly designed to extend the opportunities for higher education. The reforms were very successful because they created a legal basis for establishing new private and public higher education institutions in order to extend the opportunities for a higher education. The number of students has increased dramatically in the past ten to twelve years, and

the Poles enjoy a variety of options in terms of schools, subjects or alternative means of studying. Furthermore, the privatisation of Polish higher education was itself an interesting and successful process. Unlike other branches of the Polish economy, the rapid growth of private institutions in higher education was not a result of foreign investment, nor were they built from the state's ruined universities. This smooth progress was very unusual for private sector institutions, rendering the privatisation of higher education a unique phenomenon in the Polish economy. However, there was also a dark side to the reforms, as a number of higher education institutions evaded the state's control and the quality of teaching and research seriously declined. To make matters worse, a dispute between the public universities and private sector institutions has emerged over staff employment. Finally, the issue of equal opportunities leaves much to be desired in terms of providing equal access for students from different geographic and social background.

In the Czech Republic, the government has retained strong political control over higher education, making system less flexible and responsive to public demand. The system is bureaucratic and controlled from the top down, but unlike in Poland it is much easier to evaluate the quality of teaching and research provided by HEIs. In addition, with regard to the development of private higher education institutions, the process of liberalising higher education appears to have begun in the Czech Republic in 2000/2001 – ten years later than in Poland. The number of private HE institutions is currently increasing rapidly, but the market mechanism and real competition are still limited. This means that the real boom in education is probably yet to come, and the Czech government still has an opportunity to confront it adequately. However, in order to do so, it must learn from the Polish experience how to avoid the side effects of the transformation from elite to mass higher education.

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## The Czech Economic Elite after Fifteen Years of Post-socialist Transformation\*

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**Abstract:** The East-Central European post-socialist transformations have now reached a new stage, with the need to address the problems of further modernisation and maintenance in the context of the EU. The role of elites in this process is as intermediators between the influence of the European context and the needs and interests of differentiated internal social structures. Their attitudes and behaviour exhibit a high degree of internal fragmentation and division corresponding to various strategical orientations favouring various societal models. The post-socialist Czech economic elite was initially reproduced out of former state socialist managers and their cadre reserves. After the first phase of economic developments, inspired by neo-liberal radical privatisation and elements of 'shock therapy', and once the new, more European phase ushered in many new factors, there was a distinct decline in the number of 'old-new' economic elite on the scene. In the empirical part of the article the results of several surveys are used to briefly describe the changes in the composition of the Czech economic elite in the 1994–2005 period and to summarise their attitudes and behaviour. The analysis concludes that the current image of a liberal and pro-European Czech elite is consistent with the stable and remarkable progress of the Czech economy since 1999, the considerable wealth, strong profits, and high salaries enjoyed by top elites, and the enhancement of their role in the European economy. There are also some limitations and weak points that diverge from this general picture. The article's conclusions touch on the question of the role of the economic elite in the progress of arriving at more consensual attitudes and behaviour among societal elites as a whole, favouring further economic growth, modernisation and the strengthening of social cohesion in the context of the EU.

**Keywords:** post-socialist transformation, Czech Republic, economic elite, change  
*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review*, 2006, Vol. 42, No. 3: 537–556

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\* This article is part of a broader study dealing with the role of economic and political elites in the Czech post-socialist transformation. This study was prepared as part of the grant project No. A708283 of the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic 'Czech Elites on the Threshold of the EU'.

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## **The post-socialist transformation and the role of the elites**

The East-Central European<sup>1</sup> post-socialist transformations that occurred between 1989 and 2005 represent a new type of non-violent qualitative societal change. In view of the dissimilarity of the 'state socialist' social and political background of these countries in comparison with others, and owing to the new balance of power in the world and in European politics and economics, these transformations differ from most social and European political and social revolutions that have occurred before. The background of these countries was in a state socialist (totalitarian, egalitarian and non-market) system, with a largely industrially developed (semi-modern) but under-capitalised society, which in the post-socialist period progressed, with strong probability of success, towards democratic, market and the more or less meritocratic or class social systems characteristic of the early stages of post-industrial (late modern) society. This historical process has thus far gone through two phases, roughly determined by changing geo-political contexts. In the first phase (in approximately the first two-thirds of the 1990s) the transition to a democratic parliamentary political system took place alongside rapid and radical economic and social change, all of which occurred under the key influence of the dominant neo-liberal stream in world politics and economics, and in many cases accompanied by the use of 'shock-therapy' or at least some elements of such an approach.<sup>2</sup>

The increasing economic difficulties and social tensions that ensued in the last third of the 1990s heralded the start of the second phase, which is still in progress, and which has been strongly influenced by: a) the requirements of the EU accession process, b) rapidly developing economic co-operation with advanced, mainly European countries, and c) the normatively set consequences of EU membership. This phase is characterised by the fact that the modernisation aspects of transformation typical for advanced European countries and the need to somehow strengthen social cohesion have moved to the forefront.

However, in individual countries one can nowadays observe phenomena indicative of a possible new turn to the more nationally oriented right, mainly as a result of some of the flaws and failures of left-centrist governments, including corruption, continuing economic and social difficulties, and a certain disillusionment

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<sup>1</sup> The category of East-Central European post-socialist countries roughly coincides with the new member countries of the EU from this region.

<sup>2</sup> In most of the European post-socialist countries the principles of the Washington Consensus II among leading world economic institutions were applied, though most of the governments in question preferred not to speak too loudly about it. Rapid liberalisation and the consequent privatisation of all decisive spheres of the economy, accompanied by 'shock therapy' were typical features of the economic reforms in most post-socialist societies. Among the specific aspects of the first phase of Czech economic reform was the stress laid on creating a domestic (national) economic elite and a middle class and the extreme rapidity of the changes, mainly enabled through the unorthodox method of combining the voucher and administrative methods of privatisation [cf. Mlčoch 1997; Sojka 2004].

with developments in both world and European politics. This turn recently manifested itself in the outcome of the parliamentary elections in Poland in 2005 and to some extent also in the process of constituting a new government in the Czech Republic after the elections in June 2006.

However, this description of the two historical phases does not apply fully to all the countries in question. For example, the temporal pacing of Slovakia's course differs slightly from this general scheme, owing to a nationalist and populist episode in politics that detained the whole process for years. However, nationalist and populist tendencies also exist in other countries and may intervene in further stages of development. The changes in the Baltic republics have also shown some specificity.<sup>3</sup> But the problems typical for each of the two basic phases had to be solved in all the countries of East-Central Europe, and only the future can tell whether the influence of several new factors and processes of differentiation will call into question the existence of a unitary East-Central European type of post-socialist transformation.

The current social and cultural-civilisational structures of the societies that experienced the type of changes characterised above can for the most part be described as a hybrid, consisting of the persistent bureaucratic and egalitarian relationships that survived from the past and the new meritocratic and class relationships. The young democratic systems are still just developing the requisite political culture and still trying to obtain a balance between administrative regulation and civil society. Moreover, the political party system seems far from achieving the relative stability that is typical of countries with a long history of parliamentary democracy. Only some professionals (mainly those active in the entrepreneurial sector of the economy) have attained economic and social statuses that correspond to their qualifications and achievements, while others (mainly those working in the public sphere) are still suffering from the consequences of inherited egalitarianism. This makes the influence of the new middle strata rather weak. At the same time, the clear contours of a new class structure have emerged. In addition to the gradual revival of a petty bourgeoisie class and a class of mid-level entrepreneurs and managers, a top managerial and a capital ownership class have also emerged (in many cases marked by the illegal and/or immoral way they attained their new positions), along with elements of a political and bureaucratic class, both of which enjoy some privileges. On the other hand, a significant unemployment rate and a considerable amount of poverty and other forms of social exclusion show that the top and bottom rungs of the social ladder have clearly become polarised. Such relationships

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<sup>3</sup> The well-grounded empirical work by A. Steen [1997] shows that all three Baltic republics differ from the other Central-European type of post-socialist societies owing to their historical fate of having been much more closely tied to the Soviet totalitarian system. This also significantly influenced the composition and behaviour of even the post-socialist elites. In two of these societies – Estonia and Latvia – the conflict between elites representing ethnic majorities and those of the Russian population has had an extraordinarily strong impact on the behaviour of elites.

form the social framework in which complex, deep and also controversial civilisational and cultural modernisation changes are taking place.

The complexity and continually changing nature of the external and internal circumstances surrounding the development of the post-socialist countries allows them the possibility to consider various social models. One such model resembles the neo-conservative and neo-liberal concept backed mainly (but not exclusively) by the present ruling strata in the United States. But there are also a variety of European types of social arrangements for consideration (e.g. democratic-socialist, social democratic, social liberal, christian conservative), all of which combine liberal and democratic concepts with some degree of respect for social rights and protection. Nor can the nationalist and populist models and even the Russian-type of centralist model be fully ruled out as yet. Conversely, a return to the principles of state socialism seems – at least among East-Central-European countries – very unlikely. And there is of course also the possibility that hybrid combinations of features from several of these models could emerge.<sup>4</sup>

In any case, the future of the post-socialist countries is in no way pre-determined, and there is still a broad field in which to make relatively free (both rational and irrational) choices. As EU membership provides some guarantees that these choices will be democratic in character, and the pre-agreed and codified rules of the game in this community lead the member countries towards modernisation and the maintenance of social cohesion, the manifold differences between future possible developments in most European post-socialist countries can be reduced to one main difference: between trends that strengthen the European Union and those that weaken it. This does not mean that the current state of the EU should be in any way idealised or that automatic support should be given to the bureaucratic and centralist tendencies that exist in this European organisation. However, the present situation, having originated in the course of European and world history, does not allow post-socialist countries in East-Central Europe any general choice today other than that of joining the advanced European countries and co-operating with them or opting not to do so.

According to the 'sandwich' concept, outlined by J. Pakulski in an elites workshop held in Prague several years ago, the role of national elites in the post-socialist transformation processes lies mainly in their intermediation of external (international) and internal (nationally specific) social influences and pressures, which are an expression of corresponding social needs and interests. However, the post-socialist

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<sup>4</sup> The statements in the preceding text are a condensed expression of broader reflections presented in the author's recently published new book [Machonin 2005b] devoted to the Czech historical experience and its relation to sociological thought. That work explains the post-socialist changes in East-Central Europe in terms of societal transformation instead of applying some version of the so-called transitological theories, particularly popular among some political scientists. Compare, for example, the systematic explanation of the application of transitological theory to the post-socialist changes in the work of one of the leading thinkers in this approach, Michel Dobry [2000].

political elite are still more fragmented or even divided than they are consensually unified, and the attitudes and activities of the economic elite (also somewhat internally fragmented) have to respond to the possibility of substantial changes occurring in the composition of the power elites and their strategic orientations.

Each of the various internal components of a society's elites is bound to one or more international forces influencing the course of transformation. The majority of these forces are geopolitical in nature. The first such sphere of forces is represented by the combined influence of international economic institutions and international corporations, US capital and administration, and the international organisations controlled by them. These are usually referred to as the leading forces of globalisation. The second sphere is clearly the EU, with its broad network of economic, political, social and cultural institutions, and the advanced European economy. Although the interests of individual old EU members and their specific relationships to the post-socialist countries – both as a whole and individually – vary, the influence of the European community on the post-socialist societies has thus far been primarily relatively united. Despite the defeat of the Soviet block in the last stage of the Cold War, and despite the tensions that continue to exist between the successor states in the former Soviet Union and the other post-socialist countries, no one can deny Russia's continued political and military influence and its economic weight in some areas of international and European affairs. This makes the influence of Russia the third geopolitical sphere of influence, albeit a weaker one than the first two.

Individual segments of elites in the European post-socialist societies tend also to be tied to some internal social groupings, like classes, strata, ethnic groups, economic sectors, regions, settlement types, religious groups, and generations, etc. This is a result of tradition, ideology, and the social composition of the members and supporters of political parties or movements and their basic programme objectives. However, political subjects striving to occupy a leading position in the political system must to some degree transcend their ideological positions and traditional social anchoring in order to gain a broader than the traditional mass form of support, especially in times of relatively frequent political changes caused by unexpected phenomena. Such events can also occur in stable democratic systems, but in the rapidly developing post-socialist countries cases of this nature are far more common than in the advanced European countries. On the other hand, the at times confused political, economic and social developments in the European post-socialist countries have shown that for serious political subjects and their leaders it does not pay to deviate too much or too long from promoting the needs and interests of their social base of supporters or from their own traditions, ideology and past programmes.

Today, how fragmented the political elites in the European post-socialist societies are varies considerably from one country to the next. Many factors in the structure and behaviour of elites co-determine for periods of varying length (depending, as a rule, on the election results) what kind of strategy is asserted in each country and has a chance to shape the societal systems either in favour of or against

the complex transformation goals it entails. Such factors include, for example, the relationships between the individual segments of elites, the degree to which they co-operate, make compromises, lose or win, and compete or fight, and, of course, the strength of their influence on the population, as derived from both their programme strategy and tactical qualities and from the personal qualities of their leaders. For the time being, in most post-socialist countries the prevailing situation is that of a socially and politically divided 'ship that cannot sail': the principal social and political subjects exhibit only minimal ability and willingness to together search for and implement optimal or at least compromise solutions. This is one source of the sudden and at times almost haphazard changes that occur in the developmental trends in individual countries. While in such a situation the countries in question certainly need their elites as the mediators between the stimuli coming from Europe and the existing cultural and social handicaps experienced by the mass of society, and need them to perform their role of maintaining social cohesion to facilitate further modernisation,<sup>5</sup> the model of elite behaviour probably ought to be more one of a rationally argued tendency towards promoting consensus, pragmatism, and compromise, and even a certain level of co-operation on important issues of European and national significance – something that Szomolányi [2002] calls the 'gradual convergence of elites'.

EU membership was assumed to be, and to some degree still is, one of the main unifying and stabilising factors assisting the progress of transformation. However, growing differences between individual member countries and various political streams within the EU in connection with the European Constitution and the interpretation of the Lisbon strategy have significantly weakened that effect.

### **The origin, development and current structure of the economic elite in the Czech Republic**

A series of analyses of economic, historical and sociological data produced by a group of Czech sociologists in the years between 1994 and 2005<sup>6</sup> indicate that the new economic elite were profoundly shaped by the composition, behaviour and attitudes of the majority of the state socialist management elite in Czechoslovakia and the Czech lands. It was Ivo Možný [1993] who put forth the idea that a large pro-

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<sup>5</sup> That is why we are wary of C. Lasch's [1995] severe criticism of the elites for their nearly total isolation from society and for their betrayal of democracy. In the current situation, the post-socialist elites are confronted with serious problems in some aspects similar to those that the elites of this region had to cope with during the period of nation-state formation. Therefore, neither we, nor the elites themselves, can afford to adopt a position of nihilist skepticism towards their role in society; instead we prefer rational and realistic criticism and a motivational emphasis on how they should perform their positive role.

<sup>6</sup> See Machonin [2005a], Machonin and Tuček [1994, 1996, 2000, 2002], Machonin, Tuček and Gatnar [1995], Hanley et al. [1996], Machonin, Šťastnová et al. [1996], Matějů [1997], Tuček

portion of Czech managers had in the 1980s already become interested in making substantial changes to the Czech economic system. This means that they were aware of a) the weakness of the Czech economy in comparison with economies in more advanced countries, b) the disadvantages arising from their limited right to make decisions within a command economy, and that a role was played even by the fact that c) there were evident limits to their income in comparison with the salaries of western managers, not to mention the incomes and wealth of capital owners. In particular young and middle-aged, better-educated managers in mid-rank positions in the economic hierarchy, regardless of whether they were members of the Communist Party or not, were dissatisfied with their status and the prospects for obtaining higher positions occupied by old and faithful communist cadres.

### *The historical phases in the development of the economic elite*

In the first phase of the transformation the large majority of the post-socialist economic elite – with the continued presence and active engagement of the non-discredited (and therefore less influential under state socialism but more so after 1989) part of the top and mid-level state socialist management – played a key role in the privatisation process and profited maximally from its prevailingly national character. According to the Elite Research 1994<sup>7</sup> two-fifths of the economic elite in 1994 had also been members of the state socialist elites, though not necessarily in the same positions. We will call them the ‘old-new economic elite’. As for the other three-fifths, which we will refer to as the ‘new economic elite’, in 1989 30% occupied a position managing several departments in an enterprise or in some other organi-

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[1996], and Tuček et al. [1997, 2005]. The common thread in this series of titles is the study of elites as a part of stratification and mobility research. Many of the ideas expressed in these studies, mostly written by P. Machonin and M. Tuček, or with their participation, are used in this article without special quotations. Something similar applies also to the reflections on some general concepts concerning the characteristics and roles of elites in the process of post-socialist transformation, as elaborated on the basis of work on elites conducted by an international team in the spirit of new ‘elitism’ and their application to post-socialist transformations formulated mainly by John Higley, J. Pakulski, G. Lengyel, W. Wesolowski and others. See, for example, Best and Becker [1997], Dogan and Higley [1998], Frentzel-Zagórska and Wasilewski [2000], Higley [1997], Higley and Lengyel [2000], Higley, Pakulski and Wesolowski [1998], and Steen [1997]. Most of the Czech and foreign works referred to are based on data on elites collected in the first half of the 1990s. This paper aims to grasp the results of the changes in the structure, attitudes and behaviour of elites in the second half of the 1990s and at the beginning of the 20th century. A cross-national comparison can be hoped for after the data from other European post-socialist countries is collected and elaborated.

<sup>7</sup> The ‘International Elite Research in the European Postsocialist Countries’ in 1994 was led by I. Szelényi and D. Treiman, and in the Czech Republic by P. Matějů and M. Tuček. For details see Szelényi and Treiman [1991], Szelényi, Treiman and Wnuk-Lipiński [1995], Tuček [1996], Hanley et al. [1996] and Matějů [1997].

sational unit, which means that they were close to an elite position, while 55% were mid-level management, and only 15% were 'real newcomers' to the management or capital-ownership structure after 1989 [Tuček 1996: 157–161].

These findings falsify the general validity of the hypothesis of elite circulation or qualitative exchange as one of the possible sources of new elites recruitment [see Szelényi and Treiman 1991; Szelényi 1995].<sup>8</sup> Exceptions to this falsification can be found only among new owners, who attained their position in the restitution process, and while this was a relatively more common occurrence in Czechoslovakia than in other post-socialist countries, only a limited number of restitutees actually carried on in their or their parents entrepreneurial activities, and only a small number then became members of the real economic elite. Nor has the assumption that there was a tendency towards a kind of conversion of the old political capital into new economic capital been confirmed as a widely valid rule, though a number of such cases did indeed take place. In 1994 the proportion of former communists among the 'old economic elite' amounted to 95%, among the old-new 83%, and among the new 53% [Tuček 1996: 157–161]. Data from a 1999 survey<sup>9</sup> indicate that these percentages had fallen to approximately 25% by the end of the 1990s, while the age composition of the current elites strongly suggests that the decline is continuing.<sup>10</sup>

Serious economic and social difficulties and an increase in the level of popular dissatisfaction in the years 1995–1998; the apparent existence of many illegal and/or immoral activities among a not negligible part of the old/new and new economic elite; corresponding changes in the composition of the government (1997, 1998) and in economic and social strategy; a series of bankruptcies of privatised banks, big industrial enterprises and other big firms; the increasing inflow of foreign, particularly European, capital with corresponding personnel changes; the start of serious negotiations for EU membership; the gradual generational change in favour of younger and, in terms of education and/or fresh experience, better qualified cadres: all this, plus some other factors,<sup>11</sup> led in the final years of the 20th cen-

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<sup>8</sup> Conversely, the hypothesis of nearly immediate qualitative exchange of at least the power elite was verified as one of the basic characteristics of the Velvet Revolution.

<sup>9</sup> The survey on 'A Decade of Post-socialist Transformation in the Czech Republic' in 1999 was led by M. Tuček. For details see Tuček et al. [2003].

<sup>10</sup> That there was a relatively high percentage of former communists among the economic elites in 1994 does not mean that they were advocates of communist ideology. For most of them – especially the younger ones, but also the middle aged – membership in the Communist Party began during the 'normalisation' period and was the only way in which they could pursue a career. After November 1989 most of them quickly severed their ties with this party and adapted themselves to the new demands of the market economy.

<sup>11</sup> All these processes started gradually in the years 1995–1996. Their early stages have been described in the Czech report of the international business elite survey, which encompassed Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1997 and was led by Pál Tamás. See Tuček et al. [1997, 2005]. In qualitative interviews, twenty-three top managers active in the Czech economy evaluated the Czech economic privatisation process and other reform steps as necessary.

tury to the downfall of an important part of the economic old/new elite recently discredited in the new environment of society. Along with the downfall of prominent right-wing politicians engaged in economic policy (or shortly thereafter) a significant portion of top managers and/or capital owners belonging to the old-new economic elite were forced out of their positions,<sup>12</sup> despite the fact that the criminal nature of the privatisation activities some were engaged in could not in most cases be proved owing to the absence of relevant legislation at the time of these activities.<sup>13</sup> However, the work of the police and the justice system gradually became more effective and helped foil several cases of fraudulent behaviour, this time mainly among the *nouveaux riches* that had emerged out of the privatisation process.

In the ensuing years, as managers aged, those politicians and managers who had been involved in the reform processes of the 1960s and assisted in implementing the economic strategy of Miloš Zeman's minority Social Democratic government were gradually excluded from economic activity. At the same time the rise of the successful privatisers continued. New possibilities for professional involvement in the economy opened up to people with political ties to the Social Democratic Party, and from 1998 to people with ties to the Civic Democratic Party, which gave the minority government limited support, and since 2002 also to those tied to the Social Democratic Party's coalition partners. Some privatisers even came to rank among the very top elite. The emphasis governments since 1998 have put on foreign capital investment soon brought about a new wave of recruitment of newcomers to the

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On the other hand, they criticised the numerous economic policy mistakes made by the second Czech government under Václav Klaus. They did not of course mention the evident mistakes made by the top management of the firms they represented. Shortly after the interviews, some large Czech firms, whose top figures had been involved in the survey, collapsed, and most of them had to undergo substantial reorganisation, including changes in the ownership structure and corresponding personnel changes. This mainly occurred over the course of the three years after the data sampling, which took place in 1997, that is, the same year the second, unsuccessful government, headed by the main protagonist of neo-liberal reform in the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus, collapsed. Simultaneously, many prominent figures that backed neo-liberal economic policy, like economic ministers and the heads of privatisation institutions, disappeared from the top economic-political positions.

<sup>12</sup> The series of bankruptcies of big both industrial and financial firms was accompanied by the departure of a group of influential post-communist managers or owners. In the list of the fifty richest Czechs (see below) none of their names can be found. The data on the decline in the proportion of former communists among managers cited above, and the data indicating a juvenilisation of the economic elite (see below) can be seen as indirect proof of the fact that an acceleration of the exchange of the old-new economic elite for the new new elite was not typical just among its wealthies members.

<sup>13</sup> The well-known and often criticised delay in the introduction of the relevant legal provisions only after the actual privatisation process – regardless of whether it was intentional or not – was one of the indispensable elements of the Czech neo-liberal privatisation strategy as well as the extreme speed at which privatisation occurred, as it allowed irreversible changes to be made before the population could become aware of their real nature.

economic elite, partly from abroad, and in most cases from the ranks of the middle-aged and younger domestic cadres (some of them graduates of professional study programmes in the Czech Republic or abroad).

### *The fifty richest Czechs*

Some interesting information relating to this issue was provided in an overview of the fifty richest Czechs, which was published at the end of 2002 in the magazine supplement of one of the major national daily newspapers [*Magazin Lidových novin* 2002].<sup>14</sup> It is not surprising that this source indicated that there was only one woman on the list of the richest people. Further it showed that twenty-three of them were under the age of 40 (six of them in this age group were professional sportsmen approaching the end of their active career), fifteen were in the age group 40–49, and only ten were in the age group 50–59.

There were only two people from the oldest generation (60+) on this list, both of them restituted and at the same time dissidents. In addition to them there was also one relatively younger heir to a former family enterprise on the list. Only one (!) man on the list belonged to the old-new political elite and used his social and political capital to acquire a good deal of economic capital as a lawyer. One young man benefited his career by using his position in a fund dealing with the confiscated fortunes of the state socialist youth organisation. And four on the list had returned to Czechoslovakia after 1989 with some amount of disposable capital. If we add up all these cases it is clear that only a real minority were those who had used their (or their ancestors') previous capital for their new careers.

This means that the overwhelming majority of the current Czech top economic elite (managers and capital owners with other than Czech or Slovak nationality were not included in the overview) can be described as *nouveaux riches*.<sup>15</sup> However, this does not mean that these and the many other people close to them in the highest ranking economic positions were involved in the phenomenon Ivan Szelényi et al. called 'making capitalism without capitalists' [Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley 1998, 2003]. In the process of liberalisation and privatisation, which took place dur-

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<sup>14</sup> Many important facts are presented here in a somewhat unsystematic and more journalistic manner. They are elaborated in the text according to the current usage in content analyses.

<sup>15</sup> This is also true to some degree for the economic elite as a whole. According to the survey on elites 2003/2004, which will be referred to below [Frič, Nekola and Prudký 2005], 79% of the current economic elite situate the event that was decisive for their professional careers in the year 1989 or later, and a full 48% of them after 1989. According to these statements the share of those who started their career before 1989 must to have declined to 21%. This means that for among the current economic elites the link to the old economic elite or their cadre reserves, resulting from the reproduction processes that prevailed at the outset of the transformation, is no longer fully valid.

ing the second half of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century, and under the continued functioning of old-new or new companies these people became real capitalists, functioning normally in both domestic and international markets, regardless of their rather heterogeneous career backgrounds, though somewhat limited in their activities by certain factors (which will be mentioned below). Leaving aside the athletes, most of whom in the future are likely only to become part of the business elite, there remain fourteen newcomers who started out mainly as mid-level managers in industry, construction, transport, commerce, and similar sectors, another twelve in the sector of banking, privatisation funds, stocks, betting shops, financial companies and the real estate business, two in foreign trade, one in agriculture, one in the spa business, two in the media and show business, two in state administration, and two as real self-made-men who started out at the bottom. But their current standing among the economic elite, the amounts of their disposable capital, and their forms of behaviour place them, and others with similar statuses, unquestionably at the core of the developing capitalist class. In this regard there are no detectable features that distinguish them from the capitalist classes *in statu nascendi* that developed, for example, in bourgeois or most national liberation revolutions.

In the Czech case, as in many other post-socialist transformations, the opportunities and significance of this group are limited by two factors. The first is the apparent hegemony of foreign capital, which is represented among the contemporary economic elites primarily (but not exclusively) by managers of Czech origin, whose economic influence, based not so much on their wealth as on their mandates from abroad, is probably even stronger than that of the richest Czech capital owners and managers. The second limitation to the class positions of top Czech businessmen is the considerable amount of state intervention, based on the 'rules of the game' as established by legislation that dates partly from a compromise inclusion of the Charter of Basic Rights and Liberties in the new Czech Constitution in 1992 and partly from the past decade and the two election victories of the Social Democrats. On the other hand, the position and influence of strong economic subjects has significantly increased in the past several years, and their interests are often asserted not only through the media but also by some pressure activity, lobbying, and in cases even by clientelism and corruption, problems which have not yet been adequately tackled by the state administration.

The increasing emphasis laid both objectively and subjectively on the competitive strength and the modernisation of the economy, together with growing impact of the EU on Czech economic legislation and policy, and the increasing influence of foreign capital in the national economy have accelerated the generational turnover and the changes in qualifications and the attitudes of the economic elite.

*A comparison between 1994 and 2003/2004*

There are data for comparing the description of economic elites at two different points in time – in 1994 and in 2003/2004.<sup>16</sup> In two different surveys conducting in these years economic elites were selected from a list of large and prominent firms and a sample of their top representatives was created. The sample was created in both surveys in a similar manner, which makes a comparison possible. Leaving aside the question how fully representative any sample selection in any elite survey can be, the results obtained through both surveys roughly correspond to known historical facts and sociological data on the developments of society as a whole and of the Czech economy and political system in particular, and thus enabled the interpretations presented in this paper.

The first piece of information to come out of the comparison is that the proportion of males in the economic elite decreased from 90% in 1994 to 80% in 2003/2004. This corresponds to the known fact that there has been an increase in the amount of private economic activity among women. However, the educational and qualification potential of women is nowhere near being fully applied, and it may be expected that the above trend will progress.

Data on the age structure of the economic elite are also significant and interesting. Though the average age of the Czech economic elite remained nearly equal in both periods (at around 46 years of age), the table clearly shows the differences that developed over time. The economic elite in the first phase of transformation was dominated by middle-aged people, while younger members of the elite were just starting out and there were few of the oldest members owing to the departure of the discredited part of the state socialist elite. The middle-aged elites of 1994 be-

**Table 1. Age structure of the Czech economic elite, 1994 and 2003/2004**

Year	Type of elites	60+	55–59	50–54	45–49	40–44	35–39	–35
1994	Old-new + new	6.4	11.1	21.1	22.3	17.9	12.3	8.9
2003/4	Contemporary	12.8	14.0	10.5	12.8	16.3	18.5	15.1

[Data 1994, 2003/4]

<sup>16</sup> The data from 1994 come from the already mentioned Czech elite survey in 1994. The sample of the elites studied as a whole in this case involved 1509 respondents. For 2003/2004 we are grateful to CESES (Center for Strategic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University), and particularly to the project director Pavol Frič, for allowing us to use the data from a survey on elites, the results of which have been published in an official report [Frič, Nekola and Prudký 2005]. In this survey the total sample size was 826 respondents. The use of comparable data from the early and the later phases of the post-socialist transformation enables us to better characterise the dynamics of the development of the Czech economic elite.

**Table 2. Highest attained education of the Czech economic elite, 1994 and 2003/2004**

Year	Type of elite	Apprenticeship	Full secondary	Tertiary or post-graduate
1994	Old	2.4	22.6	75.0
1994	Old-new + new	0.8	13.8	85.4
2003/4	Total	0.7	17.3	82.0

[Data 1994, 2003/4]

came old elites in 2004, and in the meantime the proportion of young people increased substantially (not so with the political elite, as young people harboured some mistrust towards the political system as a whole). The natural turnover of top businessmen became a regular pattern of change in the structure of the economic elite.

The educational structure of the economic elite in the course of the transformation can also be compared. In 1989 the system of 'working-class directors', typical of the 1950s, had already been fully done away with, but the influence of the political approach on the nomination of cadres (applied mainly in the political purges at the beginning of the 1970s and later on in the system of cadre recruitment until 1989) still resulted in an inadequate proportion of people with tertiary education and of course to the insufficient qualification (one-sided qualifications inadequate for the new conditions) of all managers. This had clearly improved by 1994. In the sample of representatives of selected large firms it is possible to observe only a slight decline in the percentage of tertiary educated by 2003/2004, a decline that is much more visible in a wider sample from 2004/2005, which also included managers and owners of mid-sized companies (see below). This kind of decline indicates the existence of some upward mobility among new capital owners and managers with lower education owing to the liberalisation of the labour-force market. This opened up opportunities for applying other qualifications, not necessarily tied to education, for example, entrepreneurial skills and/or a willingness to take risks. However, it involves other risks, connected with the professional competence of members of the elite.

### *The qualitative in-depth survey*

The contemporary economic elite mostly share a (neo-)liberal<sup>17</sup> outlook and support EU membership and its positive influence on the Czech economy. This inclination was revealed in a short qualitative (= not representative) in-depth survey of seven-

<sup>17</sup> A general liberal orientation seems quite certain. As for the neo-liberal (and neo-conservative) inclinations, stressing the principles of monetarism and state non-intervention, they

teen members of the business elite and economic experts on the impact of the Czech Republic's accession to the EU had during the last quarter of 2004 and the beginning of 2005.<sup>18</sup> These findings were later corroborated using a broader CESES sample in 2003/2004 (see below). The participants in this research also gave a highly positive evaluation of the results and various aspects of EU membership. The most frequent positive evaluations were given to the country's inclusion in a broad European economic, market-type space, the economic contributions from structural and other EU funds, the close co-operation with European firms and their investment activities in the Czech Republic, the growth of the Czech economy, the rise in exports, and the economy's competitive strength, a slight increase in wages and the standard of living, the broader assortment of goods and services, and the fact that the expected rapid rise in prices did not occur. All these anticipated or already partially achieved modernisation shifts were viewed as leading to an increase in the authority of the Czech Republic on the international stage and an increase in the country's attractiveness. At the same time, their responses also revealed some significant criticism partly pertaining to EU policy and especially to the policy of the Czech government.<sup>19</sup>

#### *The economic elite in 2003/2004*

This picture is supplemented by information from data obtained in a broader survey by CESES in 2003/2004 [Frič, Nekola and Prudký 2005]. In this survey 21% of respondents declared they had very strong feelings about belonging to Europe), 45% had strong feelings, 26% had only weak feelings, and 8% had no such feelings at all. (These feelings were significantly stronger among members of the cultural and political elites, and the difference may be due to the specific problems of competition from abroad and the EU's regulatory tendencies which primarily affect the economic elite.) The respondents also answered a question about the expected contributions of the Czech Republic to the EU: 27% see this contribution as lying in education, 18% in the creativity, skill and flexibility of the work force, 11% in culture and the intellectual sphere, 3% in historical experience, 10% in strategic behaviour,

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were prevalent in the qualitative in-depth survey, but less so in the CESES survey, where the respondents relatively often referred to a need for some state regulation.

<sup>18</sup> The in-depth survey was carried out by Petr Hartoš from the Institute of Sociology several months after the Czech Republic's accession to the EU. On the other hand, the two Czech coalition governments that operated over the course of this period were exceptionally weak and gradually lost support from both the public and even more so from professionals. Though the Czech economy was showing quite positive developments at that time, the trend was not that obvious and was not sufficiently stable. This situation certainly had an influence on the results of the survey in question.

<sup>19</sup> A more detailed reproduction and analysis of the results of this in-depth survey is to be published by the Institute of Sociology AS CR in a volume of papers by Machonin, Tuček, Nekola and Hartoš [2006].

9% in the quality of production and services, while 22% chose various other kinds of response. This does not sound like any overestimation of the possible role of Czech national business in the European economy. On the other hand, Czech elites on the whole (including both businesspeople and politicians, and also cultural and mass-media professionals) are sufficiently self-confident where their role in a national dimension is concerned: 80% of Czech elites are sure that they are capable of mobilising people to take an interest in achieving a better future, 60% of them think that the elites possess sufficient will to modernise the country. When asked about the internal features of the elites, they were more skeptical. This applies particularly to the business elite, 49% of whose members characterised Czech elites as primarily focused on defending and securing their own interests, while 42% admitted that the elites have their acquaintances and connections to thank for their positions, and a full 74% indicated that the elites are too closely bound to networks of acquaintances and mutual services. It is no surprise that even members of the economic elite – though not to the same degree as the political elite – expressed the opinion that there is growing tension between the elites and the population; 14% definitely agree with this statement and 39% somewhat agree.

Some important information on the ideological outlooks of the business elite is provided by data on the differentiation of the business elite by their sympathies for the main political parties: 40% of its members declare support for the leading opposition right-wing Civic Democratic Party, and 6% for the small right-wing coalition party the Freedom Union, while the Social Democrats received the support of only 11%. The influence of the Christian Democratic Union and the Communists is quite marginal, and 30% of the business elite do not support any of the political subjects in the domestic political arena. This structure of political orientations reveals the business elite to be the most right-wing oriented segment of the elites, similar in this regard to only top media professionals. These results corroborate the fact that there is a prevailing liberal orientation among the Czech economic elite and add that it signifies prevailing support for right-wing political parties with a neo-liberal approach to solving the country's economic problems. There is also further evidence of the positive view the business elite take of the European Union: 56% of the sample of the business elite declared the European Union to be a highly important institution for further societal development. This percentage is significantly higher than it is among the other segments of the Czech elites.

#### *The survey on elites in 2004/2005*

Another data sample exists from a survey carried out at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic at the end of 2004 and the start of 2005,<sup>20</sup> using a sample of 470 respondents selected from the Czech business elite. The sample was comprised of directors, deputy directors, or owners of enterprises

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<sup>20</sup> The project was led by M. Tuček.

with more than twenty employees, which corresponds with the de-concentration of the enterprise structure that occurred in the process of privatisation and transformation. The economic elite is therefore conceived in somewhat broader terms than in the surveys in 1994 and 2003/2004. For this reason in the new sample the proportion of tertiary educated was only 66% while in the data from 1994 it was 85.4% and from 2003/2004 82%. Clearly, the results of this survey, characterising the sample as a whole, cannot be used in a comparison with the data from 1994 or 2003/2004 discussed above. In order to narrow the research field to a group with characteristics similar to the concept of business elite as described in this article, it was necessary to focus on one sub-sample of owners or managers heading several economic units or departments: 85% of this group were males, 75% tertiary educated, 74% working in professions corresponding to their educational field and level. They declared themselves as belonging to the upper-middle or upper strata of the population. Also, 75% of them are highly or somewhat interested in politics, 32% identified their political orientation as left-wing or left-centrist, 20% as neutral, and 48% as right-centrist or right wing.

EU accession was evaluated as useful for their companies by 57% respondents and as neutral by 35%. A full 75% evaluated foreign investments as positive for their enterprises. In addition, 82% thought that the economy has a significant influence on political sphere, and 76% acknowledged the influence of politics on economy. One-half of the respondents valued the effects of the government's economic policy on the economy, while 43% felt that government policy has no influence on economic activities. Only 40% thought that the business elite forms a more or less cohesive group, while the remaining 60% indicated minimal or no cohesion. This complementary information in principle corresponds with what we know from the other data sources. The slight difference in the proportion of people with tertiary education (7% less than in the CESES survey) is probably a result of the presence of heads of mid-sized companies in the selected sub-sample. Nevertheless, among managers and owners in top positions in Czech companies there clearly appears to be a predominance of people with tertiary education.

## Conclusion

The composition, situation and attitudes of the Czech business elite revealed through the set of data sources discussed in this article correspond to the stable and remarkable progress of the Czech economy since 1999, and to the remarkable wealth, strong profits, and high salaries of its top members and the enhancement of their role in the European economy. A genuine top business elite has emerged in the Czech Republic, one that in principle differs little from its Western counterparts.<sup>21</sup> There is a problem in the fact that some of the economic elite do not have a tertiary

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<sup>21</sup> Even the wave of newly exposed economic criminality and corruption cases seems to be distinctly influenced by the presence of large economic companies and conflicts between them.

level of education and are for this or other reasons not adequately prepared for solving the difficult tasks connected with modernisation and European integration. Also, the fact that some entrepreneurs and managers attained their positions through questionable means makes them somewhat less reliable actors in the situation of actual 'rule of law'. Nor can one ignore the manifest clientelism and corrupt behaviour of some of the economic and political elites.

One of the most important preconditions for changes in the composition, attitudes and behaviour of the post-socialist economic (and also political) elite to correspond to the requirements of the new phase of developments is for the EU to recover somewhat from the shock it suffered after the French and Dutch 'no' votes on the European Constitution and from the conflict concerning the outlook for the financial budget. From both Western and East-Central European populations comes a warning: an excessively rapid and ill-prepared (i.e. the absence of dialogue with the people of all the countries in question) institutionalisation of the economic, social and political strategies of an expanded EU and the onset of the eventual changes they bring about can easily disturb the strategic balance between modernisation and social cohesion that has been managed thus far. If this balance is renewed and incorporated into EU policies, then conditions favourable to the solution of principally the same issue on the national level could arise, that is, the establishment of a constant balance between ongoing modernisation and an adapted social cohesion within individual countries.

The role of the elites in the Czech Republic towards achieving this type of strategy can be defined as: a) to support modernisation changes (coming mainly, but not exclusively, from the EU, and, particularly stimuli from the more advanced part of the EU) as much as possible and contribute in this way to strengthening Europe's competitive strength, and b) to put through the kind of economic, cultural and social reforms that are acceptable to the people as a contribution to the improvement of the standard of living and the culture of a broad strata of the population. Ongoing economic growth and relative progress in the process of modernisation in the Czech Republic since 1999 render the creation, application, and fulfilment of such a strategy a real possibility. But there are two significant obstacles to this. The first one (not discussed in detail in this article) is the internal structure and quality of the political elite in particular. The second (thus far more latent than manifest) is the tension between the current power elite and the more neo-liberally oriented economic elite, particularly the latter's top representatives at the head of large companies. Irregardless of the various possibilities for further political relationships within the country, the elites in Czech society can contribute to further adapting society to the new conditions and tasks arising from the country's membership in the EU if process could be achieved in strengthening consensus within its internal structure.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> By consensualisation we mean real progress toward agreement (or at least toward realistic compromises) of the relevant segments of societal elites concerning not only a) the rules of the game of a democratic state of law (including the peaceful exchange of owners, managers,

To this end it would be desirable to solve at least some portion of the many internal cleavages and conflicts that exist within the elites. The cleavages are not too sharp within the economic elite. Ongoing generation shifts and much more intensive support for research and development, education, the spread of information, international co-operation and counter-corruption measures should improve this aspect of the problem. Experience thus far suggests that even the problem of the economic elite having to adapt to changes in the power elite (e.g. after parliamentary elections) is not beyond a solution, on the condition of course that internal contradictions within the political elite are regulated to a socially acceptable degree. Some difficulties in the economy and in the social sphere can be caused by exclusive and biased practical adherence to the doctrine of maximum state non-intervention in economic and related or consequent social affairs, and, conversely, by the promoting equally biased radical populist strategies based on exaggerated state intervention.

This article was submitted to the editorial board of the *Czech Sociological Review* at the end of May 2006, one week before elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. It will be very interesting to observe what changes the election results bring to the state of affairs analysed in the paper.

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politicians and high bureaucrats according to both the functioning of the economy and election results), but also b) the willingness of them to seek for elaborating common long-run crucial societal strategies corresponding to national needs and interests.

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## Demographic and Social Correlates of Suicide in the Czech Republic\*

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**Abstract:** In this article the authors review the trends and differentials in mortality from self-inflicted injury and poisoning in the Czech Republic between the early 1970s and the present in terms of their socio-economic and demographic associations. They describe the sources of data on suicide and explore the possible extent of under-reporting of deaths from suicide, and they examine the differences in suicide incidence by age and sex. With the decline in mortality from suicide, the male/female ratio of suicide rates increased from about 2.6 in the early 1970s to around 4.0 in recent years. Suicide rates increase steadily with age, and this pattern did not noticeably change during the period reviewed. The age-specific suicide rates of older men and women declined more than the rates for younger people. As in other societies, married men and women have the lowest suicide rates; in contrast, divorce puts both men and women at the greatest risk of suicide. The authors attempt to investigate the social correlates of suicide by analysing the variation in suicide rates among districts in the Czech Republic and selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the district populations. Stepwise regression analysis is used to identify three independent variables that explain 50% of the variation in suicide rates among districts: the abortion ratio, the percentage of locally born population, and the percentage of adults with limited education.

**Keywords:** suicide, difference, gender, age, marital status

*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review*, 2006, Vol. 42, No. 3: 557–571

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\* This manuscript was supported in part by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, grant no. MSM 0021620831.

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## **Introduction**

Intentionally self-inflicted harm, irrespective of whether it results in death (suicide) or leaves no substantive damage to the person's health (attempted suicide or para-suicide), has been the subject of study by social and medical scientists since about the middle of the 19th century. Prior to that it had been the domain of theologians and philosophers, arguing the case of an individual's right to terminate their life. At the forefront of medical research has been the issue of the victim's mental health. Sociologists, and later demographers and epidemiologists, have searched for patterns in self-destructive acts and in the characteristics of their agents in an attempt to develop a framework for preventive actions and policies. This article is intended to contribute to the understanding of suicidal behaviour and its patterns and trends in the Czech Republic.

## **Data sources**

As in Western countries, there are three types of statistics on suicide in the Czech Republic: 1) the cause-of-death statistics published by the Czech Statistical Office (CSO); 2) the statistics on suicides and para-suicides collated and published by the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (IHIS CR); and 3) the statistics on deaths investigated by the police. Owing largely to the differences in the procedures used to collect these data, the latter two sources record fewer deaths by suicide than the CSO. For instance, in the period between 1996 and 2000 the CSO's cause-of-death statistics recorded 8106 deaths from intentional self-inflicted harm, while the IHIS CR reported only 7618 cases, and police records indicated a mere 6178 suicides. Yet even the cause-of-death statistics are undoubtedly an under-estimate of the true incidence of suicide. It is the coroner's verdict that determines whether a death is to be attributed to suicide. It is the practice of coroners to ascribe a death from self-inflicted injury or poisoning to suicide if there is proof 'beyond a reasonable doubt' that the victim intended to end his/her life. In questionable cases the death is attributed either to the category of causes where the intention remains undecided, or, alternatively, it is deemed an accident. In the Tenth Revision of the International Classification of Diseases of the World Health Organisation (ICD-10) deaths from intentional self-inflicted injuries and poisonings are coded as X60-X84 and those deaths where the intention remained undecided as Y10-Y34. In the Czech Republic, the ratio between self-inflicted deaths of uncertain intent to one hundred deaths unequivocally attributed to suicide has in recent years hovered between 18 and 20 [Dzúrová and Dragomirecká 2002: 9]. This ratio varies considerably by age and sex and by the method of suicide. In 1990–2000, the ratio was 20.2 and 18.5 per hundred recorded suicides of women and men, respectively. The highest ratio was in those instances where a young person under the age of 20 committed suicide. There was a higher ratio than the overall average among the very elderly. With respect to the method of suicide, in 1999–2000 the highest ratio

**Table 1. Estimate of the potential under-reporting of suicides, Czech Republic, 1999–2000**

Cause of death (ICD-10)		Number of deaths
X60-X84	Intentional self-inflicted injury & poisoning	3259
Y10-Y34	Event of undetermined intent	609
R 96	Other sudden death, cause unknown	100
R 98	Unattended death	98
R 99	Other ill-defined and unspecified causes of death	563
W 13	Fall from, out of or through building	116
W65-W74	Accidental drowning and submersion	455
Total of potential suicides		1941
Under-reporting of suicides: Minimum		(Y10-Y34)/(X60-X84)
Maximum		Total / (X60-X84)
		18.7 %
		59.6 %

Source: Czech Statistical Office

of 'uncertain' to 'certain' suicides was for deaths by poisoning from addictive drugs (Y10-Y18) – 54 'uncertain' to 100 'certain' suicides; from drowning (Y21) – 22 : 100; and from firearm discharge (Y22-Y24) – 16 : 100 [Dzúrová and Dragomirecká 2002: 11].

The potential extent of under-reporting of suicides may be quite large. O'Carroll [1989] found that in the United States the under-reporting of national suicide rates is most commonly estimated at between 40 and 80%. We attempted to estimate the possible extent of under-reporting of suicides in the Czech Republic by assuming two extreme situations: a) all the deaths classified as open verdicts were in reality suicides, and b) all accidental deaths listed in Table 1 as potential were in fact disguised suicides. In the first instance, which may be considered the lower limit of the extent of under-reporting, the number of recorded suicides has to be inflated by around 19% to account for under-reporting. In the second case, which represents the upper limit of the extent of under-reporting (and, admittedly, a most unlikely situation) the adjustment factor amounts to about 60%.

In the following analyses we use deaths recorded as resulting from intentional self-harm, i.e. suicides. However, in the analysis of regional variations in suicide rates we use combined rates of recorded suicides (X60-X64) and open verdicts (Y10-Y34) in order to eliminate the possible effect of variations in the coroners' practice of determining deaths as resulting from intentional self-inflicted harm.

**Trends in suicide rates: 1970–2002**

According to Džurová and Dragomirecká [2002] it is possible to distinguish three phases in the incidence of suicide in the Czech Republic since the end of the Second World War. During the first phase, between 1945 and 1951, suicide rates gradually declined by almost one-third: from a high point at 30 per 100 000 inhabitants in 1945 to 21.5 in 1951. The second phase was one of rising suicide rates, reaching a new peak of 40 per 100 000 inhabitants in 1970. The third phase, which began around 1970, has been characterised by gradually declining suicide rates. Table 2 shows the suicide rates (per 100 000 inhabitants) by sex during this third phase. In the course of these thirty years the decline in suicide rates may be partly due to the increase in the amount of attention mental health has received, particularly depres-

**Table 2. Incidence of suicide in the Czech Republic by sex, 1970–2002**

Year	Suicide rate (per 100 000 inhabitants)		M/F ratio	Year	Suicide rate (per 100 000 inhabitants)		M/F ratio
	Males	Females			Males	Females	
1970	41.6	16.8	2.5	1985	30.1	11.3	2.7
1971	40.5	15.4	2.6	1986	30.6	11.9	2.6
1972	40.1	16.7	2.4	1987	27.6	10.4	2.7
1973	35.9	14.4	2.5	1988	27.0	11.3	2.4
1974	36.7	14.5	2.5	1989	27.1	10.2	2.6
1975	34.4	14.1	2.4	1990	28.5	10.6	2.7
1976	31.9	13.3	2.4	1991	27.8	9.6	2.9
1977	33.2	12.8	2.6	1992	29.6	9.5	3.1
1978	33.1	13.7	2.4	1993	28.1	9.5	3.0
1979	30.9	12.1	2.6	1994	26.7	10.0	2.7
1980	32.0	12.9	2.5	1995	25.6	8.5	3.0
1981	31.7	12.0	2.6	1996	23.7	6.6	3.6
1982	31.5	12.3	2.6	1997	26.2	6.7	3.9
1983	31.0	11.2	2.8	1998	25.3	6.5	3.9
1984	29.8	11.5	2.6	1999	25.7	6.2	4.2
				2000	26.0	6.7	3.9
				2001	25.9	6.2	4.2
				2002	24.5	6.1	4.0

Source: Czech Statistical Office

sive disorders and their treatment, the improvement in access to psychological and social counselling and crisis management, and the availability of more effective medication for mental disorders.

During the last decade in this period Czech society went through a phase of dramatic political, social and economic change. The political liberalisation that followed the collapse of the communist regime in 1989 and the subsequent introduction of policies aimed at the privatisation and globalisation of the Czech economy brought about significant social changes. Yet at the same time, and especially between 1996 and 2000, suicide rates dropped to the lowest levels recorded in the country in more than a century. This suggests that, contrary to expectations, the societal and political transformation of the 1990s did not result in a negative social response and an increase in suicidal behaviour [Džúrová and Dragomirecká 2002: 26].

Suicide nonetheless continues to represent a concern and a social challenge. Although the proportion of deaths from suicide out of the total number of deaths declined between 1960–1964 and 1996–2000, from 2.5% to 1.5%, among young men and women aged 20–24, suicides represented, respectively, about 20% and 30% of all deaths that occurred between 1996 and 2000 [Džúrová and Dragomirecká 2002: 26]. The relative importance of suicides is likely to increase in the future owing to the continuing decline in the rate of mortality from natural causes.

### **Variation of suicide incidence by gender and age**

During the period of high suicide rates in the early 1970s, males were 2.6 times as likely as females to end their lives. The gradual decline in the suicide mortality rate in over the next thirty years, which was particularly pronounced among women, resulted in the ratio of male/female suicide rates increasing to about four times as likely in recent years (Table 2).

The age pattern of suicide mortality reflects, among other things, the stage in the life cycle at which stressful circumstances overpower an individual's natural inclination for survival and to protect their life. Stressful conditions are often encountered with increasing incidence at an older age, and thus in many societies suicide rates increase with age. This trend is also noticed in the Czech Republic, where the incidence of suicide steadily increases with age for both men and women (Table 3). This pattern has not noticeably changed over time. Yet one important change has manifested itself: in the course of the decline of suicide rates the incidence of suicide among older men and women has decreased by more than 40%, while among younger men the rates fluctuated, with no discernable trend. Such a fluctuation in suicide rates was also observed among men in the 20–29 age group during the 1990s. Although the numbers are not high, the phenomenon of constant or possibly even rising suicide incidence among young people is a matter of serious social concern. A rising incidence of suicide among young men has also been observed in some Western countries and has been documented by the World Health Organisa-

**Table 3. Suicide rates by age and sex. Czech Republic, selected periods (per 100 000 inhabitants)**

Age group	1970–1974		1981–1985		1991–1995		1996–2000	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
10–14	5.5	0.9	1.8	0.4	2.7	0.4	1.7	0.6
15–19	23.9	10.8	12.3	4.1	12.8	2.9	12.0	2.9
20–29	36.3	10.6	25.7	7.1	21.9	5.5	20.4	3.4
30–39	40.4	10.4	34.5	8.6	31.2	7.8	27.3	4.8
40–49	52.1	16.4	40.0	11.3	39.5	10.8	37.3	8.3
50–59	57.0	21.2	45.7	15.8	39.3	13.2	33.7	8.5
60–69	62.7	26.4	50.2	22.2	40.5	14.5	33.6	9.8
70+	109.7	45.6	102.5	36.5	76.7	27.2	62.3	16.6
10+	46.0	18.0	37.1	13.8	31.7	10.7	28.6	7.3
All ages	39.0	15.5	30.8	11.7	27.6	9.4	25.4	6.5

Source: Czech Statistical Office

tion [1996]. For instance, between 1960–1964 and 1990–1994 suicide mortality among males aged 15–24 increased in France from 6.7 to 18.2 per 100 000 inhabitants, in Finland from 18.9 to 45.5 per 100 000 inhabitants, in Norway from 4.6 to 21.9 per 100 000 inhabitants, in New Zealand from 5.8 to 34.9 per 100 000 inhabitants, and in Australia from 9.7 to 23.7 per 100 000 inhabitants in 1993 [Ruzicka and Choi 1999: 31].

### Marital status and the incidence of suicide

Apart from gender and age another demographic characteristic that has been associated with differences in the incidence of suicide is marital status. Suicide risk is considerably higher among non-married men and women than among those who are married. Two mechanisms have been suggested as plausible explanations for these differences: selection, or, alternatively, the sense of protection bestowed by marriage and having a family. In the first instance, differences in suicide rates may arise from a health-related selection process, which operates both in the marriage unit and in the breakdown of marriage in a divorce. A person's state of health may affect his/her chances of marrying; there is likely to be a relatively large proportion of people who suffer from health problems, especially mental health disorders, like drug or alcohol addition, among those who remain single, and that puts them at a greater risk of self-inflicted harm. The health status of a spouse may also affect the chances of a marriage ending in divorce. This kind of selection process may explain the higher than average suicide rates among divorced people and people who have never been married. An alternative explanation is the claim that marriage and fam-

**Table 4. Suicide rates by marital status, gender and age groups, Czech Republic, annual averages 2000–2002 (per 100 000 inhabitants)**

Marital status /Age groups	<20	20–24	25–44	45–64	65+
Males					
Currently married	17.6	19.6	25.0	34.4	24.4
Never married	21.0	29.6	61.2	90.1	15.0
Divorced	36.9	57.1	71.7	52.7	63.7
Widowed	1035.9*	64.8	81.3	105.3	99.0
Total	20.9	26.4	34.7	49.1	25.0
Females					
Currently married	1.4	3.8	7.5	9.4	5.9
Never married	3.2	7.3	14.3	11.8	2.7
Divorced	13.4	10.3	14.5	16.1	13.0
Widowed		4.4	9.0	16.3	14.3
Total	3.0	5.2	8.9	13.9	6.6

Note: \* Based on 1 suicide and 39 widowers

ily lead to a healthier life style, reduce exposure to stress, and provide greater access to social support networks [Gove 1973; Reher 1998].

As expected, married men and women had the lowest incidence of suicide in all age groups (Table 4). Among men the highest risk of suicide is among widowers, especially elderly widowers (the extremely high suicide rate among widowers in the 20–24 age group is distorted by the very low number at risk). Widowed women appear to cope with their bereavement better than men and between the ages of 25 and 64 have suicide rates that are only slightly higher than for women still married. The breakdown of a marriage by divorce appears to put men at a lower risk of suicide than the loss of a partner owing to the latter's premature death. Women, on the other hand, seem to be exposed to a greater risk of suicide when their marriage ends in divorce than in the case of the premature death of their husband. Only at age 65 and over is the risk about the same for both types of marriage dissolution.

Reher [1998] makes a distinction between societies with strong family ties and those with relatively weak family ties and argues that in the former there is strong social cohesion and they are usually more conservative (in social though not necessarily in political terms). Social control of behaviour tends to be more effective in strong-family societies – as evinced by the low incidence of divorce and extra-marital pregnancy. In weak-family societies loneliness is one of the most significant social problems; the individual 'must confront the world and his own life without the safety net of familial support' [ibid.: 217]. According to some indicators the Czech Republic ranks among the weak-family societies: in 2000–2001 the divorce rate was 57 divorces per 100 marriages; in the same period 22.6% of total live births occurred

outside marriage; according to the 2001 census, 29.9% of all private households were single-person households. In the same census 62.2% of men and 56.0% of women admitted to having no religious affiliation. All the above indicators, which are usually assumed to be connected with high suicide rates, have been rising during the past two or three decades in the Czech Republic. Suicide rates have nonetheless been declining. It is just possible that the classic predictors of suicide incidence are no longer compelling.

To examine Durkheim's thesis that changes in suicide rates may be attributed to specific changes in the social environment, Makinen [1997] analysed trends in suicide rates in several European countries in the early 1960s and late 1970s. He found an association between high suicide rates and the process of the erosion of the traditional family, which was indicated by a higher frequency of divorce, a higher proportion of females in paid employment, and fewer children. However, the changes in suicide rates were unrelated to either the levels of or the changes in these social variables. European countries with 'modern' family characteristics experienced a 'suicide boom' during the 1960s, but as the boom subsided the association between suicide rates and social characteristics vanished. Makinen [1997] questioned the relationship between Durkheim's suicidogenic social indicators and suicide rates, hypothesising that a society reacts to social change in general, and to the transformation of family from 'traditional' to 'modern' in particular, by an increase in the incidence of suicide. However, in the course of time, as society becomes accustomed and adapts to the social patterns associated with 'modernity', the indicators lose their predictive capacity with respect to the incidence of suicide. The continuing decline of suicide rates in the Czech Republic, despite the recent economic and social change, may be indicative of such a case.

Thomas G. Masaryk's theory of the relationship between suicide rates and the religious climate of a society is another example of an association that has been extensively discussed for more than a century [Clarke 2003]. In a monograph published in 1881 Masaryk demonstrated how the mass phenomenon of suicide developed as a result of modern cultural life in general and owing to the decline in religiosity among the masses in particular. Drawing on historical examples, he observed that suicide rates increased during periods of social unrest, a weakening of order, and the waning of religious faith. He also noticed an association between suicide rates and education levels, in which he saw an explanation for contemporary prevalent differences in the incidence of suicide. Masaryk also pointed out the differences in suicide rates among the Germanic, Romanesque and Slavic nations, which he attributed to an unbalanced education, lacking moral and religious content. Although the transformation of traditional societies is now studied in the context of changes among a wider range of factors, in the 20th century Masaryk's 'religiosity of the masses' continues to be one of them. In a recent study Neeleman and Lewis [1999] looked at twenty-six countries and investigated the relationship between suicide rates and an aggregate index of religiosity, controlling for socio-economic conditions. Adjusted for socio-economic variation, the negative associations

of male suicide rates with religiosity only were apparent in the thirteen least religious countries. The authors concluded that men are less likely to commit suicide in a religious society regardless of their attitudes toward religion. Clarke, Bannon and Denihan [2003] attempted to verify Masaryk's theory using data for Ireland. They concluded that both social supports and intolerance of suicide constitute the protective effect of a community's religious climate, diminishing the inclination to suicidal behaviour. Although religiosity may be a marker for other, not clearly recognised factors, it is an indicator whose validity emerged even in the analysis of regional variation in suicide rates in the Czech Republic.

### Social correlates of suicide

Each act of self-destruction results from an individual's decision, which reflects, *inter alia*, that person's psychological and social characteristics and circumstances. The external influencing factors – in Durkheim's parlance, the suicidogenic factors – identify the existence and the distribution of the parameters within which individuals make their choices. Social, cultural and economic factors, irrespective of how closely they may be correlated with the incidence of suicidal acts, do not determine an individual's propensity to suicide. 'External factors...cause no particular individual to commit suicide but act to generate an overall effect' [Cresswell 1974: 158]. However, cultural and social characteristics potentially affect the variation in the incidence of suicide in another way: through differential reporting or misreporting of the event as suicide. In Farberow's [1975: xiii] words: '...culture will define and direct the way in which suicide occurs, is reacted to, and is reported'.

Unfortunately, the cause-of-death statistics only provide very limited social, cultural and economic information about the deceased persons. One way to get around this problem is to attempt an indirect approach, by analysing regional differences in the incidence of suicide in relation to the variation in the social and economic characteristics of the regional populations. However, this approach leads to ecological correlations, and, as Robinson [1950] so well pointed out, the limitations of ecological correlations in causal analysis must be borne in mind.

A preliminary analysis of suicide statistics by district indicated that the ratio of 'uncertain' to 'certain' suicides varied regionally. To reduce the possibility that such variation could affect the results of the regional analysis, we calculated the district suicide rates using the total number of 'certain' and 'uncertain' suicides. The resulting average annual suicide rates for 1996–2000 were 36.1 and 9.1 per 100 000 men and women, respectively.

The Czech Republic is divided into seventy-six administrative districts. For the regression analysis the directly standardised regional suicide rates were calculated for the population aged 15–84 years, males and females taken together. The standard used was the age structure of the population as of 1 July 1998. The selected independent variables to be correlated with the incidence of suicide during the

**Table 5. Correlation coefficients of selected regional characteristics and incidence of suicide. Czech Republic, 1996–2000**

Characteristics	R	Significance
National heterogeneity	0.518	0.000
Locally born	-0.590	0.000
Gypsies	0.474	0.000
Religiosity	0.583	0.000
Low level of education	0.410	0.000
Unemployment	0.226	0.048
Induced abortion	0.581	0.000
Criminality	0.244	0.032

Note: For more about characteristics, see Annex A.

1996–2000 period are listed in Annex A, along with their interpretation and the anticipated association. However, it must be kept in mind that the selected variables are merely surrogates of what are likely to be the real causal factors behind suicidal acts.

Bivariate correlation between standardised district suicide rates and each of the selected independent variables suggests a close association (at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) with abortion ratios, religiosity, and low homogeneity of the population (in terms of the index of heterogeneity as well as the percentage of locally born). Weaker associations, though still statistically significant, were found with variables describing levels of criminality and unemployment (Table 5). However, some of the independent variables are highly inter-correlated, and their explanatory value is thus reduced. This is particularly the case of the index of heterogeneity, the proportion of the locally born population, the index of religiosity, and the incidence of abortion.

Therefore, we carried out a stepwise regression analysis: by means of a step-by-step addition of the independent variables the combination of three variables 'explained' 50% of the regional variation in suicide rates. The explanatory variables were the abortion ratio, the locally born population, and the limited level of education, in that order. None of the other independent variables made a further significant contribution to the explained variance (Table 6). The resulting equation estimating regional suicide rate is

$$\hat{Y} = 18.623 - 0.186 X_1 + 0.163 X_2 + 1.125 X_3,$$

where

$\hat{Y}$  is the directly standardised district suicide rate (based on recorded suicides plus open verdicts) per 100 000 persons aged 15–84 years;

$X_1$  is the proportion of locally born persons in the district population;

$X_2$  is the ratio of induced abortions per 100 live births in the district; and

$X_3$  is the proportion of persons aged 15+ years with less than elementary education.

**Table 6. Multiple Stepwise regression of regional standardised suicide rates (\*) and significant explanatory variables; Czech Republic, 1996–2000**

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	Significance
Dependent variable:				
Suicide rate* per 100 000	0.709	0.502		
Independent variables:				
Abortion ratio			0.375	0.000
Proportion of locally born population			−0.330	0.000
Proportion of people with a low level of education			0.217	0.018

Note: \* Deaths recorded as suicides, males + females, age group 15–84 years; standard=age distribution of the population of Czech Republic on 1 July 1998.

**Table 7. Age standardised mortality ratios: total mortality and suicides in the age group 40–84 years by level of education and gender, Czech Republic, 1999–2000**

Level of education	All deaths		Suicides	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Elementary	1.338	1.010	1.464	0.817
High school (without certificate)	1.049	1.093	1.033	1.028
High school (with certificate)	0.796	0.949	0.700	1.302
Tertiary education	0.578	0.646	0.627	0.873
Total	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Source: Rychtaříková [2002].

The districts with comparatively highly standardised suicide rates were those in which there was a high incidence of induced abortion and a strong prevalence of low education, and in which the population was rather heterogeneous, that is, where a large proportion of the population had moved in from other parts of the country or from abroad.

The positive association of the risk of suicide with the level of education may have a direct component apart from the hypothesised effect. A study by Rychtaříková [2002] found that men aged 40–84 with a low level of education had the highest propensity to suicide (1.464, i.e. 46% higher than the national average), while those with tertiary education had the lowest (0.627, i.e. 37% below the national average). This pattern was very similar to that of differential death rates from all causes (Table 7). Women's suicide rates by educational level did not show a consistent pattern.

**Table 8. Suicide rates and unemployment, Czech Republic, annual average 1996–2000 (per 100 000 inhabitants)**

Employment status	Age group			
	15–34	35–59	15–59	0–85+
Total population	3.5	7.3	10.8	12.4
Seeking employment	14.7	26.1	40.8	41.3

*Source:* Data from Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic

In general, Masaryk's theory of the 'physical and mental organisation of man' as the underlying factor of suicidal behaviour appears to be reflected in our model, in which 'social disorganisation' variables are of importance. In the highly industrialised regions of the country, which attract employment-seeking migrants from other parts of the country (as well as from abroad), the standardised suicide rates are generally above the national average. Migration is a selection process and is heavily weighted by single persons whose suicide risk is typically higher than average. The process itself leads to the interruption of cultural traditions and family links and supports, resulting in potential social isolation and loneliness and particularly in aggravating any crisis situations. Such crises include prolonged unemployment, which appears especially to increase the risk of self-inflicted harm: in the Czech Republic suicide rates were four times higher among unemployed persons of working age (15–59 years) than in the total population of that age group (Table 8). Among unemployed persons who committed suicide, an aggravating factor was the comparatively high rate of alcohol and drug abuse: alcohol abuse was reported in 46% and drug abuse in 24% of all cases of suicide among the unemployed, in contrast to 24% and 11%, respectively, among all suicides [Dzúrová and Dragomírečká 2002: 68].

## Conclusions

In many respects the ecological characteristics of suicides in the Czech Republic are not any different from those found in other countries. This is particularly true of the patterns in the differences in the incidence of suicide between men and women, by age, and by marital status. The decline in suicide rates among older men and women may be attributed to improved palliative care and pain management in the case of chronic illness, and to the widening of access to institutional social and health care for the elderly. In addition, since the end of the communist regime, non-governmental organisations have emerged that provide support and counselling in these areas. Freedom to express one's religious affiliation may also play a role. However, what is disconcerting is the stagnation and, more recently, a possible increase in suicide rates among teenagers and young adults. This tendency gives rise to several social concerns, especially because of its association with the problems school-leavers

face in obtaining employment and with rising levels of alcohol and drug abuse among young people. The new competitive environment and an increasing emphasis on a person's individual responsibility may also exert a strong influence.

The observed regional differences in the incidence of suicide appear to be related to the structure of the regional populations rather than to the economic characteristics of the regions. A higher than average incidence of suicide was observed in the regions with a large proportion of immigrants. In the new environment migrants may suffer from feelings of isolation, from the interruption of social and familial links, and from a loss of identity. In contrast, low suicide rates were recorded in the regions that have traditionally been dominated by a Roman Catholic population.

It is worth mentioning that the trend in suicide rates in the Czech Republic since the 1970s appears to support Makinen's hypothesis. Traditional social indicators relating to suicide incidence, such as divorce or extra-marital pregnancy, appear to be losing their predictive power as society is changing. Events that may previously have been considered as casting social shame on the individual and his or her family may have lost much of their stigmatising effect.

Notwithstanding the ecological correlates of the incidence of suicide, the decision to take one's life is an individual decision, perceived as the only solution to pressing problems. However, the identification of areas with a comparatively high incidence of suicidal behaviour may assist in designing policies and measures to alleviate this problem. Such policy measures may range from broader-based economic assistance, such as developing job opportunities, especially for young people, to specific mental health-related assistance, such as socio-psychiatric counselling services.

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## **Appendix A.**

Selected population characteristics of the regions and their assumed association with the variation in the incidence of suicide

Characteristics:	Hypothesis:
Proportion of persons of a nationality other than Czech, Moravian or Silesian	Greater heterogeneity of the population is assumed to be associated with lesser social cohesion and a higher incidence of suicide
Proportion of persons born within the given region	
Proportion of ethnic Gypsies in the district's population	A higher proportion of Gypsies may result in more frequent inter-personal conflicts and a higher incidence of suicide
Proportion of persons declaring no religious affiliation	Religiosity is assumed to provide some protection against self-inflicted harm; a higher incidence of suicide is expected in the regions with a low proportion of persons declaring religious affiliation
Proportion of persons aged 15+ with less than basic/elementary education	A low level of education is deemed to reduce employment opportunities and choice of jobs, limit the quality of life, and increase the risk of psycho-pathological disturbances, including suicide
Percentage of unemployed in the regional labour force	A high level of unemployment may result in a higher incidence of suicide
Number of induced abortions per 100 live births	A high abortion ratio may indicate a higher incidence of weak family structures and thus a higher propensity to suicide
Incidence of criminal acts in the region (per 1000 population)	A higher level of criminality may indicate social disorganisation and a higher propensity to suicide

# Citizens, Families, and Reform

***Citizens, Families, and Reform***  
**Stein Ringen**

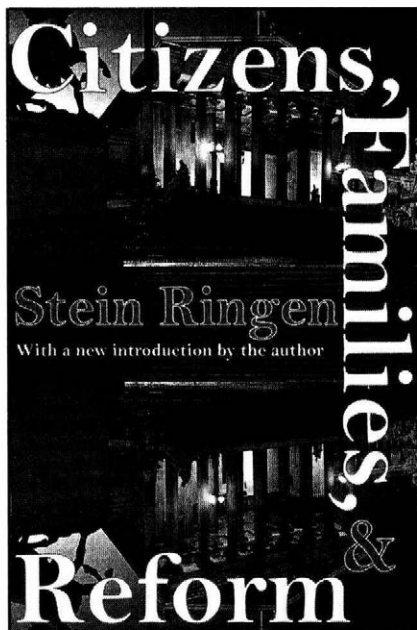
With a New Introduction by the author

In ***Citizens, Families, and Reform***, Stein Ringen shows how long-standing inequalities of income and class are flexible and changing in post-industrial societies. Such inequalities respond to structural changes such as social mobility and to public policies such as those of the welfare state. His book is a study of the process from careful statistical analysis to specific policy recommendations.

***Citizens, Families, and Reform*** draws on two strands of research summarizing detailed statistical analysis, one on children and families and the other on social inequality. Ringen's basic premise is that prudent social policy should start from investment in families. Progress and reform in society, such as extended access to education, tends to modify social divisions and stimulate open opportunity, particularly in the area of higher education. ***Citizens, Families, and Reform*** addresses the situation of children, who have a surprisingly lower standard of living than adult population groups by most measures of well-being. Ringen attributes this disparity to flaws in the distribution of power, which leads to the disenfranchisement of children as citizens. He addresses this problem by discussing children and voting rights, building a case for realizing the ideal of one person, one vote, by extending the vote to children.

Real democracies are necessarily imperfect. Ringen argues for the classical liberal theory of social progress through economic growth and equality of opportunity and warns against the "terrible temptation towards perfection." ***Citizens, Families, and Reform's*** new introduction reviews the debates sparked by the book's original publication in 1997 and suggests areas in which his arguments have been vindicated.

*Stein Ringen* is professor of sociology and social policy and fellow of Green College, University of Oxford. He has held various academic posts in government, including assistant director general in the Norwegian Ministry of Justice. He is the author of *The Possibility of Politics*, to be reissued by Transaction in 2006.



ISBN: 1-4128-0498-1 (Paper) 2005 218 pp. \$24.95/£18.95/€29.95



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## Old Obligations in the Modern World: The Father as Provider before and after Divorce

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**Abstract:** The article draws on empirical qualitative research to identify the various ways in which separated or divorced fathers in the Czech Republic relate to the norm of father-provider. It offers an analysis of the plurality of men's approaches to the traditional provider norm of fatherhood, and the changes that occur in their attitudes and approaches as a result of divorce. The results show that although for Czech men the 'provider' dimension is the strongest dimension in their notion of fatherhood even after marital separation, their understanding of what material support for the children means is transformed by the fact of separation. In the father's view, the child, along with the family, ceases to be a joint enterprise, and the child often becomes identified with the ex-wife. According to their notions and practices concerning child support, the men in this study can be divided into three groups: nurturing fathers who reject the provider/caregiver division and thus refuse to pay; helping fathers who consider their children to be primarily the ex-wife's responsibility, and thus only pay small amounts of money, and the fathers-providers who are willing to fully support their children, but only if this support is voluntary and under their control.

**Keywords:** parenthood, fatherhood, marital separation, child support, family  
*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review*, 2006, Vol. 42, No. 3: 573–590

The vast majority of social-scientific research dealing with the issue of parenthood after divorce focuses mainly on examining the impact that divorce has on the children and on analysing the situation of mothers who have sole custody of the children, while fathers are most often considered in terms of an intervening factor. Contemporary research on fatherhood has yet to take up the task of revealing how men, after divorce, cope with the loss of everyday contact with their children, how they re-define their fatherhood, and what changes their paternal role, their identity, and the way they care for their children undergo. To this end it is also necessary to investigate the ways in which fathers handle the varied and sometimes even incompatible standards that nowadays apply to fatherhood, and how they reconcile the discrepancies that exist between the old, traditional normative demands and the

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new, modern<sup>1</sup> normative demands. In the traditional normative model of fatherhood the father is first of all the provider, responsible for ensuring the material comfort of his children. Sociological studies show that in the Czech Republic this is still a very significant dimension of fatherhood, even though the specific substance of the dimension is changing. Moreover, it is predominantly assumed that when a couple who are parents divorce the father continues to be the provider for his children, and this dimension of fatherhood persists even beyond the fundamental changes that other dimensions have already undergone.

In this paper the author draws on empirical qualitative research to identify the various ways in which separated or divorced fathers in the Czech Republic relate to the norm of father-provider, how they interpret it subjectively, and in what way this norm is reflected in their behaviour. The article goes on to analyse the plurality of men's approaches to the traditional provider norm of fatherhood, and the changes that occur in their attitudes and approaches as a result of divorce. The objective of the article is to discover some of the reasons why, after divorce, only a limited number of fathers fully attend to their court-ordered duty to provide their children with economic support.<sup>2</sup>

## **The paternal role**

In order to obtain an accurate grasp of the problem it is first necessary to clarify the theoretical conception of social roles in general and the paternal role in particular. Social roles are traditionally defined as the expected manner of behaviour that is tied to any particular social status [Velký sociologický slovník 1996: 943]. The paternal role may be understood as referring to the sum of everything that is expected from the person who occupies the status of father, that is, the entire inventory of norms associated with the social position of 'father'. The way in which a man plays his pa-

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<sup>1</sup> I use these terms in their common-sense lexical meaning, not in the sociological sense. In this sense 'tradition' means a long-term custom or practice. The 'traditional' norm of fatherhood corresponds to the traditional and the first phase modern society, while the development of the 'modern' norm of fatherhood corresponds to the second phase of modern society (since the 1960s) (see Singly [2000: 16]). 'Traditional' therefore refers to the norms and obligations that were most strongly associated with fatherhood during the first industrialisation period, when the workplace and the home were separated and fathers began to be absent from the home for longer periods during the day.

<sup>2</sup> Data on the degree of compliance among divorced fathers with court-ordered child support payments are unfortunately not yet available in the Czech Republic. It may be assumed that the rate of compliance will correspond to that observed in other countries: the American authors D. R. Meyer and J. Bartfield [1996] assert that 15% of fathers pay nothing, 41% pay part of the sum they are required to pay, and 44% pay the full amount; the Canadian author M. Baker [1997] cites national estimates indicating that 50% to 75% of fathers pay nothing or only part of what they are required to pay.

ternal role depends on the hierarchical order in which the individual dimensions are arranged, and after a divorce for many reasons this hierarchy often changes.

The classic definition of a social role no longer corresponds to social reality today. More appropriate appears to be the French sociologist Francois de Singly's concept of roles and identity [2003: 99–100], according to which nowadays there is no single role that corresponds to a given social position – although this has been the traditional view in the social sciences – and instead individuals construct numerous personal roles on the basis of various registers or social repertoires. Repertoires are 'narratives in which only one of the dimensions pertaining to the role figures' [Singly 2003:100]; they are particular patterns of behaviour that all individuals in a given social position have available to them and which they choose from and combine to create their own version of a particular role. This means that it is possible to identify multiple, different repertoires pertaining to the social position of the father and associated with each particular dimension of fatherhood. The actors choose from and combine these repertoires to create their own paternal role. In this way they select their own personal way of being a father, and this personal role becomes part of their identity (for more on the notion of roles and identity see Singly [2003]). To study the nature that the paternal role acquires after parents divorce, it is necessary to reveal how individuals construct their roles on the basis of various repertoires and to examine the kinds of relationships that exist between these individual repertoires.

### **The traditional and the modern norm of fatherhood**

It is possible to trace some common features in the various theoretical approaches to contemporary fatherhood [Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley and Buehler 1995; Singly 2000; Modak and Pallazo 2002] and to distinguish two basic groups of norms – for simplification they are referred to here as the traditional and the modern norms of fatherhood (see footnote 1). The traditional norm involves the functions of intergenerational transmission and authority and especially the father's obligation to materially provide for the family, while the new, modern norm expects emotional closeness, the father's physical presence, and his active involvement in looking after the children and, in some cases, also the household. While traditionally the father was a father 'by proxy', i.e. his parental role was to a large extent mediated by the mother, partly by the way in which she spoke of him to the child, and partly by how she spoke about the child to the father, the modern father is meant to have a direct, unmediated, and personalised relationship. Evidence of the effect of the modern norm of fatherhood can be found in some trends in contemporary social policy, for example, the introduction of parental leave and the ongoing discussion over short-term paternity leave, which would enable a father to spend at least several days with his newborn child.

Data from quantitative surveys conducted over the past ten years (ISSP 1994; *Naše společnost/Our Society* 2003) indicate that in Czech society the traditional norm

of fatherhood is still quite strong. Even though women have been active in the labour market now for several generations, the ideal notion maintained by a full one-half of all Czech men and women about the arrangement of roles in the family is still very traditional in character: the man is supposed to see to the family's financial security and the woman is primarily responsible for looking after the children and the household [Hašková 2003: 39; Radimská 2003: 12]. Even though the family budgets of the majority of households require both parents to be economically active in order to maintain a satisfactory standard of living, and even though women are considered 'co-providers', according to 90% of Czech men and women it is still the main task of the father to provide as best as possible for the financial security of his family [*Naše společnost/Our Society* 2003]. These data illustrate the specific situation the Czech Republic is in as a transition country still affected by the legacy of communism, in which modern elements (a high percentage of women in the labour market, a well-developed system of institutional childcare to help reconcile work and family responsibilities, a high divorce rate) and traditional elements (vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market, persistent gender stereotypes in the family) were combined. Modernisation was moreover largely and artificially enforced and was not accepted or viewed as positive by large segments of the population.

What does this division of roles mean in terms of being a parent? Outside the father's economic responsibility there is no specific sphere of raising or caring for the children where he is engaged more than the mother. The woman is responsible for the majority of activities connected with parenthood, and if the father's involvement increases, then it does so only alongside the mother, either with her or in her place when she is unavailable [Singly 2000: 182]. If the parents divorce, the mother ceases to represent the parental couple in her relationship with the children, and the father's absence consequently acquires a new significance. Before, though he may not have been personally present in the family for the majority of the time, his presence was mediated through the mother. After a divorce he becomes genuinely absent, even if in the end he is spending as much time with his children as he spent before [see also Bowmann and Ahrons 1985].

Below we will look at the results of a qualitative study of divorced fathers in the Czech Republic<sup>3</sup> and see how Czech fathers define themselves in the face of the traditional norm of fatherhood and what kind of influence the provider repertoire has on their individualised paternal role. We will look at how the use of this repertoire changes after the marriage breaks up – that is, how fathers after a divorce continue or desist in their provider role, and what influence this dimension has on the relationship they maintain with their children.

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<sup>3</sup> The author conducted this study in 2004–2005 as part of her doctoral project 'Parenthood after Divorce in the Czech Republic'.

## **Research methodology**

The methodology used in this research analysis in this paper is based on grounded theory [Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 1999], and is particularly inspired by the constructivist version of grounded theory propounded, for example, by Kathy Charmaz [2003] and Jean-Claude Kaufmann [2001]. The assumption in this methodology is that the reality that I discover arises out of an interpretative process and from its temporal and cultural circumstances. Thus it is not just a matter of discerning a single objective reality of post-divorce fatherhood but rather understanding the ways in which the subjects under analysis construct and interpret their own subjective reality.

The basic research question is how fatherhood is perceived and understood by men who, after separating from their partner, do not have custody of the children, no longer share a home with them or have day-to-day ritualised contact with them, and cease to live within the family they helped found. The aim is to grasp how these fathers reconstruct and maintain their paternal and male identity, how they accommodate and create their own paternal role, how they interpret the situation they find themselves in, and what kind of rationalising strategies they elect in this new situation.

The target group in the research was men who had divorced the mother of their child or children in the period between 1989 and 2000<sup>4</sup> and whose children were no older than thirteen at the time of the divorce. This meets the condition that there be a consistent, global socio-economic experience in the entire sample population and at the same time ensures that the events that respondents refer to are not too far back in the past. The age of the child at the time of divorce is capped so that the respondents were at least for some time required to be in the situation of a divorced father of child who had not yet reached puberty, which has specific implications for the construction of the paternal identity and role. It is with smaller children that the question of everyday care arises, as it can be assumed that they are not yet self-sufficient in life and require greater attention and concern.

The sample includes men between the ages of 25 and 52, with children between the ages of 3 months and 23 years. Roughly one-half of the respondents have university-level education, and the remainder have secondary education or vocational training in some profession. The structure of education is to some degree replicated in the economic standing of the respondents, but does not necessarily correspond in all cases. The majority of respondents have the standard, court-ordered amount of contact with their children, which is every second weekend and a part of the summer holiday term. Fourteen of the respondents adhere to this court-ordered routine, five fathers see their children less often owing to the fact that their

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<sup>4</sup> The major part of the sample population was selected using the snowball method and contacted by telephone with a request for an interview; seven respondents were selected from a database at a psychological counselling centre and were contacted by post. Sample saturation was used to set the number of interviews, and a total of 35 interviews were conducted.

children are older and they or their children have little free time, and two have less frequent contact because their former spouses at times prevent them from seeing the children. Four respondents opt for more frequent but shorter, irregular contacts, where the children do not stay with them overnight. Five fathers in the sample maintain more frequent than average contact with their children: two of them have joint custody of the children, two spend roughly a third of their time with the children, and one father has sole custody of one of his children. Finally, five respondents have no or only rare contact with their children.<sup>5</sup>

A constructivist version of grounded theory [Charmaz 2003] was used to analyse the data, based on the assumption that no 'epistemological rupture' exists between the everyday knowledge of respondents and the theoretical knowledge of social scientists. The methodology's theoretical assumption is that no recognisable, objective social reality exists, and instead what we have are numerous subjective social realities shared by various groups of actors [Charmaz 2003; Schwandt 2003; Potter 1996]. Using this approach it is possible to reveal how a given group of men see and interpret their situation, what significance they assign to the experiences they encounter, their own actions and the actions of others, and how their interpretations subsequently influence the direction of their other actions. Divorced fathers have their own subjective social reality, which is obviously just one of the many social realities that together make up and compete with each other in the space of post-divorce parenthood. The biggest limitation to this method of analysis is that it does not encompass respondents who refuse to speak about their situation, and that is likely most often the case of divorced fathers who maintain no or only irregular contact with their children.

### **The provider as one of the main repertoires of fatherhood**

Despite all the changes fatherhood has undergone in recent decades, the relationship of the father to his employment has not changed in any fundamental way [Castelain Meunier 2002; Townsend 2002]. All the interviews conducted with the respondents in the sample revealed that the dimension of provider is still a key factor in male identity. Even if they do not actually define themselves in the first place as the provider in the family, they all do feel the need to define themselves in some way in relation to this norm. All the respondents are aware of the general expectation that the father should financially provide for and support the family. This norm is present everywhere, but fathers differ in terms of how much they accept and behave in accordance with it.

Considering that the wives of all the respondents had had paid employment at least at some phase, the household model of provider/housewife (in which the man only provides materially for the family and the woman only looks after the chil-

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<sup>5</sup> The names used in the article are not the respondents' real names.

dren and the household) was never permanently applied in any of the cases. Nonetheless, the significance of the economic activity of the men and the women in these families, as in the population as a whole, differed. Even though a woman's income is essential to maintaining a satisfactory standard of living in the family, it is perceived as secondary, while the man is primarily responsible for the household's material security. In the man's case paid employment is taken as a given and he is not required to deal with the issues of reconciling work and family commitments. He invests more into his professional career than the woman does, and his income is usually higher than that of a woman with the same level of education. Unlike women, his career is not interrupted for family reasons. The periods of maternity and parental leave are a time when the family usually relies on one income, and with just one exception in the sample it was the man's income. The relatively long period of parental leave in the Czech Republic (from two to six years) gives rise to a situation where the family functions for a while according to the 'traditional' model, in which the father is the sole provider.

The dimension of provider does not just involve the financial contribution from paid work but also other material provisions for the children. In the Czech Republic this refers mainly to home improvements, an activity that is perceived as part of the father's investment in his family and children and that the father views as equal in value to the time spent personally with his children and to his paid professional work. One respondent, Oldřich (an entrepreneur; 2 sons, ages 17 and 14), used to spend time on home improvements in the family flat, which after his divorce his wife and children continued to live in, and he perceived that time as more than just a material contribution for his children, but also as time spent in their company, which further confirmed him in his position as a father: *'Because I contributed a lot to improving the flat in Sojčák, ... I spent a lot of time there'*. Conversely, Richard (an automotive service employee; one daughter, age 10) viewed work on home improvements as a way of compensating for his absence from paid employment: *'I was unemployed for around five months in '92, so I worked on the flat'*.

Even though while engaged in economic activity the father is not present in the household and in the company of his children, his employment is part of his paternal role and identity. Men regard their professional time (before divorce) as time spent as a father – work for them is one way of looking after their family and children.

*'But I really looked forward to having a child. That's for sure. I looked forward to being a family, and I went to work and earned money to provide for us.'* (Kamil, employee of an NGO; one son, age 14)

*'I'll conclude it with this, I'm going to work so that some day the firm benefits the kids, and so that here, after I'm gone, let's say, there'll be something to remember me by.'* (Vít, company director; two daughters, ages 21 and 17, one son, age 5)

## **Divorce and the provider repertoire**

What kinds of changes does divorce bring about in the attitudes of fathers toward the provider repertoire? How much do they remain the family provider after the divorce – if they are no longer the provider do they see themselves at least as the provider for their children, who are not in their custody and do not share their household?

In reality it may be said that this involves a dimension of fatherhood that expresses itself noticeably after divorce, either negatively or positively. All the respondents expressed a feeling that after the divorce they were expected to continue in the role of provider but nothing more, and that in the other dimensions they were shut out of the family (according to Daniel (translator; one daughter, age 6) the main expectations from a father after divorce can be easily summed up as *'shut up and pay'*). The differences occur in how much men agree and identify with this expectation.

After a divorce relationships that to that time had functioned in some manner within the 'communist community' of the family are suddenly calculated in explicitly financial terms [see Arendell 1986; 1995]. The main change in the provider repertoire is probably that after the divorce the married couple, and thus also the parental couple, ceases to exist as a unit, and this becomes most evident in the division of the previously joint family budget into two parts. The division of labour in the family, where physically looking after the household means in theory the same contribution to the family as financial security and vice versa, is challenged. The mother no longer represents the parental couple, that is, the father, to the child in the father's absence. The father's financial contribution ceases to be for the child a visible symbol of the father's involvement. If the mother refuses to mediate the father's role by speaking of his work and financial contribution, his role as provider can become completely invisible.

## **The two levels of financial support**

After divorce fathers are most often able to perform the provider repertoire of their paternal role on two basic levels. The first is by paying a court-ordered sum of child support, and the second is what the father gives the mother or child voluntarily in addition to that [see also Cohen 1993; Municio-Larsson, Pujol Algans 2002]. Although the first level is actually defined as mandatory, both involve a certain kind of negotiation, whether between the actors involved or in the minds of the respondents. The majority of respondents nonetheless accept the fact that it is necessary to pay child support – even though some of them consider the amount too high, or view it as unfair given the wife's income or owing to the circumstances of the divorce. Despite this initial blanket acceptance of the obligation to pay child support after divorce, many of the respondents eventually admitted that there are situations where child support should not have to be paid, for example, if a woman leaves her

husband for a richer man, or when the mother does not allow the father any contact with the child. In this case the mother is not fulfilling her obligations to the father, and therefore the father need not fulfil his obligations to the mother.

Evident from the above is the basic paradox of the provider repertoire as the building block of the paternal role: before divorce the father sees himself as the 'family provider', providing money for the entire household, not just the children, and investment into the household is essentially also an investment in the children. After the divorce the family as a unit dissolves, and the father can no longer be the 'family provider'. Theoretically he should remain the provider for his children, but they now belong to the household of his former wife, with whom he is in some more or less serious conflict. The majority of fathers do not distinguish between the personal needs of their former wife, the needs of the household as a whole, and the needs of their children.

Fathers take a more creative approach to contributions beyond the margins of mandatory child-support payments. They may use the additional resources to negotiate with the wife or even the child. If the wife does not abide by the established terms (for example, she refuses to allow the father contact with the child), she does not receive any additional money or gifts. As Jan, one respondent (journalist, one daughter, age 5) said: *As we agreed, as I can now, so I pay the child support. And when the relationship was working and I could go there, which wasn't properly understood, then I helped her materially more than I had to. Buying clothes and stuff like that.* Conversely, the mothers use their control over the time spent with the child to negotiate additional financial support – when they're in need, they allow the father contact with the child, which they may previously have blocked, in order to obtain additional money.

Unlike child support, the father has some control over the additional contributions he makes. He can give his contributions directly to the child, so that the child is aware of them, and he is able to decide how the money will be used. Court-ordered child support is often interpreted as a contribution to the wife, while additional contributions are viewed as being directly for the child. Jan's view was: *'It's not that I'm taking revenge on the child, definitely not. It's just, I give the money to her and not to the child, and I don't know what she does with it'.*

The fathers' preference for direct and voluntary material contributions to cover their children's needs is connected with the very nature of fulfilling the provider dimension of the paternal role. The provider dimension is of key importance for many of the respondents, but when they contribute in the form of child support payments they may be invisible to the child [Seltzer, Schaeffer and Charng 1989]. By buying something with the child or giving the child money the provider dimension is exercised and visible in practical terms.

## **How fathers relate to the provider repertoire**

Although the provider repertoire is in some way a part of the paternal role of all the respondents in the sample, and this traditional norm of fatherhood still significantly influences the construction of the paternal identity of Czech fathers, differences appear in the way in which the fathers, during the interviews, defined themselves in relation to this norm, and in the way in which they interpreted the provider repertoire in specific terms. Not all of them give clear priority to this dimension of fatherhood, and not all of them consider fulfilling the obligation of supporting the family as sufficient for the fulfilment of their role as a father.

It was possible to distinguish three model approaches that surfaced in the responses of the divorced fathers in the interview sample with regard to how they relate, in their attitudes and practices, to the norm 'the father must provide for the family'. These approaches may of course apply to fathers in general and not just to divorced fathers. These three approaches represent three ways in which the respondents currently perform their repertoire as provider, and as such form part of their individual paternal role and also identity. Those different approaches than reflect in the behaviour of father as a provider before divorce, and also in the ways in which fathers relate to the provider repertoire after divorce.<sup>6</sup>

These three model approaches to the norm of father as provider were identified with the use of grounded theory in coding and classification. They represent a certain analytical simplification of social reality, but they nonetheless best reflect the areas where the respondents most coincided or differed, and it was possible to classify each respondent in one of the three groups. It is important to point out that not all respondents necessarily exhibited a fixed tendency to belong to one single model approach, and during a respondent's life course the model they belonged to changed in some cases, particularly in relation to the specific situation of the Czech Republic and the transition process that society has been going through.

### ***Group A: The 'full' providers***

The first group consists of fathers who accept this norm without reservations – they believe that the father is primarily responsible for financially providing for the family, and for them being a father means fulfilling this provider role. Ten men from the

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<sup>6</sup> Men's willingness to contribute after divorce to covering the material needs of their children, and thus their continuation in the provider repertoire, depends on numerous external circumstances. Of importance is who it was that initiated the divorce, whose 'fault' it was, and why the divorce had to happen. Another factor is the question of whether the father regularly sees his children and whether his former wife allows him to see them. But just as they were before the divorce, of fundamental significance here are the father's general ideas about the division of gender roles in the family and about the provider repertoire as part of the paternal role.

sample could be classified in this group. Some of them responded that they are against any questioning of this role and asserted its validity, and they felt threatened by and rejected the changes that are occurring in society: *'My feeling is that it's been established for several centuries that the man takes care of the income and making sure the family survives and the woman takes care of making sure everything comes together, and I think it'd be pretty difficult to change that.'* (Oto, accountant; one son, age 24, one daughter, age 20) Stressing the traditional norm of fatherhood goes hand in hand with an emphasis on the traditional norms of motherhood, where the mother is designated as responsible for the household and the children.

The fathers in this group, before they divorced, genuinely endeavoured to fully support their family and did not share this responsibility with their wives. Some of them exemplified this approach even before the changes that began to occur in society in 1989, and the economic transition only opened up new opportunities with which to fulfil their provider repertoire. In order to manage this they, for example, would hold two jobs or they began their own business – they invested the maximum in their professional life to provide for the family. This was Richard's experience (automotive service employee; one daughter, age 10): *'I held, say, two or three jobs, just to make up a bit at the other end, you know.'* For this group of fathers providing for the family meant bringing the maximum amount of money into the family budget. The more money, the more satisfied they were with the image of themselves as a father. But their work commitments left them little time or energy for other activities associated with fatherhood, as Jan reports (journalist; one daughter, age 5): *'It's a never-ending cycle, going to work, reconstructing the flat, so there was no time. Then there was the flat, but I was going to work all the time because there was always something that needed paying for, and somehow it had to be done.'* Here the repertoire of provider is the most fundamental component in the paternal role and paternal identity.

In return the men in this group demand that this division be respected and recognised also by their wives. They are convinced that as long as they fulfil their role as provider they have fulfilled their duty as father, and the wife has no right to demand more of them. If the woman is not satisfied with the man's definition of the paternal role, conflict and misunderstandings ensue, as was the case of Jan (journalist; one daughter, age 5): *'In actuality I can't understand it, I mean I provided us with a flat, I got work, I don't understand where all that hate comes from.'* According to Ivan (bank employee; two daughters, ages 5 and 9) the woman should respect and appreciate her husband for his economic contribution and not demand more of him:

*'There's a huge difference now....She acknowledges me as being capable of making money, she knows what it involves when I have to make money, because I'm sitting up to three or four in the morning several nights and I have to do it, we have deadlines, but it's for the money....She doesn't mind at all if I come exhausted from work and just sit down and need to rest, she's not lazy, she cleans the whole place and she doesn't need my help. It's a different approach; it's respect for the other person.'*

Within this group of men whose role as father draws primarily on the repertoire of family provider it is possible to detect differences in their background experience. From the perspective of the Czech Republic's specific situation as a country in the process of social and economic transition, a significant part of this group are men who reduced their paternal role to the repertoire of provider after the onset of capitalism, and the way in which they interpret the paternal role was facilitated by the change in the political and economic system. These men now define themselves mainly in professional terms. After the revolution they threw themselves into making money, and they managed to become successful. Usually they are independent businessmen, managers, or independent professionals in lucrative fields. They have little free time and they are capable of more or less supporting their family alone, so they put stress on the traditional norm of fatherhood. What is interesting is that these are often men who under the communist regime, before they were fully engaged in the professional sphere, did not ascribe the role of supporting the family any major significance. They originally belonged to group B and were providers only at the representative level, but following the change in circumstances in society and the positive change in their own professional life their approach to the father-provider repertoire also changed, and they began to conform with group A. Their position is not fixed by clear and firm convictions about the primary significance of the traditional norm for the paternal role and about the traditional gender-based division of labour, but by circumstances, and these of course correspond to the notion of fatherhood rooted in tradition.

Before divorce the men in this group focused their paternal role on the provider repertoire and provided for the economic needs of the family without any significant contribution from their partner. After divorce, they continue to acknowledge the provider/caregiver distinction, and they are willing to contribute more than the wife to the economic needs of their children, just as before the divorce. Many of them moreover continue to feel an obligation to support not only their children but also their former wife as compensation for the fact that she personally takes care of and is raising the children. After divorce not only should the mother not have to cover the costs of raising the children, but because she is caring for the children she has the right to support for herself. This point of view was expressed by Vít (company director; two daughters, ages 21 and 17, one son, age 5), a successful businessman with an above-average level of income: *'She's someone with a normal wage, so she wouldn't be able to afford much. So you have to take care of that. And the girls live with her. One still lives there all the time, the other just on weekends now. But I'm committed to the kids and to my wife for giving me the kids, too.'* Similarly, Josef (university lecturer) also does not question the obligation to support his now seventeen-year-old daughter by making a larger contribution than his former wife, given that even before the divorce the division of roles in the family was similar: *'I think that I contribute more financially, but that's not a problem for me, because basically, even in the marriage, I was making the money and she was at home.'*

Men who accept their role as the sole provider for their children are usually men with higher incomes (not all men with higher incomes however share this

view). They find their paternal identity in the fact that they economically provide the child with something that the mother cannot – additional material resources, private schools, expensive vacations, and travel. They are moreover aware that the expenses associated with raising children are much higher than the amount of child support set by the court, and they tend also to contribute in other, supplementary ways, but ways that they choose and control themselves.

*Group B: fathers who are providers on the representative level*

The second group is made up of fathers who accept the traditional norm but are also aware of the new demands that compete with the old and introduce certain paradoxes. The majority of the sample, i.e. 18 respondents, is in this group. The norm dictating that the father is above all the provider in the family is not as obvious and unequivocal in this group. These internal conflicts are reflected in the responses of some of the men interviewed, where we were direct witnesses to a process in which they became aware of the pluralist nature of fatherhood: *'In some way it's sort of normal that the dad should support the family. Normal? Well, I guess it isn't today, but... he probably should in some way provide for the family.'* (Radek, factory worker; one daughter, age 9) In this group the father's obligation to support the family is still the main dimension of fatherhood; it is an inseparable and unquestionable part of the paternal role. However, the fathers in this group are still aware that in addition to this norm there are also other obligations and demands that a father should attend to and that providing for the family alone is not enough, even though it continues to be the father's primary function. In addition, these men realise that attending to all the responsibilities associated with fatherhood, both the old and the new, is very demanding, and that these demands sometimes even seem incompatible. Frankly put: *'You've gotta work like a nut to make money and then you're never home.'* (Filip, taxi driver; two daughters, ages 13 and 7)

The men in this group see themselves as providers, but a deeper investigation reveals that in reality their families relied on the income of both partners in the couple, so the man is the provider only on a representative level. While the men emphasise the role of the man and the father as that of the provider, and also see themselves as such, their income is insufficient to support the family alone and is often no higher than that of their wife. Even though in practical terms they are not actually providing for the family, at least not exclusively, they perceive the provision of its material security as their main paternal responsibility. The fact that the man has a child automatically means that he must take care of the child's material needs – for this group of men this responsibility is not open to question or discussion. *'But I don't have a problem with having to support my kid.'* (Miroslav, driver; one daughter, age 10) For them, 'supporting' the family does not mean bringing in the maximum amount of money possible; it means 'providing' for the child, and that signifies different things to different men. It does not necessarily mean bringing home the most money and devoting all available time to making money, but rather involves ensuring an

acceptable standard of living, as subjectively determined by the fathers. This was Antonín's view (warehouse employee, one daughter, age 7): *'Naturally, to provide for the child's well being. That's important. But I wouldn't say that I'd necessarily have to make millions.'* There is enough room left open to these men to draw on other repertoires, and fatherhood is not restricted to just supporting the family. It remains the key paternal activity, but mainly at the representative level; in practical terms it is just one of a set of parental roles that both the child's father and mother devote themselves to.

Before separating from their partners, the provider repertoire was for this group of fathers a very important element in the composition of their version of the paternal role, but only in terms of the man being primarily responsible for the economic situation of the family. After divorce, however, the family as a unit breaks up, and the man, according to his understanding of things, ceases to be responsible for the material welfare of his children's household. Even though at the general level these men usually continue to claim that the father is supposed to be the main provider, in practical terms they view their contribution after divorce as just that, a contribution – the wife must financially contribute and must do so by providing for at least half of all the material needs of the children. The financial contribution the fathers make to the children should in their view be used exclusively for the child and not for the needs of the wife or her new family. After divorce the father-provider and mother-caregiver distinction ceases to apply. Personally looking after the children and the household and materially providing for the children and the household cease to be mutually commutable and of equal value. This means that the mother's personal care for the children is not compensated with money, as is the case in the two-parent family.

However, as long as they live in a two-parent family the fathers do not usually have an exact idea of how much they invest into raising their children and into their family. Men usually have a distorted idea of what a child actually needs and how much it costs. Consequently the sum they must pay seems too high, and they are convinced that the former wife is using the money for herself. In a two-parent family the social, economic, and cultural capital of its members is calculated, and investments into one area increase the benefits for everyone. Once the father no longer shares a household with his children and their mother, there are no subjective returns to him through an increase in his own capital from whatever he invests.

Men in this group nonetheless accept the basic responsibility for the material welfare of their children – as Miroslav said (driver; one daughter, age 10): *'Once I have kids, then I have to take care of them'*. Another respondent, Antonín (warehouse employee; one daughter, age 7) summed up his approach similarly: *'But on the other hand, I say to myself, you've got to pay. It's not that the kid was a mistake or anything, but once you've got a kid, then you should pay something.'* But like before the divorce, for these men 'supporting' the family does not mean bringing in the most money. Instead it means 'material security', and that signifies different things to different men.

*Group C: fathers who refuse to be providers*

For the men in both groups described above fatherhood is a firm component of their male identity, and being a father means first of all being the family provider. For those seven men other dimensions of fatherhood are optional. But there were several men in the sample who questioned the requirement that the father is mainly the provider and disputed the traditional norm of fatherhood. These men accorded greater importance to other dimensions of fatherhood that do not put them at a distance from their children and do not force them to spend long hours away from home. However, it is necessary to make a distinction between those fathers who questioned this norm (at least according to their responses) even before their divorce, and those who began questioning it after their divorce.

Some of the respondents, in their own words, rejected the obligation to support the family as their primarily paternal role even before they divorced, and they ascribed other dimensions of fatherhood with equal or greater importance and demanded from their wife that she equally contribute to materially providing for the family. According to Daniel (translator; one daughter, age 6) one of the reasons that led to his divorce was the fact that his wife refused to contribute to the family budget and assumed that he would be the sole provider in the family: *'She had this neat idea that she wasn't going to contribute anything to the household out of her pay. That she was going to make money, and she'd keep that for herself'*. These fathers reject the traditional division of roles in which the mother takes care of the children and the father is the provider, and do so even at the representative level. They do not want to be reduced as fathers to just 'the one that pays for things'. Some of these men, for example, Tomáš (painter; 2 daughters, age 5), spent some or all of the period of parental leave with their children, while the wife provided economically for the family. Vladimír (insurance agent) looked after his small son when his wife decided to work abroad, where she had a much better opportunity to earn money. For these men the repertoire of provider is not the most significant component in their paternal identity. But divorce presented them with an entirely new situation.

This group of fathers does not include the provider repertoire in their paternal role and contests the obligation of financially providing for their family as the first and foremost responsibility of the father. These men moreover have the feeling that after divorce this is the only dimension of fatherhood that is expected of them, and given that even before their divorce it was not in their view a dimension of significance or one they accepted, they find themselves in serious conflict with the expectations of society. These fathers are among those who most often question the obligation to pay the court-ordered amount of child support or just do not pay it at all.

## Conclusion

The changes that in recent decades the normative model of fatherhood has undergone in industrialised countries are increasing the plurality of demands and norms associated with fatherhood and also the plurality of ways in which fathers can be fathers – how they can interpret and construct their own version of the paternal role. The dimension of father as provider is part of the traditional normative sphere of fatherhood and in the social imagination of contemporary Czech society it continues to be of fundamental importance. All the respondents in the study feel a strong amount of social pressure to fulfil this function, and if a couple with children splits up it is generally assumed that this dimension of fatherhood particularly should be upheld, even if the others vanish. In this sense the commitment to provide for one's children represents an even stronger obligation associated with the role of father when the nature and content of social roles in general and the paternal role in particular are changing; the social role is becoming dependent on individual choice and is no longer defined in terms of a clear set of obligations and expectations tied to a certain position in society.

However, men do not accept the norm of provider across the board and without reservations. In this qualitative study of fatherhood after divorce in the Czech Republic it was possible to distinguish three ways in which fathers relate to the repertoire of provider as one and evidently the most important dimension of the paternal role. The respondents in the most numerous group B see themselves as providers, but a deeper investigation reveals that the family before the separation in reality depended on the income of both parents, so the man is only the provider on the representative level. After divorce, the men assume that the mother will contribute to providing for the material needs of the children and they view their financial contribution as really just a contribution. Another group of men (group C) question or explicitly reject this norm and fulfil themselves through other repertoires of fatherhood. After divorce they worry about their paternal role being reduced to the single dimension of provider. For this group of men the reconstruction of the paternal role is very difficult, especially if they find themselves in the typical and, in the Czech Republic, most common custody arrangement after a divorce, which allows only limited personal contact between the father and child, while the father's responsibilities as provider are preserved. In this regard, those fathers who accept the provider norm of fatherhood (like those in group A), and for whom it is the main dimension of the paternal role, find themselves in an easier position. Separation from their children does not require that they make any fundamental changes to the way in which they perform the role of father, they are able to continue in the provider repertoire, and their absence from the household does not signify any major change in behaviour. On the other hand, these fathers are exposed to the threat of their support for the child being rendered invisible if the child is not made sufficiently aware, either through joint activities or through the mother, of how the father contributes as a provider.

Experiences in the Czech Republic and throughout the world indicate that

child support payments, as set out in court or a divorce agreement, are usually not paid regularly by fathers and sometimes not even at all, or they are paid only for a period after the divorce. In the interviews the respondents gave various instances where they felt it legitimate not to pay child support or to limit their financial contribution, or indicated what they felt to be the biggest problem about the obligation to provide material support for children they no longer share a household with after divorce. But the reasons for abandoning the provider duty vary between the groups because they are connected with the attitude of men towards the traditional norm of the father as family provider. The men from the largest group B (the fathers who are providers at the representative level) cease to perceive themselves as the 'family provider' when the parents as a couple and the family cease to exist as a unit. Theoretically they should continue to be the provider for the children, but the children now belong to the household of their former wife. The majority of those men do not make a distinction between the personal needs of the former wife, the needs of her household as a whole, and the needs of the children. Many of them believe that the obligation to continue in the role of provider should be derived from the reasons for the divorce and take into account which spouse's 'fault' it was. Another problem is the loss of control over their own income that some men sense after divorce. They are unable to provide or control what the money will be spent on. Investment in the children, which they formerly perceived as investment in the family, and by extension in themselves, loses its original significance. For the fathers in group C, who reject the provider norm, there may be a reduction in the willingness to financially support the children when original agreements on contact and visits with the children are not respected by the former wife or when they consider that they are not allowed a sufficient amount of time to spend with their children. They refuse to reduce fatherhood to the provider dimension and they prefer to draw on other repertoires or to not be fathers at all. With regard to group A, the fathers who tended to be 'full' providers before the separation, a significant factor is that after divorce the father's financial support for the child ceases to be evident and perceptible because it is no longer mediated through the mother or is sometimes even concealed from the child. As a result, for the father the act of paying child support loses its significance as paternal behaviour, and it is not perceived as a validation of his paternal identity. His motivation to provide this contribution thus dissipates as his contribution ceases to be perceptible or visible.

The dimension of provider is a dimension of fatherhood that is subject to the normative impulses of the social environment and society's institutions and exhibits strong continuity after the divorce of a couple. Nonetheless, men approach this dimension creatively and reinterpret it in various ways and in accordance with their own needs. The unwillingness to pay their financial contribution and the reasons that lead to such a situation indicate that divorced fathers have an unclear relationship to this norm and its acceptance does not necessarily imply its subsequent fulfilment in practice.

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## Unequal Chances in Education: Educational Inequalities in the Czech Republic

Edited by Petr Matějů and Jana Straková

MICHAEL L. SMITH

Education systems play a fundamental role in mitigating or transferring inequalities from one generation to the next. One would presume that the Czech Republic, given its egalitarian tradition and track record of redistributive social transfers, would also have developed an education system that equalises the educational opportunities of different socio-economic groups. Contrary to such presumptions, a wealth of data has shown that the Czech Republic has some of the greatest inequalities in educational access and attainment in the OECD. Students from poorer and less educated families systematically attain lower levels of education (and have a lower chance of being accepted to college) than students from richer and more educated households. Which factors best explain these educational inequalities, and what can be done to remedy them? *Unequal Chances in Education* [2006], edited by Petr Matějů and Jana Straková,<sup>1</sup> is the first major work of its kind to compare the educational inequalities in the Czech Republic with those of other countries, to offer compelling explanations of the causes of Czech educational inequalities, and to highlight possible remedies.

*Unequal Chances in Education* builds on some of the previous research findings by Matějů and his collaborators on the role of education in the processes of social stratification in the transition context. In 'Education as a Strategy of Life Success', Matějů and Řeháková [1996] used survey data before and after the Velvet Revolution to measure the increasing importance of the perceived role of education in achieving higher status. Such changing perceptions, which were linked to the rising economic returns of education during the early transition years, played a comparatively significant role in shaping life choices. In fact, these subjective evaluations of status mobility mattered even more than class-based determinants in explaining whether people saw themselves as winners or losers in the economic transition [Matějů 1996]. Since university graduates not only earned significantly more than non-graduates but also saw themselves as experiencing strong socio-economic ascent [Matějů and Večerník 1999: 157–181], it is not surprising that university education has experienced a significant supply-demand imbalance. While the number

<sup>1</sup> The full list of authors includes: Josef Bašl, Pavla Burdová, David Greger, Jaroslav Kalous, Tomáš Katrňák, Petr Matějů, David Münich, Jan Mysliveček, Eva Potužníková, Ivana Procházková, Blanka Řeháková, Natalie Simonová, Jana Straková, Vladislav Tomášek, and Arnošt Veselý.

of seats at Czech universities has roughly doubled between 1994 and 2004, the increase in demand has been even higher, as evidenced by the continued high selectivity of the tertiary sector (about 50% of applicants to Czech universities are rejected). Due to the lack of educational reform and the apparent limitations of the state budget, educational attainment will continue to be a key differentiator of social status and economic prospects [Matějů and Simonová 2003].

One of the most original contributions of *Unequal Chances in Education* is its application of the social-psychological model of social stratification to the Czech context. Blau and Duncan's *American Occupational Structure* [1967] established the consensus view that a pupil's future educational and employment status is largely shaped by socio-economic status, such as their father's employment status or level of education. Sewell and Hauser [1972], using the Wisconsin Longitudinal Survey they were developing, built on that model, arguing further that 'social-psychological' variables – such as the role of significant others and educational aspirations – mediated the way social origin impacts future status. According to Sewell and Hauser, when rich kids have higher educational attainment than poor ones, this is largely because rich kids tend to live in environments that prescribe higher values to education than is the case of poorer households.

*Unequal Chances in Education* therefore tests the validity of the Wisconsin social-psychological model in the Czech context, particularly by identifying the determinants of pupils' educational aspirations. According to Tomáš Katrňák's analysis of PISA 2003, the educational aspirations of pupils and their parents are closely correlated: while only 38% of Czech ninth-graders aspire to a university education, that percent increased to 63% among the pupils whose parents had also aspired to obtain a university education (p. 180). By comparing the data of a 1989 family survey and the 2003 PISA-L, Matějů also discovered that the *direct* effect of the family's social origin on a pupil's educational aspirations has been declining, whereas the *indirect* effect of social origin as mediated by pupils' abilities and the significance they ascribe to education has been sharply increasing (p. 164). This suggests that social-psychological factors matter a great deal: pupils with similar social origin form similar beliefs about education, which in turn shapes their aspirations.

Another original contribution of the volume is its development of an analytical approach for measuring students' chances of educational attainment on the basis of social origin. The analysis by Matějů, Řeháková and Simonová focuses on three dependent variables: attainment of a secondary school diploma, students' successful transition from secondary to tertiary education, and the attainment of tertiary education. Respondent cohorts were differentiated by when they turned 18 years old (in five categories, from before 1948 up to the 1990s), which was made possible with the large combined dataset (over 6700 cases) they created from three different surveys in the 1990s. The main explanatory variables in the analysis were the class position of the father when the respondent was 16 years old, the student's gender, and the parents' highest attained education. A logit model, which is often used to assess the probability of success or failure of a given event, was used to es-

timates students' expected chances of educational success in terms of the independent and dependent variables above (p. 293–296). The model was quite useful for assessing educational inequalities: when the odds-ratio between two groups' chances of success increases (e.g. the ratio of the odds of success between students whose fathers are qualified versus unqualified workers), it can be said that the educational inequalities between those groups increase.

The analysis confirmed many of the hypotheses by the three authors. First, in terms of attaining a secondary school diploma, the authors found that the role of the parents' education declined in importance during the communist period in determining their children's educational success, though it is still quite high: even in the 1990s the odds of finishing secondary education among students whose parents studied at a college versus those without a secondary school diploma were about eleven times higher. On the other hand, in the late communist period, the role of the father's class position significantly increased in importance in determining their daughter's (but not their son's) chances of getting a secondary school diploma. Second, in terms of getting into college, the authors' most significant finding was that the father's class standing sharply increased their children's (both boys and girls) chances of getting into college in the 1990s compared to the communist period. This was even the case when parents' education was controlled (p. 301). Finally, in terms of attaining tertiary education, the role of the parents' educational background continued to play a significant role in shaping their children's chances throughout the entire communist and post-communist period; however, the model came up with conflicting interpretations of the role of the father's class position in this regard (p. 304).

The book's case about increasing educational inequalities does not rest only on data-based models. The authors of *Unequal Chances in Education* also employed other survey and empirical data to measure different types of educational success based on social origin. The sheer amount of survey data it incorporates is impressive: not only does the book make use of PISA 2000, PISA 2003 and PISA-L (the longitudinal supplement to the PISA survey), but also the 1998 Survey of Graduates (*Sonda Maturant*), a 2004 survey of students at Czech private and public colleges, along with ISSP data and additional aptitude tests (TIMSS 1995 and 1999). Many of these surveys were even implemented with the active involvement of the authors. For anyone who has doubts about the soundness of the quantitative analysis, the book also comes with a CD of the main questionnaires and datasets (PISA 2003, PISA-L and the 2004 college survey, in .sav and .por formats), enabling students and scholars to do the computations themselves.

One of the constant threads throughout the book is the authors' analysis of two types of factors in creating educational inequalities: the social, cultural and economic variables mentioned above, and the structural features of the educational system. By keeping with Procházková's institutional analysis (Chapter 1.4), the authors reveal how pupils of low social origin face constant barriers to their educational attainment *throughout* their educational career. The remaining part of this essay will survey those key findings.

The rigidity of the Czech education system discriminates pupils on the basis of social origin at a very early age. Primary compulsory education is taught at two main types of schools: basic schools and special schools (which have recently been renamed as basic schools with a special education programme), the latter of which are oriented towards students with low aptitude or educational handicaps. But social origin also matters. Roma children are often sent to special schools at an age before which they can overcome the barriers caused by their insufficient preparedness for basic school, such as their command of the Czech language (p. 99). Students attending special schools are much less likely to be accepted at a diploma-conferring secondary school, significantly affecting their future life prospects. Czech men who never continued on to a secondary school have an unemployment rate roughly three times the national average (p. 96).

The more specialised tracks an education system has, the more likely social origin will influence the educational attainment of pupils. In the Czech Republic, an extreme case of this can be observed in the gymnasia and multi-year gymnasia (grammar schools), to which pupils at primary schools can apply from as early as the end of the fifth grade. It is often thought that only outstanding students can get into these 'elite' gymnasia. However, Procházková found that among the top 9% of pupils taking the PISA 2003, less than 40% of those pupils studied at gymnasia, with the rest studying at basic schools (p. 103). The analysis of PISA 2003 by Straková, Potužníková, and Tomášek also revealed that economic, social, and cultural status (ESCS) accounted for 9% of the variance of ninth-graders' test results (at all types of schools), but also found that the schools' ESCS accounted for 84% of the variance of the test results of pupils among those schools (p. 135). Thus what is definitive for explaining the differences in the aptitude of pupils at individual schools is the *social composition* of the pupils at those schools, not the rigor of the studies or the learning methods used.

In fact, the type of secondary school students attend is highly correlated to the socio-economic background of their parents, thus questioning the degree to which pupils freely choose their educational and vocational tracks. According to Matějů and Straková's analysis of the PIRLS 2001 survey, the most important reason parents have for wanting their children to attend multi-year gymnasia is because it is the surest path towards being accepted to a university (p. 201). The competition for admission to gymnasia is immense, not because they are simply good schools, but also because they have a high level of prestige attached to them and because they enable access to tertiary education. This has also left its mark on the degree of social, cultural and economic homogeneity of pupils at those schools.

In a similar vein, the chapter by Münich and Mysliveček reveals how the structure and admissions process of secondary education poorly corresponds to the wishes and interests of pupils. This is partly because the type of secondary school pupils attend has a strong impact on their educational and career prospects. The Czech Republic has three main types of secondary schools: gymnasia (20% of students), secondary professional schools (44%), and secondary vocational schools (36%). Since most gymnasia are located in the cities, the limited geographic mobili-

ty of pupils in the countryside means that they can be tracked into a school unsuitable to their needs or interests. It also leads to supply-demand gaps in the labour market, as there are no guarantees that jobs will be available in the vocational tracks pupils choose. According to Festová [2004], the unemployment rate of recent graduates of vocational schools was 23% in April 2004, compared to 15% for graduates of professional schools and 6% for graduates of gymnasia.

The authors of *Unequal Chances in Education* demonstrate that two factors determine educational inequalities in university admissions: the type of secondary school students attended and the social origin of their parents. According to 1998 data analysed by Matějů, Procházková and Burdová, while 71.6% of students from multi-year gymnasia who applied to college were accepted, only 37.4% of students from vocational schools were. When the authors controlled for aptitude, they also found that 83% of students with the highest aptitude at multi-year gymnasia were accepted, compared to 53% of their equally smart peers at the vocational schools. Gymnasia students whose parents were the most educated were 1.45 times more likely to get into college than gymnasia students whose parents were the least educated. Focusing just on social origin, 61% of college applicants whose parents had a university education were accepted, compared to 37% of applicants whose parents did not have a secondary school diploma (p. 333). Overall, the authors calculated that students whose parents were most educated had about 1.65 the chances of getting into college compared to applicants whose parents were least educated. These inequalities in university access also have a major impact on future life chances, as Czech workers with tertiary education earn approximately 1.8 times more than workers with a secondary school diploma (this compares to the 1.63 OECD average).

The discriminatory nature of the admissions process is further facilitated by its selectivity. Roughly 50% of college applicants fail the entrance exams (p. 327). In fact, approximately 11% of applicants failed to enter a college or university at least five times previously. Only 33% of Czechs aged 19–24 are in tertiary education (compared to 80% in Sweden and 63% in the USA), which is at the bottom of the list of developed countries. The highly selective nature of the admissions process means that universities have to draw virtually arbitrary lines between equally competitive applicants, which in turn increases the influence of social origin on admissions. In fact, as Josef Basl revealed, university students from households with high socioeconomic status constitute over 40% of the student population in the lucrative fields of the natural sciences, medicine, arts, and law (p. 349). Students from households with lower status dominate in the field of agriculture, which arguably provides the least chances for economic advancement later in life.

These numbers will probably sound alarming to the lay Czech audience. According to a 2006 survey by CVVM and the Institute of Sociology, only 36% of respondents think Czech primary and secondary education needs reform. Despite the inequalities discussed above, 59% of Czechs are satisfied with the system of primary and secondary education. And despite significant problems in university access and performance (not a single Czech university ranks among the top 300 in the

world), only 19% of Czechs are dissatisfied with the universities. Popular discourse on educational reform is equally polarising, as in the 2006 parliamentary election campaigns, during which the governing Social Democrats sought to demonise proposed reforms in university financing as policies that would benefit the rich and harm the poor. The problem, however, is that the current 'free' system of university education *already* benefits the rich and harms the poor, since poor students are less likely to get into college to begin with. Given the public's lack of desire for reform, is there any way out of this mess?

Jaroslav Kalous' conclusion of *Unequal Chances in Education* lists a number of ambitious recommendations, such as promoting general education at secondary schools and increasing university access. However, it is difficult to imagine how those goals can be achieved without a comprehensive reform in education financing. The Czech Republic could follow one of two models: the Scandinavian model of very high levels of state financing (at least high enough to reduce educational inequalities), or the liberal model of implementing tuition and means-tested scholarships and promoting private sector participation in tertiary education financing. The first model may simply be too unrealistic: while the Czech government has sought to increase funding for higher education over the last decade, it has not even been able to keep up with inflation and with the number of students, causing the state subsidy per student in real terms to drop by over 30%. While OECD countries invest on average 1.6% of GDP in their tertiary education systems, Czechs invest only .9%, putting the country near the bottom of the scale [OECD 2006]. Czechs also lag significantly behind in terms of public funding for research and development (at a miserly .56% of GDP). Even at a GDP growth rate of 6%, it could take decades for the Czech Republic to catch up.

That brings the liberal model into play. As part of the 2004 survey *Studium na vysoké škole (University Study Survey)*, the authors measured the hypothetical reaction of students at public universities to different amounts of tuition (if it were imposed) and student loans. According to Basl's analysis, if tuition were 8000 Czk per semester, 76% of the students would be able to pay it (mostly through their parents' earnings), 16% would take a student loan, and 8% would not study. Disaggregating responses by the social class of the student's father, 63% of students whose father is an unqualified worker would be able to pay it, 22% would take a loan, and 14% would not study. By comparison, 79% of students whose father has a professional career would be able to pay it, 15% would take a loan, and 6% would not study (p. 362). Thus, the students' hypothetical reaction is not nearly as extreme as suggested by the daily press. At the same time, the differences in responses by social origin suggest that scholarships or tuition waivers for low-income students would help equalise opportunities while also expanding educational access. It may force some students to work, which is not a bad thing, given that students at public institutions earn only a fraction of the amount (about 20%) of the earnings of students at private colleges.

Though *Unequal Chances in Education* anticipates how the educational inequalities it documents will shape future social status and life success, the fact of the mat-

ter is that there are no longitudinal data available on the social and educational development of specific cohorts over the life cycle. The need for such data clearly motivated the authors of the volume to participate in the international PISA-L project, the longitudinal survey initiated in 2003 that was given to over 9800 Czech 15-year-olds and to their parents. Those pupils have now gone down different educational and career paths, and so the second wave of the survey on those students (now 18-year-olds), to be conducted in the fall 2006, will shed important light on the relationship between the educational aspirations, educational attainment and life success of the first 'post-communist' generation of Czechs.

MICHAEL L. SMITH is a researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. His research interests focus on three areas: political participation and civil society; corruption and democratic governance; and social inequalities under transition. His most recent publication is a book chapter in *Assessing Participatory and Direct Democracy at the Local Level* (forthcoming, 2006). He is currently completing his dissertation in the Department of Political Science at the New School for Social Research in New York.

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ISSN: 0147-2011

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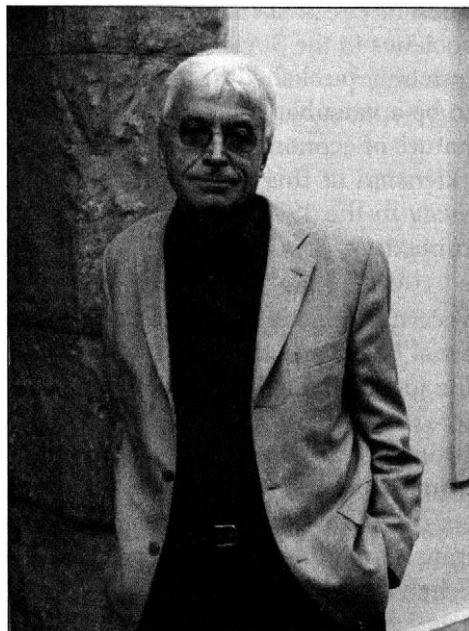
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## Jiří Večerník – 65!

Jiří Večerník, founding father of this journal and foremost among the foremost Czech sociologists, has just turned sixty-five. This is an occasion for celebration and reflection. Jiří is one of the few members of his generation who can look back on the results of his work with a sense of satisfaction. To succeed in his generation a person required exceptional tenacity, courage, patience and integrity. His career path reflects the course of the history of Czech society in the second half of the 20th century, and it was no easy history.

Jiří's university years coincided with the period when sociology was deemed a bourgeois pseudo-science and the sociology departments at all Czech universities had been shut down. He did not therefore obtain a systematic university education in the field that he later went on to excel in. It is one of the paradoxes in the history of Czech education that this fact gave him an advantage over those who entered university a few years later, when sociology was re-opened for study. What he would have received then was an education in Marxist-Leninist sociology, something worse than no sociological education at all. He studied economics instead and eventually introduced his strong educational background in this field into sociology. As tends to be the case with remarkable personalities, he turned an unavoidable handicap into his basic competitive advantage.

Jiří Večerník's professional work lies in the field that can broadly be referred to as economic sociology. His very first important research engagement established this as his specialisation: in Pavel Machonin's *Czechoslovak Society* (a research project conducted in 1965–1969), which introduced the empirical approach back into the sociological analysis of social stratification, Jiří wrote the chapter on 'Income and the Living Standard in Social Differentiation' (Pp. 295–321 in P. Machonin et al. *Československá společnost: Sociologická analýza sociální stratifikace*. Bratislava: EPOCH 1969). This project came forth at a time when a window briefly opened to allow the study of Czech society, and Jiří's first monograph, *Issues of the Sociology of Consumption* (Prague: Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences 1971) was the posthumous child of that time. In the long and dull years of normalisation that ensued, which for him meant total marginalisation, Jiří nonetheless managed from the background to influence the content of the Czech Statistical Office's micro-censuses so that the data they produced would be socio-



logically relevant. Using these data he developed analyses of the income differentiation of Czech society and on the basis of comparative analyses of data from other societies in the Soviet block he created comparative studies. This work, which often was only published in mimeo form and never reached the book market, continues to be a valuable and reliable source of information on social stratification and the nature of economic inequality in Czech society in the 1970s and 1980s. The natural extension of this work is Jiří's subsequent involvement in the *Luxembourg Income Study* in the 1990s, crowning his endeavours by putting them in an international context.

When the Czech Republic had re-joined the ranks of open societies, Jiří Večerník became the first editor-in-chief of *Sociologický časopis*. He re-built the editorial board and the entire way in which the journal operates, and he also founded the journal's English edition, *Czech Sociological Review*. In the re-established Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, he and Petr Matějů together built a strong social stratification department. He was one of the few Czech authors who from the moment the opportunity arose participated in creating a European sociological discourse: in international publications addressing the post-communist transformation of the Eastern block Jiří's name appears most often representing the Czech side. His monograph *Markets and People: The Czech Reform Experience in a Comparative Perspective* (Aldershot: Avebury 1996) has become a standard reference for understanding Czech economic reforms, and *Ten Years of Rebuilding Capitalism: Czech Society after 1989* (Prague: Academia 1999), which he (and Petr Matějů) edited, is probably the most comprehensive analysis of the development of Czech society in the first decade after the revolution. The citation index for Jiří Večerník also reveals how much his work is cited. While sociology and economics are two scientific disciplines that are in a certain sense close, they nonetheless (or perhaps for this very reason) often regard each other with spite. Consequently, it is rare that they agree on a single expert authority. Yet Jiří Večerník has achieved this, as the most cited Czech author in both sociology and economics.

It is the custom on such an occasion as this to say that the person of honour is of course still in fact young (as though youth were a virtue) and will remain so 'for years to come'. In Jiří's case there is no need. There is no skill to being young. And while age is certainly no bed of roses, unless of course we consider the alternative, there is indeed an art to it. And I have never been so sure of anyone as I am of Jiří that it is in art he will master. When I watch how, with knowledge, deliberation and epicurean delight, he appraises the bouquet of a glass of Moravian Riesling, undisturbed by the admiring look of the beautiful woman by his side, and aware that, when it comes to it, the William Davidson Institute in Ann Arbor will be happy to publish another of his analyses in their Working Papers (as that too is among the pleasures of growing older), I realise that we just have to envy him, and I shall gladly toast him with a glass of that Riesling.

Let me wish a long and happy life to this chevalier of *L'Ordre des Palmes Académiques*, and of beautiful women (*Non est gaudium, nisi mulier* is his creed)!

A brilliant sociologist and economist, a lover of classical music, a dazzling pianist, a diligent labourer of science and a much sought-out political-economic commentator, a good friend and an artist of life, etcetera, etcetera. *Skol!*

Ivo Možný

Masaryk University

## Jiří Večerník – The Reluctant Empiricist

Jiří Večerník is one of a handful of great contemporary Czech sociologists. He is an empiricist, a collector and organiser and user of data, mostly numerical, and a very productive and prolific writer. Thanks to Jiří we know an awful lot about Czech society that we would be ignorant of had it not been for his efforts and abilities, in particular about what has happened after 1989. There is more to his work than this, but for me his true legacy will be his contribution to the recording of the Czech transition. History is in the making and Jiří Večerník is there to preserve the memory of it. That is a gift to his nation.

I came to know Jiří when coincidence brought me to Prague in, I think, 1991. The Central European University was establishing a branch there – subsequently to at least my regret disbanded – and I was recruited to lecture on sociology and social policy. It has never been difficult to invite people to Prague and I kept coming two or three times a year. Claire Wallace was in charge and seemed to know everyone. I cannot remember when or how I first met Jiří but it was friendship at first sight. Fortunately I have been able to continue to come to the Czech Republic, including through the hospitality of the Institute of Sociology. I consider my contact and co-operation with Czech sociology colleagues to be one of the most rewarding aspects of my professional, and indeed personal, experience.

Jiří Večerník writes more than others can read. I think I am not wrong to suggest that his two most monumental works, so far, are *Markets and People* (Avebury, Aldershot 1996) and *Ten Years of Rebuilding Capitalism* (Academia, Prague 1999, co-edited with Petr Matějů and co-authored with an impressive collective of Czech sociologists, demographers and economists).

The question that is pursued in both of these books, and in much of Jiří's work otherwise, is this: what kind of society has the Czech Republic turned into after its most recent revolution, that of 1989? There are two possible hypotheses. The first one looks back to the grounding experiences in the Czech lands of relatively early industrialisation leading on to twenty years of vibrant co-habitation between capitalism and democracy after the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, and including the short resurrection of that co-habitation after the Second World War. When com-

munism fell in 1989, this grounding experience was within living memory (as it was not in most countries within the then Soviet block) and was present in the national awareness as an idea of what kind of society this 'really' is. According to this view, the forty years of authoritarianism was only a temporary setback which the Czechs would easily shrug off so that they could get back on their 'natural' course of development. The Czech Republic, then, would rapidly be re-established as a normal European country.

The other hypothesis would stress the shortness of the democracy-capitalism co-habitation and the profound impact in society, including in attitudes, mentalities and culture, of life under communist authoritarianism, in particular the ruthlessly totalitarian Czech version. According to this view the dominant experience would be that from 1948 and onwards, an experience that would crowd out the memory of happier but more distant days. The Czechs would have to work hard and long for their 'normalisation' and the remains of totalitarianism would sit in their society for a long time.

Jiří and I have discussed these two hypotheses as long as we have known each other. In discussions he tends to lean towards the second view but I have not been fully persuaded that his own evidence is unambiguously in support of that pessimism. It is probably true that an authoritarian legacy lingers in some ways in popular attitudes and expectations but also that this is largely a generational influence that is dying out rapidly. There may be a certain immaturity in the Czech political-democratic culture, but that is matched by a mature understanding of seeking that culture to be improved by the binding commitments of membership in the European Union. On these matters Jiří writes more carefully than he speaks when he summarises the lessons of his research. As a reluctant empiricist he guards carefully against reading simple truths out of even the most detailed statistics.

As usual, it is too early to tell. Jiří's contribution is a determined insistence that these matters should be judged and analysed empirically and 'from below', from the life experiences of ordinary people. For his part, he has not only insisted on how it should be done, he has also done it, and done it with great flair. No doubt, more is to come.

I want to mention one other contribution: his editorship of the English language editions of the *Czech Sociological Review*. That is a heroic enterprise. It is successful because of Jiří's relentless hard work, both to get others to contribute and to contribute himself. It is an achievement that Czech sociology can publish six issues a year of their review, two of them in English. I don't know if they – the Czech sociologists – are fully aware of the value of that resource. The English language editions may not be viable without the determination and energy that editor Večerník is able and willing to put into it, but that will not last forever. I think it may now be time – and I take this opportunity to put a challenge to Jiří and his colleagues – to sit down and think ahead about how to best safeguard a unique tradition.

Stein Ringen  
Oxford University

## Jiří Večerník and the Luxembourg Income Study: Teaching Us about the Transition of the Czech Republic in a Comparative Perspective

Jiří Večerník appeared at one of the initial meetings of the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Ford Foundation Project on the economic and social transformation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in 1991. This transformation, termed by Barbara Torrey 'the most important social experiment of the 20th century', was to be examined by the LIS project associates using quantitative household income micro data on changing incomes and living standards and on their distribution in the former Soviet block nations of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Russia.

At this meeting we met many transition scholars – some of whom were in the western mode, like Petr Matějů and Endré Sik; and others who were working based on the background, training, and customs of the soviet block. We met a Czech sociologist and a researcher who was head of the Socio-Economics Department at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, the editor of the *Czech Sociological Review*, and a scholar who we found to be a thoughtful and articulate spokesman of the transition. Above all, his stories and theories made good sense and were spoken in careful yet passionate English! His name was, of course, Jiří Večerník.

Like us, he had published work in the field of the labour markets, economic inequality and social policy. But unlike us, he knew about the ways in which the regime system in the Czech Republic had so twisted salaries and other labour market rewards that the police and military were paid more than physicians, lawyers, scientists and of course academics.

Indeed, Jiří was a gracious and eager student of LIS and immediately put his ideas to work to show how the new market freedoms were changing the labour market reward structure and also leaving many behind. His LIS research (e.g. Večerník 1995, 1999) showed his readers how situations were changing in his native land compared to other countries. This work later was expanded into two major books and other outcome.

We could find no better example of the type of scholar we could work with in the countries we were studying, and so not only did we make Jiří the Czech country coordinator for LIS, but also, by vote of the LIS member countries, Jiří was elected a member of the Executive Committee of the Luxembourg Income Study.

On this, his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, we would like to congratulate Jiří on all he has contributed to our collective understanding of social and economic policy and human outcomes in the Czech Republic and the CEE more generally.

*Tim Smeeding and Lee Rainwater*  
Luxembourg Income Study

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**Timothy A. Byrnes – Peter J. Katzenstein**  
(eds.): *Religion in an Expanding Europe*  
Cambridge 2006: Cambridge University  
Press, 352 pp.

In accordance with the so-called secularisation thesis, social scientists in the past claimed that the role of religion in the late modern age was in decline. Nowadays, few would disagree with the statement of Peter Berger, that 'the world today ... is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever' (*The Desecularization of the World*. Washington-Grand Rapids 1999, p. 2). The former disinterest in religion among scholars is being replaced with a growing number of studies in sociology, political science, economics and other related fields that are drawing attention to the return or new entry of religion to the sphere of politics and the public space, which is certainly not limited to the world of (fundamentalist) Islam. The reviewed volume, written predominantly by American scholars, is concerned with religion within Europe, the role religion plays in contemporary and possible future enlargement of the EU, and the (as yet non-existent) common European identity. In brief, they take seriously James Beckford's observation that the boundaries of 'secular' Europe are becoming sharply defined in religious terms.

Three introductory papers (by P.J. Katzenstein, D. Philpott and T.S. Shah, and J. Casanova) define the main issues studied in the book. Has modern Europe development become the model for the worldwide decline in religious significance, as claimed by the secularists, or is it rather the exception that proves the rule of de-secularisation, which is what Berger recently stated? And if the latter is the more realistic view, how it is possible that 'secularised' post-Christian Europe still has numerous implicit ties with the confessions it formerly embraced? How is the battle over the religious clause in the European constitution (which is still not approved) to be understood, or the Catholics'

quest for the re-evangelisation of Europe from the East (mainly Poland), or the unwillingness of the European majority (including many politicians) to accept Muslim Turkey as a member state in the EU, which so far is a rhetorically secular club of formerly Latin Christian states (with a few Orthodox Christian exceptions)? Are Orthodox or Muslim members welcome to join the club? Or do these questions have something to do with the heavily politicised issue of immigration? However much most observers would agree with Katzenstein's presumption that 'European enlargement will feed rather than undermine the importance of religion in the EU' (p. 2), it is necessary to go further, following Casanova's argument (first published in *Transit* 27/2004, pp. 86–106) that it has not been religion *per se* but the implicitly religious 'knowledge regime' of secularism that has adopted many Latin Christian institutions, and that has defined the European self-understanding/s against the religious 'others'. The de-churching of the European population and the privatisation of religion have not resulted in total secularisation, and anti-clerical movements have not protected 'fortress Europe' from a concealed or unconscious backing of established religious traditions.

The book is divided into three main parts on Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and (Turkish) Islam, and respectively the attitudes of these religions towards the European integration process. While Catholicism can be regarded as the most trans-national of the three religious traditions, widely involved in Europeanisation from its beginnings in the 1950s, Eastern Christianity appears to be the least, owing to the nationalist character of Orthodox churches and their relation to the state. Paradoxically, recent Turkish Islam is somewhere in between, considering the fact that the Islamist Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) is attempting to enter Europe without becoming religiously Europeanised (either in the Christian or post-Christian sense), and it sees European democ-

racy and religious privatisation as an obstruction to Kemalist forced secularisation. However, these general findings, which are reviewed again by T. A. Byrnes in his concluding chapter (pp. 283–305), should be examined in more detail.

J. B. Hehir has pointed out, for example, that a comparison between European and American Catholics has shown that the latter are much more publicly engaged (pp. 112–115), while the European clergy rely primarily on its exposure in high politics. Similarly S. P. Ramet, offering her standard phenomenological take on Eastern European data, argues that the Church is certainly not homogenous in its evaluation of European integration. Poland has experienced wide religious de-privatisation since 1989, as the former Pope willed, albeit its accession did not just have strong supporters (advocating the Poles' re-evangelist efforts), but also opponents, who were worried about secularisation, widespread materialism and consumption over spiritual values, or the forced abolition of relatively new restrictive laws (e.g. on sexual behaviour). Similar polarisation – though the majority is more *Europhobic* – can also be seen in the Orthodox churches that emphasise the preservation of national identity and traditions against the secular, materialistic and liberal West, and against their traditional enemy – the Muslims (or even the prospect of a Muslim presence within European borders).

Not surprisingly, the biggest disagreement that can be observed among the book's authors is over Muslims. On the one hand, B. Tibi, a Muslim naturalised in Europe, argues in his 'confession' that neither *shari'a* Islam or Islamism as such can be integrated into a secular Europe according to the French model, and he calls for the modern privatisation of (the Muslim) faith through Euro-Islam. In his viewpoint, Europe must refrain from identifying with any particular religious ideology (including Christian). Unfortunately he pays no attention to the recent problems with implicit Christian substrate of *laïcité*. Precisely

this issue, as well as Tibi's essentialist description of Islam and Europe (whether post-Christian or not), are the targets of M.H. Yavuz's and J. Casanova's criticism. They offer a more structured analysis of the development of Turkish Islam and the changes in its relationship with a secular/post-Christian Europe and maintain that possible Turkish accession is leading to a major debate over the meaning of European identity, while (non-integrated) immigrants only make the problem more visible. Casanova also adds that however dubious the democratic attitudes of recent Islamists may seem, those espoused by Christians' (and especially Catholics) just some decades ago were not any better (p. 73). And T.A. Byrnes remarks in his conclusion that, 'as the field of [studying] International Relations moves slowly and reluctantly to take seriously the religious entities ... it must do so with a very clear understanding of the diversity of religion itself, and with an equally clear recognition of the very diverse ways in which religion intersects with politics. It would be a real shame ... if the field's response to transnational religion and its role in world affairs simply shifted from one of disinterest to one of oversimplification' (p. 302).

He is absolutely right, but his and his colleagues' book is not free of certain shortcomings of this kind. Some are connected with the fact that the contributing scholars are primarily of an American background. On the one hand, they correctly recognise the role Islam itself (both immigrant and Turkish) has in the struggle for a common European identity, which is different from the New World where Muslim immigrants constitute just one small minority among others. On the other hand, the majority of the authors (with the exception most notably of Casanova) pay attention only to organised forms of religion, those that are most visible from the political scientist's viewpoint or from the American's experience, and leave aside T. Luckmann's 'invisible religion'. Precisely this, however, is a very significant factor in European affairs, as is the existence of

substitutive religions that may include the ideology of secularism. The 'great enlargement' of the EU in 2004 left aside (at least temporarily) Orthodox countries and thus contributed to creating an external image of the EU as a predominantly Latin Christian association. But it is misleading to judge CEE members based on the Polish prototype and its Roman Catholic image. Polish under-secularisation (among the EU-15 comparable only to the Irish) is much less common than the Czech and East German over-secularisation, and in the latter countries *laïcité* fills the role of institutional (albeit implicit) religion. Unlike France, for example, where both religion and its antipode underwent a certain 'secularisation' process in the late modern age, nowadays there is a great danger of a sharp struggle between religious organisations and their adherents on the one side and their strong opponents in Eastern European countries on the other, and not only involving (the former) Orthodox countries and their attitudes towards the EU. Similarly, it is misleading to ignore the issue of Protestantism, even though it is much less involved in European trans-national ties and less visible than the prevailingly Catholic Christian democracy and the policy of the Holy See, and there are few signals of any wider religious attendance in Protestant/Anglican countries (as the authors argue on pp. 14, 62–63). The secularism of the Protestant countries has in many ways remained superficial. It has led to 'believing without belonging' and the 'vicarious function' of (unattended) churches, as G. Davie maintains in her books. Moreover, the German 'political unification' of all Christians, or the Dutch or more recently the Scandinavian contribution to European integration process must also be taken into account.

It must also be noted that there are large discrepancies between the contributions to the volume. Some authors are re-affirmed in their position as top experts in the contemporary scientific study of religion, most notably José Casanova on both examples of 'multiple

modernities' (i.e. Poland and Turkey) and on theoretical approaches to European religious development and its comparison with other parts of the world (here mainly the United States). Others provide nothing but an exact description of their fields. This is especially true for Sabrina P. Ramet, whose papers on Polish Catholicism and Balkan and post-Soviet Orthodoxy inform the reader about (usually) unfamiliar data on religion in Eastern Europe, but they do not try to go beyond that and proceed into theoretically or historically grounded analyses; And for one of the editors, Timothy A. Byrnes, who has commendably drawn the attention of political scientists to religion (not only in this volume), but who usually fails himself to present a more complex – let's say sociological – understanding of religion. In the case of Eastern European religion it is not the editors' fault along for the significant lack of analysis, as they were simply unable to find the necessary contributors. The unwillingness or inability of Eastern European social scientists to contribute to international discussions is unfortunately quite widespread, and it is mainly they (i.e. we) who are responsible for this; thus Vjekoslav Perica (University of Utah), examining the Serbian Orthodox Church, was the only contributor to the volume with Eastern European roots.

I cannot say that the reviewed book has exhausted the topic of the return or new entry of religiosity into European politics. In many cases it poses the important questions, but gives no complete answers, and other areas of research are simply left aside. However, it is a significant (mostly factual and to a lesser degree theoretical) contribution to the fields of political science and sociology of religion, which for too long were (unconsciously) ruled by a secular liberalist self-understanding that paid little attention to the real and certainly not unreligious world. The same is true for most contemporary Europeans, real devotees of the teleological theory of religious decline as a result of modernisation, for whom the view from outside –

that of prevailingly American scholars, or the Muslim view mediated by some contributing authors – can shed light on some deeply hidden symbols and institutions of their own identity. It is a major question to what degree contemporary Europe is still Christian or post-Christian, a question that has much to do with EU enlargement, the issue of immigration, multiculturalism, and even our own identity. Of course, the question cannot be answered in a single volume (I am even not sure it can be answered by any scholarly discussion), but the important thing is that the question is raised. *Nolens volens*, we have to realise that de-traditionalised post-Christian Europe may still have something in common with its former religion/s (and *ipso facto* something distinguishing it from others), knowledge of which is of great importance, especially for scholars in post-communist countries. Whether we ought to work on strengthening or weakening these ties, and in relation to which ideology, is a completely separate issue.

Zdeněk R. Nešpor

**Branko Milanovic: *Worlds Apart: Measuring International and Global Inequality***

Princeton NJ 2005: Princeton University Press, ix and 227 pp.

Branko Milanovic is a lead economist at the World Bank who has been dealing with world inequality for three decades and is deeply involved in the topic. His most recent book is both a synthesis of his many years of research in the field and an important step forward in explaining the issue. In just 150 pages, he offers a concise clarification of the problem and in the next 50 pages he provides the reader with the results produced by various inequality measurements. Although tightly focused, the methodology is by far the book's main message. Indeed, it is a substantial one and well underpinned by

geopolitical and historical considerations about what might be behind the trend or trends in inequality as variously represented using different measurements.

The book excels for its innovative substance and sound style. It is thus highly readable and accessible even for people unfamiliar with inequality issues. 'The mother of all inequality disputes is the concept of inequality', begins the author. He then distinguishes three various measures, each of which has a specific construction and use. Concept 1, the most frequently used measure of inequality, takes countries as units of observation and characterises them by GDP. Concept 2 adds population weight to the previous information, so that, for example, Luxembourg and China are not taken as units of observation on the same level. Concept 3 is quite different, as it observes all individuals or households and computes using populations of people instead of sets of countries or regions.

Understandably, different methods return different results regarding the level and, in particular, dynamics of inequality. Concept 1 (the unweighted inter-country measure) shows a trend of increasing inequality. The turning point occurred in 1978–1980, when the oil crisis caused oil prices to triple, real interest rates soared and the world growth rate slowed down. At that time, the proportion of middle-income populations declined (some countries of Latin America, Eastern Europe), while China and India pulled ahead, and Africa's position deteriorated further. Taking the poorest country in the Western 'first' world (Portugal) as a benchmark, the author distinguishes the second, third and fourth worlds, where GDP is a third, between one and two-thirds, and finally more than two-thirds below Portugal's GDP.

While the first and second 'worlds' has shrunk in recent decades in terms of the number of countries and the size of the population they encompass, the third world has expanded as a result of China's and India's

move upward from the fourth world and, in addition, their rapid population growth. This is also the reason why inequality measured by Concept 2 (the weighted inter-country measure) shows a decrease, unlike Concept 1 (the unweighted inter-country measure). However, if more territorially detailed data are used, i.e. by breaking down big countries into their component states, provinces, regions, or rural/urban areas, the decline in inequality measured with the Concept 2 no longer appears. Looking at inequality in a longer time span (1870–2000), intra-country inequality (due to class structure) has largely been replaced with inter-country inequality (due to location).

In recent decades it has not been difficult to obtain data for the first and second concepts, provided we accept the estimates of GDP for less developed countries. Nevertheless, data accessibility is a challenge in the case of Concept 3, which instead of macro-data uses micro-data, which can only be obtained from surveys among households. This is a particular value added of the book, which utilises the World Bank database of household incomes and expenditures – the HEIDE database – covering 84% of the world's population; this being another long-term achievement of none other than Branko Milanovic himself. He gave consideration to various indicators and finally selected per capita income (not per equivalent unit) in amounts observed in individual surveys (not reweighted by aggregate statistics) and adjusted by purchasing power parity (PPP).

Only the results produced by Concept 3 may rightfully be regarded as representing world or global inequality. Milanovic certainly was not the first to use data on individuals, but he did it in the most comprehensive and cautious manner. In the book, he also carefully reviews all previous literature and findings in this field. His calculations of inequality among the entire world population are much higher than those returned in inter-country inequality (a Gini coefficient between 62 and 66 as opposed to 50). The fig-

ures are indeed alarming: while the top 10% of the world's population receive half of the world's income (adjusted for price levels), the bottom 90% share the other half among themselves. In simple dollar terms (not adjusted), the top 10% collects two-thirds of the world's income.

While in the perspective of Concept 1 there is some equalisation between countries, according to the Concept 3 inequality within countries is likely growing. This discrepancy probably evokes the most interesting question among the many raised by the book. Francois Bourguignon (Chief Economist at the World Bank), in a discussion about the book, linked inequality and globalisation this way: 'In the first part of the 20th century, we saw a huge increase in Concept 1 inequality; then for the last twenty years we have seen a decrease in Concept 1, but an increase in inequality within countries – because of increased globalization of capital and trade flows. The logical limit of this is that in a fully globalized world, with completely free trade and capital flows, there would be no more inequality across countries, but only inequality within countries' [<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events>].

This is, of course, a purely hypothetical consideration that in a way simultaneously echoes the author's concluding thoughts about a possible move towards a global community and a global democracy, where many functions of today's national governments will be taken over by new global institutions: 'At that point, issues like global inequality will acquire almost the same importance that national inequality nowadays has in national political discussion' (p. 162). Managing transfers thus would thus become a task for global agencies dealing with individuals rather than international agencies where nation-states represent their interests.

Such a vision of a global solution to inequality – however far in the future it may be – is not very highly endorsed by the documentation Branko Milanovic has collected. The current picture indicates that popula-

tions of large regions in the world do not overlap on the income ladder, except rich individuals or very small groups. Not even the richest people in rural India intersect with the poorest people in France. The 'middle class' (in terms of countries identified by relative fractions of GDP) is disappearing and polarisation is increasing. Between 1960 and 2000, almost all countries with a middle relative income fell among poor countries, and as the rich countries only Western countries remained.

More income means obviously more power, and the gradual concentration of power makes the idea of a global tax authority and equalisation at the citizen's level a mere illusion. Thus one can tend to agree with the author's reluctance to forecast the possible shape of future income inequality. He follows Vico and Tocqueville in rejecting any such 'laws of motion' and lists numerous various factors that can affect development in unpredictable ways. On the contrary, he criticises deterministic theories that 'under the false air of inevitability, they sap all effort to effect social change' (p. 148).

Going back to the prose of inequality, many questions arise. Is the benchmark of poverty nation-specific or global? Is poverty absolute or relative? The opinions vary: one is that poor people are desperate enough to improve their material conditions in absolute terms rather than 'march up' income distribution. However, globalisation increases awareness of differences in living standards, and also leads to migration, which causes certain national and cultural standards to spread and become shared generally. With globalisation, reference consumption increases as people get to know more about each other. We can document this in the behaviour of Czech citizens, who once the iron curtain had fallen began relating their own standard of living to that in Austria or Germany.

If 'the mother of all inequality disputes is the concept of inequality', then it is 'the father's' task to take care of the data, even if they differ in quality and availability. In the

three countries that determine world inequality first and foremost – the USA, India and China – the quality of surveys is not the same. In fact, for the latter two countries, the most populous ones, only grouped data are available, 'groups sometimes very large', as the author notes (p. 105). Here there are also the added problems of different units of observation (families sharing resources in those countries often cross the boundaries of households), measuring income in kind, etc. Some criticism could therefore be lodged in this regard. In any case, I cannot share the author's optimism about the feasibility of a homogeneous worldwide income survey – greater obstacles need to be overcome than the ability to obtain resources and political will.

Collecting reliable data on income is a problem everywhere. The choice of the 'best' income indicator, suitable even for a worldwide comparison, will remain a problem forever. The debate about global justice and legitimacy of redistribution will evolve further on different levels and from different ideological perspectives. The task of obtaining the right data is permanently on the agenda. One thing is sure in all these contexts: the enormous contribution of Milanovic's book, which is without a doubt the best and most comprehensive reading on world inequality written so far.

*Jiří Večerník*

**Maurizio Bach – Christian Lahusen – Georg Vobruba (eds): *Europe in Motion. Social Dynamics and Political Institutions in an Enlarging Europe***  
Berlin 2006: Edition Sigma, 224 pp.

What is the pace and the pattern of development of the enlarged European Union (EU)? No doubt this question warrants serious attention from social scientists after the Treaty to establish a European Constitution was rejected in France and in the Netherlands, but also in view of the controversial debates on enlargements (past and future). Not much of

the academic literature on the future of the EU has been produced by sociologists. For about five decades, studies on the process of European integration have mostly been written by lawyers, political scientists, or economists. This book, edited by three German sociologists, is an attempt to reflect on the EU from a sociological perspective. In their introduction, the editors explain why, for sociologists, working on the EU is a difficult but also challenging task. In 'looking for the societal dimension of integration', sociologists 'are confronting with a bewildering paradox: the further European integration proceeds, transforming the very fabric of society in each member state, the more society vanishes as a relevant unit of reference for social integration. [...] Social integration, social inequality, collective identity or even citizenship somehow seem to lose their explanatory power and too analytically fail to grasp the specific dynamic and aggregate effects of supranational systems building'.

If the editors are quite right to observe that society, in terms of 'a model of social integration, as the first and foremost trajectory of values' is decomposing with European integration, it is regrettable that all the chapters of the book are not organised around this powerful question. As it happens at times with collective books, the contributions are not all connected to the research agenda set out in the introduction. This is particularly true in Part 1 titled 'The New European Geometry'. For instance, the chapter by Martin Heindenreich on 'the decision making capacity of the European Union after the fifth enlargement' is an institutional account of the EU political system, which is far from any questioning of the EU as a social entity. The chapter by Georg Vobruba on the 'internal dynamics and foreign relations of the European Union', analysing the foreign policy capacity of the EU, is also disconnected from the main research question raised in the introduction.

Most of the other chapters published in Part 2 ('Institution of Social Integration') and

Part 3 ('Identities and Cultural Institutions') try to re-introduce society as a key factor of the European integration process.

I will concentrate only on some of the chapters that I found particularly inspiring. The chapter by Richard Münch entitled 'Solidarity and Justice in the Extended European Union' shows that a new paradigm of social policy is emerging in the enlarged EU. This paradigm supports the employability of the single individual instead of job security, equal opportunities instead of equal results, and the justice of achievement instead of status security. 'The different paths of the individual member states, writes Münch, are steering towards a common goal through inclusion into a common developmental process and a common social discourse, where a new common vocabulary and semantics and a corresponding new paradigm of social policy are being developed'. No doubt there is a growing number of common features to the social problems and policies of the EU 25, with regard to access to the job market, health care, or the elderly, which are represented by a liberal paradigm of the empowerment of the individual. But differences also remain between states, according to their respective historical experiences. Focusing too much on convergence, Münch forgets to look at divergence, which still constitutes the other side of the coin. The chapter by Christian Lahusen is built on the assumption that the EU is eroding the national compartmentalisation of civil societies in two respects: first, by providing an inclusive policy arena of interest representation; second, by introducing the free movement of capital, goods, labour and services. Lahusen writes, 'These objectives are applied also to the service sector and particularly to the social economy as a means to spur employment and fight social exclusion more effectively'. He goes on to add that this creates specific problems for the non-profit sector in the member states, because these new requirements challenge the organisations committed to membership participation voluntarism and altruism. Com-

mercialisation, professionalisation and managerialism have become the news trends of non-profit organisations, a development that is particularly interesting to observe in the new member states. Barbara Wasner's chapter on the integration of civil society organisations of the new member states into European networks is complementary. It shows how the European institutions (especially the EU Commission) try to establish layers of European networks in the new member states, on issues like employment, the environment, education and justice, in order to facilitate the implementation of regulations. The interesting point is that organisations are sometimes just 'planted' and have no real anchoring in the 'third sector' of the new member states, making misfits out of domestic institutions and European regulations. Several political scientists have also observed this in the old member states. Thus the research community is invited to continue its reflection – with enlargement – on the viability of the Commission's policy to implement integration through European networks.

In the end, this book – which is somewhat of a patchwork – contains relevant chapters, which help provide a look at the societal dimension of European integration. But it is only an invitation to go further.

Christian Lequesne

**Sandrine Devaux: *Engagements associatifs et postcommunisme – Le cas de la République tchèque***

Paris 2005: Éditions Belin, 319 pp.

The topic of civic engagement is unquestionably very popular in contemporary sociology and the political sciences. To a large degree the focus on civil society is linked to the fact that social scientists are interested in understanding the process of democratic transformation in post-communist countries. Amidst

the boom in 'civil society studies', it is legitimate to ask: what can another book on civil society in a post-communist country add to our understanding of a topic already so substantially analysed?

In *Engagements associatifs et postcommunisme – Le cas de la République tchèque*, the French political scientist Sandrine Devaux persuasively demonstrates that another approach to the topic can provide an impressive array of new information. Her book shows that despite the abundance of literature and empirical research on post-communist civic engagement, the mainstream Anglo-American approach of 'civil society' prevails, and that we are overlooking other, alternative approaches that could facilitate a deeper understanding of the real social processes behind post-communist civic engagement.

Sandrine Devaux specialises in the study of the political and social transformation in Central and Eastern Europe and focuses on new forms of civic and political participation. She is also the author of books on the relationship between civic associations and political parties in the Czech Republic, on collective identities in post-communist Europe, and on the new civic and political activities in enlarged Europe. The reviewed book is based on her doctoral thesis.

The author opens the volume with a very instructive and systematic critique of mainstream approaches to the study of democracy, especially the Anglo-American approach of 'civil society', which according to her has reached an impasse. The author largely criticises the use of such terms as 'social movement', 'civil society' or 'non-profit sector' in any analysis of post-communist societies. She labels them as normative and functionalist, remarking that this kind of approach can obstruct the effort to obtain a real understanding of social facts. Even if this criticism is probably apt, it must be admitted that these terms 'imported' from the West are used owing to the lack of 'indigenous' terms or original concepts developed by scientists from post-communist countries. (The

criticism moreover points to the enduring 'battle' between Anglo-American and French political science.) For the above-mentioned reasons the author has chosen for her analyses the more general and neutral term 'associative life'.

The author's second critical observation targets another mainstream 'transition approach', which, according to the author, treats the actors in the transition as though they were tied to the old system and without any active power, and it represents a normative understanding of social change. This criticism of transitology leads Sandrine Devaux to choose for her own research a combination of analyses that take into account the heterogeneity of Soviet systems (a reference to Zdeněk Strmiska) and draws on the path dependency theory (not in the sense of determinacy but in the sense of the importance of past for understanding the present).

Finally, but importantly, the author's third critical objection concerns the fact that democracy in post-communist countries has been studied more from above than from below, which means that research has focused mainly on phenomena like a country's first elections, the crystallisation of political parties, and elite studies. By contrast, Sandrine Devaux has decided to focus on 'associative practices' in order to grasp reality from the point of view of ordinary people, asking how they perceive change and how they really experience it.

Her approach can therefore be defined as the sociology of practices of association in the context of political change. She pays special attention to the link between individual behaviour and systemic, political, economic and social modifications. She tries to find out how individual actors use the freedom of association that comes with the new regime and what the impact of regime change is on everyday practices in associations. This even allows her to formulate some new hypotheses about the functioning of Soviet-type society.

The main thesis of her research can be summarised as follows: There is no specific model of post-communist associative engagement, but only some connection between individual behaviour and collective behaviour inherited from the communist period on the one hand and modes of creation of associations and associative sociability on the other. Her goal is more ambitious than just measuring the level of democracy by the development of civil society (the number of NGOs). The author aims to understand how communist associations were re-converted into democratic ones, which means finding out how different civic associations are constituted in the transition from one regime, where individuals were not free to choose their interests or motives, to another, where not only can they gather freely but they can also construct the objective of their mobilisation and declare it publicly.

To study the phenomenon of associative life in post-communist countries Sandrine Devaux selected Czech society as her case study, looking at the period between 1968 to the middle of the 1990s. She gives the following reasons for her choice: First, the case of the Czech Republic challenges the prevalent assumption that civil society in post-communist countries is weak. The author points out that different associations existed even in the period of normalisation (after the Prague Spring in 1968) and that the revival of civil society after 1989 was quite strong. Second, concentrating on one post-communist society allows the author to apply a qualitative approach and thus to make a more detailed analysis of specific processes in the domain of associations. However, whenever possible she compares the Czech case with that of other post-communist countries, specifically Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. This comparison offers readers a broader view of the situation in the post-communist region and at the same time allows the author to comment on 'post-communist associative life' in general.

The author uses qualitative methods to examine the ordinary practices of actors: face-

to-face semi-structured interviews, analyses of the documentation of relevant associations and of the recent public discourse on civic engagement.

For the interviews the author chose three categories of associations: youth organisations (scouts, pioneers), social assistance associations focused on children, and groups of parents of handicapped children. She examined the following phenomena in particular in these associations: how actors deal with the past; how membership in associations forms resources or constraints for the actors; the logic of continuity, interruption, transformation or innovation of old organisations; the different types of capital mobilised by social actors, their experience with the communist regime and the way they view the new opportunities in democratic society.

The book is well structured and is comprised of two main parts. The introductory chapter outlines the path from communist mass organisation to freedom of association. The author familiarises readers with the principles of mass organisations under the communist regime in Czechoslovakia and the incorporation of traditional Czech organisations into the Soviet system. The reader learns about the process through which the laws on freedom of association adopted after 1989 were created, moreover in comparison with similar laws in France, Hungary, Poland and Romania. The comparison shows, for example, that Czech law is centred more on distinguishing civic organisations from other political parties or business organisations rather than on setting out a positive definition of civic organisation.

In the introduction the author substantiates her choice of theoretical background, which includes the above-mentioned criticism of other approaches. The first part of the book goes on to describe the revival of associative actors and the process of reconfiguration of communist heritage. The first chapter looks at the restoration of traditional organisations – such as the Scouts move-

ment – and their trajectories, and shows, for example, how the Scouts functioned under the communist regime and in the process of re-defining Scout identity after 1989. In the second chapter the author describes the conversion of old official organisations, in this case the communist youth organisation known as the 'Pioneers', and the formation of their new identity and their legitimisation in the democratic system. The author shows that the communist Pioneers organisation became a reference point after 1989 for other youth organisations. Moreover, even if from the ideological point of view the continuation of the pioneer organisation, which is still considered a symbol of the communist regime, is illogical, from the perspective of associative practices it plays an important social role in Czech society today. Chapter three provides the reader with information about the effects of competition in the sector of youth organisations since 1989 and about the emerging conflicts and stigmatisation.

The second part of the book deals with associative engagement as a vector of social innovation. Chapter four covers the formation of associations by mobilisation and the transfer of actors' professional competences. Chapter five explains the different modes of socialisation and engagement in the post-communist period, indicating personal trajectories and disposition as determinants of participation, as well as the actor's perception of collectives and the new civic engagement. It also reveals the perception of a symbolic break point in 1989 in social practices.

The book is accompanied by informative tables and graphs (the number and types of organisations over time, an international comparison of civic associations, the structure of communist organisations) and illustrations (posters of organisations).

In my opinion the book is accessible to the general public, thanks to the clear explanations of the terms used and the detailed historical and political descriptions of circumstances in both communist and post-

communist Czech society. Even readers who experienced communist and post-communist reality will not be bored by the description of 'well-known facts' but may often be surprised by unusual discoveries about communist and post-communist social reality, depicted in depth and colour.

Sandrine Devaux's study of 'associative life' definitely adds a new perspective to our understanding of how authoritarian regimes became democratic ones, focusing on political and social change from the 'bottom up'. The key strength of the book lies in the fact that the author has dared to address the mainstream theories of democracy and civil society. It is in the Tocquevillian tradition that the development of civil society is closely related to the establishment of a democratic system. The author challenges this prevailing thesis, showing that in its own way 'associative life' existed even before 1989 and in some cases became the bases on which the 'new democratic civil society' was formed after 1989. Here it is important to mention that the case of youth organisations is specific, and that is why the conclusion about the foundations of civil society in communist associative life cannot automatically be applied to all types of organisations.

Another finding Sandrine Devaux presents, which could be a source of future debate, is that if the new democratic regime brought about a radical change at the juridical level (new laws on associations), the change was not as radical at the level of the daily routines of associations, inherited from old system. This finding suggests for example the use of new theoretical tools in the study of post-communism: no system can totally control or organise a whole society.

The originality of the approach also lies in the fact that new associations do not come from nothing (creation *ex nihilo*) but from the re-configuration or re-modelling of already existing resources. This perspective shows that the past matters, which on a theoretical level confirms the path dependency

theory. Also, people's testimonies show that the representations of past experience and antecedent socialisation affect the vision of democracy and that they are often more important for associative practices than new structural factors. Even if people declare freedom of expression of opinion or group identity, the author notes that it is surprising that on the level of the description of associative practices before and after 1989 the perception of regime change is so weak. Though the conclusion about the weak perception of regime change sounds very pragmatic, I consider it to be quite remarkable, especially in comparison to the philosophical reflections on the change of the regime. For example, Václav Havel distinguishes sharply in his books between 'living a lie', referring to a person's hidden identity under the communist regime, and 'living in truth', referring to the free expression of opinions in a democratic regime. This study clearly shows that there is a gap between the philosophical and moral democratic theory and the everyday reality of democracy.

The above-mentioned general conclusions genuinely challenge some of the widely accepted notions about the transformation in post-communist societies. The study's bold criticism is not built on sand, but it is very well argued and documented. The study should be considered the first step in an alternative reflection on civic engagement as the vector of social innovation, but not necessary only in democratic regimes. Moreover, the author shows that the process of democratisation has not always had just positive effects on associative life at the level of everyday practice.

Even if the book cannot conceal its French provenience, reflected especially in its severe criticism of culturalism, communism, the notion of 'civil society', or the theory of democracy and social capital, this 'French wind' is refreshing and must be appreciated. Given the predominance of the Anglo-American paradigm of 'civil society' in the studies on post-communist transforma-

tion, the existence of alternative approaches creates a balance and preserves the necessary multi-paradigmatism in the social sciences. For this reason, this book, presenting an original reflection on the role of civic associations in the process of transformation in the Central and Eastern Europe, warrants se-

rious attention and should be of great use and interest to a wide range of social scientists.

*Markéta Sedláčková*

(This review was supported by the project GA ČR 403/04/1007.)

## Sociological Studies 2005/2006

Sociological Studies is a peer-reviewed series of working papers written by researchers based at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The first volume in the series was published in 1989 as 'Working Papers'. The series was subsequently renamed twice: in 2000 the title was changed to 'Sociological Papers' and in 2004 it was given its current title 'Sociological Studies'. The volumes are published in Czech or English, and the Czech volumes are accompanied by abstracts and summaries in Czech, English and German.

All published studies are based on the research projects conducted by researchers at the Institute. They cover a broad spectrum of interests and provide valuable information for scholars and students. Readers can learn about the results of research work conducted as part of completed or ongoing projects. A list of volumes published in the series to date is available at: <http://studie.soc.cas.cz/>.

In 2005 six volumes addressing a variety of topics were published in the series:

**SS 05:1 Blanka Řeháková: *Measuring Value Orientations with the Use of S.H. Schwartz's Value Portraits* (in English)**

The study acquaints readers with two methods of measuring value orientations developed by S.H. Schwartz, focusing especially on the Portrait Values Questionnaire that was used in the European Social Survey in 2002 and 2004. The analysis in the study uses ESS 2002 data sets from ten selected countries (the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland) and creates four higher order value types (conservation, openness to change, self-transcendence, self-enhancement). It is then shown how strongly these types are represented in each of the countries included in the analysis and how the percentages of represented types change in relation to sex, age, education, and religiosity. For the Czech Republic the odds of each of the types are modelled in relation to age, education, and religiosity.

**SS 05:2 Tomáš Kostecký: *Political Behaviour in Metropolitan Areas in the Czech Republic between 1990 and 2002 – Patterns, Trends and the Relation to Suburbanisation and Its Socio-Spatial Patterns* (in English)**

The study deals with the political consequences of the suburbanisation process in the four largest metropolitan areas in the Czech Republic after 1989. Aggregate socio-economic data on the level of municipalities are used first for the creation of a typology of suburban communes. Then the electoral turnout in suburban municipalities is studied in relation to their socio-economic, cultural and geographical features. Finally, the effects of suburban development on voting behaviour are analysed. The analyses show that not all features of the political behaviour of the suburban population in the Czech Republic follow trends observable in the West, but most relations between socio-economic development and political behaviour in suburbs are similar.

**SS 05:3 Tomáš Kostecký – Jana Vobecká (eds.): *Regional Elites 2004* (in Czech)**

This study presents an analysis of the characteristics, opinions and attitudes of regional elites in the Czech Republic. It is based on an empirical survey conducted in the autumn of 2004, just be-

fore the elections to the regional assemblies were held. The study looks at political, administrative, economic and cultural elites, focusing especially on how regional elites evaluate the functioning and the developmental potential of the regions, and on their willingness to co-operate with other actors. The study also attempts to reveal and describe the kinds of issues that the elected regional representatives and the regional administration must face. The first part of the study centres on an analysis of the social and economic background of the regional elites, their professional and political careers, value preferences, expressions of trust, and their attitudes towards social issues generally. The study is part of the outcome of the research project 'The Influence of Political Culture and Socio-economic and Institutional Factors on the Differences in the Way the Czech Regions Function'.

**SS 05:4 Alena Křížková (ed.) – Radka Dudová – Hana Hašková – Hana Maříková:**  
*Work/Life Balance in the Czech Republic: Policy, Time, Money, and Individual, Family, and Company Practices* (in Czech)

The new labour market model that evolved in the Czech Republic after 1989 and the family strategies of women and men are two spheres that interact and overlap at various levels of society and in the individual strategies of those involved. The changes to the circumstances surrounding labour market participation that resulted from the economic, political, and cultural changes in Czech society and the effects of a global labour market have created a dynamic foundation, which has altered the entire atmosphere of society and the developmental trends within it and on which individuals, families, employers, and companies must base their life strategies. This study analyses the provisions and conditions currently available to the actors – individuals, households, and companies – in the form of social policy measures, financial options or benefits, and the time granted individuals to reconcile work and family life or for employers to facilitate a work/life balance for their employees. Using sociological and statistical data, an analysis is also made of the strategies employed to make use of these conditions and resources with a view to the gender structure of society – family relationships and the functioning of gender relations in the labour market. The issue of work/life balance is studied especially from the perspective of the legislative changes that have occurred in the sphere of family and employment policies, changes in employment and gender relations in the labour market and in the family, and the demographic trends in Czech society, which have been the subject of long-term study in the Gender & Sociology Department at the Institute of Sociology AS CR.

**SS 05:5 Petra Rakušanová: *Civil Society and Civic Participation in the Czech Republic***  
(in English)

This study defines the space of civic participation based on a differentiation between the terms 'civil society' and the 'third (non-governmental) sector'. Establishing this terminology and theoretical framework appears to be key, as these two terms are often confused. Notwithstanding its long tradition and topicality, the term 'civil society' is somewhat abstract and is today used mainly in theoretical and conceptual contexts, whereas the 'third sector' is more practical and concrete, as it offers the possibility of factual definition, and therefore, it is mainly used in empirical research. The key factor in the theoretical and empirical connection between the terms 'civic participation' and 'civil society' is the fact that a democratic political system is based on the opportunities that citizens have to participate in and influence public affairs. This study also defines civil society historically and attempts to conceptualise civic participation in the Czech Republic. Consequently, by determining the role of non-governmental organisations and through a description and analysis of the character of the non-governmental sector, the study aims at defining the borders of the civic sector and civic participation in the Czech Republic.

**SS 05:6 Jana Stachová: *Civil Society in the Regions of the Czech Republic* (in Czech)**

The subject of this volume is a case study aimed at examining the level of civil society in the regions of the Czech Republic. The research is primarily based on a qualitative case study of two selected regions (administrative regions), which represent as different as possible types in terms of the state of civil society, using interviews with representatives of the non-profit sector. The case studies focus primarily on the state and development of the non-profit sector, which is what the author conceives as the key, constitutive element of Czech civil society. One of the aims is therefore to describe in detail the situation and the development of the non-profit sector in selected regions, and in this connection to identify the socio-cultural and the institutional factors that may influence the level of civic participation. The author looks mainly at what kind of institutional features can contribute to the shape of civil society and especially influence how local and regional governments affect the state and development of civil society in the region.

Studies to be published in 2006 include:

**SS 06:1 Zdeněk R. Nešpor – Jiří Večerník (eds.): *Socio-economic Values, Policies, and Institutions in the Period of the Czech Republic's Accession to the European Union* (in Czech)**

The volume presents a study of some of the central dimensions of the complex changes Czech society has experienced in connection with the transformation after 1989 and the country's accession to the European Union. It expands on standard mainstream economic, sociological and political science approaches to also take into account the historical dimensions of these processes. The study is methodologically grounded in the tradition of economic sociology and the conceptualisation of economic culture; it also analyses the differences between objective social facts and their ideological, political and media representation and looks at transition policies and their social reception. Special attention is devoted to analyses of the labour market, social and family policy, the monetary system, education, health care, and the issue of contemporary international migration. Qualitative field research is used to compare the business values of domestic and foreign business people doing business in the Czech Republic and the economic culture of Czech public administration, while comparative analyses based on international quantitative surveys are used to examine work and family values and attitudes on contemporary religiosity/spirituality. A key question that the authors attempt to address is whether various types of (economic) cultures – (post)communist, Western or different Western types, or even that which preceded the rise of the socialist dictatorship – have clashed, changed, or fused in the processes of transformation and European integration. In other words, whether and how much the Czech Republic is already in Europe and/or how much it is still moving towards it.

**SS 06:2 Zdenka Vajdová – Daniel Čermák – Michal Illner: *Autonomy and Co-operation: Effect of the Municipal System Established in 1990* (in Czech)**

This study primarily examines two processes that public administration went through at the local level beginning in the early 1990s: a process whereby municipalities were broken up into autonomous units, and a process whereby these autonomous municipalities voluntarily came together to form co-operative groups or unions of municipalities. The description and research on the first of these two processes drew on data from a database of newly emerged municipalities, which was created for this purpose. The description and research of the second of the two processes is based on a survey that was conducted among representatives of the unions of municipalities and on several case studies of specific unions. The study also contains a discussion of the size of municipalities, the effectiveness of their administration, and local democracy, a review of inter-mu-

nicipal co-operation in some European countries, and a look at the media image of co-operation between municipalities that emerged from content analyses of the magazines 'Public Administration' and 'Modern Municipality'. The study is part of the outcome of work on the project 'Inter-Municipal Co-operation – An Element of Local Democracy and an Effective Tool of Autonomous Local Government'.

**SS 06:3 Petra Rakušanová – Blanka Řeháková: *Participation, Democracy and Citizenship in a European Context* (in Czech)**

This study focuses on the relationship between participation and citizenship and their influence on the formation and functioning of effective representative democracy. In the first part of the study the authors introduce the theoretical framework they apply to their study of democracy, participation and citizenship. In the second part, which contains an analysis of democracy, they outline a practical framework of how democracy functions and apply this in further analysis using data from the ISSP 2004 on citizenship. Some of the study's basic findings are that socio-demographic factors have a fundamental effect on participation and people's trust in election participation and that trust in institutions is clearly influenced by how satisfied respondents are with the political and economic situation in the country. Evidently trust in institutions is based on how well the state fulfils its obligations. The study also shows that there is a clear and direct connection between trust in one's fellow EU citizens and participation in the elections to the European Parliament. The vitality and legitimacy of democracy in the Czech Republic and in Europe generally depends on establishing effective ties between political elites and citizens. The increased involvement of citizens in political and civic life should be encouraged by the active efforts of political representatives.

**SS 06:4 Hana Hašková: *The Phenomenon of Childlessness in a Sociological and Demographic Perspective* (in Czech)**

This study examines the phenomenon of voluntary and involuntary childlessness, focusing in particular on the occurrence of this phenomenon in the Czech social context. It presents a summary of the studies on childlessness in the Czech Republic before 1989; an analysis of the public and professional discourse on childlessness, declining fertility rates, and the postponement of parenthood to a later reproductive age in the Czech Republic; a summary of the theories that aim to explain childlessness, the current decline the fertility rate and the postponement of parenthood in Central and Eastern European countries; an outline of the gaps in research on childhood to date in this region; and the conceptual model and methodology applied in a study on childlessness in Czech society currently under way. It also contains a demographic analysis that on the one hand transversally compares a) the basic characteristics of first-time mothers, b) the fertility rate of first births, c) the birth-order structure of children born, and d) the total fertility rate in Europe, and on the other hand makes a generational comparison of a) the percentage of women who remain unmarried and b) the completed fertility rate of women born in 1965 in Europe, concluding with a comparison of the percentages of women who remain childless in different European countries and a prognosis of future trends. It presents a sociological analysis of a worldwide online discussion of voluntarily childless people and addresses two basic questions: How do voluntarily childless people view the majority, pro-family oriented environment around them, and on the basis of this analysis what kind of 'childfree' types of people can be identified? Finally it analyses and compares the image of biological childlessness and the image of low fertility presented in the Czech public media in the years between 1994 and 2004.

# Sociologický časopis Czech Sociological Review

# 3

## OBSAH

STATI	
Stein Ringen: Pravda o třídní nerovnosti	475
Petr Matějů, Anna Vitásková: Mezosobní důvěra a vzájemně výhodné výměny: měření sociálního kapitálu pro srovnávací analýzy	493
Natalie Simonová, Dominik Antonowicz: České a polské vysoké školství – od byrokracie k tržní soutěži	517
Pavel Machonin, Milan Tuček, Petr Hartoš, Martin Nekola: Česká ekonomická elita po patnácti letech postsocialistické transformace	537
Dagmar Dzúrová, Lado Ruzicka, Eva Dragomirecká: Sociální a demografické souvislosti sebevraždy v České republice	557
Radka Dudová: Staré závazky v moderním světě: otec jako živitel před rozvodem a po něm	573
RECENZNÍ STAŤ	
Michael L. Smith: Nerovné šance na vzdělání: vzdělanostní nerovnosti v České republice, Petr Matějů a Jana Štraková (eds.)	591
JUBILEUM	
RECENZE	
ANOTACE	

PE 4584



# Sociologický časopis Czech Sociological Review 3

## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

Stein Ringen: The Truth about Class Inequality	475
Petr Matějů, Anna Vitásková: Interpersonal Trust and Mutually Beneficial Exchanges: Measuring Social Capital for Comparative Analyses	493
Natalie Simonová, Dominik Antonowicz: Czech and Polish Higher Education – from Bureaucracy to Market Competition	517
Pavel Machonin, Milan Tuček, Martin Nekola: The Czech Economic Elite after Fifteen Years of Post-socialist Transformation	537
Dagmar Dzúrová, Lado Ruzicka, Eva Dragomirecká: Demographic and Social Correlates of Suicide in the Czech Republic	557
Radka Dudová: Old Obligations in the Modern World: The Father as Provider before and after Divorce	573

### REVIEW ESSAYS

Michael L. Smith: Unequal Chances in Education: Educational Inequalities in the Czech Republic. Edited by Petr Matějů and Jana Straková	591
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### JUBILEE

### REVIEWS

### ANNOTATIONS

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PE 4584

Roč. 42, 2006, č. 1-3



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ISSN 0038-0288

