
Editorial

This issue of the *Czech Sociological Review* includes a great variety of topics, from very empirical issues to highly theoretical ones. While the articles examine both old and very new topics in the field of sociology, they share in common an attempt to re-assess and apply new perspectives, pushing the boundaries of the field and calling for sociology's engagement in exciting new areas and ways.

Two articles are on poverty. This reflects the attention that the issue is currently receiving from international and national bodies in close connection with the politics of poverty alleviation and the prevention of social exclusion. Halving financial poverty is the first of the UN Millennium Goals. In the European Union, the Lisbon process has put the focus on social inclusion, a trend that is being developed with growing intensity. All new EU member countries, including the Czech Republic, have recently prepared National Action Plans on Social Inclusion, which set out policies in various relevant areas – the labour market, education, social protection, anti-discriminatory policies, etc. The issue also presents social research with a great challenge.

In the first article on poverty, Michael M. Förster provides evidence on income poverty levels and trends and the driving factors behind income poverty in 26 OECD countries, using data that overcome many of the comparability issues that plague cross-country comparisons in this field. The article presents and discusses the overall trends in the incidence and intensity of poverty during the past 20 years and documents the changes that have occurred in the profile of poverty during that period. Of outmost importance is the analysis of the main determinants that have influenced these changes and that are of particular importance for formulating poverty alleviation policies: trends in social spending, tax/transfer policies, labour markets, and employment, and changes in the population structure.

Jiří Večerník asks who are the poor in the Czech Republic. Using new sources of income data, he applies a variety of measurements that reveal the different faces of poverty, comparing objective and subjective indicators. Developments since 1989 indicate that more change has occurred in the composition than in the amount of poverty. Before 1989, poverty was caused mainly by demographic factors. By contrast, in the market economy, unemployment became the strongest factor of poverty. Although the problem of 'the working poor' is – so far – less acute in the Czech Republic than in other EU countries, it is nonetheless still a serious problem. In conclusion, the author calls for sociology to be drawn more into poverty research.

Several contributions are on sociological theory. Jan Drahokoupil reminds us of the seminal ideas of Karl Polanyi. His article deals with contradicting interpretations of the notion of social protectionism in Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*. The first interpretation sees social protectionism as a balancing principle of economic liberalism. The second understands social protectionism as a part of the market

pathology. The author concludes that the favourite notion of social protectionism as a balancing principle of economic liberalism does not correspond to Polanyi's theory. He also comments sceptically on the utility of Polanyi for understanding social protectionism in social analysis.

Marta Kolářová analyses the images presented in the British and Czech alternative press to determine how men and women in the anti-globalisation movement are visually represented in the alternative media. The author discusses the many ways in which women's participation in this form of social protest is presented as gendered and what the images depicted in the media signify in semiotic terms. The author argues that the alternative media reproduce gender stereotypes and confirm gender patterns. While social protest in general is an underdeveloped field of study, the gender perspective on this field is even more neglected. This work is a very welcome contribution to an emerging area of inquiry.

Paul Blokker reviews two books dealing with the post-communist transformation. He shows that after a relatively dogmatic period in which neo-liberalism and neo-modernisationist attitudes towards transition dominated, the advance of interdisciplinary, and historically and culturally informed approaches are rendering the field of transition studies a breeding ground for innovation and critical perspectives on sociology in general. The possibility of understanding the emerging post-communist societies as possible alternative forms of democratic and capitalist societies rather than as either faithful or failed copies of the West is a perspective that is increasingly gaining ground. Western-centric and economic-determinist thinking will effectively belong to the past.

Martin Hrubec interviews Nancy Fraser, a social and political theorist from the New School in New York. In the interview they discuss the theory of justice she developed, which attempts to connect the requirements of both redistribution and recognition. The main ideas behind the theory are elaborated in their discussion. As Nancy Fraser concludes, theorists of justice should not focus only on debating the question 'equality of what?' but should also look at the question 'equality among whom?', which means evaluating the relative merits of nationalism, liberal internationalism, and cosmopolitanism with respect to issues of distributive justice, on the one hand, and of recognition, on the other.

In the summer of 2005, the *Czech Sociological Review* will publish a thematic issue on legislatures and representation in Central Eastern Europe. The guest editors of the issue will be Zdenka Mansfeldová, Lukáš Linek, and Petra Rakušanová. The issue will focus on topics related to legislatures and representation and will address a basic question, which – after decades of research and theoretical thinking – remains unchanged: Who do MPs represent? The articles in the summer issue of the *Czech Sociological Review* will address legislature and representation topics using empirical findings from different countries in the CEE region and will be contributed by both established and new young scholars from CEE and Western Europe.

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