

Sociology - Czech Republic

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Michal Illner

Sociology – Czech Republic

Discussant: Ivo Možný

1. Analysis of the pre-1989 situation

It would be impossible to discuss the present state and recent development of Czech sociology without at least a short flashback. The reader interested in a more detailed retrospective is referred to specialized works (Havelka, 1995; Macků, 1996; Možný, 1996; Urbánek 1995; etc.). This paragraph has been inspired by an unpublished presentation on the development of Czech sociology given by Jiří Musil at the ISA XV World Congress of Sociology (Musil, 1998).

The beginnings of Czech sociology can be dated back to 1882, when teaching in the Czech language was renewed at Prague University. The development of the discipline in the next hundred years can be divided into four periods that, rather significantly, copy the turns in the political development of the country: 1. the formative period, 1882-1918, 2. the period of expansion, 1918-1948, 3. the period of destruction, renewal, and stagnation, 1948-1989, 4. the period of another renewal after 1989. Although discontinuity prevailed over continuity, some general common features can be distinguished throughout the 120-year history of Czech sociology – see below.

The founder of Czech sociology is considered to be Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, a professor of philosophy at the Czech university in Prague who later, in 1918, became the first president of Czechoslovakia. In his habilitation thesis (1879), he analyzed suicide as a mass phenomenon of modern times (Masaryk, 1881); his best-known later writings dealt with the *Social question* (Masaryk, 1895) and the *Czech question* (Masaryk, 1898). The growth of industry and the rapid urbanization of the Czech Lands, with a simultaneously strong role of agriculture, stimulated other authors' interest in urban and rural studies. As in other industrializing and urbanizing countries, attention focused on social pathology, poverty, and social policy.

The second period, 1918-1948 (with the exception of the years of the 1939-1945 Nazi occupation) was an organic continuation of the formative years. New accents were called for by the establishment of the independent state of Czechoslovakia in 1918, and political themes became important, particularly the theory of democracy and issues of the nation and nationalism. Masaryk again and also Edvard Beneš, his collaborator and later his follower in the presidential office (who studied sociology in France and was influenced by Émile Durkheim), wrote on themes of democracy. The literature dealing with the national question was partly a continuation of the historically oriented pre-war discussion of the "Czech Question" and partly shaped by studies of the relationship between Czechs and Germans. Emanuel Rádl's study on "War of the Czechs against the Germans" (Rádl, 1928, the title is not to be taken literally) can serve as an example. The most extensive series of empirical research projects consisted of studies of the living conditions of poor families in Prague and of the urbanization process in Prague suburbia (Ullrich, 1938), monographs on rural communities, and studies on specific social strata. Sociological theory did not flourish. Josef Ludvík Fischer, a professor at Palacký University in Olomouc, was the only exception. In the late 1930s, he was able to formulate an original structuralist-functionalist theory of society, different from the Parsonian theory.

Sociology was also developing in institutional terms, and the political elites supported its development. There were two independent chairs of sociology in the inter-war period, as parts of the faculties of arts in Prague and Brno held by Josef Král and Inocenc Arnošt Bláha. Two sociological journals – *Sociologická revue* (Sociological Review) and *Sociální problémy* (Social Problems) – were published, and foreign literature, mainly French and American, was translated. German sociology, including Max Weber, remained outside the focus of Czech sociologists of that

time. This promising period was interrupted by the Nazi occupation of the Czech Lands in March 1939 and by the closing of Czech universities soon thereafter. The short, more or less liberal post-war interlude from 1945-1948 was dominated, also in the universities, by heated debates between the liberal democratic, social democratic, and communist intellectuals about the future political and social system of the country. There was little space left for academic work. The communist takeover in February 1948 abruptly closed this transitory stage.

From the perspective of the development of sociology, the 40-year period of the communist regime can be divided into three rather different stages in regard to the political environment for the social sciences. After the communist coup, sociology in Czechoslovakia disappeared. The chairs of sociology were closed down and the teachers emigrated or were expelled from universities, unless they were Marxists or quickly converted to Marxism. Many students met the same fate. Sociological journals were banned, access to sociological literature in libraries was prohibited, and foreign and international books and journals were not available. As Musil (cf above) remarked: in contrast to Poland, where after 1948 the teaching of sociology at universities and even sociological reviews survived, the Czechoslovak situation was an intellectual blackout.

A partial renewal of sociology took place in the middle of the 1960s when, as part of the destalinization of the regime, a more liberal political atmosphere temporarily began to prevail. At that time, the *Czechoslovak Sociological Association* (Československá sociologická společnost) was founded and sociology – its Marxist version – was once again taught at universities. In the Academy of Sciences, the *Institute of Sociology* (Sociologický ústav Československé Akademie věd) and the *Institute of Public Opinion Research* (Ústav pro výzkum veřejného mínění Československé Akademie věd) were established and the Czech-language *Sociologický časopis* (Sociological Journal) was founded. However, the Communist Party and the state power watched the development of sociology with suspicion and tried to control it. In spite of restrictions, the five years from 1965 to 1969 saw remarkable development in the discipline. As Musil mentioned, its main protagonists were Marxist revisionists who hoped that sociology could help to modernize the rigid and stagnating society. To establish a distinction between sociology and historical materialism and to protect sociology from the incursions of this ideological discipline, the empirical component of sociology was stressed and the methodology of social research was developed. Functionalist schools enjoyed great sympathy. The main themes of extensive research were concerned with the modernization of socialist society. The main topics were social stratification – Pavel Machonin headed an extensive research project (whose results were published in Machonin, 1969), and Radovan (Richta, 1966) headed research on the social and cultural context of scientific and technological development (or revolution). Research on social stratification was highly professional and helped to educate a number of young sociologists who later became some of the key personalities of Czech sociology. Traditional sociological disciplines were able to regain their formal position, and contacts with Western and international professional organizations were renewed. Methods of social research were studied and applied to local conditions (Lamser, 1966).

The occupation of the country in August 1968 by the Warsaw Pact states and the establishment of the “normalization” regime in 1969 once again decimated Czech sociology. This time, as Musil observed, people were more targeted than institutions. The chance to survive was greater for people on the institutional and thematic periphery of the discipline. Some research programs survived, but under strict ideological control. The leading positions at universities and in the Academy’s newly founded *Institute of Philosophy and Sociology* (Ústav pro filozofii a sociologii Československé Akademie věd) were predominantly occupied by second-rate persons. The *Sociologický časopis* (Sociological Journal) survived. Sociological research continued, but mostly outside the Academy and universities. No new concepts or thoughts incompatible with Marxist political orthodoxy could be publicly presented. Gradually, however, an informal sociology developed in the form of discussion groups, applied research teams, etc., often under odd institutional roofs, where more open discussions could take place. However, this semi-legal

sociology was limited to critical comments. Several Czech sociologists were actively engaged in anti-communist dissent (and suffered the consequences), but the discipline as such did not play a very important role in the protest movement. This period in the history of Czech sociology was terminated in November 1989. The fourth and so far last stage, which started with the fall of the communist regime, is the subject of the next parts of this report.

2. Redefinition of the discipline since 1990

After 1989, the situation of Czech sociology changed fundamentally. The most conspicuous development occurred in the political environment of the social sciences. All political restrictions and regulations on what can be investigated, how, by whom, and with what results have been lifted. A liberal atmosphere has been introduced regarding researchers' choice of themes and theoretical and methodological approaches. Until recently, the state even dropped any effort to specify any preferred programs of common interest. The limits to research, if any, were financial, but definitely not political.

The subject structure of post-1989 sociology has been mostly influenced by the processes of societal change that have been shaking Czech society. For most of the 1990s, the dominant themes of sociological research have been the post-communist transformation and its economic, political, social, cultural, and socio-psychological aspects. The transformation and transformation-generated problems were a gold mine of research topics. It took some time before the fascination with the uniqueness of transformation phenomena and with their specific Czech features began to give way to the understanding that such phenomena are part of a more general process of societal change, which has been taking place on a broader historical and geographical scale. Multinational comparative research projects, usually covering all or some of the four East-Central European countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and the Slovak Republic – and sometimes extending further to the east or southeast, provided ample material for broader generalizations.

The institutional structure of social science has changed profoundly in four ways (Illner, 1999): organizational diversification and fragmentation, the dismantling of monopolies, the strengthening of university-based social sciences, and the emergence of private and commercial research. The hierarchical system of social science institutions supervised by the Communist Party and the state bureaucracy was dismantled. The majority of applied research institutes linked to ministries ceased to exist as well. Both the universities and the Academy of Sciences underwent fundamental reorganization; the Academy's size was reduced by almost 50%, and any formal hierarchical relationship between it and the universities disappeared. University social science, the weaker partner until 1989, was substantially strengthened as new institutions of higher learning – social science faculties, departments, or centers – were established, some in the regional capitals, and began to teach sociology, the most important new institutions being the *Faculty of the Social Sciences* at Charles University (Fakulta sociálních věd Univerzity Karlovy) and the *Faculty of Social Studies* at Masaryk University (Fakulta sociálních studií Masarykovy univerzity). The research capacities of universities were also upgraded. In the Academy, the new *Institute of Sociology* was founded in 1990, reviving the tradition of the Academy's first sociological institute, which the communist regime had dissolved for political reasons in 1970. The *Institute of Public Opinion Research*, until 1989 an organization serving almost exclusively the Communist Party's Central Committee, was totally reorganized and began to collect as well as to regularly publish data on political and other attitudes. In 2001, the Institute was incorporated in the Institute of Sociology at the Academy.

A new system of financing research from public money was established, with grant agencies as its core element and peer reviews as the basic mechanism of evaluation (cf below). Systematic measurement of the scientific output of individual scientists as well as of research groups and organizations has been introduced, and output criteria started to play an important role in the

allocation of public resources, although not in a consistent way throughout the whole structure of social science. Public databases of research projects and their outputs were established.

Besides the public sector institutions, a plethora of private social science educational, research, and consulting organizations also emerged – schools, polling and market research agencies, consultation firms, think tanks, etc. Competition developed between the public sector and private institutions as well as within each of the two groups for research themes, finances, human resources, foreign links, and attention from the media and politicians.

The thematic and organizational transformation of social science has been accompanied by a tremendous mobility of research and pedagogical personnel. Several significant currents of mobility can be distinguished: 1. The compromised former communist elites, partly voluntarily, partly under pressure, left their positions and frequently also their organizations, moving mostly to jobs in the private sphere, into retirement, or just to lower-level jobs within their original home institutions. The so-called “*screening law*” preventing former top communist nomenclature cadres from occupying leading positions in public sector institutions (those of directors, deputy directors, and departments heads) played a secondary role in this context. 2. Sociologists whom the communist regime had expelled from universities and research bodies for political reasons after 1968 were offered the chance to return to their positions as part of the *rehabilitation* process. 3. Human resources were redistributed between public sector institutions and newly emerging private ones – clearly in favor of the latter. A number of talented younger-generation sociologists left the Academy’s institutes and university departments to establish or accept jobs in private research firms, taking with them the professional knowledge and inside information of their home institutions as a professional “dowry”. 4. Some redistribution of personnel also took place between institutes of the Academy of Sciences and universities; its main stimulus was a massive downsizing of the Academy in 1993 and new openings in the institutions of higher learning.

On the other hand, the mobility of social scientists into and away from the country did not reach significant dimensions: so far, external “brain drain” has not been a frequent phenomenon in the social sciences and the number of returning expatriate sociologists has also been small, partly because of the modest size of the Czech sociological émigré community. Those who returned or kept visiting the country repeatedly, offering their help in rebuilding Czech sociology, include Václav Bělohradský, Ernest Gellner, Miroslav Disman, Jiří Kolaja, Jaroslav Krejčí, Jiří Nehněvajska, Zdeněk Strmiska, Zdeněk Suda, and Ilja Šrubař.

Unfortunately, the post-1989 organizational and personnel changes in Czech sociology have never been systematically mapped and researched, so no quantification of these changes is available.

3. Core theoretical and methodological orientations

Revival and adaptation of major pre-war traditions

The fifty years that passed with the Nazi occupation of the Czech Lands and the closing of Czech universities in 1939, the end of all academic research, and the fall of the communist regime in 1989 were much too long a period to permit the preservation of any direct and organic link between pre-war and contemporary Czech sociology. Most of the people who, under normal conditions, could have spanned the two periods as university teachers, authors, and representatives of schools of thought had been expelled from their academic jobs and not permitted to do any research or to publish. Some emigrated, some were imprisoned, some disappeared into private life. The two periods of relative freedom in 1945-1948 and 1965-1969 were too far apart and too short to be able to restore the tradition. With some exaggeration, we can say that Czech sociology had to start anew three times since the war – in 1945, 1965, and 1989 – each time with new themes and approaches.

However, on a general level, some *more lasting features* can be recognized in contemporary Czech sociology reaching back as far as the pre-war time or even the 19th century: empiricism and aversion to abstract theory, theoretical eclecticism, emphasis on practical application, and policy uses of social science knowledge. Jiří Musil, after recently surveying the last hundred years of Czech sociology, suggested seven clusters of themes, or rather thematic orientations, that he thinks recur in Czech social thought: 1. The national question and problems of nationalism and identity (a theme also represented by historians and political scientists). 2. Problems of the welfare state, social policy, and the theory of applied social science; social problems, poverty, and social pathology. 3. Problems of social modernization, often seen as a part of socio-ethical issues. 4. Urban and rural sociology. 5. The social stratification of Czech society, viewed from the perspective of the social conflicts it can cause. 6. The theory of democracy and of the political system – efforts to balance liberalism and socialism. 7. Social theory – the weakest link within this series (Musil, 1998).

Another pre-war feature of Czech sociology that was revived after 1989 has been its spatial concentration in *two major academic national centers* – one in Prague around the Faculties of Arts and of the Social Sciences of the Charles University and the Institute of Sociology at the Academy of Sciences, the other in Brno, the cultural center of Moravia, around the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University. The two centers, representing the bulk of Czech sociology's capacities and output, are locked together in symbiotic cooperation and competition, each trying to define its own turf. Although it is still too early to make a final judgment, it looks like "Prague" and "Brno" schools of sociology are emerging in the Czech Lands, just like before the war.

Past and present inspirations

Czech sociology, a relatively modest scientific enterprise now as before the war, has always taken its theoretical and methodological inspiration from abroad – in the inter-war period mostly from French and American authors, under communist rule from the Soviet Union. The Soviet link, mostly a channel of ideological control, was not always detrimental: particularly in the 1980s, some Soviet social science personalities and institutes were sometimes more liberal than their official Czech counterparts.

After 1989, the window to the West was opened and Czech sociology was exposed to the plurality of theoretical and methodological currents and thematic orientations of world sociology. Eclecticism prevailed. It is difficult to name any theoretical and methodological current that influenced Czech sociologists in a way as distinctively as the hermeneutic, post-modern approaches, which attracted a closely-knit group of adherents. Other schools of thought that found some resonance among Czech sociologists were theories of modernization, of social and cultural capital, and of path-dependency, as well as neo-institutionalism. Prominent sociologists whose works were translated and published in recent years in the Czech Republic and who, among contemporary personalities of world sociology, have had the chance to influence the Czech social science community include Zygmunt Bauman, Peter Berger, Pierre Bourdieu, Ernest Gellner, Anthony Giddens, Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Luckmann, and Robert Merton.

The once exclusive and obligatory connections with official Soviet institutions that the communist authorities forced on Czech sociologists ceased to exist almost immediately after 1989; they were never substituted by links with the new post-Soviet social science bodies established in Russia since then. Neither side was interested; for both, Western connections were now of primary importance. Moreover, for Czechs, Russian contacts still smack of the former paternalism. Although understandable, this breakdown of contacts is regrettable: both the new Russian sociology and the changing Russian society are sufficiently interesting to deserve attention.

The traditionally well-established and predominant quantitative approaches to research methodology have been paralleled in the 1990s by a trend that promotes, sometimes in a somewhat doctrinaire way, qualitative and particularly biographical methods as the way to analyze social phenomena. However, the quantitative vs. qualitative dichotomy has developed solely on the

academic level. In problem-oriented, applied research, quantitative and qualitative methods have been successfully combined.

4. Thematic orientation and funding

Transformation (transition) as an object of study

Societal transformation – its causes, manifestations, mechanisms, forms, and impacts on the various segments of social life – was, in a general sense, the main subject of interest of Czech sociological investigations after 1989. However, much research was thematically linked to the transformation merely as the relevant societal environment of the concrete phenomena under investigation. In fact, any study of contemporary Czech society conducted in the 1990s had to take transformation into account, even if transformation was not its immediate subject. While there was scarcely any aspect of social life not affected by transformation, the number of studies dealing explicitly and primarily with societal transformation, e.g. with its theoretical models and interpretations, was modest. Contributions of this kind included, for example, Možný's essay offering an original micro-sociological interpretation of the communist regime's collapse (Možný, 1991), studies viewing transformation as a belated modernization of Eastern and Eastern-Central European societies (Machonin, 1997), Kabele's attempt at a theory of societal change (Kabele, 1998), discussions about the conceptual difference between transition and transformation, and discussion about which of the two better captures the processes taking place in the former communist countries.

As mentioned, the bulk of transformation-related studies tackled concrete individual aspects and manifestations of the process, often with an explicit policy orientation. By the end of the 1990s, the pivotal role of transformation as an integrative concept began to recede and the frequency of transformation issues has been gradually falling. Joint problems shared by many European industrialized countries – like globalization, problems of the information and knowledge-based society, aging and its consequences, family behavior, international migration, nationalism, minorities, unemployment, postmodern values, etc. – and lately also issues of European integration, none of them transformation-specific, have been gradually increasing in number.

The choice of themes

Although broadly represented, transformation issues did not entirely dominate Czech sociology in the 1990s. Other themes were discussed as well. Beside the themes mentioned above, Czech sociology was also rediscovering and evaluating its historical heritage. It retrospectively analyzed and evaluated socialist society and, reflecting on the current state, discussed the problems, the institutional framework, and the infrastructure of the discipline. Many contributions, including efforts to translate the most relevant foreign-language sociological works and make them accessible to the Czech public, aimed to overcome the consequences of Czech sociology's long intellectual isolation from world social science. The *characteristic features* of Czech sociological studies in the 1990s were

- their thematic, theoretical, and methodological diversity, starkly contrasting with the regimented and uniform profile of official, pre-1989 sociology,
- their retreat from Marxist approaches (and sometimes the adoption of other ideological paradigms – neoliberal, conservative, radical “green”, etc.),
- their inspiration by theoretical concepts developed by Western – mostly American, British, German, and French – authors; the post-modern paradigm became particularly popular among part of the young generation of sociologists,

- the strong representation of empirically-based and policy-oriented studies and, on the other hand, the under-representation of original Czech theoretical writings,
- the coexistence of the well-developed, traditional quantitative research methodology and the rapidly expanding qualitative, particularly biographical, methodology, and
- the uncertain disciplinary identity of many studies due to the thematic and methodological interpenetration of sociology and its adjacent disciplines – political science, economics, demography, social geography, and social anthropology; often, the author's home institution or the journal where the study is published is all that helps to solve the identity problem.

A survey of the contents of the ten volumes from 1991 till 2000 of *Sociologický časopis*, the only Czech-refereed academic sociological journal, and of books published by Czech authors during the last twelve years offers a partial picture of the thematic structure of Czech sociology in the 1990s and permits us to estimate the frequency of specific themes. Four clusters of themes were distinguished and ranked according to their frequency.

The following paragraphs characterize in detail only the first, most frequent thematic cluster; with the rest, we have to content ourselves with a brief enumeration of the main themes.

Cluster A

This set of the most frequent themes has to do with the basic structural changes of Czech society after 1989. It covered the following fields of study:

The post-communist transformation as a general problem

Studies dealt with the process of transformation on a more general level. The issues discussed were the social, economic, and political roots of the changes, the role of the pre-communist and communist heritage during the transformation, and continuities and discontinuities; the mutual relationship and timing of the economic and social components of transformation, as well as of its structural and cultural components and the tensions between them; the actors of transformation – their interests, roles, and strategies; the role of the market and of the state; and the specific features of transformation in the Czech Republic.

The dynamics of social structure and stratification

The emerging new social structure and stratification were studied, including the new class relations, the new mechanisms of social mobility, and the role of various factors that determine the stratification system – with special attention to the influence of meritocratic factors and to the role of the social and cultural capital accumulated during the communist regime. In this context, the problem of the circulation and reproduction of the former communist elite was studied and research on the new post-communist elite was conducted. Considerable attention was paid to the formation of the new middle class. Another group of studies focused on social inequalities created by the transformation process, on identifying the winners and losers of transformation, and on related issues of social justice. Attitudes of the public toward the new structures were studied, possible conclusions about their social legitimacy were drawn.

Socio-economic changes and the social aspects of the economic transformation

This body of research is closely connected with the previous one, as well as with parallel investigations of similar issues conducted by Czech economists. One group of themes includes the role of the market in the transforming society, social aspects of the post-1989 privatization process, and the new capitalists and managers. Another set of themes are the new income and property differences and inequalities, their social and demographic determinants, their distribution and consequences, their perception by the general public, and their legitimacy. Still another field of study was the changes and distribution of the living standard, especially studies of poverty. Another set of studies covered problems of the labor market, unemployment, and the unemployed. Another represented topic was the transformation of the welfare state. In the second half of the 1990s, social aspects of the housing market became another important research subject.

Social problems and social policy issues

Investigations covered social aspects and (often negative) social consequences of the systemic changes. Viewed as social problems, such issues were frequently approached from the social policy perspective. The key issues were social exclusion and the marginalized groups defined by poverty, ethnicity, and other social or cultural criteria, as well as systems, methods, and instruments of social policy and social work aimed at coping with social problems. Analysis of various social policy systems and discussion of their applicability in the transforming societies were frequent themes.

The new political and administrative system

A major field of studies at the boundary between political sociology, on the one hand, and political science and administrative science, on the other. The disciplinary identity of many studies is ambivalent. Investigations cover the socio-structural determinants and differentiation of political behavior, in particular of various forms of political participation: electoral behavior, party membership, participation in social movements, and political extremism. Another set of studies is concerned with political attitudes and identities, their structure, and their social determinants. Yet another major theme is the formation and representation of interests by political and non-political institutions, including NGOs and social movements. In this context, the controversial concepts of civil society and of "non-political politics" were discussed. The structure and dynamics of public policy were studied. The Czech Parliament was the object of intensive research at the end of the 1990s. Research on the political elite was conducted, mostly as part of a more broadly conceived elite research. Some research was done on political culture and political values and also in the field of political geography. The new local democracy, local self-government, local politics, and the more general issues of decentralization were intensively studied from the sociological perspective. An independent field of interest was the social aspects of the legal system and its functioning.

Cluster B

Four sets of themes fall into this cluster:

Research on socio-demographic phenomena

- Social aspects of population development
- New patterns of partnership and family

*Gender studies**Research on attitudes, values, and mentalities**Methodology of social research*

- General methodology and methods of qualitative research
- Methods of quantitative social research.

Cluster C

The third-most frequent set of research themes was a rather heterogeneous group:

- Studies of socio-spatial and environmental issues
- Studies of sociological aspects of ethnicity
- The sociology of law and studies of social pathology
- Sociology as a discipline and as an institution

Cluster D

The fourth cluster comprises a number of weakly represented themes:

- Transformation in and of economic organizations
- Retrospective analyses of Czech society under the communist regime
- Development of human potential
- Problems of the information society and of information technology
- Problems of globalization
- Sociological aspects of European integration

- Lifestyle research

It is annoying to find among the weakly represented topics themes that will probably be of great importance for the further development of Czech society and that deserve much more attention.

A specific type of outputs were *social reports* aimed at presenting a synthetic picture of societal (or social) development in the Czech Republic in the 1990s or of some of its components; these sometimes also offered a scenario of what is to come.

The impact of thematic orientations on institutional structures

As mentioned above, the 1990s witnessed the growth and diversification of the originally underdeveloped institutional structure of Czech social research. New universities and research organizations, both public and private, mushroomed; the old ones were transformed or disappeared. The former division of labor, which was sometimes decreed from above, broke down. Individual researchers and institutions sought to find and to optimize their positions on the emerging market (or rather markets) of research themes, projects, foreign cooperation, and funding opportunities. It took most of the 1990s before the situation began to stabilize and a new division of labor started to take shape.

In academic sociological research, thematic orientations have to some degree spontaneously divided among four main institutional centers. The *Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University* is the main locus of biographic sociology and qualitative research, as well as of studies of sociological theories, the history of sociology, and the sociological aspects of public policy. In this faculty there is the *Center for the Social and Economic Strategies (Centrum pro sociální a ekonomické strategie)*, whose goal is to identify and analyze key issues, developmental barriers, and opportunities for the social, economic, and political development of the Czech Republic. The *Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University* is the strong point for social policy studies and research on social problems, minorities, ethnic and marginalized groups; it has a well developed program in family, children, youth, and seniors' research; and its department of political science runs projects in political sociology. The Faculty is host to a branch office of the Research Institute of Labor and Social Affairs. The *Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University (Sociologický Ústav Akademie Věd České Republiky) (Katedra sociologie Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy)*, has a stake in research on criminality and other social pathologies, in the sociology of labor, and in the history of sociology and sociological theories. The *Institute of Sociology at the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic* is a focal point for quantitative comparative research of social structure, social inequalities, and social justice, for studies of modernization, economic sociology, and socio-spatial issues including local politics, and for gender research and demographically-based family research and political sociology – particularly parliamentary studies, studies of political attitudes, and opinion research. It harbors the *Center for Public Opinion Research (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění)* and the *Sociological Data Archive (Sociologický datový archiv)* – units of national relevance.

The two hitherto separate institutional orbits – the universities and the Academy of Sciences with its individual institutes – grew closer over time and have established numerous channels of cooperation, both in research and in the training of students. During the 1990s, prominent universities were able to expand their research capacities and thus to make headway in catching up with the Academy of Sciences. The top universities now tend to position themselves as “*research universities*” whose main thrust is doctoral studies, while the Academy's institutes and individual scholars became extensively involved in teaching, particularly in postgraduate studies.

A system of *periodic evaluation* of state-financed research facilities has been introduced, based on peer reviews. The system still needs further refinement, and a discussion of the merits and limits of scientometric criteria in the social sciences is under way.

Funding

Like the institutional structures, the funding of academic sociology – concentrated almost exclusively in public institutions – was diversified after 1989. The most relevant source of financial means has been the state budget. These funds are distributed through two basic channels, either as “*institutional funds*” assigned to institutions according to diverse need-based criteria, such as the number of students, employees etc., or as “*targeted funds*” distributed as a rule on a competitive basis in the form of grants. The weight of this second channel has been growing and the government’s policy is to support this trend also in the future.

Several grant agencies and similar bodies were set up to be responsible for the distribution of the targeted funds; researchers can submit research proposals to these bodies. The largest and most relevant is certainly the *Grant Agency of the Czech Republic* (Grantová agentura České republiky), which commands the largest chunk of the targeted state funds. Other grant agencies, established by individual public institutions, specialize in supporting research in particular fields related to their own activities. These include the *Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic* (Grantová agentura Akademie věd České republiky), the *Grant Agency of the Charles University* (Grantová agentura Univerzity Karlovy), and grant agencies or similar units of individual ministries, some of which also sponsor social research. Recently, the state system of support for research and development has been further diversified by opening two new channels. One is support for newly established *Research Centers*, aimed to merge the research capacities of universities and non-university institutions and focusing on cross-sectional themes; the other is the financing of institutional *Research Plans*, intended to support long-term research on complex problems. A *National Program of Targeted Research* is being prepared. The culture of private sponsoring of social sciences and humanities is not developed in the Czech Republic.

Another source of finances has been foreign and international institutions, including Western governments, the European Commission, and diverse foundations supporting the re-creation and development of social sciences after 1989. Sizeable funds were received to support libraries, scholarships, training, publications, conferences, and also research activities. Universities could enjoy support within the European *Copernicus*, *Eureka*, and other funds. The particularly supportive foundations have included the *Open Society Fund* and several other agencies funded by George Soros, the *Friedrich Ebert Foundation*, the *Volkswagen Foundation*, the *British Know How Fund*, the *Ford Foundation*, and the *Rockefeller Brothers Fund*. During the second half of the 1990s, the generosity of external donors gradually receded in the Czech Republic as their activities moved eastward. By the end of the 1990s, the European Commission’s *Framework Program* became a potential source of funding. For sociology, the Framework Program has been more a promise than an effective source of financial means. So far, only teams and researchers willing to climb the bandwagon of their West European partners have had a real chance to participate in the European grants.

The next, though not yet very strong source of funding, has been the *for-profit activities* of public academic institutions – commissioned research, expertise, paid courses, etc. This source is, of course, the most important one for private organizations doing research and training in sociology. Since Czech legislation has recently permitted the establishment of private institutions of higher learning, it is to be expected that this type of resources will become more important in the future.

5. Public space and academic debates

Genuine academic debates, i.e., interactive exchanges of views, have not been very frequent among Czech sociologists.

- One that did take place concerned *post-modern thinking* and the theoretical and methodological challenges it represented for Czech sociology. The post-modern paradigm,

including the narrative and biographical methodology, invaded Czech social sciences after 1989, finding quite a number of adherents, who launched a critique of the so far dominant analytical, quantitative, and more or less positivist approaches. However, no deeper conflict between the post-modernists and the “traditionalists” has developed. This is partly because a kind of “third way” was found accommodating both sides, partly because the “hard” post-modernists were able to find their own institutional niches.

- Another debate concerned *the concept and the theories of modernization* – their scientific status and their usefulness in conceptualizing and explaining the post-communist transformation. Some Czech sociologists, trying to find a suitable theoretical framework for explaining the post-communist transformation, were inspired by the writings of Rudolf Andorka, Wolfgang Zapf, Samuel N. Eisenstadt, and others and found the answer in modernization theories. Others, however, questioned the usefulness of these theories, pointing to the directionality and the cultural bias of the modernization approach.
- The *transformation versus transition dispute* concerned the nature of the post-1989 societal changes in the Czech Republic and in other former communist countries. Should these changes be viewed as a transition to the “standard” economic and social patterns as they exist in the capitalist societies of Western Europe, or do they constitute a new quality – a system “sui generis”?
- Another debate focused on the *new middle class* emerging after 1989. Does it really exist? What is its origin, structure, size, dynamics, and its social and political role? Has it gained from the transformation?
- *Civil society and “non-political politics”* – the phenomena and the concepts. The theoretical tenability of both concepts, the very existence of these phenomena and the role civil society plays and should be playing in social life and in politics. This heavily loaded debate took place mostly in the media, outside of the academic sphere, but with social scientists’ participation.
- *Internal problems of Czech sociology and its public role*. Discussions concerned the state of contemporary Czech sociology as an institution and as a system of knowledge, its thematic orientation, its ability to cope with the scientific challenges brought by the post-1989 transformation, its professional status and productivity compared with world sociology and with other social science disciplines, methods of measuring its outputs, and its other problems. The public role of sociology was discussed – the obligation and ability of sociologists to act outside of the academic sphere, to take part in public discussions, to comment on relevant social issues, and to explain them to the general public.
- *The public role of opinion polls*. The quality of their results and methods; the impact of published results on political preferences and voting behavior of the general public as well as on the behavior of politicians; the polling agencies’ and the media’s culture of reporting their results.

6. Views on further development

International cooperation and the expected impact of EU accession

During the fifty years preceding the fall of the communist regime in 1989, with the exception of short windows of opportunity in 1945-1948 and 1965-1969, Czech sociology was isolated from world social science. Dogmatic political control rendered its *isolation much more thorough* than that of Hungarian and Polish sociology. The barrier fell in 1989, and international links were gradually rebuilt over the following twelve years in many forms: Czech researchers’ participation in bilateral and multinational research projects, co-authorship of publications with foreign colleagues, lectures abroad and participation in international conferences, lectures by foreign

professors at Czech universities, Czech sociologists' membership and offices in international scientific associations, their involvement in informal scientific networks, scholarships for Czech students at foreign universities, study visits by foreign students and researchers to Czech academic institutions, the organization of international conferences and meetings and the hosting of foreign social science institutions in the Czech Republic, participation in governmental as well as non-governmental programs, etc. There is no list or map of all the forms and instances of international cooperation. Initially formal inter-institutional links have frequently developed into informal interpersonal ones, and these later helped to facilitate a new generation of formal cooperative endeavors.

Yet in terms of worldliness, Czech sociology still lags behind its Polish and Hungarian sisters, even with all this busy networking. Twelve years have not been enough to make up for the initial difference; and Czech sociology, unlike Polish sociology in particular, could not count on massive support from compatriots abroad, because the Czech expatriate community was much smaller and less influential. This is not to deny the importance of the selfless and effective help of the Czech émigré sociologists who offered their support after 1989 (cf above).

Probably one of the most important factors to influence the international cooperation of Czech sociology in the coming years will be the country's integration in the European Union and a new quality of its participation in the Union's research programs. Modest so far, this participation is likely to intensify, partly because Western European scholars and institutions will want to learn about societies in the new member states, partly because the rules of the *6th Framework Program* encourage Western European authors of research proposals to include scholars from the candidate countries as participants in their projects, and partly because Czech sociologists will themselves actively seek such cooperation. Motivated by economic, political, or purely scientific reasons, this will lead Czech sociology to conduct more collaborative research and to orient itself much more toward all-European and global problems. Another factor pointing in the same direction is the development of the "*European Research Area*" in the social sciences, based on networking among institutions, research teams, and individual researchers.

On the Czech side, the prerequisite to such increased cooperation is, of course, professional competence and work discipline, language and social skills, and a healthy portion of cosmopolitanism – qualities that have not been in sufficient supply so far among the older generation of Czech sociologists. Contacts with the outside were the matter of a still relatively narrow set of "ambassadors". The number of competent communicators is, however, rapidly growing, and there is a fair chance that the situation will be different for the young generation.

On the "European" side, the fruitfulness of cooperation with Czech and other Eastern-Central European partners will depend on Western scholars' familiarity with the Eastern-Central European stage, on their sensitivity to the specific cultural and economic circumstances of the respective societies, and particularly on their ability to maintain partnership relations with Eastern-Central European colleagues even in intrinsically asymmetrical material situations. An unhappy scenario of European cooperation – though there is nothing to suggest that it will materialize – would be to concentrate European-level research capacities and their management in a limited number of Western academic centers, leaving the Central European partners with only auxiliary roles as suppliers of rough data and of talented young researchers.

The "EU connection", although strengthened, will not and should not undermine Czech sociologists' cooperation with their partners in other European countries and in other parts of the world. One of the important links here is and will certainly remain that with Slovak, Polish, and Hungarian sociologists. These three countries, with which the Czech Republic has shared a common or similar fate over the last fifty years and, hopefully, will also share in the years to come, are the natural partners for cooperation and for comparative research – already within the EU. Slovenia and Estonia can be included. Cooperative links have also been established and should continue with U.S. and Japanese partners. Re-opening a window to Russia is a matter for future development.

The impact of sociological research in the public sphere

In recent years, sociology and sociological research, whatever people understand them to mean, became popular among the general public, and the image of a sociologist as a professional who is competent to analyze society and comment on his findings became established and accepted. This was not so much the merit of the sociologists themselves as of journalists who discovered that some sociological themes and particularly the results of opinion polls are a readable and audible material, suitable to cover the pages of newspapers' weekend issues or to feed TV and radio discussions. In the process, the media sometimes reduced sociology to just a couple of attractive themes and often identified it with opinion research. Sociologists who managed to penetrate into the media have undoubtedly played a role in shaping public opinion and have had the opportunity to present some relevant issues for public discussion. Equal opportunities for men and women, tendencies of demographic development, the functional literacy of the Czech population, the dynamics and factors of income distribution, regional disparities, housing problems, ethnic issues, lifestyles, and political attitudes were just a few such attractive themes.

Sociology's impact, if any, on "big" politics and the central politicians has been less visible and more indirect. The one social science discipline that strongly influenced the sphere of politics, particularly during the first half of the 1990s, was economics, not sociology. This was partly because some of the leading politicians of the time were themselves economists; many of them dismissed sociology as a kind of soft and, in their opinion, intrinsically leftist subject unsuccessfully competing with economics in explaining the functioning of society. Moreover, sociology was often identified with its skewed pre-1989 version. This situation changed somewhat at the end of the 1990s when, as a contribution to the public debate on the problems and developmental orientation of Czech society, several social reports were published, including a series of UNDP-sponsored Human Development Reports. The government invited a group of sociologists to participate in drafting background materials for the *Social and Economic Strategy of the Czech Republic*. A government-sponsored unit – The *Center for Social and Economic Strategies* – was established in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Charles University to pursue this work. The first outputs of this team attracted attention. For more information refer to the Selected Bibliography.

The branch of social investigations that definitely did have an impact on both the general public and the politicians has been public opinion research. Results of the polls have been closely watched and reacted upon, in spite of voices questioning their validity. The organizations conducting opinion surveys and providing data on politically and socially relevant issues were thus highly relevant contributors to public debates. The media have regularly published and commented on their findings (a list of the most important polling agencies is in the appendix).

Sociology's involvement was more prominent on the level of policy formation. Czech sociologists contributed numerous research reports, pieces of expertise, recommendations, etc. dealing with various policy issues to state authorities, local governments, NGOs, etc. For example, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Regional Development commissioned such cooperation. Sociologists took part in drafting the Strategic Plan for the Development of Prague, etc.

Human resources in sociology and the problem of the "brain drain"

Czech sociology and social sciences in general experienced a surge of interest among the young generation after 1989. The numbers of young people interested in sociological studies and applying to the universities rose dramatically, exceeding the available educational capacities. At the same time, the labor market was interested in the social science professions, mainly for practice-oriented jobs, i.e., in market and opinion research, the media, advertising and publicity agencies, human resources management, social services, and public administration. The academic sphere – new social science departments and research institutes – also demanded a new labor

force, but offered entirely uncompetitive salaries. So academia was the loser in the ensuing competition: private firms and public administration were able to offer salaries much higher than university departments and institutes of the Academy. Often, after spending some time in an academic setting to acquire more skills in research methods, data analysis, and foreign languages, young and gifted researchers have taken these better-paid jobs. The kind of job opportunity that has attracted, at least temporarily, young sociologists, in spite of being poorly remunerated, was work in charities and other institutions providing beneficial public services. The feeling of being directly useful and employing one's knowledge to solve social problems has been a strong motive for some young sociologists, leading them away from the more abstract and more cognitive game of academic social science.

Unlike this internal "brain drain", Czech sociology has not so far experienced any substantial outflow of human resource abroad. This situation may change in the future, as the national labor market in the social science professions becomes saturated, leading the new cosmopolitan and "exportable" generation of young sociologists to start to seek opportunities abroad.

Note

In this contribution, given its limited scope, we preferred to concentrate more on trends and the characteristic features of Czech sociology than on factography. The reader seeking factographic information is referred to the institution CD and to the Selected Bibliography. Shortly after completion of this paper, a monothematic Czech-language issue of Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review was published, devoted completely to the recent development, present state, and problems of contemporary Czech sociology (Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review 2002). It neatly complements this overview with further information and insight. The two formerly separate journals Sociologický časopis and Czech Sociological Review were merged in 2002 with the composite name "Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review". The journal is now a bimonthly, with two of the six yearly issues published in English and four in Czech.

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Selected Bibliography (1990 – 2002)

Introductory note:

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, boundaries of sociology as a discipline are rather fuzzy in the Czech Republic and it is often difficult to decide on the disciplinary identity of individual publications. The present selection of publications is not much restrictive in this respect.

The list has been limited to books with academic content, authored or co-authored by Czech writers, presented by established publishers and generally available. Publications of 'grey' literature (i.e. publications with limited circulation - e.g. internal prints of institutions, working papers, reports etc. have not been included. This rule has been relaxed in the case of social reports some of which were not on sale in public bookshops.

A selective bibliography, such as the present one, can suffer from structural imbalances and omission of important items. Although we tried to minimize such a risk by controlling for the important themes as well as the relevant authors, such deficiencies cannot be excluded. The author will appreciate suggestions which would help to remove such imperfections.

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Journals, Bulletins, Encyclopaedic Works

Journals

Sociologický časopis (Czech Sociological Review)

Academic bi-monthly published by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Four issues in the Czech language and two issues in English are published each year. English summaries are available in the Czech language issues. The journal is reviewed by the Institute of Scientific Information and is impacted.

Biograf

Czech language journal specializing in biographic and reflexive sociology. Published by the Virtual Institute (cf. below) both in a printed and an electronic on-line form. Three issues are published annually.

Sociální politika (Social Policy)

A Czech language journal published monthly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Devoted to social policy issues.

Pohledy (The Views)

A Czech language journal was published bi-monthly by the the Czech Confederation of Trade Unions. The journal was devoted to social problems, social development and social policy issues. Recently its publication has been interrupted.

Sociologické texty (Sociological Papers)

A series of Czech or English language studies, published irregularly (annually about ten issues) by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The series presents outcomes of the Institute's research.

Sociální studie (Social Studies)

A series of Czech language studies published irregularly by the Faculty of Social Studies of the Masaryk University. The series presents results of research conducted by the Faculty's staff and students.

Bulletins

Data&Fakta (Data and Facts)

A Czech language bulletin published irregularly – about ten issues annually - in the electronic form by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Presents short reports on the Institute's recent research findings.

Gender. Rovné příležitosti. Výzkum (Gender. Equal Opportunities. Research)

A Czech language bulletin published quarterly by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Dept. Gender and Sociology. Issues concerning equal opportunities of men and women in the Czech Republic are discussed.

SDAInfo

A Czech language bulletin published quarterly by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, its Sociological Data Archive. It presents outlines of the Archive's available services, overviews of stored data and research projects, provides references to other sources of social data and is dedicated to promoting secondary data analysis.

Encyclopaedic works

The 90s enriched Czech sociology with three encyclopaedic publications (see also above the Bibliography):

Sociologický slovník (The Dictionary of Sociology)

by Bohumil Geist (Geist 1992)

Velký sociologický slovník (The Great Dictionary of Sociology)

Edited by Miloslav Petrušek, Jiří Linhart, Alena Vodáková et al., with contributions by more than two hundred Czech authors (Petrušek et al. 1996). A major original Czech encyclopaedic work (in two volumes). The Dictionary represents a major collective accomplishment of Czech sociology of the 90s. It contains 2350 entries covering the history of sociology, sociological schools, sociological theories and concepts, general methodology, research methods and techniques, sociological disciplines, sociology in individual countries as well as a biographical annex covering 2700 personalities of world and Czech sociology. The Dictionary embraces also a wide range of entries referring to adjacent disciplines. Available are English, French, German and Italian equivalents of the entries. As a spin-off were published, in separate volumes, three mono-thematic collections of some of the Dictionary's entries devoted to sociological schools and paradigms, to social deviation, sociology of illness and of medicine, and 3. social and cultural anthropology.

Sociologický slovník (The Dictionary of Sociology)

by Jan Jand'ourek has been the latest contribution to the family of dictionaries (Jand'ourek 2001).