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Divided by Freedom

Czech Society after 30 Years



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How Divided by Freedom Was Conceived

For the thirtieth anniversary of the restoration of freedom, Czech Radio decided to try to come up with some useful, inspiring and, as Václav Havel would have put it, meaningful content. Quite quickly, the phrase “divided society” was brought up. And we found out it was used frequently although its meaning was vague.

Is the Czech society divided in a way that is different from what it was twenty-five or fifty-five years ago? Does it differ from other European countries in the way it is divided? Isn't it natural for a country to be divided? And if it is a symptom of a social disease, how could it be discovered and how could the disease be cured?

We approached many experts and to our surprise we found out that a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the “divided” Czech society didn't exist. There were many insights into individual problems but the bigger picture was missing. Getting it and stimulating the debate on the “divided society” seemed to be worthy of the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain.

We approached sociologist Daniel Prokop and his two colleagues, Paulína Tabery from the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, and Martin Buchtík, Director of the STEM Empirical Research Institute, who helped us to create the assignment of the research of the Czech Society after Thirty Years. Czech Radio commissioned agencies with which it has cooperated for a long time to collect data from a sample of more than four thousand respondents.

Now you are holding in your hands the publication describing the basic results. They will be largely reflected in Czech Radio's broadcast; we provide them to both the general public and experts and they will also be the basis of discussions between experts, politicians and other figures which are organized by Czech Radio.

We believe that in all these respects the results of the project represent a useful, inspiring and meaningful public service.

René Zavoral
Czech Radio's
Director General



UNITED BY HOCKEY. It was called the “Tournament of the Century” because it was the first time the ice-hockey stars met at the Olympics. Instead of the hockey powers, Canada and Russia, it was won magnificently by the Czechs headed by Dominik Hašek and Jaromír Jágr. Nine years after the Velvet Revolution, hundreds of people filled Czech town squares again.

Czech Society 30 Years after the Velvet Revolution – Research Summary

What is the structure of the Czech society 30 years after the Velvet Revolution? Are we really divided into a handful of members of the elite and “the ordinary people,” who lag behind that elite, as the society is described by populist politicians? Or have new inequalities and dividing lines been created within the society, and is it still relevant to examine its stratification, or class structure, if you will? And how big and strong is the mythical middle class that we often refer to without defining clearly what we mean by it?

These and other questions were asked in the research called Czech Society after Thirty Years. Besides them, there was one more, essential question, without which it would be pointless to look for new social classes. How is a person’s social status related to their feeling of contentment in life, to the kinds of problems they face, and to their confidence in others and

in political institutions? Do social classes differ in the extent to which they believe they can influence social affairs and to which they trust institutions and other people and assume that democracy is the best type of government?

It is often said that the society is divided, which usually refers to the differences in opinions on issues, such as migration and pro-Western tendencies, and in the degree of supporting authoritarian values or in putting emphasis on climate protection. But is the Czech society really divided into two irreconcilable bodies of opinion? And how are these views connected with a person’s status in the stratified society?

HOW WE EXAMINED THE STRUCTURE OF THE CZECH SOCIETY

A person’s social status and security don’t stem only from their income and property. There are people who have a substantial income but who lack social contacts and knowledge that would help them to succeed in the ever-changing society. They might be financially secure at the moment but their future is uncertain. On the other hand, those who have social contacts and knowledge work in professions and on posts that are un-

derpaid. There are groups that have almost no social capital as well as those that have a sufficient amount of it.

In describing Czech society’s structure we were inspired by the famous Great British Class Survey. Like its authors, we also used the approach of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who shows that besides income and property (economic capital), for social status it is also crucial to have social contacts and relations. These relations help people to cope with crises, get better-paid jobs and other benefits (social capital). Bourdieu also shows that for social success it is important how far one shares the appreciated cultural preferences and orientations connected with a higher social status (cultural capital).

The British sociologists describe British society from those points of view, dividing it into 7 classes based on the share of people’s economic, social and cultural capital. Our study is based on their methods with only minor modifications. We added another kind of capital: the competences important in the changing global society, such as languages and computer literacy. Besides the competences of different professions, we also consider the support one may get from friends and family.

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE RESEARCH

The research Czech Society after Thirty Years and this publication have been prepared for Czech Radio by sociologists Daniel Prokop, Martin Buchtík, Paulína Tabery, Tomáš Dvořák and Matouš Pilnáček. In June 2019, a survey involving 4,039 respondents was done by MEDIAN and STEM/MARK. It used a combination of on-line and personal inquiries and it is representative for the population of 18–75 years of age as regards all sociodemographic indicators, intensity of using the Internet, district of residence and kind of town (based on the degree of social problems). The authors: Daniel Prokop focuses on poverty and political research, has founded analytical company PAQ Research, and works for Charles University. Martin Buchtík deals with issues connected with the changing society, such as the formation of public opinion and the quality of life. He heads the non-profit STEM institute. Paulína Tabery deals with the methods of sociological research and public opinion polls. She is head of the Public Opinion Survey Centre (Academy of Sciences). Tomáš Dvořák focuses on studying populism and quantitative methods and works for PAQ Research and Charles University. Matouš Pilnáček deals with sociological research methods, quantitative methods of data analysis and political research. He is an analyst at the Academy of Sciences.

SIX CLASSES OF CZECH SOCIETY: A SUMMARY

A statistical analysis of latent classes shows that there are 6 classes in the Czech society, which differ in the composition of their sources (capital) and therefore in their social status as well. Firstly, there are two kinds of higher middle class. The first one is secured by its income and property (*established middle class*), while the second has less property but a greater potential for the future because it can become stronger due to its social contacts, cultural capital and language and digital skills (*emerging cosmopolitan class*). These two classes together constitute about a third of the society.

Secondly, there are three types of lower middle class, constituting a half of the population. They consist of the

traditional working class, which has solid income and property but limited other sources (contacts, cultural capital, new competences) and the *vulnerable class*, which is the exact opposite: socially and culturally it is one of the middle classes but it is suffering economically. And finally, the specific *class of local ties*, which benefits from both owned property and social contacts.

Every sixth Czech of 18–79 years of age belongs to the lowest class, which we call the *impoverished class*. Such a person lacks all types of capital: income, property, social contacts, new kinds of competences, and human capital.

Type	Class	Typical kinds of capital	Size
Higher middle class	Established middle class	High income and large property, but only slightly above-average social capital (contacts, help from others), cultural capital and new types of competences (languages, computers)	22,1 %
	Emerging cosmopolitan class	High or above-average income, but limited property. Large social capital, cultural capital and new types of competences.	11,9 %
Lower middle class	Traditional working class	Above-average income and property, but very low social and cultural capital, and lack of new types of competences.	14,4 %
	Class of local ties	Above-average property and social capital (contacts, help from others), but lower income and cultural capital and new types of competences.	11,8 %
	Vulnerable class	Solid social, cultural and human capital (new competences), but very little property and low income.	22,2 %
Lower	Impoverished class	Very low income, little property, little social capital and few new competences.	17,6 %

Unlike in Britain, in the Czech Republic there isn't a class that has very high capital of all kinds and constitutes more than 0.5%–1% of population. The issue of elites, which haven't been able to accumulate all types of capital yet, is discussed in the section "Where Have Czech Elites Gone?"

WHAT KINDS OF CAPITAL WE EXAMINED AND HOW

Three kinds of capital are used in the Great British Class Survey: economic, social and cultural, each having two dimensions. This approach is updated in our study with regard to the specifics of the Czech society, including the (lack of) knowledge of Western languages, more equalized incomes, less metropolitan post-Communist country increasing the importance of local social relations, bigger differences in income based on gender (focus on household incomes) and less distinct separation of high culture in cultural preferences.

Economic capital:
Dimension 1: Household income converted to household (consumer units).
Dimension 2: Household property including immovable properties, savings and other property.

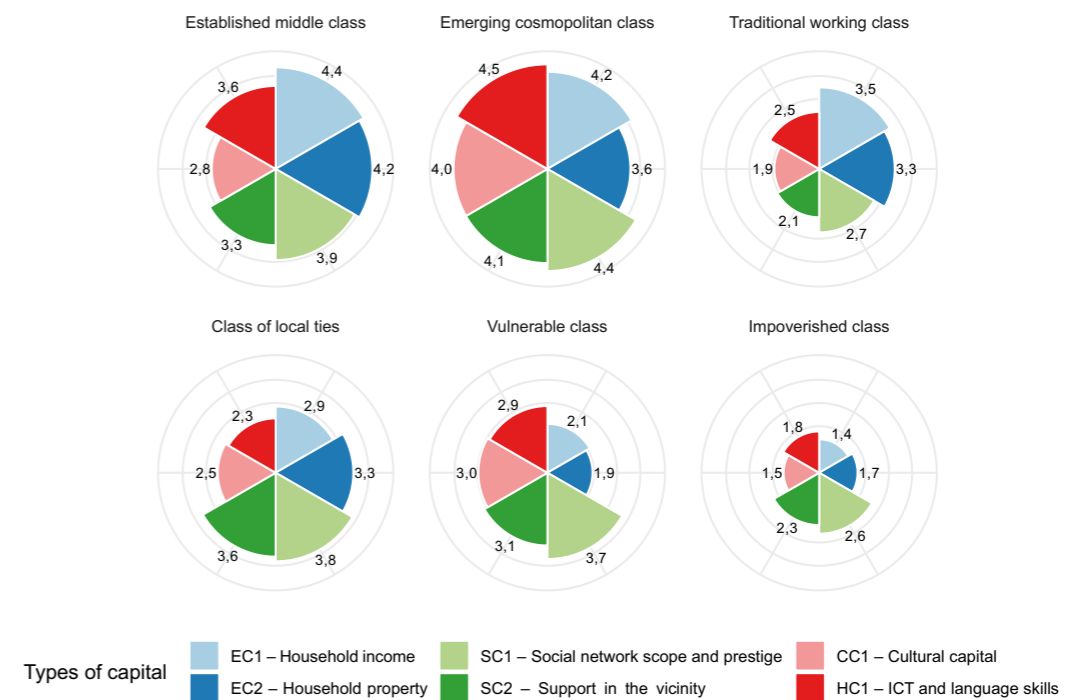
Social capital:
Dimension 1: Total size and prestige of social network – measured through working posts whose representatives the respondent knows.
Dimension 2: Helpful capital: the fact whether the respondent has people around him/herself that can help with financial and legal matters, babysit, help if the person is ill or help in the household.

Cultural and human capital:
Dimension 1: Cultural capital: total degree of participation in high-culture activities (theatres, museums, exhibitions, etc.) and emerging culture (quality TV, modern concerts, etc.).
Dimension 2: New competences (human capital): knowledge of English and another Western language and ICT competences (abilities and self-confidence in working with a computer and on the Internet).

Position of classes in terms of different kinds of capital



Distribution of capital types among social classes



Description of Czech Social Classes 30 Years after 1989

Established middle class

The *established middle class* includes 22% of the Czech population. Its members typically have high incomes and large property. This economic capital is connected with an above-average social network, cultural capital and the knowledge of ICT and languages. In short, it is the wealthiest and secure class. However, in comparison with the *emerging cosmopolitan class* it has somewhat smaller resources and knowledge in areas important in the modern globalized society. Therefore, it may also have limited chances of getting wealthier and becoming a social elite.

Its members are mostly middle-aged. In terms of professions, they are usually specialists in different areas, including professionals in industry, state administration and private companies. It includes a significantly higher-than-average number of managers and directors of companies (these managerial groups constitute about 36% of the *established middle class*).

Where can you meet them? A characteristic feature of this class is that its members live in cities but even more often in satellite towns. Thanks to their high income, most of them (56%) have repaid their mortgage and lead a slightly more settled life.

A slightly lower level of human capital, i.e. knowledge of ICT and languages, in comparison with the *emerging cosmopolitan class* results from age difference, which, however, is not the difference of a whole generation as the two higher middle classes are only 7 years away from each other. This difference, however small, is essential. The members of the *established middle class* mostly got their education and entered the labour market in the transformation period, before the full emergence of digital technologies. This class didn't grow up in the new world and draws on the heritage of the post-Communist social transformation.

Another typical feature of the *established middle class* is that its members know people of different professions but they only have an average network of friends and relatives who could help in the event of work-related or personal problems. That is probably the result of a less active lifestyle and of this class preferring to live in suburban areas, where there are fewer opportunities for cultural activities. These people are also partially separated from the closest social relations providing social support. To a degree, age might play a part here, too – these are often people who are taking care of their parents and children at the same time.



Emerging cosmopolitan class

The *emerging cosmopolitan class* includes 12% of Czech population. Its members typically have large capital of all types except for one. That exception is property, which they haven't accumulated (yet), so it is only slightly above average. They have substantial income and social capital, which is large in terms of prestigious contacts (lawyers, doctors, IT specialists) and a supportive network of friends and family. They have no problems with digital technologies and are the only ones who can really speak Western languages. Their strong cultural capital is connected with an active lifestyle focused on higher and modern culture.

This class is the most city-based. Its members live in v Prague and in city centres. Like the *established middle class*, they often live in rich towns (more than 50% live in a third of the richest Czech towns). They are mostly in their early middle age. There are some singles, but almost half of them have children younger than 18.

The *emerging cosmopolitan class* is the germ of the future social elite. It already includes the largest number of managers, top managers and company directors (these managerial posts are held by 41% of them). In terms of professions, the most frequent ones are IT specialists (analysts, developers) and finance and technology specialists. Their lesser property (so far) is the result of their lower age. However, in the future their property will grow as their income increases and as they use their large human and social capital.

Their lesser property is shown by the fact that these people live in rented flats or houses more often (21%) than the *established middle class* (8%). This disproportion is caused by age as well as by increasing financial inaccessibility of properties, especially in Prague and Brno. This fact, along with higher unpaid portions of mortgages could be the largest risk factor for this class in the future.



Traditional working class

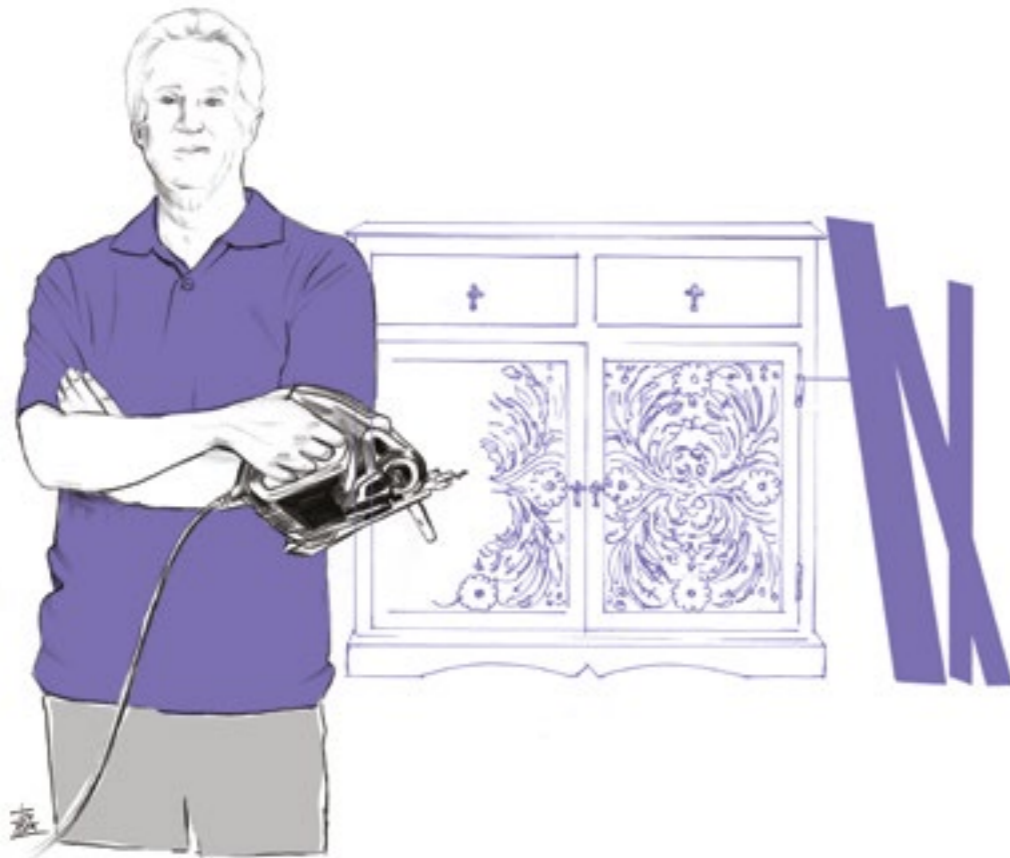
The *traditional working class* includes 14% of Czech population. This class might be called “blue collars” as it is close to this label. A characteristic feature of this class is solid property and income, which are slightly above average in comparison with the other classes. For this class, property mostly means flats and houses (87% of its members live in their own flat or house).

They live outside Prague, usually in small towns and villages. About a half live in small town with fewer than five thousand inhabitants. Unlike the aforementioned (higher) middle classes, this class includes relatively fewer people with a college degree, and secondary education prevails in it. Middle and higher age is typical of this group.

In terms of occupations, this class mainly consists of manual labourers in traditional and riskier jobs, which are relatively well paid. They are usually less qualified technical workers, craftsmen, qualified labourers, lorry drivers and retail shopkeepers. This group has profited from the economic growth of the past few years and because its members live primarily in small towns and villages, they can enjoy a relatively high living standard.

On the other hand, their status is below average in terms of the other kinds of capital. Despite living in small towns they are not involved in local networks and have a very limited number of friends and relatives to turn to if they need help in legal or financial issues. Their social capital is also small as regards prestigious social contacts; they don't know any lawyers, doctors, IT specialists or similar professions.

Their lower education level and higher age lead to a lower level of human capital. They can't speak much English and only have basic knowledge of ICT. Their lifestyle is more passive, which results from the size of the towns they live in and from a low degree of social relations and engagement in local life. The *traditional working class* is a group of people whose status in the Czech social structure is full of contradiction. Economically they are doing well but due to the absence of the other kinds of capital, their status could be threatened in the future because of economic crises or globalization and automation.



Class of local ties

This class includes 12% of the Czech population and along with the *emerging cosmopolitan class* it represents the smallest segment. Its characteristic feature is above-average residential property and very large social capital. These people have good contacts with prestigious professions and they also always have someone to turn to if they need help in professional or personal life. They live primarily in the country and in small towns. There are very few people under 25 in this class; it includes mainly older age groups, which is connected with a more settled life in the country.

In terms of profession, this class consists of both qualified and unqualified workers, whose income is mostly below average. As regards their life standard, they are secure especially thanks to having their own houses (89% live in their own houses). Lower costs of living outside cities relatively increase the value of their income and therefore their life standard as well. For these reasons they are not substantially affected by socio-economic problems or threatened by unemployment or distress.

This rural class is peculiar to the Czech Republic, which has, in comparison with other countries, a large number of small towns. Although the members of this class have little knowledge of ICT and foreign languages, they could have higher incomes if they took more advantage of their relations with their friends in prestigious jobs. This class is also characterized by a low rate of Internet usage (only 63% of them use the Internet on a daily basis and a third very irregularly).

The *class of local ties* is a unique type of class, characterized by its intensive connection to the rural community in terms of property (housing) and substantial local social contacts. The relatively lower costs of living in the country don't make its members strive for higher income. Therefore, the labour market trends (digitization and automation) don't pose much of a threat for them now or in the near future.



Vulnerable class

This class includes 22% of the Czechs. It is a lower middle class, typically with under-average income and property. It consists of people of all generations. Their education level is usually under average, with secondary education without a leaving exam prevailing. In terms of professions, there are many ordinary administrative workers and employees in the services sector. If there are any managers, they are in the low-paid sectors. These people have an average (or slightly under-average) knowledge of languages and ICT and they lack specific knowledge and competences that would help them to find better employment. Their knowledge of ICT and languages isn't sufficient for them to do specialist jobs, which are better-paid. Therefore, they often have badly paid jobs even though they have formal education, which could help them to get more skilled and better-paid jobs.

Despite having very little property and low income, they have an above-average social capital. They have contacts with prestigious professions (lawyers, doctors, IT specialists, etc.) and they also have someone to turn to if they need advice. Therefore, they are a kind of opposite to the *traditional working class*, which typically has higher income and larger property but low social capital. The majority (62%) of the *vulnerable class* are women.

Little property and low income is also reflected in this class showing the second highest percentage (38%) of rental housing. The group's general vulnerability also consists in the fact that it includes many families with children and with mothers on maternal leave, with relatively more frequent job loss.

The general status of this class is ambiguous. On the one hand, there is a potential for higher income and larger property. On the other hand, the low economic capital and an unfavourable position in the market, combined with frequent divorces, lead to risky life situations. In this class, distraint, job loss and long-time unemployment occur more frequently.

The *vulnerable class* is a city class which hasn't taken advantage of the economic boom of the past decade and although it has a potential to grow, there might be more threats and significant decline in the event of an economic crisis. It is a forgotten class which isn't benefitting from globalization and digitization and probably cannot detect any future trends. It is a class in which the gender aspect is under threat, too.



Impoverished class

The *impoverished class*, which constitutes 18% of the Czech population, has no kinds of social capital. The representation of all types of social capital is largely under average.

Under-average education (22% of members have primary education only) and higher age prevail in this class. These people usually live in mid-sized or larger towns except for Prague. In comparison with the other classes, they live in regions strongly affected by structural problems and low standards of living, i.e. in Ústí, Karlovy Vary and Moravian-Silesian regions. In comparison with the other classes, its unemployment rate is the highest (over 6%). Its members are very often auxiliary staff, building industry workers, unqualified manual labourers, shop assistants and other shop employees. It also has a high percentage (60%) of women.

These people do the lowest-paid jobs and have no abilities to get better-paid ones. Little property and non-existent social capital of the supportive network of family and friends makes this class vulnerable to different risk factors. It has the highest percentage of rental housing (41%) of all classes and unstable forms of housing are more frequent in it.

For these reasons, it is a class that most often faces socio-economic problems, including unemployment and distraint. Because its members have no contact with the most prestigious professions and have minimum knowledge of ICT (only 50% of them use the Internet on a daily basis, which is the least of all classes), their chances of improving their situation and social status are low.

Part of this class consists of senior citizens who haven't accumulated any social capital due to less prestigious and low-paid jobs and of the unemployed and the poor at pre-retirement age. However, a certain part consists of young (14%) and middle-aged (32%) people. Therefore, the *impoverished class* includes all generations and age groups.

While the other classes usually have at least one above-average type of capital, which may represent a certain kind of support, the types of capital of the *impoverished class* are all very weak. These people haven't benefitted from the economic growth of the previous years, unlike, for example, the more qualified traditional working class, and have no resources to improve their situation.





Where Have Czech Elites Gone?

Although according to our research we cannot talk about one homogeneous “elite” constituting a separate class, it doesn’t mean that there are no Czech elites. The evolution of the Czech post-1989 elites is specific and it hasn’t settled even after thirty years. For the evolution of elites as a separate class characterized by very large economic, social and cultural capital, the essential factor is passing the social status, consisting of property as well as network of relations or cultural background, on

to the younger generations. That is something that has been interrupted or made very complicated in basically every generation in the past hundred years, unlike, for instance, in Britain, where this group represents 6% of the population. The change thirty years ago did change the character of the elites but not completely. As a 2001 STEM survey shows, 39% of the member of the elites were Communist Party members before 1989, but the principle of seniority was disrupted and hasn’t returned to our society since then. What hasn’t changed is the fact that most elites still consist of men.

Today’s elites vary internally to a large extent. Different groups have different levels of mutual relations. Elites can be

considered to be groups from the government circles and state administration, especially political elites, i.e. MPs and representatives of all political parties, including leaders of cities and regions, as well as officials of public institutions and companies where the government owns a large share and the country’s representatives in international institutions, such as the EU or UN. Another group includes the elites of the private sector, which means the owners of large companies and dynamically evolving start-ups, and top managers or CEOs of multinational corporations. Other elites consist of the owners or important commentators of the mass media, elites in the areas of civic society, culture, science, churches, the police, the army or

emergency services. Each of these groups has its own history, which is reflected in its social status, living conditions and its members’ opinions.

Our analyses and previous studies show that even in an extended sense, elites constitute 0.5%–0.1% of the adult population, which means tens of thousands. From the point of view of social structure, elites are mostly parts of the *established middle class* or *emerging cosmopolitan class*, which may become the core of the elite if part of it accumulates property, secures its income and keeps its contacts and competences.



THE END OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. The dissolution of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993 was celebrated in Slovakia, while the Czechs were disconcerted. Both countries joined the European Union on 1 May 2004.

Where They Live and What Threatens Them

A COUNTRY RIDDLED WITH DISTRRAINT

About 800,000 of Czechs are facing distraint. Approximately 400,000 are facing multiple distraint and all they can do is declare personal bankruptcy. However, personal bankruptcy has been largely impossible in the Czech Republic until recently, and only about 20,000 people a year would declare it. According to a Median survey, distraint results in lack of confidence in the rule of law and in leaving legal employment. Distraint mostly affects the regions of Karlovy Vary, Ústí and Moravia-Silesia; in some areas about a quarter of the population is facing it. Another major social problem of today's Czech Republic is inaccessibility of housing and insufficient housing policy. About 83,000, out of which 20,000 are children, are homeless or staying in quarters, with friends or in a neglected environment. In rich cities like Prague and Brno even the middle classes have to cope with increasing prices of flats.

Distraint map – data and analyses: <http://mapaexekuci.cz/> Median: Distraint in the Czech Republic – survey among people under distraint. Platform for social housing: 2018 Report on Exclusion from Housing

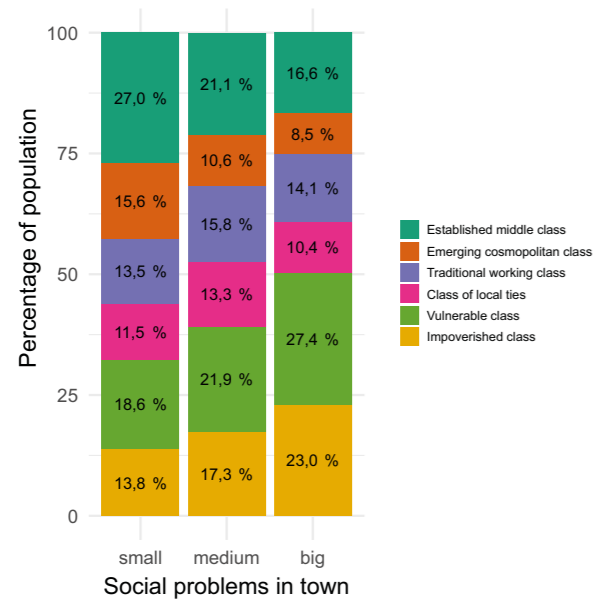
RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The social structure of Czech regions varies considerably. More than a half (56%) of Prague's inhabitants are members of the two higher middle classes, while almost a half of the inhabitants of Karlovy Vary and Ústí regions belong to the *impoverished class* (make up 24% of it), lacking all types of capital, or to the *vulnerable class* (they make up 32% of it). The *class of local ties*, benefitting from contacts and help of others, is spread around the rural Vysočina region and South Moravia.

However, even within individual regions there are towns affected by social issues, such as distraint, unemployment, divorces or long distance from regional centres. And the conditions of towns are related to their social structure. Almost a half of towns with only minor social problems (43%) consist of the (higher) middle classes, while in poor towns affected by social problems, half of the inhabitants belong among the economically weakest, the *impoverished* or *vulnerable class*.

The relation between place of residence and social status 30 years after 1989 isn't only a result of the fact that people in these places have lower education and different job levels. An advanced analysis shows that with the same education level, job level, age, sex and household structure the respondent has 1.5–1.7 times higher chance of becoming a member of the *established middle class* or *emerging cosmopolitan class*, if they live in towns least affected by social problems. By contrast, life in a third of towns with the biggest socioeconomic problems is connected with 1.5 times higher chance of belonging to the *vulnerable* or *impoverished class*. Causal relations probably go both ways. Towns suffer from social problems because lower and poorer classes live in them, while their risk environment can decrease the chance of higher social status and increase the risk of dropping from the middle to the lower classes

Class structure of towns – by the degree of social problems



HOW WE DEFINED SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN TOWNS

The research Czech Society after 30 Years approached 4,039 respondents from more than 1,300 towns from all Czech districts. In order to examine the relation between the social structure of the Czech society and regional problems, we divided the towns into 3 categories based on: the number of people in them who were (1) unemployed and (2) facing distraint, (3) what is men's life expectancy, which is connected with the quality of life, (4) how far they are from the district town – whether they are suburban locations, and (5) the divorce rate connected with the break-up of social relations.

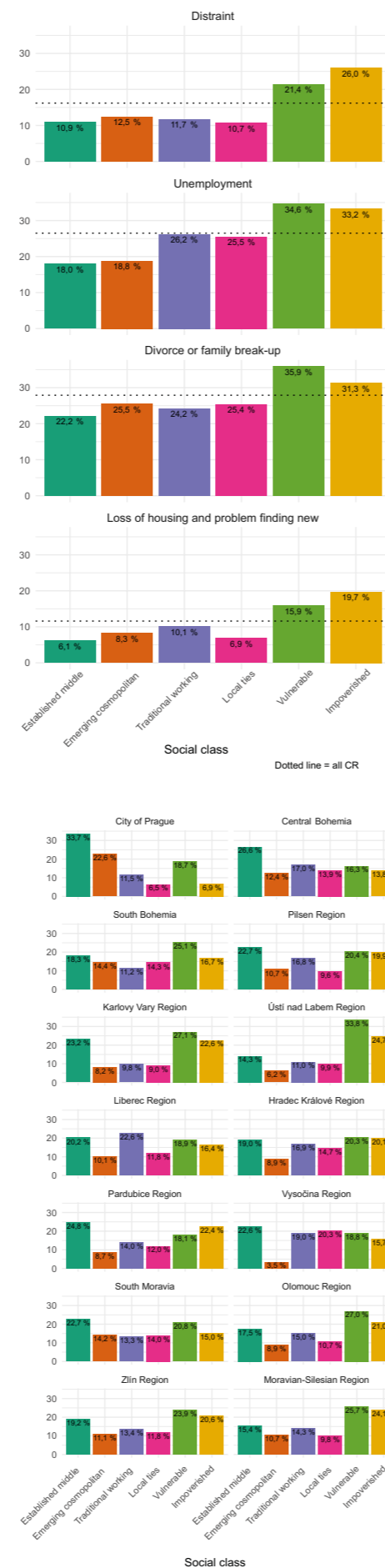
For each of the five indicators we arranged the towns in order, which we averaged, and the towns were then divided into thirds based on the average order.

DISTRAINT, HOUSING PROBLEMS AND OTHER THREATS

30 years after 1989, Czech social classes also differ in terms of personal experience with social and life problems. 16% of people admit that a household member's property has been under distraint in the past 10 years. This problem occurs specifically in the *impoverished class* (26%) and also affects the *vulnerable class* (21%). It is similar with unemployment and housing problems. Loss of housing and problems finding new housing have been experienced in the past few years by 12% of Czech households. However, in the *impoverished class* it is 20% and in the *vulnerable class* 16%.

That clarifies the position of the different lower middle classes. The *vulnerable class* consist of people who, with their human and cultural capital, belong among the middle classes, but due to the poor region of their place of residence, low-paid jobs or unstable family their social status has decreased. The *class of local ties*, whose members have limited income and human and cultural capital but mostly live in their own houses and use the support of their social networks, doesn't suffer much from social problems.

Has your household or one of its members faced any of the following problems in the past 10 years?



The Degree of Satisfaction and Participation

Social status is also connected with different dimensions of satisfaction. The *established middle class* and *emerging cosmopolitan class* are most satisfied with their standard of living and with the country's economic situation. In these dimensions, the *vulnerable class* is between the lower middle class and the poorest *impoverished class*. The *emerging cosmopolitan class* differs from the *established middle class* in its higher satisfaction with the enjoyable nature of its members' jobs and way of spending free time; it is more sociable, which is related to its larger cultural and social capital. Poverty and general social deprivation, along with a higher average age, manifest themselves by the members of the *impoverished class* seeing their health as worse. Some dimensions of satisfaction (personal relationships) are not influenced by social structure and each class has probably different reasons for being dissatisfied with the society's development.

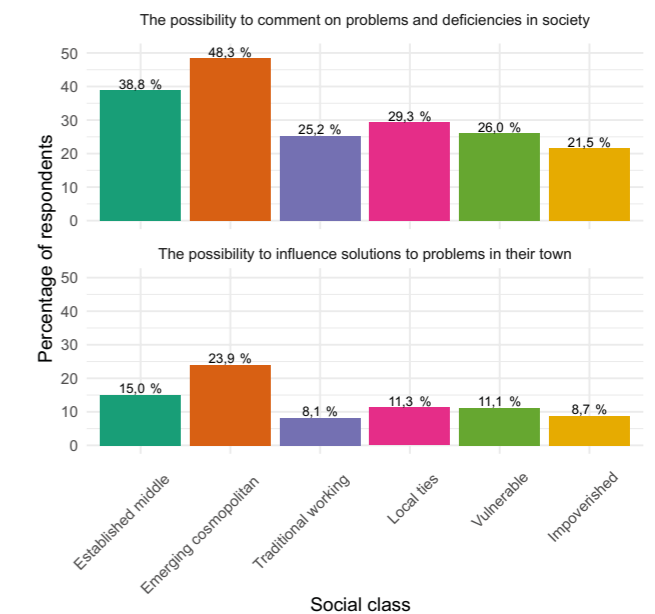
A factor analysis shows that there are two kinds of satisfaction, social and personal. How are they connected with the 6 types of capital? Personal satisfaction mostly depends on the degree of social support and partly on income, property and cultural capital. Social satisfaction largely depends on economic status.

Satisfaction with the dimensions of life. Percentage of the satisfied – dissatisfied.



Czech social classes also differ in their belief in the possibility of participating in social affairs. The higher middle classes feel more often that they can openly express their opinion on the society's problems. That is connected with their economic position and human capital, i.e. language and ICT skills, which are necessary for using on-line media and social networks and might support the feeling of freedom to comment on the problems. The possibility of solving problems in their town is most strongly felt by the *emerging cosmopolitan class*. This feeling is also connected with cultural capital, i.e. activities that might increase engagement in the place of residence. Due to relatively low non-economic types of capital, the *traditional working class* has a limited feeling of social participation.

How far do you agree that people like you... (% of "definitely yes")



Interpersonal Confidence and Confidence in Institutions

WHY TO EXAMINE CONFIDENCE AMONG THE SOCIETY

A high degree of confidence among the society is connected only with positive things: it ensures social stability and cohesion and facilitates many processes from business transactions to ordinary communication among people because these acts are much easier in a trusted environment. Societies with a low degree of confidence don't thrive, which is a sign of negative phenomena in the functioning of the state or in interpersonal relationships. Therefore, confidence and experience with one's closest persons and with those one doesn't know personally and the opinion on the general situation in the country are crucial aspects of a well-functioning democracy. That is why it is important to find out whether the degree of confidence is the same with all classes or whether there are large differences. We focused on two types: interpersonal confidence and confidence in state institutions.

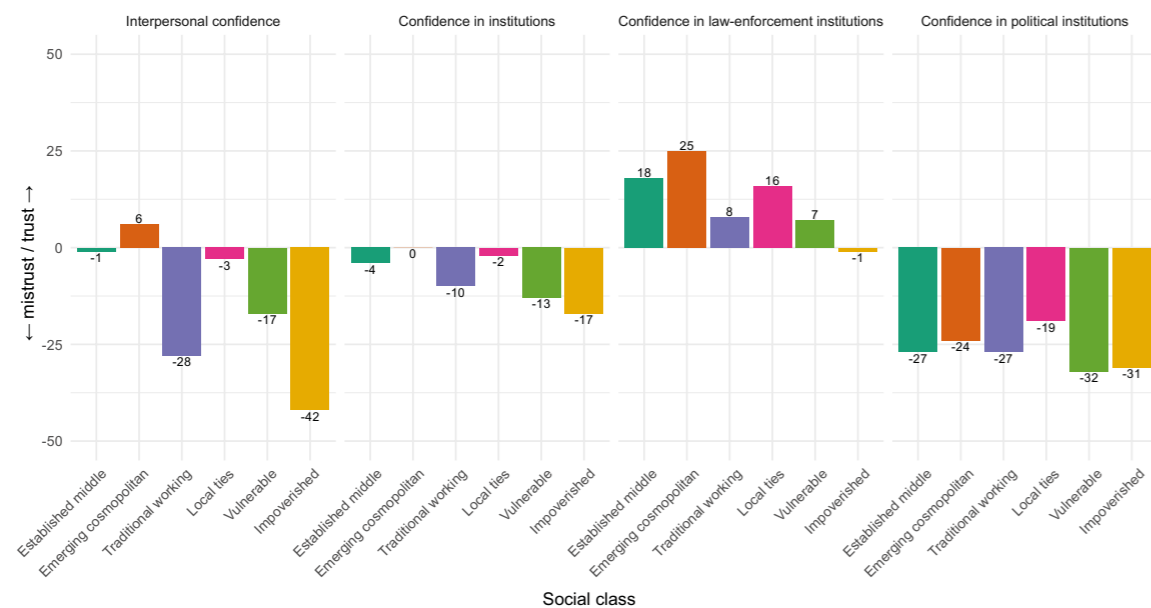
The individual classes differ in both interpersonal confidence and confidence in the country's institutions. The *impoverished class* feels the least confidence in people. It is followed by the *traditional working class* and the *vulnerable class*. By contrast, the *class of local ties* and the established middle class are similar in that they feel a considerably higher degree of confidence than the first three. A class that is really different is the *emerging cosmopolitan class*, which is the only one whose confidence in people reaches positive figures. General interpersonal

confidence, which was measured in our research by the opinion on people's honesty, is very important for a functioning society and its lack felt by the *impoverished class* and *traditional working class*, which is quite secure economically, might be a problem in the future.

As regards confidence in institutions, it is again the *impoverished class* that keeps the largest distance. It is followed by the *vulnerable* and the *traditional working class*. The *established middle class*, *class of local ties* and *emerging cosmopolitan class* show a higher degree of confidence in institutions. Across the classes there is higher confidence in law-enforcement institutions, such as the police and courts, than in political institutions, such as the government and the Parliament. However, there are differences in how far the individual classes trust the law-enforcement institutions. The two higher classes, the *established middle class* and the *emerging cosmopolitan class*, feel the most confidence, and are followed by the *class of local ties*. In this case it is also the *impoverished class* that shows the least confidence. The classes don't differ much in the lower degree of confidence in political institutions but the lowest degree can be seen in the *impoverished* and *vulnerable classes*.

Confidence in institutions is essential for democracy as its degree reflects not only confidence in the system but also the work done by these institutions and direct or indirect experience with them (through the media). In this respect it is positive that the classes agree on higher confidence in the police and courts, but their scepticism towards political institutions is a warning. However, the most serious is the human estrangement of the *impoverished class* and *traditional working class* shown by their lower confidence in people.

Who the individual classes (don't) trust



The People's Ideas of Social Stratification

Our research was aimed at discovering the class structure of the Czech society. However, besides the real structure, it is no less important to know what ideas of the social stratification the people have. What influences the citizens' behaviour is not only the reality but also what they think of the society.

In order to find out about people's idea of social stratification we asked them to choose from four statements accompanied by pictures (see the box Suggested alternatives of social stratification). The majority of people (45%) see the Czech society as a pyramid comprised of a higher, middle and lower class that don't have much in common. The other most frequent idea (36%) is that the society is divided into three groups, one of which is a limited circle of the elite, while the second one includes also a small number of the lower class, but most of the society is somewhere in between and the people within this major class are more or less the same. Only 15% believe that the society is divided into two parts, a small elite and the ordinary people. And only a minimum of people (4%) perceive the society as homogeneous, without any differences. So, the Czech society doesn't perceive itself as classless but neither does it believe that there are only two groups, the elite and the ordinary people. Most people's idea is that of a society divided into lower, middle and higher classes, but some think these groups are relatively separated, living their own lives, while others emphasize a wide middle class of people similar to each other.

However, the question is whether these general ideas are shared by all classes to the same degree. From the distribution of these ideas among the classes it can be concluded that the

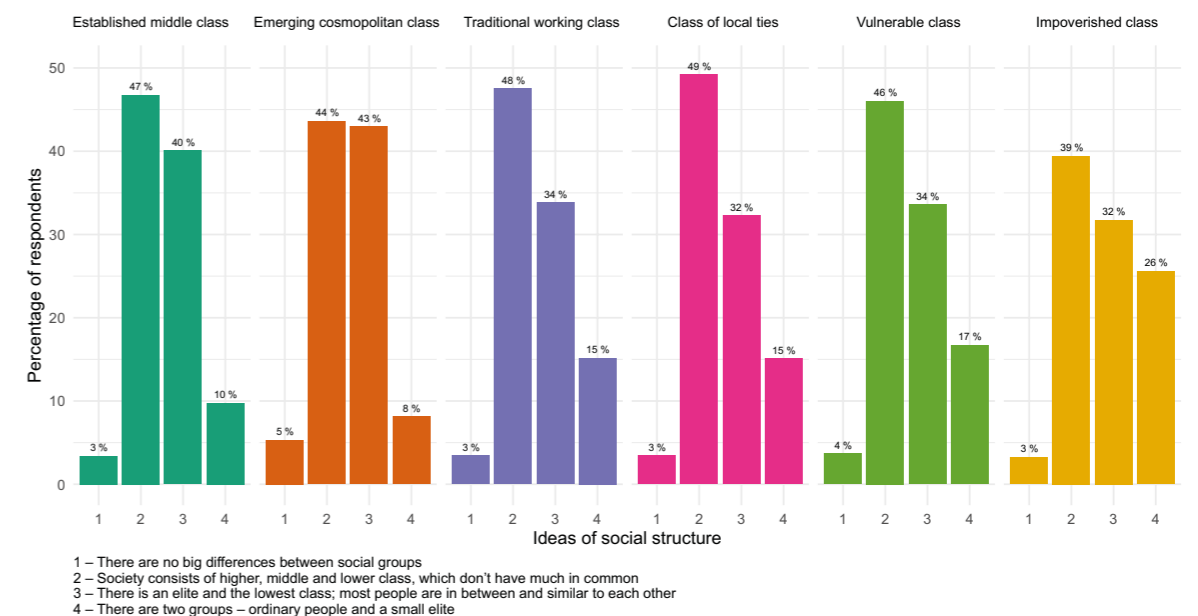
perception of the structure of the Czech society doesn't differ dramatically, which, however, doesn't mean that there aren't any differences. The largest deviation is shown by the *impoverished class*, which includes the largest proportion of people (26%) believing that the society is divided only into two parts, the ordinary people and the elite. By contrast, the higher middle class, the *established middle class* and the *emerging cosmopolitan class*, more often think that the society is divided into three groups, with most people in the middle class being similar to each other. The remaining three lower middle classes, i.e. the *traditional working class*, *class of local ties* and *vulnerable class*, don't differ in their views on social stratification. Therefore, the largest difference in perceiving the social structure is between the two imaginary ends of the class structure, with the people in these classes tending to see themselves as the "ordinary people" and view the whole social structure from their point of view.

SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In being asked about their view of the social structure, the respondents were given a choice of four general alternatives of social stratification accompanied by pictures:

1. There aren't many differences and barriers between social classes.
2. There are higher, middle and lower classes, which don't have much in common.
3. There is an elite and the lowest class and most people are somewhere between them.
4. There are only two groups, the ordinary people and the elite.

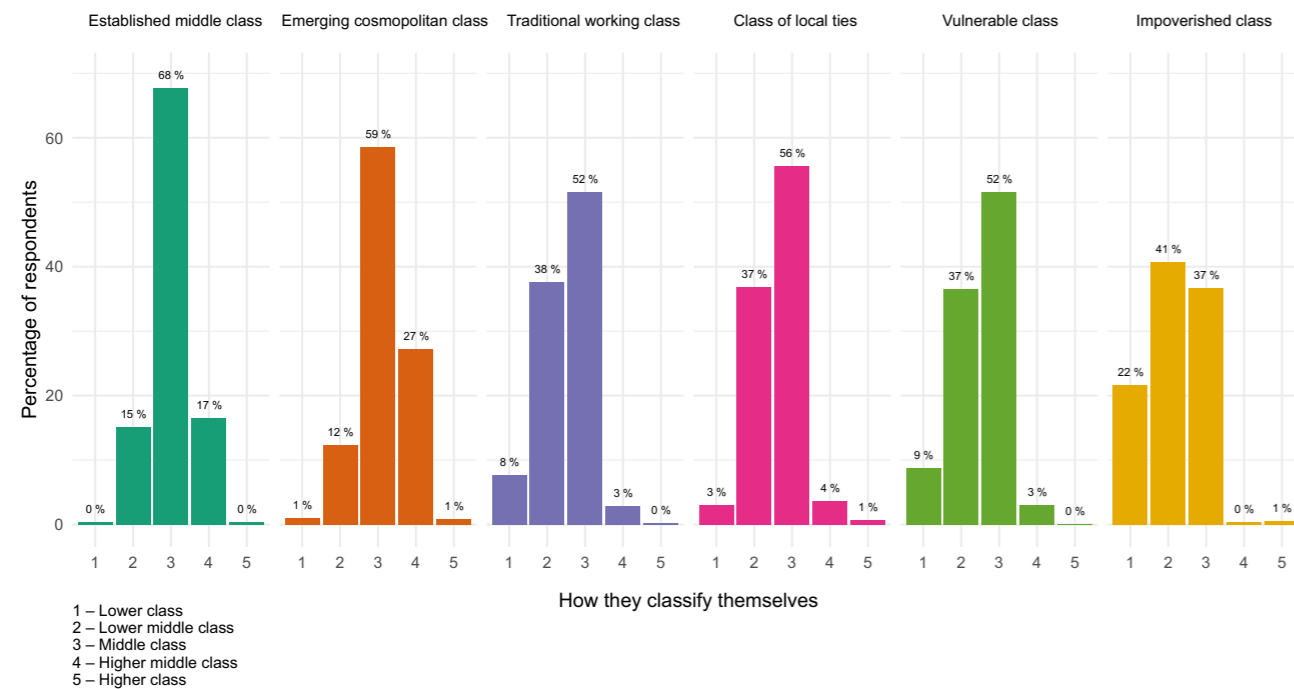
The people's ideas of social stratification



A slightly different view of social stratification arises from the members of the individual groups classifying themselves. This self-classification partly copies the social stratification found by the research, but there are obvious differences, too. Most people in each class, apart from the *impoverished class*, see themselves as middle-class. In the case of the *impoverished class* there is an evident shift towards lower classes although most of its members see themselves as belonging to the lower middle and middle classes. By contrast, despite the size of its economic, social and cultural capital making the *established middle class* one of the higher middle classes, only

a small part of its members (17%) classify themselves in this way. A very similar situation is with the *emerging cosmopolitan class* even though it perceives its privileged position to a larger degree. 27% of its members consider themselves to be part of the higher middle class. And while quite a large part of the *impoverished class* (22%) as well as smaller parts of the *traditional working class* and *vulnerable class* claim to belong to the lowest class, the highest class isn't represented. So, even though people believe that there is a higher class on the top of the society, they hardly ever see themselves as its members.

How people classify themselves



BOGARDUS SOCIAL DISTANCE SCALE

The Bogardus social distance scale has been used for nearly a hundred years as a way to measure people's willingness to accept different groups of inhabitants. They are asked how close they would allow a member of each group to be to them, having the choice of the following categories: life partner – friend – neighbour – colleague – citizen of the same country – visitor to the country – would exclude from entry into the country. If someone is willing to accept the member of a certain group as a life partner, it is assumed that they have a positive attitude to that group as a whole. The categories are designed and tested so as to have about the same distance from each other, i.e. the individual steps are divided by the same degree of understanding (or not understanding). For instance, the difference in the degree of understanding between "colleague" and "citizen of the country" should be similar to that between "friend" and "neighbour."

Attitudes to Different Social Groups

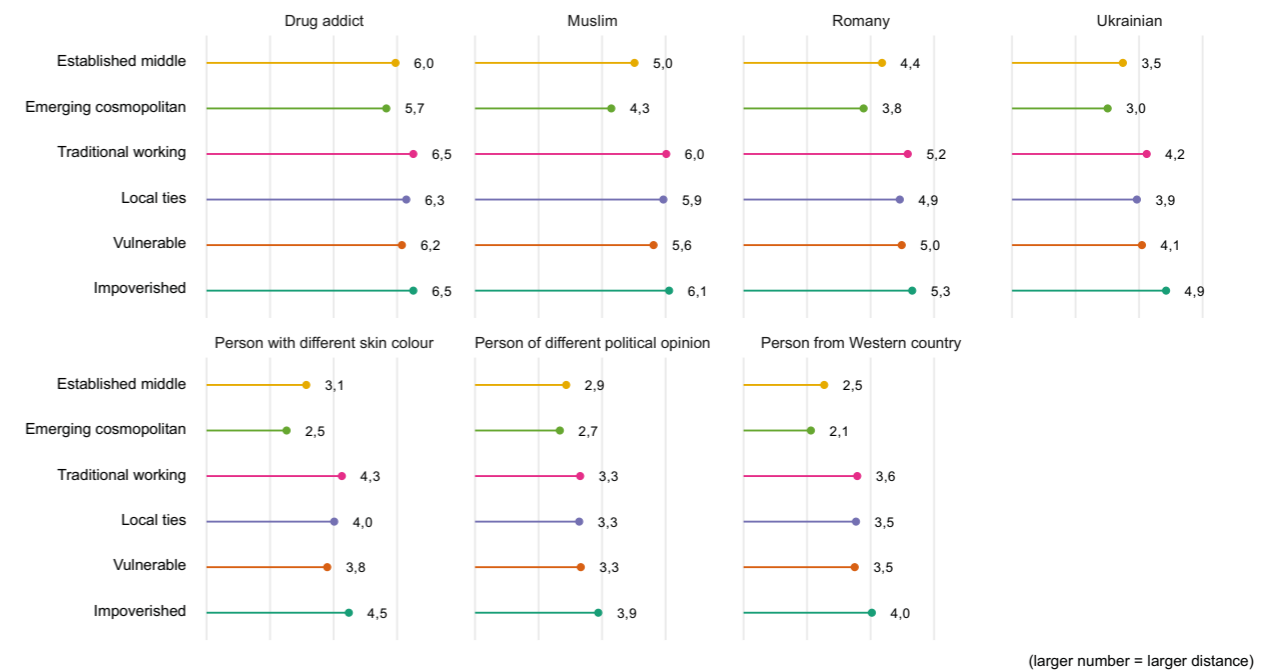
Every society consists of various ethnic, political, religious and other groups living together and sharing resources. If a group is regarded as negative by the rest, it is usually discriminated against, it may become a target of society-wide frustration, or the tensions might result in a social conflict. So, the groups' attitudes to each other and the majority's attitudes to minorities are one of the crucial indicators of social cohesion.

Attitudes towards different groups were measured by the Bogardus social distance scale (see box). The Czech society feels the largest distance from drug addicts as 67% of inhabitants would exclude them from the country. The second largest distance is felt towards the Muslims, which 38% would exclude from the Czech Republic and 34% would only allow them as visitors. They are followed by the Romany, who would be excluded from the country by 25%, and 25% accept them as citizens of the country at the most. Thus, drug addicts, Muslims

and Romany are seen by the public as the least acceptable. The other groups included in the survey were not viewed so negatively.

In terms of differences between the classes, those with larger capital tend to be more tolerant to the groups. The *emerging cosmopolitan class* has the friendliest attitudes towards all groups, while the *impoverished class* keeps the biggest distance from all of them. An interesting exception to this trend is the *traditional working class*, whose attitudes to the Muslims, persons of different skin colour and drug addicts are more similar to those of the *impoverished class* than to those of other lower middle classes. The degree of a positive view of the groups is considerably influenced by human capital and partly also by social supportive capital, both of which are small in the *traditional working class*. The *emerging cosmopolitan class's* higher amount of the two types of capitals also explains the fact that this class, compared to the *established middle class*, views the selected groups more positively. That shows that those capable of overcoming communication barriers, in terms of language or technology, are friendlier to different groups.

Distances on the social distance scale



The Divided Society

The issue of the divided society was brought into focus during the first direct presidential election and was underlined by the change triggered by the economic crisis and accelerated by the migration crisis. Since the 1990s Czech public debate and political classification had been dominated by economic issues, which formed the distinction between the right and left wing. The gradual settlement of the market situation and the scepticism caused by the crises decreased the population's interest in economic issues. That gave more scope to new topics of cultural nature, such as migration or

With many others, such as nationalism, education, environment, fear of globalization, authoritarianism or populism, the views are not so different as to be considerable barriers to dialogue between social groups.

We can see that in opinions there is often the same pattern of the detached *impoverished class* and the more liberal views of the *emerging cosmopolitan class* and *established middle class* although the grouping of the individual classes frequently changes in the topics. We will gradually deal with some of the topics and show how the Czech society is divided.

Topics that divide society – differences between the opinions of the most dissimilar social classes (in descending order by the degree of polarization)

Fear of migration
Perception of inequalities: egalitarianism, extent of merit, redistribution
Pro-Western tendency
Post-1989 development and opportunities used
More power to the people, less to elected politicians
Corporations profiting at the expense of the Czech Republic
Society divided into two camps
Materialism – necessity to advance one's own interests, importance of property
Society based on authority – a strong leader; adaptation
Uncertain future development
Superiority of our own culture
More vocational school pupils
Interest in politics and affairs around us
Belief in God
The environment – the climate and willingness to consume less
There is harmony in Czech society
Dividing of students based on talent
Patriotism – pride in our country

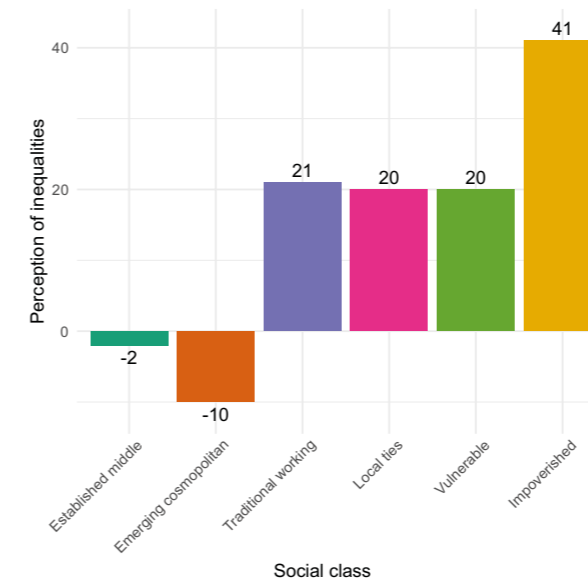
globalization, but it also partly brought the issue of the country's pro-Western tendencies back into focus. These topics became a substantial part of the political fight and a subject of the media's interest. However, this kind of debate often makes the impression that there are only two extreme attitudes to the issue.

Our analysis focused on the general views that help people to get an idea of how society works and form an opinion on individual events happening around them. Although our list of 18 opinion groups could be extended, it still provides a clear idea of the society's attitudes. There are three that can be said to divide the society: inequalities, the view of the post-1989 development and future tendencies, and partially also migration.

THE NOT SO CONCEALED INEQUALITIES

The perception of social inequalities is a key to understanding the other dividing lines. The general view (see graph) shows that the *impoverished class*, which feels social inequalities distinctly, stands out. The antipole is the *established middle class* and *emerging cosmopolitan class*. Their members consider inequalities to be important but it is not an essential issue for them. The *vulnerable class*, *traditional working class* and *class of local ties* are somewhere in between, perceiving inequalities quite distinctly. In other words, about half of the members of the former two classes (55% and 49%, respectively) think that inequalities are too big and so do 84% of the impoverished class and 75% of the vulnerable class, 73% of the *traditional*

working class and 75% of the *class of local ties*. There is a similar situation in the view of which is more important, hard work or the family one is born to, and of progressive taxation. The *impoverished class* also feels more distinctly than the others that everyone must fight for himself.



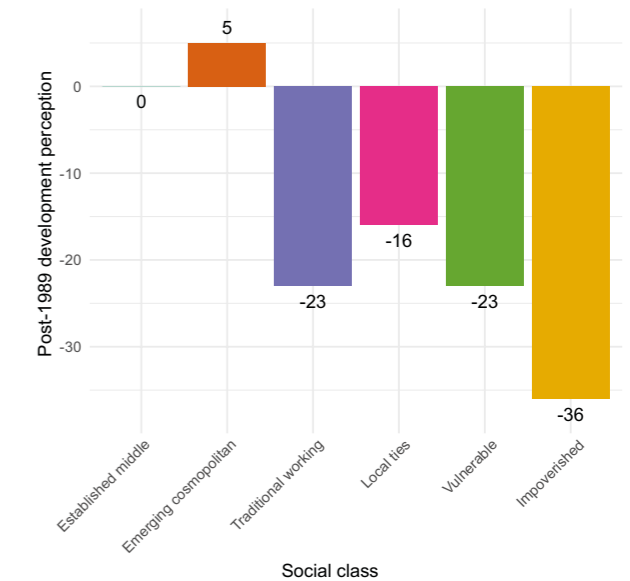
The Czech Republic is a country where differences in income are relatively small. According to EUROSTAT, the lower 20% have a quarter the amount of income of the wealthiest 20%. Differences in property are about 1.5 times higher. A comparison of the classes shows that there are inequalities in the types of capital, which might affect economic status in the future. It may be a reason why the perception of inequalities is so distinct and uneven among the classes. That is reflected in the view of the development and tendencies up to now, connected with opinions on migration and globalization.

POST-1989 DEVELOPMENT

Generally, the Czech public believes that the road we have taken in the past thirty years isn't completely bad but that we have wasted many opportunities. Positive evaluation prevails in the *established middle class* (65%), *emerging cosmopolitan class* (67%) and *class of local ties* (54%). The evaluation is mostly slightly negative in the *traditional working class* (52%) and strongly negative in the *vulnerable* (55%) and *impoverished* (62%) classes. However, general evaluation considerably reduces the feeling that everything could be better if our political representatives hadn't wasted opportunities.

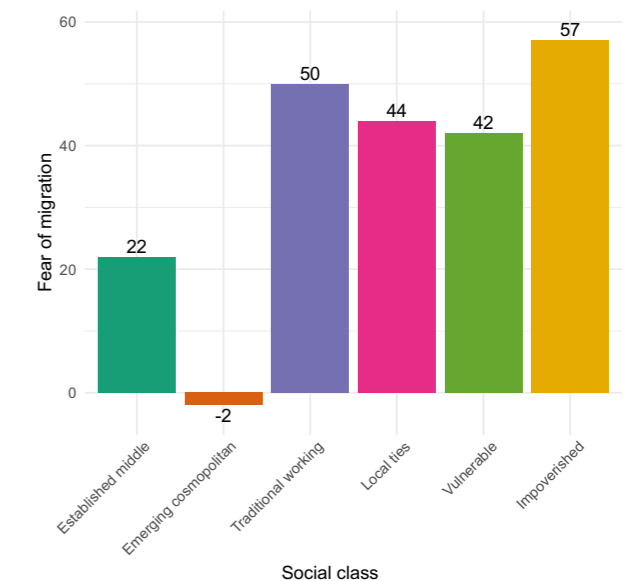
The view of the development up to now is connected with how people see our pro-Western tendency and membership in NATO and the EU. The Czech public doesn't regard this issue as a matter of choosing between the East and the West, as it might seem (in fact, only about 4% incline to the East), but as a matter of pro-Western tendencies and an idea of the Czech Republic as a sort of bridge between the two worlds or as another Switzerland. The *established middle class* and *emerging cosmopolitan class* are definitely pro-Western while

the *traditional working class*, *vulnerable class* and *class of local ties* show a slight pro-Western tendency. The lowest pro-Western orientation is shown by the *impoverished class*, although it doesn't really reject this tendency.



PATRIOTISM VERSUS NATIONALISM

86% are patriots proud of being members of their nation.
53% think that our culture is superior to that of others.



MIGRATION

Migration is an issue that has significantly influenced the public debate in the past five years. The public generally prefers the protection of its own way of life and culture, emphasizing potential security risks. Immigrants are regarded as a threat to our way of life by 72% of the public. The *established middle class* has the same opinion but is not as sure about it. This attitude isn't shared by the *emerging cosmopolitan class*. A key role

is played by human capital, i.e. language and computer skills. The Czechs' opinion is quite unequivocal in that there is a very limited number of real "fans" of migration. However, the opinion of the majority cannot be considered to be complete rejection. As Median's 2016 data show, people differ especially in the question of under what conditions immigrants should be accepted. It is also the main topic of the previous years, which according to CVVM's measuring is gradually losing its intensity and topicality.

SEEMINGLY DIVIDED

Democratic societies should strive especially for a dialogue, not for complete congruence. Thirty years after 1989, the Czech society has gone about half the way. There are more divergent views, but the three basic dividing lines, i.e. inequalities, the country's tendencies and development, and migration are essential for understanding what is happening in the Czech society. These divergent views are reflected in individual decisions, discussions and political declarations although in a manner different from the way the majority's opinions are formed. Our society is determined not to incline to the East but we are uncertain whether we want to go our own way. Neither is there a movement that would like to change our country culturally by bringing a number of people from other countries; rather it is relevant to discuss under what conditions that could happen and what cultures the people should come from. By contrast, the issue of inequalities is often reduced in the public debate to the issues of social exclusion and of the wealthy. Its importance is perceived by all social classes, but with varied urgency. As mentioned before, there is a number of issues that don't divide the society although from the way they are presented in the media they might seem to do so.

HOW WE FORM OPINIONS

Individual groups often talk about the same topic in a totally different way, using different words for it, and the groups' arguments often don't overlap. What some call the necessity of protecting our culture and traditions is seen by others as xenophobia. While some point out the issue of power cumulated by a limited circle of people, others feel the necessity of regaining the lost order of the society. Where technical innovation and job opportunities can be seen, it may also be pointed out that multinational corporations ignore the rules and make themselves be indispensable in our lives. This aspect contributes to the feeling that the society is irreconcilably divided.

However, there are generally very few of those who correspond to the archetypal textbook examples of liberals, Christian democrats, conservatives or fascists. After all, many of us don't need to formulate and defend our opinions, which are shallow and unstable. As it turns out, our opinions are influenced especially by our social environment and recent experience. Only a few people have opinions that are not in harmony with the life they live. If you are successful, you are more likely to believe that success is a matter of hard work and not of family background. If you have a vocational certificate, you are more likely to want more people to attend vocational schools.

CHOICE OF QUESTIONS

The individual attitudes were evaluated by respondents in the form of 36 statements on a 4-point agree/disagree scale. The questions were taken from respected international surveys, such as ESS or ISSP, long-term STEM and CVVM time series and internationally recognized tools measuring individual opinion features (authoritarianism, xenophobia, populism). It wasn't always possible to ask the whole set of questions for each feature, so the analytical team normally chose 1-3 questions that can best identify the particular attitude, using statistical data from the aforementioned surveys.

Because some attitudes are only represented by one item and others by two or three, for better clarity of outputs, the results are presented as average figures with a hypothetical range of -100-100. If percentage distribution is presented in the text, it is always connected with specific questions, not with indexes

The Czech society is now being divided by the way the issues are being discussed and presented as black and white emotional antipoles. However, the attitudes of the different classes are more like a colourful palette to use to paint a democratic society.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment only became a subject of public debate fully in 2018 in connection with the draught, climate change and bark beetle infestation. The Czechs are in favour of environmental protection in the long term, with four fifths of the public believing that human-caused climate change poses a threat to our future. This opinion is shared by the public across social classes. There is a difference in the willingness to invest in environmental protection at the expense of one's own comfort. In the *emerging cosmopolitan class* this willingness is expressed by 75%, in the *traditional working class* by 47%, in the *impoverished class* by 45 % and in the other classes by 60% of people. Because the public opinion on this issue will continue evolving, the potential disagreement might lie more in the degree of willingness to reduce one's own consumption than in discussing whether the problem exists.

SOLIDARITY DURING FLOODS.

In the summer of 2002 the Czech Republic was inflicted with floods (photo from Chrastava), similar to those that had affected Moravia five years before (49 victims). Both tragedies set off a large wave of solidarity and altruistic help.



The Role of Education and Mobility of Classes

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Inequality in education in the Czech Republic belongs among the largest in the OECD. Your results in PISA tests at the end of primary school and your chances of going to university considerably depend on your parents' education level and socioeconomic status. Besides large regional inequality in the quality of schools and their being underfunded, the principal reason is the early selectiveness of the Czech school system. Children are put into selective classes and schools too early, at an age when their parents decide for them. While children of aspiring parents begin to prepare for university at the age of 11 by going to 8-year grammar school, children with an uninspiring and disadvantaged background often finish their education without going to secondary or vocational school. However, in some other countries, success is related to social origin to a very small degree.

In the Czech Republic, completed education is still a factor influencing income and the degree of being affected by problems such as unemployment. Thus, there is a risk of the education system strengthening the influence of parents' aspirations and not providing enough help to children from disadvantaged environments, which results in reproducing inequalities of the previous generations. If you are raised in poverty, you are very likely to remain in it and raise your children in it, too. Limited social mobility might lead to social classes being secluded and people in some classes feeling that success cannot be achieved in today's world.

HOW EDUCATION IS INHERITED AND HOW IT IS CONNECTED WITH BELONGING TO A CLASS

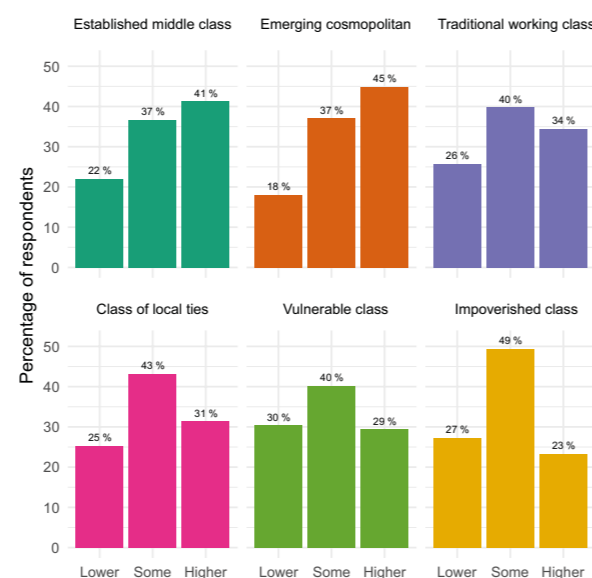
Social classes differ a lot in educational mobility. 45% of the members of the *emerging cosmopolitan class* exceeded the level of education reached by their parents. The situation is almost the same in the *established middle class*. It is only rarely that the members of this class reach a lower education level than their parents.

In the *traditional working class* and *class of local ties*, the increase in education levels between generations occurs less often. In the *impoverished class*, which is the one most affected by poverty, the number of people who exceed their parents' education level is comparable to the number of those who don't even reach that level (around 30%). Therefore, ascending and descending mobility are equal in this class. Descending educational mobility prevails in the *impoverished class*.

Who are those who don't reach their parents' level of education? In the *emerging cosmopolitan class* and *established middle class* they are mostly those whose parent(s) has (have) university education while they didn't finish or go to university. In the lower middle classes they are those who didn't achieve secondary education, unlike their parents. A specific case is the *impoverished class*, in which 27% have lower education than their parents. A half of those experiencing descending educational mobility only have primary education. They

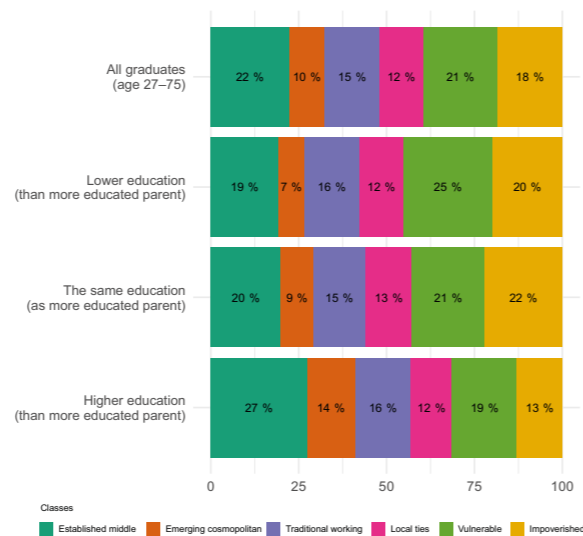
are often unemployed or have low income. This is one of the problems connected with leaving the education system prematurely.

Respondents' education and highest education of their parents juxtaposed



The two higher middle classes are partly a product of ascending educational mobility. They include over 40% of respondents who have exceeded their parents' education level. In the *impoverished class* there are 20% of those who haven't even reached their parents' education level. Another product of limited or descending mobility could also be the *vulnerable class*, having a medium level of social, cultural and human capital but low income and little property due to lower job positions. 25% of people in this class haven't reached their parents' education level.

Respondents' education and highest education of their parents juxtaposed



These relationships are also true if respondents' characteristics, place of residence, economic problems and parents' education are considered. If a respondent with the same initial conditions has exceeded his/her parents' education level, her/she has three times as high chances of becoming part of the *emerging cosmopolitan class* and twice as high chances of becoming a member of the *established middle class*, while the probability of becoming a member of the *impoverished class* is much lower.

VALUE OF EDUCATION TRANSFERRED – PARENTS' ASPIRATIONS

Respondents who have a higher level of education more frequently aspire for their children to go to university. Among people with the same education level, the ones whose parents were more educated have higher aspirations for their children. Thus, the value of education is transferred to the following generations. There is also the class factor, connected with cultural capital. According to some theories, this type of capital, connected with a higher intensity of cultural activities and knowledge of culture, is one of the tools of differentiating various types of middle and lower middle classes. Cultural capital separates those economically comparable segments of society that are focused on education and are, as a result, capable of better reproduction and strengthening of their status across generations (Špaček, 2018).

This hypothesis and the importance of cultural capital in the description of social structure are confirmed by the research. People with secondary education and above-average cultural capital aspire to their children going to university

more often (66%) than secondary school graduates with average cultural capital (47%). That is another reason why the *vulnerable class's* educational aspirations are closer to the other two lower middle classes than to the *impoverished class*, which is closer to it in terms of economic status.

The described state can be summarized based on the general shifts between the generations of the members of individual classes. The *established middle class* and *emerging cosmopolitan class* come from a background with more frequent university education, which their children continue to reach: 61% of children of parents from the *established middle class* have already reached university education or their parents are aspiring to it, and it is 75% in the *emerging cosmopolitan class*. The *traditional working class* and the *class of local ties* exceed their parents' standard in education only slightly. About 40% of their children have or their parents want them to have university education. Besides more frequent poverty, the *vulnerable class* is similar to the *impoverished class* in that it hasn't really seen an increase in education level between generations. They differ in that in the *vulnerable class's* cultural capital and educational aspirations are still part of the "family tradition," reflected by the parents' ambitions regarding their children.

The individual classes' educational aspirations are extremely varied, which might lead to the reproduction of class structure in the education system. The reason is that the system – due to the existence of selective schools and classes and large inaccessibility of secondary education – sorts out children at an age when it is their parents who have the biggest influence on their education.

University education in generations – classes compared



The Previous Hundred Years – the Previous Thirty Years

From careless euphoria to stiffened mistrust

Petr Pithart

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic thirty years ago definitely was not similar to the Czechoslovak Republic of 1918. In the then new state there were eight nations, or, more precisely, national minorities, euphoria prevailed along with the belief that during the negotiations of the peace treaties, we would be, according to Edvard Beneš's promises, "something like Switzerland," i.e. a generous, united society based on the citizens' loyalty regardless of nationality or religion.

However, that did not happen.

A "CLEAN" STATE – WHAT ABOUT IT?

After the previous twenty-eight years, the Czech Republic is a completely homogeneous country, in terms of nationality, the second ethnically cleanest in Europe after Iceland. For the first time after more than a thousand years we are a national state in the ethnical, tribal sense. There is nothing over which to put a higher roof of a political nation, like the Germans, Italians and French put the "Helvetian" roof over the co-existence of three nations.

In the past thirty years, the Czech Republic has turned into a unitary, centralized state. Because since the establishment of the independent state, being Czech had been unquestionably and insensitively regarded as being Czechoslovakian, after the country was split on 1 January 1993, an uneasy impression prevailed that the Czech Republic was what had remained of Czechoslovakia. What about it? What were "Czechia's" national interests?

Well, the national ones! The Czech Republic is the most Eurosceptic country of the EU and is now foolishly tying itself to Hungary and Poland, as if it wanted to re-confirm the existence of an "Eastern" Europe which refuses solidarity not only with refugees, but also with the Greeks, Italians and Spaniards and is getting ready to leave liberal democracy.

The "Visegrád countries" are viewed as unsympathetic troublemakers, trying to make Europe think that they are those riding behind the wagon.

The one hundred years as well as the past thirty years have seen a process of dividing, ethnical "purification," separation, and fear of foreigners.

However, the Czech Republic as a parliamentary republic and constitutional state is not a completely closed state, but one that is stopping the door to the country with both feet. It only grants asylum or citizenship to a minimum degree. Apart from Poland, it is the only EU country that has not accepted a single refugee and its politicians are proud of it. This is happening with the consent of the majority. Before WWII, Czechoslovakia was open to refugees from Germany and Austria, the countries of social and Christian democrats, the Jews, and communists.

Over half a million of foreigners, mostly Ukrainians, Slovaks and Vietnamese live here. However, they live here as individuals, as workers with whom no collective rights (autonomy, provinces, national areas, federalization, etc.) need to be negotiated. That is an essential difference in comparison with the First Czechoslovak Republic, which at least promised many such rights. The country needs many more foreigners as workforce but the door remains cautiously half-closed.

How has the development of the past thirty years contributed to these destructive attitudes, which are rare in Europe?

It would seem that it should be easier for an ethnically homogenous state to maintain civic unity but the reverse is true. The problem is how the ethnical "purity" has been achieved: expulsion and separation processes, unconstitutional cession of territory (Carpathian Ruthenia) and impetuous splitting of the state (to get rid of the Slovaks and Hungarians) have contributed to the closed-door attitude and even fear of foreigners. Only the Romany have remained and we have no idea how to deal with them.

WHY HAS CONFIDENCE IN POLITICS FADED AWAY?

The political, constitutional system is set well and proportional representation leads to coalition governments, i.e. agreements and compromises, if the coalition parties stick to the right-left line as a result of reasonably established values, but that is not happening in our country. The way of government is inclining to the chancellor-like system, with the Prime Minister having a dominant position. In the past few years, both systems have been disrupted by the President whose legitimacy is strong because of the direct election, which erodes the chancellor-like government and inclines to a semi-presidential (authoritarian?) system.

Unfortunately, the system of political parties has not resulted in unity although it is usually one of the ways to social integration. In the mid-1990s it began to be discredited by corruption scandals, for which nobody was punished, and by political clientelism and oligarchization. As a result of disappointment and strong anticorruption attitudes, new movements have been founded, based on pragmatism, which is empty in terms of values. They are intentionally neither left nor right-wing so that they can be both. They are often business enterprises with pandering marketing.

Confidence in standard political parties has been weakened twice to such a degree that still no attempt has been made to regain it.

The first such weakening was the way Czechoslovakia was dissolved – by negotiations between the leaders of two political parties (Klaus's ODS and Mečiar's HZDS), which had

not asked voters in the June 1992 elections to give them the mandate to split the country, but they agreed on the dissolution discreetly within the following five weeks. A constitutionally prepared referendum regarding this issue was rejected by them as alleged complication. In the end, the dissolution was passed by the Federal Parliament by the margin of a mere one vote.

The people realized that if they were not asked about such a crucial issue, they were likely not to be asked about any other ones, so they turned their back on politics.

The second blow delivered to the confidence in politics and institutions was the "opposition agreement" between the two strongest parties, the Social Democrats (ČSSD) and the Civic Democrats (ODS). They decided to change the electoral system into a majoritarian one so as to drive smaller parties out of the system and agreed never to topple each other (by a vote of no-confidence).

Their electoral system reform was stopped by the Constitutional Court declaring it unconstitutional but the four years of the ČSSD government backed by the ODS contributed to the spread of unpunishable corruption at all levels. The "opposition agreement" practically meant that opposition ceased to exist. Fortunately, it was terminated by the ČSSD leader, Vladimír Špidla, who thus saved the country from the duopoly.

These events resulted in voters' apathy and indecisiveness and in foolish, short-lived confidence in new parties. These basically unpolitical, merely pragmatic groups make people feel confused, so they vote according to their momentary feelings and personal liking rather than according to reason and experience.

Negative election campaigns are the most successful. Emotions are capable of uniting as well as dividing people.

Thus, politics is not integrating or clarifying things. It is increasing unimportant differences and minimizing chances for compromise and consensus in crucial matters.

AN ESTRANGED PRAGUE – WHAT IS NEXT?

Achieving unity in solving substantial problems is not made easier by the administrative units arrangement either. In 1992, after regions had been dissolved, a chance to return to a compact administrative system was wasted. It was a way of not respecting historical entities, allegedly for fear of a "new duality" and subsequent "secession" of Moravia.

Eight years later, fourteen regions were established, some of them quite arbitrarily: e.g. Vysočina and the two pairs of rival regions (Ústí nad Labem – Liberec, Pardubice – Hradec Králové); while the smallest, Karlovy Vary region, was like unwanted leftovers. The Czech regions do not correspond to the natural regions, which have never existed here as administrative units. Czechia has always been centralized, with Prague in the middle. Prague is one of the few European capitals that has not "moved" for millennia.

All the central bodies (with the exception of the justice) have stayed in Prague. As a result, Prague has become a world in itself and is becoming estranged from the rest of the

country, especially its rural parts, which also live in themselves, not relying on the Prague of politicians.

There is a total of 6,245 municipalities. It is traditional in our country to have a large number of municipalities, but it is becoming increasingly impractical. There is not a process of merging for the purpose of common projects, cooperation and political influence. On the contrary, there are opposite tendencies. The memories of towns being merged in the communist era and of the selfishness of the stronger are still fresh.

It is one of the general expressions of distrust to neighbours. The Czech Republic is unusually centralized. Both towns and regions get very little money for their development from the centre, i.e. Prague. Disputes over budgetary allocation of taxes are never ending. Centralism is second nature here.

As a result of these political and administrative peculiarities, the country's main problem is the deficit of confidence, intensifying mutual unwillingness to cooperate, at all levels. Accordingly, the body of laws is becoming more detailed, confusing and limiting for business, especially when using government money – it is assumed that everybody will cheat others and the government.

The deficit of confidence is contributed to by ever increasing local differences. There are tragic differences between the Czech and Moravian borderland and the rest of the country, especially Prague. As if Prague, the richest town, were a different world. The North shows the largest number of socio-pathological phenomena. In the past thirty years, the situation has become worse.

WE ARE ALONE. WHAT WILL THAT BRING?

The preconditions for various dividing of the Czech society are significant. With imperceptible speed and unpredictability, globalization is transferring capital without local responsibility towards places and employees all over the world. As a result of such fast changes, the world is becoming incomprehensible, confusing, unjust and hostile. Therefore, people abandoned and wronged by globalization use social networks to absorb more and more hostility and distrust, giving in to the feelings of the abandoned and the forgotten.

For more than a thousand years we lived in a "state house." No matter what it was, what form it had and how far it extended, no matter who ruled it, we always had to make agreements with others within it. Now, for the first time, we are living alone in it, even without the Germans in the borderlands! After all, that might have always been a secret Czech dream. It is an essential change of our national way of existence. The important thing now is not to try to reverse it but to know what consequences, both good and bad, it has.

The proud solitude of a smaller, ethnically purer nation would be the worst consequence.

(Crossheads are editorial.)

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BACK IN LETNÁ. Thirty years after the Velvet Revolution, the dissatisfied people filled Letná again. Although the June 2019 demonstration for the rule of law and against Marie Benešová and Andrej Babiš didn't draw as huge a crowd as that in 1989, 300,000 dissatisfied people in one place meant it was the largest demonstration throughout the whole period of freedom.



