

**‘Alone but not Entirely’;
New Forms and Content of Relationships and Newly Emerged Individualizing *habitus* in the Czech Republic**

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Abstract:

In a qualitative study of single people conducted in 2003 one particular finding stood out: a significant number of the interviewees (economically independent and without a partner) revealed their involvement in various other forms of regular or even long-term relationships. In an analysis of 38 in-depth interviews conducted in 2003-2006 the following categories of alternative relationships were identified as typical for the social context of contemporary Czech society: ‘relationships with married lovers’, ‘weekend marriages’, ‘long-distance relationships’, ‘one-night stands’, ‘open relationships’, ‘lover in case of need’ and ‘relationships to prove oneself’. The emergence of relationships that are not long-term or reproduction oriented is not a result of any deliberate strategy but is rather consequence of the complex changes in mentality and behavior that occurred in the 1990s. These shifts, for example, relating to professional commitment and its negative effect on establishment and maintaining reproduction oriented relationships (that were typical for pre 1989 period as family essentially represented the only ‘space’ of freedom and relatively unrestrained self-fulfillment), tend to be understood as the explicit result of labor-market pressures on individual actors brought by the emergence of free-market economy. But research has shown that, even at the level of individual actors, alternative approaches to partner relationships and reproduction are much more the result of people adopting and internalizing post-1989 cultural templates.

In view of spreading alternative arrangements of relationships and related growing childlessness in the Czech context, two sided explanation for the long term trend in reduced childbirth evolved. The trend was widely described in demographic terms and the reasons and sources of the changes elaborated on in principal discussion (Rabusic 1996, 1997, 2001, Rychtarikova 1996, 1997, Kucera 1997, Srb 1997). The key question in the discussion was the character of the factors and barriers, which have been influencing negatively decisions with regards to long term cohabitation and the realization of reproduction. Essentially the discussion consisted of two basic ways of interpreting why there was a fall in childbirth; ‘economic crisis’ coupled with the inability to buy or rent a flat, the rise in childcare costs, the overall rise in the cost of living along with the rise in unemployment and the bad social situation of potential young families (Rychtarikova 1996, 1997, Benesova 2001) and cultural reasons, which described the decrease in childbirth as „the consequence of cultural change, which has cristalized in the cohorts of youth born at the beginning of the 1970s“ (Rabusic 1997, 115).

The development of this specific part of the Czech population aspires to the model which gradually started to evolve in Western countries from the 1970s. It seems that, in view of the intensive dynamics of the change in the given time scale (two decades), it is possible in the Czech context explicitly to indicate the critical factors that fundamentally affect social change associated with the increase in this section of the population. Precisely, defining crucial factors which played a role in the foundation and advancement of the phenomenon of singles in a western context frequently seems problematic for western social scientists (for example the concrete differentiation of contemporary economic and cultural factors and their relevance in the explanation of the phenomenon).

Introduction

It is difficult not to notice how far the contemporary media environment has promoted the often somewhat perplexing character, that is described even now in Czech as *singles*. American television series deeply rooted in program schema of the Czech TV stations have presented the humorous lifestyles of *singles* on Czech TV screens (Sex in the City, Friends, Ally McBeale). For Czech audiences the plots of these shows may seem somewhat juvenile, but even the presence of such comedy programmes help illustrate the fundamental changes undergone in the realms of personal relationships in contemporary Czech society. In Western sociological literature there has existed by now for some time the life stage defined as "late youth", "young adulthood" or "post adolescence" (Heath, Cleaver 2003). What is characteristic about this stage is that for today's twenty-somethings and thirty somethings, the defining characteristics associated

with adulthood are lacking (having ones own family and children). This new stage¹ of life launches youth deep into adulthood and gnaws away at the phase of life that until recently was for the majority of the population part of adult life (Biose-Reymond 1998). How have people in Czech Society lived through and accommodated themselves to these changes, which did not develop gradually from the 60's and the 70's, as happened in the West, but appeared suddenly in the 90's? (if there had been no changes in 1989, it would be most probable that in the socialist reality, by the age of 26, i.e. the age that people nowadays only very slowly start to consider marriage, they would already be married with 2 children), it can be said that we are witnessing radical social change, specifically concerning personal relationships, which are related to the wide changes in Czech society after 1989.

These changes can be characterized sociologically in the more general terms of reflexive modernisation and the transformation of intimacy (Giddens 1991, 1992, 1994) and individualisation (Beck 1992, Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 1995 & 2002, Bauman 2001). Even though, in contrast with earlier standardised biographies typical for past historical periods, personal biographies in "late modernity" are reflexively constructed. These shifts stem from concrete socio-economic changes in society.

The source of these changes may on the one hand be traced to the pressures of the labor market (Beck 1992, Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 1995, Beck, Beck- Gernsheim 2002, Bauman 2001). Employment status still even more has a part in the structuring of living conditions and intimate relationships in many employment groups, by means of the demand for a flexible employment force (including geographical flexibility). On the other hand, the sources of these changes are indicated on the level of prevailing cultural models (Bellah a kol. 1985, Lash 1978).

The Changing Character of Personal Relationships and the Situation in the Czech Republic

Heath and Cleaver (2003), in an extensive qualitative study carried out in Southampton illustrated that contemporary trends in Great Britain are leading to the situation where a specific group of young people, the majority of which are university graduates, although not exclusively, often live for long periods without a partner, a situation results in living under diverse independent living arrangements. Prioritising their own careers often demands individuals to be geographically mobile, and this is often at the expense of forming personal relationships. At the same time personal intimate relationships exist, but do not share a household². Even though the explanation for this may be, according to Heath and Cleaver, that a lot of young people up to now have not considered the possibility of cohabitation or marriage as they feel unready/unprepared more and more this ever growing trend has been attributed to the relationship type "living apart together" (LAT), i.e. for couples who have deliberately decided to live separately³. The increase in relationships of the type 'living apart together' along with long distance relationships (Rhodes 2002) is clearly an example of the substantial changes in the character of personal relationships.

The later setting up of a common household between contemporary post adolescents is often characterised as a postponed transformation, which may imply that if there were no restrictive factors, the majority of young people would prefer to live with a partner rather than alone or with friends⁴. Even though

¹ 'Post-adolescence' was first presented by Galland (1984), in particular, as a consequence of the prolongation of the educational process.

² For example in the research carried out in 1998 in Great Britain, 1/4 of as yet unmarried, childless men up to the age of 35 and 1/3 of women counterparts had experienced non-cohabiting relationships lasting at least 6 months. 2/5 of these relationships lasted at least 2 years (Ermisch 2000, quoted by Heath, Cleaver 2003:148).

³ A French study of such couples indicates that 2/3 of the couples involved in these relationships explained their living arrangements through outside influences including family or work responsibilities, and the remaining third lived intentionally separately, to maintain their independence (Villeneuve-Gokalp 1997). In Britain (British Household Panel Survey) more than 60% of LAT couples stated that this arrangement met their requirements for the long term (Ermisch 2000, quoted by Heath, Cleaver 2003:149). Similar trends were indicated by studies carried out since the beginning of the 90s in Scandinavia (Trost 2003, Levin 2004).

⁴ Černá attempted to make a certain comparison of views on cohabitation, marriage and family in the Czech Republic and Great Britain on the basis of a European Value Survey (1990 and 1999) (2005:87-95) and she observed a convergence of views (for instance in various segments of the population the growing

the postponement of marriage age tends to be related to the increase in cohabitation, in reality, the proportion of young people in Great Britain who leave home due to marriage or cohabitation and the concurrent setting up of new households has been on the decrease for a long time⁵.

As results from the census in 2001 show, 12% of inhabitants of the Czech Republic live in single person households. (SLDB 2001 as quoted according to Radimska, Tomasek 2003:10). A significant proportion of these surveyed households consist of pensioners living alone (nearly half of the single occupant households), and at the same time, unlike single fathers living alone, single and divorced mothers living with children do not fall into this category. Similarly this category was rather restricted in its register of young single people, living in shared accommodation, which is especially common in larger cities, and on the other hand registered partners living separately in their own households. Even so it can be said that by means of the census, we can observe the clearly identified rise in the number of single occupied households - in the year 1961 5.6% of those aged up to 29 lived independently, but in the year 2001 the percentage was already 15.7% (SLDB 1961, 2001 as quoted by Radimska, Tomasek 2003: 10)⁶.

Although in contemporary Czech sociological discourse on the family, unmarried couples living together (cohabitation) are interpreted as being the natural alternative preceding marriage⁷ or in exceptional circumstances replacing marriage (Kucharova, Nedomova Zamykalova 1999, Poloncyova 2002a, Poloncyova 2002b), it seems it could be a lot closer to what has been described as *singlehood* i. e. living individually (for example the less likely shared incomes and planning children). In the situation where cohabitation is a common gateway which is seen as being a positive experience, it can be expected, if we accept the thesis of Axinn and Berber (1997) that unmarried cohabitation brings with it the growth in positive attitudes towards *singlehood* and related new and less traditional arrangements of personal relationships.

Even though there have been significant changes registered in reproductive behaviour in the Czech Republic in the 90s, with a decrease in births and the rise of childlessness in women up to the age of 30 (Jurickova 2005) on the one hand and the intensive rise in number of children born outside marriage on the other hand, not much attention was paid to the change in the models of intimate partnership behaviour with which these changes are linked. Even though the last empirical study, focused specifically on the younger generation (BMG 2003) indicated that close to 1/3 of young people aged between 20 and 35 lived outside marriage and did not cohabit (Ettlerova, Matejkova 2004), it did not pay attention to the characteristics of intimate personal relationship arrangements in this sector of the population. A similarly incomplete picture of intimate personal relationships is generated on the basis of the national census of people, houses and flats (Paloncyova 2004). So in the Czech Republic partnership is *a priori* designated

opinion that 'marriage is an outdated institution') even when taking into account the delayed dynamics of the changes of attitudes and the growth of the pluralism of opinions in the Czech Republic.

⁵ The proportion of young people leaving home for this reason has reduced in Great Britain - at the end of the 70s and in the 80s, 60% of women and 55% of men compared with 46% of women and 38% of men leaving their family home in the 90s (Ermisch, Francesconi 2000 quoted by Heath, Cleaver 2003:146).

⁶ Bartoňová considers the dynamics of the growth in young individual households as recorded in the census of 2001 (i.e. the years 1991-2001) relative because of the high birth rates recorded at the beginning of the 70s and the concurrent halt in growth of the proportion of independently living individuals in the 90s (this even according to Bartoňová can of course be explained by the limited accessibility to independent living). Similarly, in the context of the changes in the timing of marriage and the divorce rate, and also in the context of the mortality rate of older people Bartoňová acknowledges the decisive growth of the proportion of households of single women up to the age of 30 (2.4 times more than in 1970, i.e. 3/4 of the households of single women up to 30 years old) is at the expense of the representation of married women up to the age of 30 and the continuing growth in proportion of divorced men already in their 30s influenced by the rise in the divorce rate (2005:82-85).

⁷ The increase in forms of non marital relationships in the Czech Republic, particularly in relation to the governing trends from the period preceding 1989 was clear from the research 'Forms of family life for the younger generation 97'. Although cohabitation in the Czech Republic seems to be fundamentally related to marriage and its precursor (84% of respondents living as unmarried couples had the intention to get married to their partner in the future) it most likely concerns the wrong dependence (the decision for young people to go through with marriage depended on the length of the relationship, not at all whether the partners lived together unmarried [Vymětlová 2000]). Similarly, in the case of cohabitation, relationships were not anymore serious than those where the couple did not live together (Vymětlová 2000).

to be either marriage (irrespective of shared or unshared living arrangements) or a intimate relationship based on shared households⁸.

Metodology and the Organisation of the Research

A research project was set up as a qualitative study focused on as yet unmarried, economically independent young people without partners, with the aim to determine the habitual motivation, rationale and characteristics of the life strategy of these actors as representatives of the change in family and reproductive behavior since 1989. The research⁹ characterized the alternative personal relationships applied in this specific segment of the population, which previous research have hitherto neglected.

The project was realized as means of the qualitative research through method of semi-standardised interviews and their following analysis carried out in accordance with the grounded theory (Glasser, Strauss 1967, Strauss, Corbinova 1999, 1998:158-183). The research comprised of 39 in-depth interviews (typically lasting between 45 to 100 minutes), and one interview was removed from the data set (on the discovery that the conversation partner did not conform to the independent financial status required). The majority of the conversation partners belonged to the age group 23-32¹⁰ with the exception of a thirty-six year old¹¹ and a twenty two year old. I conducted the interviews personally, according to a pre-prepared "script", comprising of various thematic segments:

- a) how long the conversation partner had been single, separation and length of relationships, current plans and motivation;
- b) concrete social and family background of the conversation partners in the light of their approach to personal relationships, and the societal situation in the 90s and at the start of this decade, the level of education and the career advancement of the conversation partners.
- c) their attitudes towards various dimensions of matrimony and singlehood, hypothetical questions about solutions to the occurrence of unplanned pregnancy and factors playing a role in these decisions.
- d) practical problems in meeting and getting to know potential partners and the maintenance of relationships in view of work, free time and general use of time, how the conversation partner imagines their personal situation in the next 3-5 years¹².

Of course I did not rigorously impose these guidelines, but rather used them in the case of breakdown in the flow of replies, or to return the conversation to the relevant subject¹³.The intention of

⁸ The typical reality confirming growing prevalence of alternative forms of partnership arrangements in the Czech Republic, which is at the same time neglected in existing research discourse, is the growth in number of children born outside marriage (now reaching up to 30%) and the inability to deeper characterise the relationships from which they were born.

⁹ For more detailed characteristics and description of the research see Tomášek 2003a, Tomášek 2003b.

¹⁰ Although the ages 23-24 may seem low, especially from the viewpoint of university educated people, who as a rule achieve economic independence at a later stage, the reality is that especially amongst people with High school and primary education, the age 23-24 is the age whereby long term and already considerably stabilized economic independence is achieved (5 to 6 years from leaving education and entering the employment market) which until recently carried with it in the specific Czech context, entering marriage and the starting up of a family.

¹¹ Conversation partners for the research were found using four principle methods: through the medium of internet listings (seznamka.cz, rande.cz), on the basis of contact through friends and colleagues of the researcher, in coffee shops and pubs, in which the interviews took place, and from the company surrounding conversation partners, occasionally by chance approached individuals in those establishments and not the least through contacts arranged through previously interviewed conversation partners. These various methods of obtaining interviewees presented a wide social spectrum of actors and at the same time with respect to the principles of saturation ensured an relatively adequate research sample of the population.

¹² In 2006 contact was made with the interviewees from 3 years before to repeat interviews with 12 previous conversation partners. This longitudinal component is to enable the verification of the fulfilling projections, motivations and intentions presented by conversation partners.

¹³ The thematic sequence, to a certain extent revised during the first interviews, appeared to be relatively natural and following the usual chronology of self-presentation by the conversation partners in reference to

this method was to provide the conversation partner as much as possible - with the minimum of determination, structure or restrictions, and to offer them as much space to present information about their surroundings and situation, and the key factors affecting their motivation, life strategies and consequently their intimate relationships. I used coffee shops, bars and pubs as the location for conducting the interviews, which provided anonymity and eliminated the need to meet in the private environment of the conversation partner (which especially for the female interviewees, due to the sensitivity of the subject and their actual single status, might provoke misgivings in the aims of the research and create a feeling of danger). As well as bringing a trust inducing atmosphere, using these establishments also attempted to recreate the situation, where the majority of conversation partner would usually discuss personal problems with their close friends.

As given by the grounded theory (Glasser, Strauss 1967, Strauss, Corbinova 1999,1998:158-183), the analysis was not based on the opening formulation of the hypothesis nor the whole collection of hypotheses and their verification, but the questions and thesis were developed during the collection of data or even on the very basis of the collected data. In the collection of data was terminated the moment that signs of saturation were present (Glasser, Strauss, 1967:61-62), i.e. when the acquired elements and motifs of the conversation partners answers began to become to a greater degree repetition or overlap. In the course of the analysis itself the data was given by identification of categories, their properties and dimensions and their interconnection and the generation of a collection of codes related to specific strategies, conditions and consequences. These were arranged into a family of codes, which under analysis describe the obstacles, which make traditional long term relationships problematic (marriage, long term cohabitation with realized reproduction), and finally alternative forms of relationships.

Material Barriers, Pressure in the Workplace and Career Development

Material barriers and the starting of families

One of the requisites for the formation of long term relationships and the starting of a family, as very early in the interviews became apparent was the need for material security: "*since I don't have a flat then I can't afford that luxury, children are a material question.*" (27 f, lawyer working for a government agency). Similarly a number of male conversation partners expressed the inability to develop relationships leading to the starting of a family and their preference for delaying the steps leading to the starting of a family by claiming incapability of guaranteeing the acceptable living standard for family life. Some of the conversation partners explicitly revealed the motivation for their actual professional ambition being the need to construct the appropriate material conditions for the future creation of a family (one of the conversation partners presented this as his exclusive motivation), even if at that actual moment they were not involved in any relationship.

With awareness of these criteria, from the viewpoint of the single conversation partners, only a few of them could contemplate those steps towards setting up a family, and that was due to their long term and stabilised security of their housing situation (even if the majority of property owned were small or smallish flats). And also within that small group of the conversation partners, in the event of starting a family, they would expect help from their parents.¹⁴

partnership relationships. The active application of this scenario was more frequent in the case of conversation partners who had been found through the medium of the internet listing, i.e., particularly in the situations of "blind" meetings without an idea of the concrete nature and theme of the interviews from the side of in such manner encountered conversation partners, which in the case of mediated meetings and interviews through the medium of concrete individuals, whether they were friends, colleagues or previously interviewed individuals, were clearer .

¹⁴ Even the forming of a long term personal relationship with only a prospect of reproduction, which in itself is not necessarily conditional on owning or getting a flat, was often perceived as problematic by conversation partner pointingly in view of material reasons. In reference to this it became apparent, and was further clarified that reference to material reasons was at offer as the easiest explanation regarding more complex phenomena in the lives of the conversation partners.

In this context there is two sided explanation for the long term trend in reduced childbirth which had its origin in the changes in the late 80s. The trend was widely described in demographic terms and the reasons and sources of the changes elaborated on in principal discussion (Rabusic 1996,1997, 2001, Rychtarikova 1996, 1997, Kucera 1997, Srb 1997). The key question in the discussion was the character of the factors and barriers, which negatively influenced the decisions of conversation partners with regards to long term cohabitation and the realisation of reproduction. Essentially the discussion consisted of two basic ways of interpreting why there was a fall in childbirth; 'economic crisis' coupled with the inability to buy or rent a flat, the rise in childcare costs, the overall rise in the cost of living along with the rise in unemployment and the bad social situation of potential young families (Rychtarikova 1996,1997, Benesova 2001) and cultural reasons, which described the decrease in childbirth as "the consequences of cultural change, which has crystalised in the cohorts of youth born at the beginning of the 1970s" (Rabusic 1997, 115). The situation and the position of conversation partners in view of personal relationships and reproduction, as explicitly described socially and culturally, is inter-related with their professional engagement.

Employment and Relationships

Somewhat surprisingly, in view of the familiar stereotypical interpretation of the motivation for an individual to live alone as a sacrifice of personal relationships in exchange for success in their professional life^{15 16}, numerous replies indicated that conversation partners consider a stable personal relationship and family life as a prerequisite for the successful development of a professional career ("*that stability in marriage brings productivity above all to women*"¹⁷ 25M freelance journalist). Although professional advancement and employment engagement still figured as an obstacle to the realisation of personal relationships, and was even explicitly quoted as the main reason for separation in a long term relationship (by four conversation partners), it is difficult to characterise such a back up as an unequivocally considered choice. It has been rather more of an unavoidable consequence of work as attached to the professional involvement of research participants and their partners. One of the conversation partners characterised the problem of maximum professional dedication at the expense of personal relationships as being a time restricted phase:

*"I don't think it is possible to work like that in the long term and it is possible that one of the reasons that people of a certain age function as **singles** is simply because, if you have the time and the energy, and that you are at work every waking hour, but later there comes a certain time that you work only so much that you are capable of functioning sensibly at work and at the same time after work, but I don't think it's possible to keep it up- and whoever is still working like that when they are in their forties, well it's an example of pathological behaviour"* (29, Bank clerk).

Similarly voiced characterisation of the personal lives of professional colleagues came from another conversation partner:

*"a lot of **singles** older than me have money and work but of course, if they have money, it's because they work from morning till evening. After that they can't get involved in relationships, because they are always*

¹⁵ The unequivocally deliberate and conscious practise of this scenario was confirmed in the case of only one conversation partner with distinct professional life course, who was taking up a position on the European commission (26 M, Ministerial civil servant). Even though other conversation partners may have come close to this model, this however did not constitute a voluntary choice in the sense of Steins' definition (1981:10-12), i.e. the differentiation between voluntary and involuntary *singlehood*.

¹⁶ The usual image of singles can be to a certain extent the result of the assertion of the strategy appointed to management and the confrontation of stigma (attached previously to singles) through its self representation as the successful fulfilment of the life of the individual (Zajicek, Koski 2003). It is necessary in this context to observe, that during the 50s (for example in the USA) life without a partner was regarded, whether by social scientists or by society as a whole, as being a deviant lifestyle and its actors were characterised as being unattractive neurotics (Yenkelovich 1981:95).

¹⁷ One of the observed conversation partners, when mentioning a partner from a previous relationship, conformed unambiguously to one of the conclusions of Pohlas' studz (1995), which emphasised that a stable partnership bond guarantees people certainty and is the condition for the fulfillment of their individual potential, particularly in view of professional self-realisation.

moving in the same, closed community, the alternative is undoubtedly promiscuity, sexual activity within that community happens, but its difficult to form relationships " (25F, freelance journalist).

However when this conversation partner described his own personal situation, a different picture emerged¹⁸:

"I don't have enough money. To do something that you love doing is a fantastic thing. I don't know. I think that in my case it brings me happiness and with that comes a good relationship. That's what I want. I don't want to work from morning to night like a cretin and not have time and a woman and to have a shitty time because of it. I want to work a lot, find satisfaction in that and also to have a woman."

Although the above quotes come from a male conversation partners, it is clearly visible that to a certain extent he is taking into account the same dilemma that is usually credited to career women. But in this immediate context it is however more the choice between work and a relationship, rather than having children and a family, as the dilemma usually is structured in the case of women. In the classification of the preferences of various labour market commitments expressed by women, as presented and adapted for men by Hakim (2000), the quoted conversation partners in their statements at the least approached the category *adaptive*¹⁹.

Within the framework of types, introduced by the *preferential theory* (Hakim 2000)²⁰, there were classifiable approaches towards a professional career in the majority of conversation partners. Although, in view of the current *singlehood* status of the interviewees it might seem that for both men and women there would be a preferred *work-centered* style, this was not so, and in many interviews, especially with male conversation partners, the preference for more flexible working styles stood out.²¹ This preference was expressed by several male conversation partners, with particular reference to their previous personal relationships. They referred to their attempts to reduce their work obligations in favour of their relationships, and consciously endangering their commencing career and working opportunities.²² It was evident that for female conversation partners, achieving a working style primarily orientated towards employment may be similarly problematic, although in conversation many of them expressed certain 'resignation' to the given state or identification with that state²³.

During the process of destandardization and release of personal biographies, it is acknowledged that institutional pressures and other societal demands, including the pressures of the employment market are becoming ever more important (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 1995, Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2002, Bauman 2001).²⁴ Taking the example of the peer group of university graduates, who have for a long time in a Western European context been considered pioneers in the process of individualisation, and still today retain this image from the 70s and 80s (in the exclusive and elite position of being able to have maximum choice), have actually led to, in view of the increase of higher education and the possibility for employers to choose from an ever increasing pool of talent, the inflation of University level degrees on the labour

¹⁸ It has to be pointed out, that this concerns one of the younger participants, now at the beginning of his professional career (25 years old).

¹⁹ Hakim estimates that in contemporary Western society the category of men who prefer an *adaptive* work style constitutes about 30% of the men on the labour market.

²⁰ *Home-centered* i.e. the work style with preferred activity in the household, *adaptive* work style, and *work-centered* i.e. a work style which is primarily concentrated on employment.

²¹ Another question of course is the momentarily enjoyed state, which in view of *single* status predetermines a lifestyle focused primarily on work.

²² For example the 26 year old computer programmer who in the course of his last relationship took advantage of the possibility to choose a 4 day working week, so that he could spend more time with his student girlfriend, to go on long weekend trips and other such events.

²³ In view of the fact that the interviews were not focused on gender differences, one can only speculate whether the apparent differences in awareness or the admission of pursued arrangements of work styles (or the automatic preparedness for unconditionally accepting some sort of work style including *home-centered* style) are given by the existence of gender inequality on the labour market and represent the manifestation of different possibilities available to men and women therein.

²⁴ The changes in the sphere of employment are presented in more straight-pointed manner by Bourdieu *et al.* (1997), Castel (1995) or Harrison and Bluestone (1998).

market. Nowadays the actual problem for this group is not access to great employment opportunities, but rather maintaining employability. (Heath & Cleaver 2003)²⁵.

In view of only recent trend in the growth of numbers of university students and consequently graduates and the relative boom in work opportunities, which demand sophisticated competencies from these graduates (for example knowledge of foreign languages), it is hardly possible to interpret pressures linked to professional self-fulfillment (and their influence on the choice of working styles), likewise in the contemporary Czech context. Even so, some of the graduate conversation partners²⁶ confronted corresponding trends²⁷ to these in their employment environments. Changes in the employment market has created pressure on the workforce, which demands the necessity to accept a varied workload, including part time work, on call work, temporary work etc. Hakim (2000) interprets the promotion of this type of employment²⁸ on the contrary in a positive light as the widening of opportunity for the workforce to choose the character of their workload (Hakim is focused primarily here on women exercising a adaptive work style). In their comprehension of their employment status and their chosen work styles and the pressures included therein, it was possible to discover elements applicable to both these interpretations in the interviews with conversation partners. Some conversation partners were able to alter the intensity of their workload in relation to their situation and reality outside the workplace²⁹.

The Comprehension of Changes and Cultural Barriers

Fundamental findings in relation to the various aspects of the lives of conversation partners were present in their diverse reflexion of change after 1989 and its influence on their individual life trajectories. It can be assumed that the degree of awareness of this influence grew with the age of the respondents, this connection however did not appear relevant- one of the youngest conversation partners (24 F final year university student, receptionist in a hotel) was not aware of any influence at all, and another of the youngest conversation partners (24 F, publishing worker) specifically emphasised the effect of these changes. Many of them were aware that if the events of 1989 had not happened and circumstances had remained unchanged, they would certainly have encountered societal pressure to get married a lot earlier. The changing character of personal relationships and their maintenance in relation to changes in society was expressed by one conversation partner:

" I think that relationships have always been somewhat complicated, although it seems that they are now more complicated than before, I'm not sure- the main thing is we now are offered more freedom in relationships. It's more difficult for us, if we don't have the pressure to stay together and we don't have such strong traditions like there were before. So people often split up and really there is no pressure from society, and really that freedom that we wanted so badly, is really the obstacle." (29 F office administrator).

Although from the above quote the effect of the changes in 1989 can be felt even in the most intimate spheres of life, then clearly the post communist specificity, at the same time, the content of their responses can be however classified in the general trend of de-standardisation and the releasing of life biographies in relation to individualisation (Beck, Beck- Gersheim 1995, Beck, Beck-Gersheim 2001,

²⁵ Honneth is referring to the pathology of contemporary individualism, where the idea of self realisation is transformed into the "ideology and productive force of the economic system" (2004: 474) and became part of the "institutional expectations inherent in social reproduction" (2004: 467). The paradoxical overturn of the trend, which was directed towards the qualitative extension of freedom and had become "ideology of de-institutionalisation", led to the intensified feeling of emptiness and unfulfillment in individualised society.

²⁶ 27 out of 38 conversation partners have been in the process of obtaining or had obtained a university education (i.e. at least a bachelors degree)

²⁷ For example a graduate of teacher training college seeking work in Prague started her working career as a shop assistant (28F, PA to director of a firm)

²⁸ The proportion of full time employees fell from 70% to 62% in Great Britain between 1981 and 1993 (Hakim 1997:24 as quoted by Hakim 2000:69).

²⁹ The reasons for limiting or interrupting work involved more often personal interests or hobbies rather than personal relationships, (most frequently travel, for example for extended periods to exotic locations) and have taken on the specific form and reflected individualisation trends well known from the Western European context.

Giddens 1991,1994). Chosen biographies replace standardised biographies typical for collective experience, whether in socialist reality or in the context of the given differences according to gender, age and social class in western society. The de-standardisation of personal biographies is interpreted in various ways; Giddens imagines it as being something positive bringing greater freedom to the individual. Conversely for Beck and Beck-Gernsheim it brings with it the persistent necessity for thought and decision in even the smallest step in life, and the disruption of everyday routines acts as a menacing pressure on the individual.

Under what circumstance 'standards may stay or may not stay high'?

Many of the conversation partners were aware of the significance of the 90s for the cardinal changes in their personal lives; they usually understood these as being positive changes, but at the same time they were aware of the unconsidered and unexpected consequences entailed. One of the conversation partners was aware that *'the attainment of freedom'* enabled her to travel abroad, gain experience and self enrichment *'and to be able to achieve in that direction a definite internal strength, which men in their own right find repellent, if they see a woman and they see she is strong'* (27F, working in public relations). Although it may seem that this comes from the change in traditional expectations of women and gender agenda possibly emerges, it stems rather from the universal social phenomenon, which can be named "the individualization of expectations in view of potential partners". The above conversation partner expected a similarly well traveled³⁰, wise and internally strong partner. Similarly, one of the male conversation partners (29M, lawyer, musician, non-profit sector) preferred self-sufficient partners, for whom a relationship was not the aim of their self-fulfillment, and he literally spoke of 'standards' and that those "standards stay high" A previously quoted female conversation partner, when talking about a potential partner openly admitted that she did not want to lower her standards as *"in the long term it would not be worth it"* (27F, working in public relations). This assertion of the individualization of expectations and with its' related dilemmas are even more explicitly presented in other responses (32F, single mother, assistant/secretary) :

'I'm just not capable of saying that: yes this person does this, but in other things he is fantastic. Well, I start to see only the things that disgust me, and I'm unwilling to see good things. That is what I meant by compromise, even if it is a badly chosen word for it, well I thought so. If you simply know what you want, that you want that husband and children and a car and a house and a cottage, then you accept those things which you maybe don't like, but you say to yourself 'yes, but all this compensates those bad things.'"

In her reply the conversation partner puts her finger on the fundamental conflict embedded in Giddens' concept of the 'pure relationship'. On the one hand the conversation partner deliberates about a 'pure relationship' (viz Giddens 1992), and of course on the other hand she is aware that a 'pure relationship' is, as Jamieson formulates in a more sophisticated way (1990,490) *"theoretically, the pure relationships seems to be a near impossibility for domestic partnerships and parent-child relationships that are necessarily embroiled in financial matters above the relationships."* Jamieson explicitly examines the concept of 'pure relationship' and critically questions its supposed gender neutrality. Through shared responsibility for physical space, money and material security a relationship is self formed (1999,49) however in prevalent contemporary shared domestic arrangements gender roles are unequal. Even though the conversation partner prefers a 'pure relationship', she is aware that in real life, as Jamieson emphasises, it is not possible to achieve. What has proved to be the case in her own life and she remains single.

'Personal Space Invaders'

Amongst other explanations of the complications which accompany the fulfilling of expectations in the choice of partners is that related to getting older, which brings with it knowledge and experience, and which makes 'falling in love romantically' hard to achieve as a starting point for a relationship (*'at my age it's difficult to put on rose colored glasses, so that everything would look really lovely, so that if boys have more time, then the boys always ruin it.'*,29F, director of a customer support centre, leasing company).

³⁰ The conversation partner for example could not imagine having a partner who could not speak English and make himself understood abroad.

Another obstacle which appears with the prolongation of the 'singles period' is the gradual loss of the ability to adapt to living together with an other person. One conversation partner realised that the longer he stayed single " *the worse it would be to function in a normal fashion in a normal relationship.*"(29M, lawyer, musician, non-profit sector).

This loss of being accustomed to living with others was explicitly expressed in relation to living independently. One of the previously quoted conversation partners spoke for instance about the inability to adapt to living with someone in a restricted space (32F, single mother, assistant/secretary).

The growth in numbers of households of young individuals, which have developed directly in relation to gaining independence from their parents (and not so in relation to established relationships, respective married households) has had extensive attention paid to by Heath and Cleaver (2003) and Chander, Williams, Maconachie, Collet and Dodgeon (2004). It seems that in the post socialist context, the need to attain independent living plays a specific role. Independent living has in this sense a symbolic meaning going far beyond a utilitarian function. The need for individual housing, which could be, in relation to the demarking ones own private space in the highly specific and rudimentary laissez faire free market environment of the nineties, characterised as 'privatisation' represents in its fulfillment a goal in itself with highly symbolic undertone going far beyond the mere fact of saving a living place. The moment actors accomplish this, they find it difficult to be able share this hard gained space, and the existence of this space paradoxically creates an obstacle to the forming of a traditional domestic couple arrangement. Parallel to this unambiguous 'privatisation' process, the trend towards shared housing has appeared extensively (not within the bounds of family), which has been described in depth in the study of the British context by Heath and Cleaver (2003). The actual environment of these specific households, which were represented as so called 'chosen families',³¹ and even in interaction with individual households, is the source of the so called 'quasi-commune' and ' neo-tribes' respectively (Heath 2004: 161-179) or the so called 'urban tribes' (Watters 2004)³². Also present existence of these communities in the Czech environment enabled conversation partner to live without partners or provided a safety net in the case of the breakdown of a relationship. However isn't here more inner and deeper force at play?

Toward Individualized *Habitus* and its Sources

As it has been noted earlier the sphere of housing is classically interpreted as materially and economically key precondition for creating long-term reproduction oriented relations. Lack of financially viable housing for young people is often understood as one of the primary causes of stagnating marriage rate and decline of natality (Rychtaříková 1996, 1997). As it came out from the interviews, breakthrough and spread of singleness among current men and women paradoxically goes hand in hand with gaining own living quarters. This shift in status brings with it weakening the ability of living in partnership and accommodating yourself to living with another person. Our further inquiry though is to attempt to reach beyond this most immediate assessment of the phenomena.

Solo-housing in post-socialism and individualization

Marked character and sharpness of the changes is obvious in connection with the social benchmark of 1989 as the trend of independent housing, which was before 1989 rather unusual (young people used to leave parents directly into their through marriage established households as they were getting married in their early 20's, very young age by Western European standards at the time):

„ I knew that I keep coming back to this point, but living independently- that plays a big role. And I'll tell you, you get used to it very quickly and it's difficult to turn back. Those who leave their parents home to start up a family, they really don't go through this phase and sort it out somehow. But of course, I'm used to my comfort and certainly any strangers, and I'm not counting visitors, those that I invite there, and they

³¹ i.e. room mates and friends in collectively rented apartments or houses

³² This is various communities in the 'young adult phase', often emerging from the connection of shared housing. Although it may seem that such arrangements are limited to the younger age group, Roseneil and Budgeon (2004: 135-159) in the course of their research showed that these arrangements and relationships, in fact replace the family and even later on the parental phase.

leave that potato chips ground into the carpet ...I can deal with that. But to have someone disturbing me like that on a regular basis, I would have to know why I had him there, and the positive reasons would have to outweigh the negative ones. And those negative reasons are pretty influential for me, the reasons for ,yes' would have to substantially outweigh the negative ones to satisfy me. So these for not are quite strong for me. I say, it is clear for me from 70 – 80%, this way it satisfies me. "

(29F, manager of the clients' centre, leasing firm)

Frequently is the assessment of living arrangement less sharp and indicates certain ambiguity of markedly individualized life-styles:

"Since, for example, I play tennis with other old bachelor and go exercising, so I am coming back home rather late, or sometimes I happen to party ... but coming home I am not excited that much ... the empty apartment. On the contrary, I light up the lamp read something and I am somehow fine. So I have found that way how to make it ... Still I may say, that there are certain moments, for example on Friday night when it simply happens that I do not have, at the given moment, any program and I do not feel like getting wild and drinking hard with another old bachelor..."

(25M, economic journalist).

What is behind the choice of this lifestyle? To what extent we may speak of purposeful choice of this lifestyle? Does it really concern truly just a 'choice' of lifestyle? The issue of one-person households as related to partner relationships is now presented here as emerging from long- developing *habitus*³³ which is accompanying deeper socio-cultural changes in the society. In the case of the transition from real socialism to free-market society, these changes may be put as parallel with Bourdieu's distinction of pre-capitalist and capitalist societies and transition to society adopting the principle „laissez faire“(Bourdieu 2002). Even though, in this sense, it is necessary to interpret real-socialist context rather than the environment of totalitarian impersonal dominance more as traditional³⁴ strongly hierarchized environment with developed clientelistic elements creating space for making a use of marriage strategies and limiting actively realized lifestyles in this sphere as the sphere of 'intentional choice'. This strongly hierarchized environment with developed clientelistic elements creating space for use of marriage strategies and restraining actively realized life styles extensively to this sphere of life as the sphere of 'conscious choice'. This way, then in transition to capitalism "in the societies where actors (particularly in the position of dominated) still controlled through the consequences of general social mechanisms - for example these, which shape economic and cultural worlds (about which it may be said roughly that in them combination of various kinds of capital takes place) – the meaning of marriage strategies gradually gets weaker..." (Bourdieu 2002: 87).

Similarly, it is possible to indicate understanding of the character of these changes even in other theoretical paradigms. According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995, 2002) and Bauman (2001), in the process of destandardization and loosening of individual biographies as associated with transition from modernity to late modernity more than personal choice the institutional pressures and other social structures (including labour markets) start to play. Honneth (2004) speaks of pathologies of contemporary individualism - the idea of individual self-realization has changed into ideology and productive principle of the economic system and became a part of institutional expectations as unavoidable element of social reproduction. Trend which, in the late modernity, was supposed to lead to qualitative enhancement of freedom and should have become 'the ideology of deinstitutionalization' resulted in extending the impact of various institutional and other social structures.

Individualized habitus

³³ *Habitus* is used in this text in Bourdieu's understanding as generative and converging principle which through actual relational patterns characteristic for given positions establishes distinctive lifestyles - certain wholes uniting choice of persons, possessions and practical activities (Bourdieu 1998:16).

³⁴ The term 'traditional' may be described in relation to integration role of family as basic societal unit in the whole range of societies preceding the late modern period. In view of the specific role of family in real-socialism (pulling people from public sphere and pushing them into family corners) it is possible to speak about traditional model even in the real-socialist context.

Is it possible than to uncover specifically individualized *habitus* for the sphere of partner relationships, lifestyles and household arrangements and its social sources in view of the post 1989 Czech context? In this view, what initially draw attention are the habitual preconditions for partner relationships as a crucial factor affecting living style and the arrangement of household. The main concern here seems to be an explicit unwillingness to open single person's space/territory (*"I actually cannot imagine any more that I would have to live along with somebody in single space of some 50 m² for example, I would have to fall for him a lot"* 32F, single mother, assistant-secretary). Changes in lifestyles must be understood in long-term time span, though.

In this long-term understood context, we meet, on the one hand, with examples of unusual household practices and arrangement of family life at the time of real socialism:

"... mother was a stewardess, so when I and my brother were small she wasn't home quite often. So we haven't had kind of mother-minder who leaves in the morning for work, comes in the afternoon, cooks and wash.... Simply for her, as I have found out, her inner life was crucial."

(27F, public relations)

The arrangements in the original family affect expectations of today's actors (*"I am somehow glad that I do not expect from the family to be 150 % occupied and not to have time for myself,"* 27F, public relations). At the same time, are these expectations extensively shaped by post-socialist context. Precisely the last mentioned conversation partner realized that freedom gained in the 90's allowed her to go abroad, gain experience, enrich her own inner life and in the context of gender-given local patterns to undergo crucial transformation.

In view of these circumstances, on the other hand, another critical factor emerges, which somehow surprisingly strengthens 'individualized *habitus*'. Adhering to traditional model of arrangement of partner relations and household and gender given character of responsibilities in couple paradoxically contributes to asserting the lifestyle and household pattern of singles.

"... simply I would like to have certain comfort and somehow I want to make a living in such way to be able to ensure that I can sustain a family. Unless I am able to provide fully for a family, I do not want to have it. I would feel as doing wrong to my kid and that I make my kid to suffer having it while not being able to provide the kid with adequate background which I would like to have for him or her."

(26M, business manager finishing studies)

In this connection a question of determinants of traditional and new arrangements of relationships emerges. While attempting to get closer to socio-cultural sources of individual-oriented arrangements of relationships in the era of real socialism with its relatively high rate of divorce (compared to previous periods) a question of the role of social inheritability in creating specific individualized *habitus* emerges.

It could be assumed, that high divorce rate implying immediate increase in numbers of divorced singles and also spread of socialization in households of these singles helped to establish, in larger and larger segment of society, as a norm solo life rather than life in a couple - or to be more exact single-parent lifestyle, most often single mother with children. To what degree is it possible to consider this antecedent of post-1989 changes as the primary source of contemporary 'individualized *habitus*'?

In this regard, the categories that have emerged in interviews may attest the connection of newly emerging 'individualized *habitus*' with socialization in non-traditional as well as traditional family contexts in the closing part of real socialism. In this certain ambiguity a gender aspect comes to forefront.

"Perhaps it has got certain magic to dance around that guy but I haven't found it yet"

"So my parents are divorced, we have been brought by mother, I got older brother, who belongs to these dependent and mother had to apply double ways of upbringing toward us with the excuse that brother may not do this and this, he was a person to receive warm-lined slippers and had school homework done. He could not wash dishes because he was breaking dishes. I belonged to these self-sufficient, not that I was but because I had to be, simply, I couldn't avoid it. "

(29F, director of a customer support centre, leasing company)

Precisely this experience of prevailing traditional arrangement of household even in the broken family likely contributed to preference of solo household 'without invader' in the case of above quoted conversation partner who even assessed the degree of commitment to such household practice in her own case to 70-80 %. Her euphemistic description "invaders" may relate to experience with her brother not taking care of himself, respective application of double upbringing standards within Czech family. This is to mean subjecting brother to an upbringing model other from the one she has been subjected to and awareness of starting point of brother's model of upbringing, characteristics of this model and how it is reflected in the life of current men:

".... maybe I notice that more. On top of it, I mind that more than other women and I cannot tolerate it... Even in this state of things a person can see some advantages but I do not see them because I haven't had that example. Perhaps it has got certain magic to dance around that guy but I haven't found it yet".

(29F, director of a customer support centre, leasing company)

Another conversation partner (26F, administrator for financial receivers) gained similar experience from another non-traditional household arrangement. She lived till the age of 20 with her divorced father, to whom, in her own words, "essentially compensated for partner" what, as she acknowledged, affected her substantially (*"He was constantly showing me what men are and what they are capable of. He has shown that to me in very extensive range of spheres, not only at home but also in personal life as such."*)

The clash with the model of traditional arrangement of household already in the course of realized relationship has been described by another conversation partner (*"He has lived with parents and they have been taking care of him. Then he moved to my place, he was used to it and he had thought that I am to take care of him too, that he is not to do much and that he is not to need to put up much effort"* 28F, accountant in a firm) and she clarified her stand:

"I say, I don't want an egoist, I wouldn't like to change diapers for somebody, I don't want a baby, I am looking simply for an equal partner who would see a feminine in me and not a mother..."

(28F, accountant in a firm)

Danger of the traditional model as a block in arranging own relations emerged also in the case of another conversation partner in connection with the long-lasting crisis in relationship of brother which wasn't functional even at the time of birth of brother's now four years old daughter:

"Every time when I come from weekend at Moravia, I am so happy that I live alone in Prague, that I am not engaged in any such terrible relationship as they have. I am always so euphoric. I do not go there too often, I happen to go there once in two months, but I am always so relieved because there is such intense atmosphere in there. If it is not about one of my siblings, then it is about my parents, awful tension"

(28F, personal assistant of consultancy firm director)

..My goodness we are oldest here"

Recognizing traditional models and frequent refusal of presses connected with compliance with traditional arrangements and models has been frequently in the centre of attention of conversation partners:

"I ask myself if I should have own family ... such panic feeling that I 'missed the train'. That is what my girlfriends from beyond Prague got, poor things. They are sometime getting on my nerves... Nowadays, when going with them somewhere, their first sentence is: 'My goodness we are oldest here!' and quite often it is not even true."

(28F, personal assistant of consultancy firm director)

On the other hand, besides panic worry from not fulfilling traditional arrangements, even acceptance of traditional relationship and household arrangement is encountered:

"I am not too big feminist or, of course to certain degree I uphold the opinion that essentially larger expenses in marriage or common cohabitation should be covered by man. Buying a house, buying a car, paying for holidays and then woman ... Of course I could not live that way that I would be entirely without own money."

(28F, hairdresser and owner of hairdressing parlor)

Even though this traditionally understood relationship context is alternated in the mind of conversation partner and inherently counts with the elements of long-distance relationship:

„Eventually, in the course of time even children, but for sure I need a man who, for example, goes for business trips or something like that, since I am used to always to have some time for myself...”
(28, hairdresser and owner of hairdressing parlor):

The meaning of key elements of traditional relationships even in types of relations inconsistent with traditional family (single parent with child or children, relation with married lover) have been highlighted by clashes regarding traditional or non-traditional character of these relationships and understanding them by actors engaged:

“So that is what men look for. They seemingly look for a lover who is not to demand for their divorce and who is not to count with them in further life. But then they are surprised when I tell them that it is really that way. They expect, and this way it appears to me, that a woman falls in love, is swept from her feet, makes scenes and tries to gain him strictly for her... It seems to me that as I do not engage into thinking over such relationship and analyse under what circumstances our relationship is to continue or not to continue since these things are agreed initially, most of these men comes back to it over the course of that sexual relationship and they engage into thinking and reconsiderations over relationship and I don't understand precisely why.”

(26F, administrator for financial receivers)

This is the ambiguous context in which we should look for clues in view of the increase of solo living. Along with having the concept of “pure relationship” (Giddens 1992), on the one hand, it is necessary to realize that “pure relationship” is as more comprehensively described by Jamieson (1999: 490) as rather impossible in the case of couple household or relationship with children since it concern the financial and material obligations more than the actual relationship. Jamieson explicitly subjects the concept of “pure relationship” to criticism and puts in doubts its seemingly gender neutrality. Sharing responsibility for physical space, money and material conditions reflexively leads to relation which is, in gender terms, in presently prevailing arrangement of couple household unequal. Precisely this fact may be considered as a key factor leading to prevailing solo living arrangements along with establishment of single households as specific *habitus*, which may be described as ‘individualized’. Conversation partners, even though socialized in divorced families and thus frequently in non-traditional households were exposed to traditional distinction of man and female roles. Life in incomplete family cannot be understood as the lead to individualized *habitus* in a sense of direct social inheritance³⁵. On the contrary, living in traditional couple household may carry with it socialization leaning to individualized *habitus* (conversation partner growing up in the family of stewardess) or may lead to strong anti-traditionalist reaction (conversation partner brought up in traditional Moravian family). The issue is not thus step by step weaken position of traditional family through social inheritance multiplying the effect of broken families as it is commonly implied in connection with breakthrough of new arrangements of intimate lives but social reproduction of newly spreading individualized *habitus*.

Thus in relation to the gender view a range of categories describing the ways of spreading and social reproduction of individualized *habitus* emerged in the interviews. One of the categories is couple household leaning to individualized *habitus* in crucial distinction from traditional gender differenced upbringing in an incomplete family (different upbringing of daughter and son, specific position of daughter brought up by father). Another category can be described as anti-traditionalist reaction. These indicated categories are connected with family background in which socialization of conversation partners has taken place.

Further categories representing the mechanisms of break through and social reproduction of individualized *habitus* are already connected with the actual practices in the lives of conversation partners. The most obvious and commonly registered category is what can be described as ‘gaining freedom’ which was the result of great opening after 1989 (including the possibility of finding out about life abroad). Similarly common category, in this context, is the refusal of ‘replacement and covering for mother’ by female partner. Much less obvious category - the content of which is possible to paraphrase by words of one conversation partner: ‘Unless I am able to provide fully for a family, I do not want to have it’ and

³⁵ Even though, the example of single parent acting independently may play certain role and it may seem that people from such family may more easily get along with solo living style.

which is usually characteristic for the attitude of men associating themselves with traditional values - leads paradoxically to straitening individualized *habitus*.

It is possible to say that individualized living is an explicit embodiment or consequence of these various categories. From gender considering viewpoint this is logical expression of new individualized *habitus*, particularly if the fact that in traditional gender related distinction of spaces (men's - public space as a field of power and women's - private space of household and reproduction [Bourdieu 2000:85]) is taken into account. Individualized *habitus* can spread most widely - without regard to this traditional gender based space distinction - in the sphere of individualization of housing as (individualized) housing has belonged for long strictly to private arena of living thus not violating anyhow general social consensus.

Social reproduction of individualized *habitus* comes out as crucial theme. Even though an interpretation of this reproduction through direct social inheritance may be at offer above realized analysis describes more complex nature of coming into being and reproduction of individualized *habitus* in the context of more general shifts in cultural patterns after 1989.

Living through Solitude as a Challenge; when does "late youth" end?

In spite of emphasis on the "standards" under which *singles* are unwilling to go, living through solitude and self awareness of single status is a great challenge. A previously mentioned conversation partner (27F, public relations officer) admitted, that she becomes somewhat withdrawn and is aware of various phases, which coping with living alone bring. In the first phase she did not admit that finding a partner was important for her, because "*freedom is also important*" and that it is not possible to systematically walk along the street looking for a partner. In the next phase, she realised that without a partner, her life was impoverished. Nevertheless it is a state that she is capable of coping with.

People with this attitude find a whole range of displacement activities which compensate for their lack of a personal relationship. This specifically reveals itself for example in artistic expression. One of the previously mentioned conversation partners (29M lawyer, musician, non-profit sector) devotes his time to playing the guitar in an alternative band and actually refers to "*projection through tones*". For this conversation partner playing in a band enables him to cope with the deprivation linked to a life without a partner and this process of understanding his personal situation is even used as a source of inspiration leading to artistic output, which can more easily speak out to others, who are often in a similar situation.

Another conversation partner (36M, artist, bookseller) came to terms with problematic phases in his personal relationships through the medium of his artistic expression. This trend also appears in more general terms (*'it's now probably because I am single that I feel the need to be fully occupied'* 22, student, working in publishing) and displacement activity often takes the form of work. Escape from the private sphere into the workplace in the context of the American family was registered by Hochschild (1997). Du Bois-Reymond (1998) described the characteristics of 'post adolescence' as the realisation of a flexible and self fulfilling career, often in cultural or computer and information technology sectors, with merging borders between leisure and work with the possibility of the inclusion of personal style in their working lives. Similarly in the Czech context, we also come across the crossing of this border between work and leisure put into practice by respondents with professions in cultural or media fields (e.g. 28F translator/assistant researcher in a periodical).

These states and methods of coping with solitude leads us to the question, when does the time come when people are willing to surrender the freedom of youth? The answer is problematic and individually given. On the one hand, a thirty one year old conversation partner (31F, buyer for a supermarket chain) is aware that at a certain point she gave priority to '*freedom and independence*' but at the moment she neared her thirties she realized that she is willing to give up her "*freedom*". And a thirty six year old communication partner on the other hand describes his never ending search ("*...I always think to myself, that at this moment as a thirty six year old man I can believe in some ideal, in something ideal, I don't have to compromise and I think, that everything is not lost yet and that there are things that really do appear from time to time...*" 36M, artist, bookseller)

Obstacles to the formation of long term, reproduction oriented relationships, whether of an already explicitly defined social-economic character or on the level of more far-reaching deeper cultural models, lead to the advancement of alternative relationship strategies. In interviews conducted in the first year of research there emerged to the foreground the reality that in a distinct proportion of conversation partners, who were sought using the basic criteria "economically independent without partner", it became apparent

during the course of the interviews that many maintained some sort of regular and often long term relationships (even though they classified themselves as single). These relationships were carried out alternatively, for example merely on a sexual basis or on a friendship basis, and they were not perceived by them to be classic personal relationships that in the future would serve as the basis for starting a family (10 out of 25 conversation partners interviewed in the first year). An important genesis within the realisation of the research emerged in this context. Initially the focus of the study was on the life strategies of *singles* without personal relationships, but as the study progressed this focus gradually shifted to the characteristic of alternative relationships which were observed in people who are traditionally perceived as living without partners.

It can be said that the relationship status of many of the conversation partners in the research could be classified within the framework of Staples' old typology of *singles* (1981: 44)³⁶. In particular the *open-coupled relationship* defined in Staples' typology is clearly related to this category encountered during the realisation of this research.

Alone, but not Entirely

In light of the above presented barriers and obstacles, it seems that the issue is not that most contemporary young people have the tendency to stay alone without a partner, but rather that it is frequently true that they are not completely alone and that the key problem is that of the adaptation and adjustment of traditional structures of cohabitation to the conditions of contemporary society. The advancement of alternatives to the traditional forms of personal relationships (marriage, long term cohabitation with the realised reproduction) has accompanied the complex social transformation initiated in 1989. The issues of alternative relationship structures have already been exposed in diverse contexts. The French qualitative study of unmarried women (Kaufman 1999) works with the so called term 'shared autonomy' (*l'autonomie accompagnée*), and Levin (2004) analysed in more detail the 'living apart together' (LAT) type of arrangement, and attention was likewise paid to long distance relationships (e.g. Rhodes 2002). On the basis of the analysis of 38 in depth interviews I have attempted to characterise the key categories of alternative relationships, as they appeared in the contemporary Czech context (Tomášek 2004, 16-19).

Married or Widowed Lovers

In view of the fact that at the outset, the research project thus far concentrated on the unmarried, and the objects of the research were predominantly young people living alone (those who were single and economically independent) and that the majority of the conversation partners belonged to the 23-32 year old age group, a surprisingly substantial category emerged, which consisted of relationships with married lovers. The whole range of these relationships appeared in the responses of one conversation partner (*I have a long term lover, a regular occasional lover and I also have an occasional lover. These relationships involve various people from various age groups*), and she rationalised these relationships as being necessary for the development of a problem free career (*so that I could function professionally, which at the current time is my priority, you know to be able concentrate on career, I always find someone to sleep with, and if it simply stops working, then we just say good bye,*" 26F, administrator for financial receivers).

On the one hand we encounter relatively unstable relationships, but at the same time this category of alternative relationships does not exclude long term examples: *I have married lovers, and I have had an affair with one of them for 11 years, although if I have a relationship with someone, he knows that we can only go for a coffee, because I am always faithful when I am in a relationship, but when I don't have a relationship then he phones me again and we are happy to get back on the old rails...*" (28, hairdresser and owner of a salon). If it is the case that in the first example of this type of relationship we deal with the avoidance of long term relationships for the sake of prioritising self advancement in the professional field, it can also be viewed as a pretext for hiding the inability to form and maintain a relationship of long term character, and in the second example we encounter the need and ability to maintain a long term relationship, but its fulfillment accommodates itself to the evident need for autonomy of the conversation partner.

³⁶ Regarding the issue of various typologies of *singles* see Tomášek 2003a, Tomášek 2003b, Radimská, Tomášek 2003.

Weekend marriage

The concept of "ones' own space" is certainly the fundamental mark of the alternative form of relationship, which has been defined as 'living apart together'. This was characterised caustically by one of the conversation partners: *"I could do with a weekend marriage. That would be an ideal arrangement for me, being with a partner for maybe 3-4 days a week, maybe share a home together, but to also have the possibility of being alone."* and she explained how a 'weekend marriage' works: *"... I just mentioned it, but I think a lot of relationships like this exist now, where they live together, but at the same time they have another flat, which is an environment to escape to..."* (26F, translator, final year university student). From all the relationship categories mentioned, the 'weekend marriage' certainly most resembles the traditional form of long term relationships.

Long-distance relationships and "one night stands"

Although these two categories of relationships are distinctly dissimilar, as voiced in the interviews, these two forms are often combined. For one 26 year old respondent their long-distance relationship represented for him his most serious relationship to date: *"so for two months we were in constant contact by mail, and in June I saw her one morning, and we got it together and then I came from Paris for a weekend, then we saw each other one afternoon in Paris, when she came and then she came in October again, and we spent a weekend together, which was great, but after that she simply broke things off as she was really ambitious, or not ambitious, she was great, on the one hand she was really family orientated, but on the other hand she was really ambitious, she was studying anthropology and she used to go to the Pyrenees to do research about herdsman"* (26M, manager finishing studies).

Although often this category may exhibit similar characteristics interchangeable with 'weekend marriage'³⁷, the key distinguishing factor in the case of long-distance relationships is the possibility of maintaining and prolonging the romantic phase, which calls for a certain openness in the relationship. This openness and the innate independence associated with this category was also relevant to the category of one night stands (one of the conversation partners [(29F, accountant in a firm)] referred to it in Czech literally as 'narazovky' which could be interpreted as "roadkill") and the question of acceptance of this relationship category: *"pick up somebody when I'm drinking somewhere, which makes me feel guilty and I'm actually quite scared of doing it, but I still do it. I can't, I don't do it that often, I'm no ladies man, who makes brutal conquests and who does it to take the place of a missing partner, not at all ."* (26M, manager finishing studies).

Open Relationships

Another category which emerged distinctly in the course of the research was that of so called open relationships. In these cases it is possible to distinguish those, which acquire the characteristics of open relationships in the course of the development of classic long-term relationships, and those which are mutually predefined as open from the offset. The responses of the following conversation partner belong to this first category: *"... well it came to the point where we started having breaks, when he met some girl, who he fell in love with, and the relationship broke down, but at the same time there was still the feeling that it was not a definitive split. Yeah and it was like a constant merry-go-round , and in the end we always got together again after one of his relationships..."* (30F, translator, language teacher).

The characteristics of the second sub-category were described by one conversation partner, when she was referring to the example of her boyfriend and her previous experience with this type of relationship: *" well he was a bit twisted, when we were together he perceived me as being his primary relationship, which he would like to last for a very long time , but at the same time there was that openness from the start and to a certain extent I think we both realised, at least I think so, that we loved each other enough and that the relationship didn't last so long, that we could keep sleeping with other people and all that... and we had it set up, that everything was possible to the extent that, as long as both of us would say to the primary partner 'OK I slept with that girl and that other one..."* (28F PhD student).

Lover in Time of Need

³⁷ Understandably 'weekend marriages' can exist, where both partners live in distant locations, but their relationship is given by regular but limited cohabitation.

Often the very clarification of an actors' role and position in an alternative relationship is an ambiguous process, which gains its outline when looked at in retrospect: *"I realised very easily that he is a person that I couldn't imagine having a family with, or even live with him - we've been together on and off for 5 years and we never lived together, except for a couple of weeks when it was unavoidably necessary...he is a person that I get on with very easily, so now when I look back on it, I realise that we were actually friends, who got closer than is usual with other friends"* (23F, journalist).

In the case of men, the approach to this alternative relationship category seems to be more practical: *"I have a few girlfriends for rainy days, they are very good friends...I don't know, we've known each other for a long time, but we don't feel the need to share everything with each other in full, but in some ways there is some sort of physical temptation let's say...we enjoy seeing each other, but of course that doesn't mean every time we see each other we go to bed"* (27M, Drama school student). Even so, we encounter evidence of a long term relationship based on the sexual sphere in the responses of one female conversation partner (32F, single mother, assistant-secretary) even if she characterises her status as being without any relationship.

Relationships to prove oneself

Another category of relationship that emerged during one of the interviews can be characterised as "relationships to prove oneself: *"I get the feeling that for me, being single is responsible for the constant need to prove to myself that somebody wants me and that if I really wanted a relationship, then it would be possible. So I think that finally someone will kill me, because I set out to try all angles possible, and I wait to see if anyone takes the bait, and that is enough for me at the moment... but I think this is the manifestation of my singlehood, that I have to prove things to myself that would otherwise be fulfilled by a partner in a normal relationship..."* (24F, working in publishing).

Presented categories of relationships³⁸ lead to the question, to what extent these arrangements of intimate partnerships can meet the needs of traditional relationship patterns (marriage, long term cohabitation with reproduction achieved) or whether they achieve a wider stability associated with more traditional relationships.

Historically in sociology, non standard relationships were allocated the label 'singles'. In the 60s, 70s and 80s the term *singles* was used in western literature to describe people living in long term states of unattached cohabitation, not to speak of people who realise even more open forms of personal relationships. With the rise of non standard relationship biographies, more categories of alternative relationship types were specified, such as the so-called 'living apart together' (LAT) at the end of the 70s. For a certain period the term *singles* covered a whole range of alternative relationships. Staples (1981, 44) differentiates between those *singles* that are "free-floating unattached", and those that adapt to a temporary situation or those who live a permanent "solitary life", *singles* in "open-coupled relationships", *singles* in "closed-coupled relationships" and *singles* living in the same household, who have a defined agreement about cohabitation. The established opinion of *singles* and their lifestyles with a deliberately null and void relationship potential is a considerably one sided interpretation. This is demonstrated with the colourful categories incurred in the undertaken research in this study.

Francis de Singly (2000) specifically explained the need for relationships in contemporary individualised society. Although alternative relationships reduce the depth of mutual dependence on coupling, which for de Singly, of course along with the prerequisites of economic and material independence, represents the fundamental precondition of existence and the maintenance of the individuals' identity in contemporary society (possible existence and identity now only in reference to significant others), these relationships demonstrate at the same time that life for an individual without a personal relationship is very difficult. Giddens' concept of so called 'confluent love' reflects the alternation in a relationship that tend to be associated with the image of romantic love and includes the shift from the 'search for the right person' to the search for a 'right relationship' (1992: 62-63). These relationships, within the conditional bounds of mutual satisfaction are straight relationships (here marriage does not determine the faithfulness and devotion of a relationship, it merely labels it) into whose centre is moved sexual

³⁸ If we put aside a specific strategy for the compensation of a missing partnership relationship through overdeveloping relationships with relatives. One of the conversation partners (29F, administrator in a firm) spent a lot of time with her 6 and 2 year old nephews. Precisely the clear danger with compensating for the lack of relationship in this way was "setting my hopes on my daughter" as we were informed by another communication partner (32F, single mother, assistant secretary).

fulfillment. With reference to Giddens Bawin-Legros (2004: 241-250) the conclusion can be made that loving relationships represent the cardinal significance for individuals and that their quest and creation becomes an individualisation process in itself. In the course of research uncovered categories of relationships correspond with Giddens' concept and also with the new descriptions of personal relationships emergence as individualization projects in line with Bawin-Legros. The outlined categories of relationships are in most cases the individualised search for love, even if many conversation partners appeared to achieve a more multidimensional comprehension of relationships in harmony with the gender criticism of the concept of the 'pure relationship'.

Conclusion

Although the common preconception of *singles* tends to be related to the individuals resoluteness in the attempt to attain professional self realisation at the expense of their private lives and personal relationships, American research indicated that the majority of *singles* expect to get married within 5 years (Cargan, Melko 1982, 1992)³⁹. This conclusion was confirmed by the in depth interviews of thirty-eight respondents in the Czech Republic conducted in the years 2003-2006 (the predominant part of completed interviews overall pinpointed the intention of entering into marriage and starting a family in the next few years). At the same time there emerged from the interviews, the fact that the non existence of personal relationships leading to the formation of a family is not *a priori* a sought strategy, but one rather more related to the consequences of the complex changes on the level of the mentality and behavioural models prevailing in the 90s, which brought with it both changes in conduct and motivation in the realms of professional undertakings. Although these changes, for instance in connection with professional development and career growth are often interpreted as explicit evidence of the existential and economic pressures on the individual, the completed research recorded, that even at the level of individual actors these changes in attitude towards shared life with a partner and reproduction are the result of the assumption and internalisation of post-1989 cultural models. Similarly in the field of housing arrangements, which was unequivocally interpreted as the key existential and economic link to the formation of long term relationships leading to reproduction, there emerged that even in the sphere of housing there was the issue of the changing nature of relationships and alternating cultural models extensively in play (the breakthrough of the model of individualized living, including couples living deliberately as individuals in separate households).

From interviews conducted in the first year of research there came to the forefront reality which disturbs the outlived image of *singles* and their lives. A distinct proportion of conversation partners, who had been recruited based on the criteria of being 'economically independent without a partner', turned out to maintain some form of regular and often long term relationships, as indicated some time in the course of the interviews (even though they had characterised themselves as being *single*, i.e. without a partner). The analysis of these in depth interviews, completed in the period between 2003 and 2007, revealed the existence of the following categories of alternative relationships characteristic for this segment of the population: relationships with married lovers, 'weekend marriages', long distance relationships and one night stands, open relationships, lovers in times of need and relationships to prove oneself. Even though the realised research concentrated on this specific part of the population and due to the limited representativeness of the qualitative studies (even in the sense of the direct investigation of this particular category of society) precisely the actual characteristics of this expanding group within society (which is with difficulty registered by standard methods of quantitative research) indicate the shifts in the field of the arrangement of personal relationships⁴⁰.

The development of this specific part of the Czech population aspires to the model, which gradually started to evolve in Western countries from the 1970s. It seems that, in view of the intensive dynamics of the change in the given time scale (some 15 years), it is possible in the Czech context explicitly to indicate the critical factors that fundamentally affect social change associated with the increase in this section of the population. Precisely the sole credible purpose or defining factors which played a role in the foundation and advancement of the phenomenon of *singles* in a western context frequently seems

³⁹ This expectation of course does not mean that marriage will necessarily follow.

⁴⁰ This certainly does not mean the overall use of this markedly specific category of relationship indicated for this concrete group in other segments of Czech society (even if it does not rule out its intersection - for instance through the mediation of the relationship category - married lovers.)

problematic for western social scientists (for example the concrete differentiation of contemporary economic and cultural factors and their relevance in the explanation of the phenomenon). Nonetheless, the temporality associated with *singles* - the uncertainty of their relationships characterised by missing projections and visions, which has already become a concurrent norm to the traditional norms (associated with families' projections into the future as typical for the modern era) is in the Czech as well as the Western context, a sign of the start of post modernity at the level of arrangement of personal lives.

However, wider proliferation going beyond this one particular statistically and demographically most easily observable change should be taken notice - pluralisation of life styles and increase in variations of partner and other close relationships and their arrangements more generally. The matter is not rooted just in spread of people living single or in chosen 'families' of friends and flatmates and their 'individualized *habitus*' but rests in overall increased avoidance of marriage or marriage's changed character, increase in various degrees cohabiting and non-cohabiting relationships, breakthrough of childless marriages or marriages limited just to one child⁴¹ (this going hand in hand with increased demands regarding the material standards and with that related must of mobility and requirement of disregard for the relation base of wider family grounded in local societies). This may be regarded as spreading of similar '*habitus*' in the whole of Czech society. We are better to speak of more and more 'individualizing *habitus*' - not restricted to particular groups - rather than of 'individualized *habitus*' of concrete pinpointed groups.

Sources of Data

Singles 2003-2006, a set of 38 interviews with economically independent young people without partners.

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⁴¹ So in view of the particular Czech context, the whole range of non-traditional arrangements leaning to 'individualizing *habitus*' may be listed: people not living with a partner, people with partner but living apart, people living rather with friends and flat mates, single mothers and fathers with children, not married parents with unclear relation pattern, not married divorcees or divorced and not married taking care of child/ren of partner, adoptive parents or caretakers, lesbian and gay couples with or without children.

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