

FROM PATIENCE TO PROBLEMS: THE CZECH EXPERIENCE OF THE TRANSITION

JIŘÍ BURIÁNEK

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the recent development of the fear of crime as surveyed in the Czech Republic. The dynamics of fear and concerns are increasing now. During the period of economic crisis, some concerns should have increased, but there is a new subject of concerns, maybe even a new scapegoat: corruption. This text examines the processes of the still continuing fear reduction and the influence of both the victimization and the local conditions on the fear of crime. The second part demonstrates both an extreme rise in the concern about corruption and the element of bribery in everyday practices as well. The transition to democracy in the Czech Republic after 1989 offered a picture of a “patient” society accepting necessary social costs of the change. The conclusion on a “risk normalization” covers two features: the patient reaction of people to the increase of crime rates after 1989 and the increasing differentiation of attitudes according to the local aspects (represented by city size).

Key words: fear of crime, concerns, corruption

The transition to democracy in the Czech Republic after 1989 offered a picture of a “patient” society accepting necessary social costs of the change. Our key explanatory concept of the “risk normalization” (Buriánek 1997, 2001, 2003) covers two features: the patient reaction of people to the increase of crime rates after 1989 and the increasing differentiation of attitudes according to the local aspects represented by city size. We will tackle the problem of “patience” repeatedly supposing that the potential for adaptation is limited. The basic question thus could be articulated in a very simple way: What is prevailing now—paradoxes or realism in public opinion? Systemic compliance, moral panic or a decrease in civic participation and a continuing resignation?

The aim of this paper¹ is to describe the recent development in the field of the fear of crime studies within the scope of crime surveys in the Czech Republic. The dynamics of fear and concern are increasing now. Nevertheless, it could be assumed that in the period of economic crisis some concerns should have increased, but there is a new subject of concerns, maybe a new scapegoat: corruption. So we would like to:

- outline recent development in the perception of security risks by the Czech Republic,
- analyze the processes of the still continuing fear reduction,

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- examine the so-called paradox of fear and the influence of both the victimization and the local conditions on the fear of crime,
- demonstrate the rise in the concern about corruption.

We consider the strong concern about corruption as a new risk, as a powder-keg, which could be easily misused in political discourse.

The basic frame of reference could be outlined by two opposite views formulated by German leading criminologist Klaus Sessar's (2001) thesis on both a "generalization of risks perception" and the role of social deprivation in the social transition reflecting the situation in Germany in the 1990s. Klaus Boers' (2003) view stressing the role of the individual copying of the social environment – community, locality and vulnerability, among others – opens the way to the distinction between the fear of crime and the other "concerns" and leans toward a more detailed analysis (see his "inter-actionist model" presented at the Strasbourg 2003 EC conference). This dichotomy corresponds to the list of theories of the fear of crime offered by Jonathan Jackson et al. (2009b: 182–183), where concerns focusing on victimization, risk perception and environmental disorder could be taken as a micro-sociological view. The structural change and generalized anxiety offer a macro-sociological explanation. However, our approach is much more "historical" than the structural or confirmative one.

The Data and the Methodology

We have no intention to enlarge the debate about the fear of crime measurement troubles (see Ferraro 1995; Skogan 1987; Boers 1991, 2002; Holloway, Jefferson 1997: 256; Walklate 1998). We have reflected on the criticism of S. Farrall et al. (1997) (also see Lee, Farrall 2009). We used three types of indicators in our surveys:

- Standard questions (*Do you feel safe on the streets when walking outdoors in the evenings after dark?*)
- Concrete items batteries (the first one measuring "fear", while the second one considers the probability of a criminal act, both using 10-point scales)
- Experience/exposition items (*How often did you feel unsafe outside in the evenings last year?*)

We have tried to combine the expression of an emotion (fear) with both the more rational cognitive evaluation (probability) and the experience (behavioral aspect). The possibility of an integration of sociological and psychological aspects was discussed by J. Jackson (2009a).

Our data form a homogeneous time series due to our long-term cooperation with the Home Office. However, a gap between 2004 and 2005 represents a relatively minor difficulty. We are working with:

- Surveys "Security risks", which were carried out from 1998 to 2005, F2F interviewing, samples of about 1400 respondents from age 15, quota sampling method
- Survey "Actor 2006", based on the same methodology, N = 1939
- Security Risks Survey 2007, N = 1390

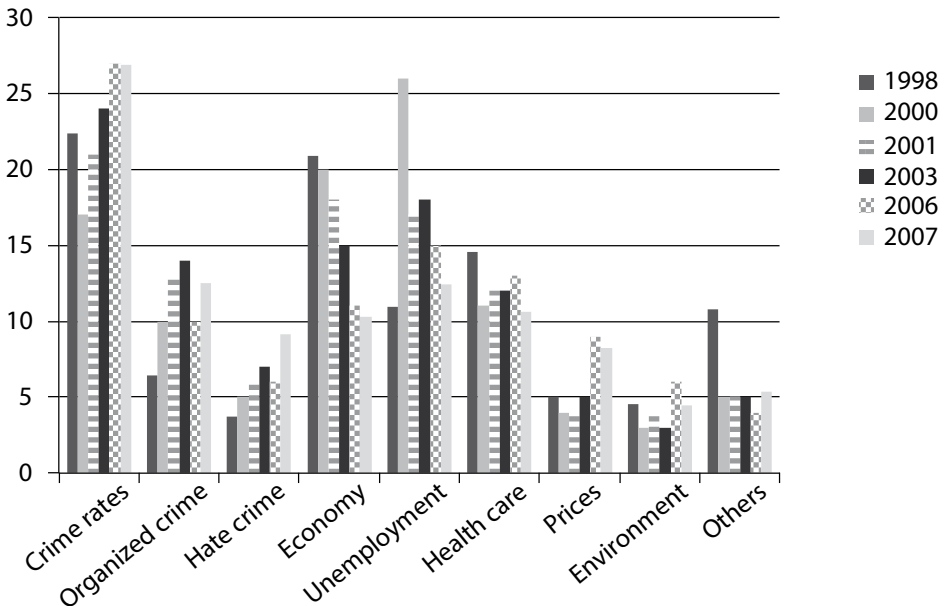
- EUREQUAL 2007, N = 994 (research on social inequalities)
- Survey on corruption in Prague 2009, N = 584
- Actor 2011 for the international project EUROJUSTIS (This was a pilot project for the ESS 2011, data collection in February, N = 1199, F2F, population 18+.)
- Actor 2011 (December), N = 1109, quota sampling

International context is provided by the ESS (European Social Survey, Round 5, 2010), which was implemented in the Czech Republic during February 2011.

The Fear of Crime Development

The people surveyed expressed the view that crime rates represented a dominating problem in society. However, our data have shown (Graph 1) that in the period of the economic depression (1997–1999), the concern was realistically transferred to economic issues.

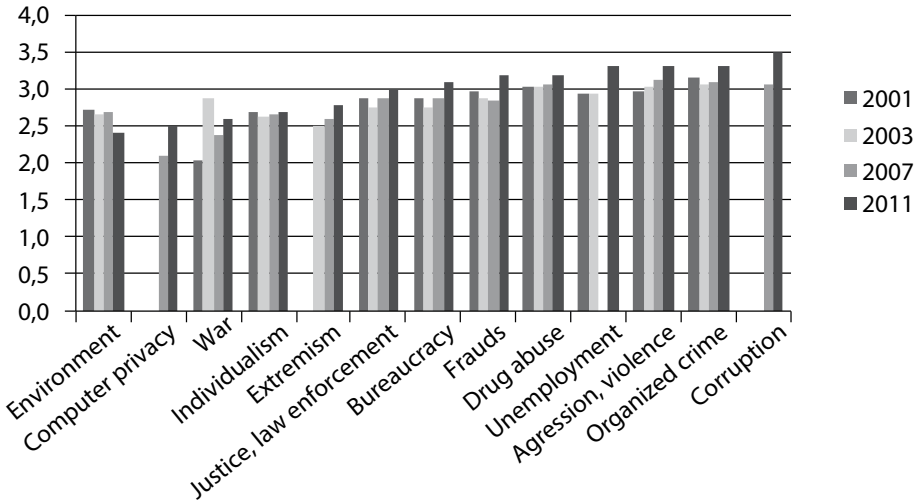
Nevertheless, nowadays corruption is becoming the biggest problem in the Czech Republic. This means that the long-term dominance of crime rates in general as the greatest subject of public concern is over. Unemployment is now in second place. In an open question asked at the end of 2011, in the first two places 40 percent of respondents mentioned explicitly corruption (in the first place 19 percent, in the second place 21 percent).



Graph 1: Crime as the Biggest Problem up to 2007

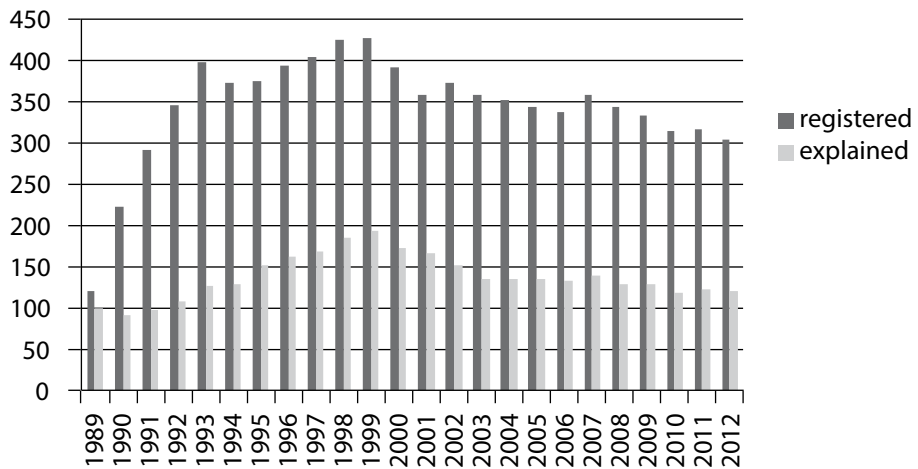
A similar result is provided by a standardized battery examining concerns over social problems (Graph 2). After we added the item on corruption into the menu during 2007,

it became obvious that it occupied a leading position. The shift in the last four years is noticeable. It is evident that the concerns have increased slightly in almost all items. The concern of environmental care has decreased, though.



Graph 2: Concerned by Social Problems from 2001 to 2011 (Means on a scale of 1 to 4 = very concerned)

The fear of crime never corresponds precisely to the crime rate figures (Graph 3). There is a correlation between decreasing crime rates after 2000 and the continually increasing feeling of safety. Nevertheless, criminality has probably been perceived all that time as a good challenge for amelioration from the point of view of citizens.



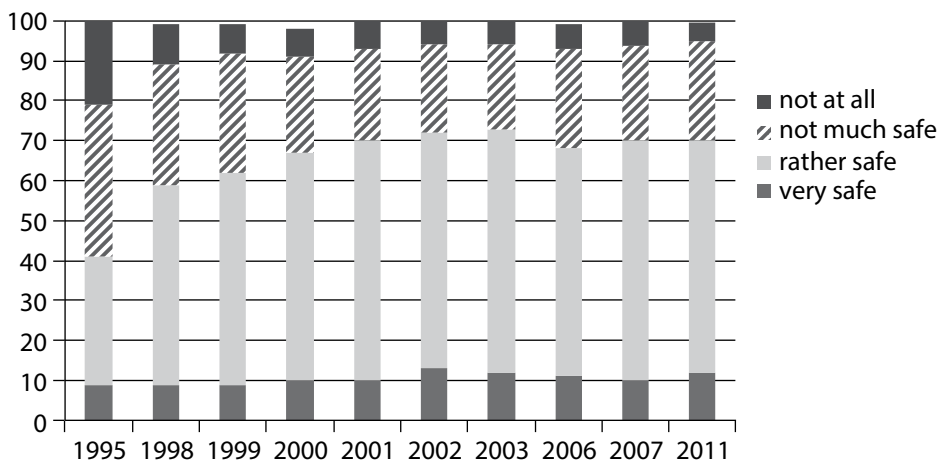
Graph 3: Crime Rates in the CR (Police statistics, in thousands)

Although the trends in crime rates are mostly positive, there is no reason to overestimate their practical relevance to everyday life. It should be demonstrated in Table 1 that the personal victimization experience (prevalence) remained on the same level, only having dropped down in the recent period. The proportion of the people reporting the event to the police is also stabilized.

Table 1: Personal victim experience and willingness for reporting

During	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2005	2006	2010	2011
Prevalence (%)	19	24	25	23	26	23	28	10	10
Victim reported the event (%)						2000	2003	2006	2011
1. Yes, to the Police						53	56	52	56
2. Yes, to another organization						2	2	3	3
3. No, only to the closest relatives						24	17	16	21
4. No, not at all						20	26	29	10

The basic indicator of fear confirms the positive trend of the risk perception by the Czech public (Graph 4). On the other hand, the potential for the further amendment is evidently limited. One reason is that we have revealed a relatively strong influence of the city size (including the differentiation by the victimization prevalence in Table 2). It represents a substantial argument in the debate on the role of “universalistic” attitudes supported by media influence, or on the contrary, on the role of the real recognition of the local condition, of the community.

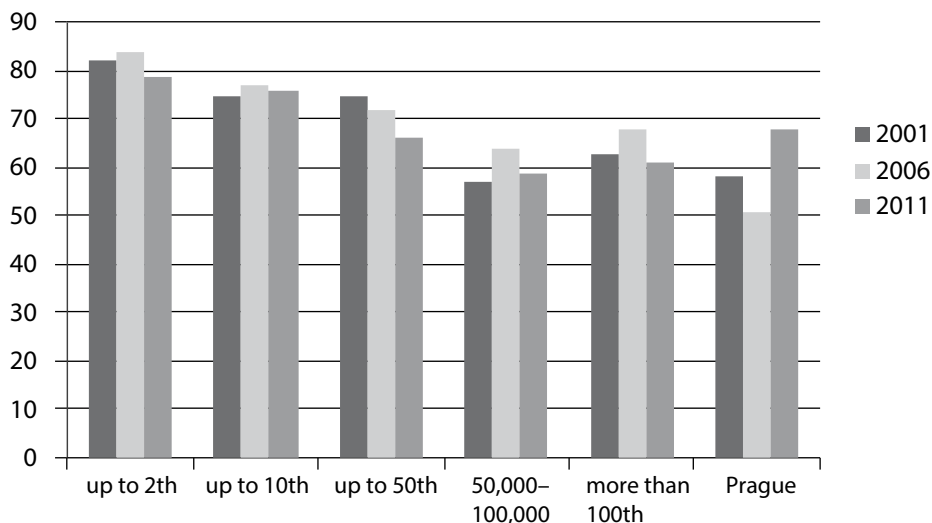


Graph 4: Fear of Crime (Feeling of Safety While Outside in the Evenings)

Note: The rest up to 100 percent = DNK

The position of the Czech Republic among European countries looks rather well. According to the results of ESS 2008, the fear of crime index 1.8 is close to Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden or Germany (Croatia and Norway occupied a top position approaching to 1.5; on the opposite side the index for Greece and Bulgaria overlapped 2.3). The medium level of fear corresponds to the relatively low level of social risks here, which correlates with the fear of crime across Europe. It should be taken as a confirmation of Sessar’s thesis, but looking on the internal differentiation inside the country, Boers’ view comes back into the game.

As shown in Graph 5, local trends differ. The position of Prague is exceptional (the positive trend turned over and became more realistic), but there is another interesting ranking of medium-size cities with about 50,000 inhabitants, where the feeling of safety is relatively low, and the tendency is also unfavorable.



Graph 5: Local Trends Differ (Proportion of people feeling very or rather safe, %)

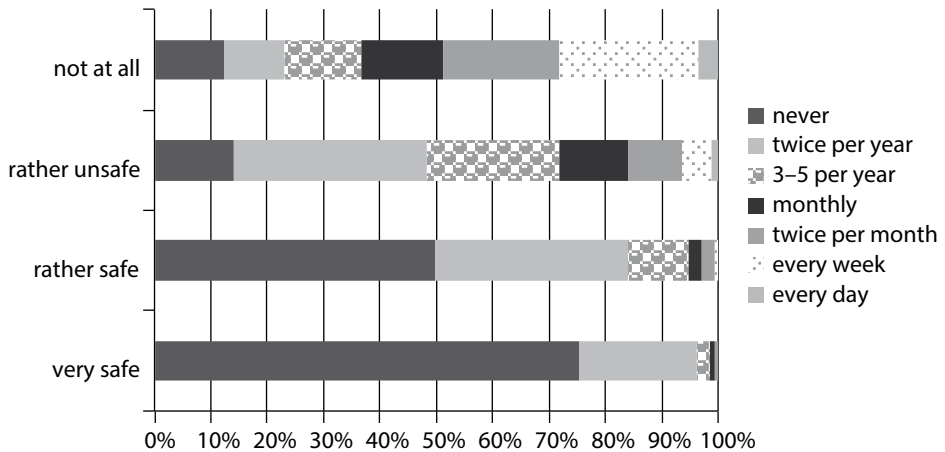
The Further Associations of the Fear of Crime

Table 2 has given evidence for the influence of both gender and victimization on the fear of crime (see also Killias, Clerici 2000). The response pattern of men is probably less dramatic. The actual difference between male and female victimization prevalence is statistically insignificant. A similar association should be observed when analyzing the role of age.

Table 2: Fear (Evenings on Streets) by Victimization and Gender (2007)

		Fear of crime						
Victim		Low	2	3	High	DNK		
1	Male	9.9	59.2	23.8	7.2	-	100	
YES	Female	3.9	45.6	32.5	17	0.5	100	
	TOTAL	7	52.7	28	11.9	0.2	100	
2	Male	15.8	63.5	17.8	2.2	0.4	100	
NO	Female	8.4	54.1	29.6	6.9	0.9	100	
	TOTAL	12	58.7	23.9	4.7	0.7	100	

The implementation of the control question “How often did you feel unsafe outside in the evenings?” did not fortify the arguments against the general measure of fear (Farrall, Gadd 2004). The scope of responses brings a bit of precision. The positive message is that the correlation coefficient (gamma) is rather high (0.66)! According to Graph 6, the declared fear is usually combined with the declared experience of fear. The type “fear without experience of fear” represents only one-tenth (or let’s say one-fifth) of those who feel “not at all safe” on the streets in the evenings.



Graph 6: Validity of the Fear Measure (Feeling Safe and Fear Experience Frequency, 2007)

This alternative question has confirmed the continuing positive trend in the fear of crime reduction.

Table 3: Faced the Real Fear Experience Evenings on the Street (%)

	2007	2011
Never	41.7	45.1
Once or twice	31.5	32.5
3 to 5 times	13.1	9.5
6 to 10 times	5.1	4.4
Monthly	4.8	4.1
Every week	3.2	2.9
Every day	0.5	0.8
Another situation	0.4	0.6
	100	100

We would like to sum up our findings into a simple conclusion stressing the observable realism in the fear of crime declarations because:

- Fear correlates with the risk exposition perception (“experience”).
- Both Fear and Risk exposition correlate with victimization.
- Fear corresponds to the local conditions.

We can illustrate our thesis by a preliminary regression analysis. Table 4 contains one of simplified models incorporating variables that explain the reasons for the feeling of fear. It is not surprising that in the fear “construction” the estimated risk of violent attacks is more relevant than the others. We have also calculated the model for men and women separately so some small differences have been identified. (Among men, the fear of assault plays an important role while among women, the fear of robbery is high on the list.)

Table 4: Regression Analysis for the Fear Experience

Model		Unstandardized Coef.		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.53	0.25	2.093	0.037	
	Sex (F)	0.61	0.07	0.23	8.754	0.000
	City size	0.11	0.02	0.13	5.089	0.000
	Not victimized	-0.5	0.08	-0.16	-6.476	0.000
	Fear robbery	0.08	0.02	0.16	4.571	0.000
	Fear violence	0.1	0.02	0.18	5.313	0.000
	Fear burglary	0.02	0.02	0.03	1.122	0.262
	Fear theft	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.828	0.408
	Fear murder	-0.04	0.02	-0.08	-2.338	0.02
	Satisf. with Police	0.07	0.04	0.04	1.76	0.079

Dependent Variable: Fear experience R = 0.47, Rsq = 0.22

The Content of Fear

The concrete identification of particular risk is widely recommended. In the recent period we have reduced our batteries of probability estimation because the differences between fear (concerns) and probability are continually diminishing. We would like to present here only the top of the ladder of fears of the Czech Republic (Table 5) and the selection of the most important events in the respect of the probability (Table 6).

Table 5: Most Frequent Fears (Means at a 10-point scale)

	2002	2003	2006	2007
Thefts	6.4	6.6	6.5	6.9
Burglary	6.3	6.3	6.1	6.7
Traffic accidents	6.1	6.1	–	7.0
Car theft	6.0	5.9	5.8	6.4
Fraud	5.7	5.6	5.1	5.9

The position of the most relevant risks is very fixed. The recent “return” of the fear of fraud could be interpreted as the result of the government’s insufficient handling of this issue. The public opinion is “realistic” regarding the structure of criminality as reflected in statistics. The small increase in concrete concerns should be examined as well. This is a challenge for another survey.

Table 6: Estimated Probability of Criminal Victimization in Selected Items (Means at a 10-point scale)

	2001	2002	2003	2006
Car theft	5.4	5.4	5.6	5.5
Burglary	5.5	5.4	5.7	5.5
Robbery	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.3
Violent attack	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.8
Rape	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.8

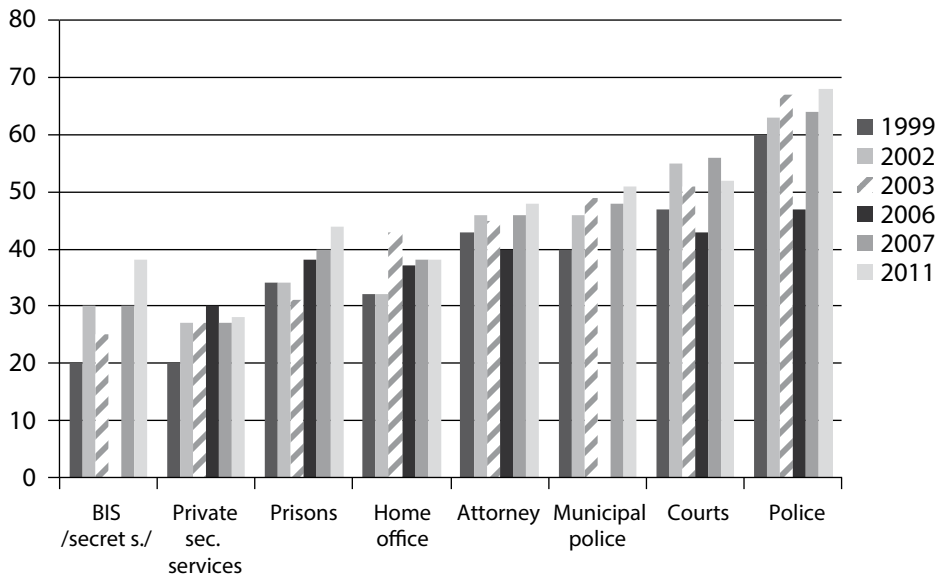
The presentation of the total numbers could be misleading in some cases. Concerned about the risk of sexual abuse, we have to distinguish between male and female perception. The fear of car theft is more relevant to those people who have owned a car. As shown in Table 7, the differentiation should be taken into account, although the fear of car theft is relatively generalized. (There is no fatal absence of logic: People without a car could be afraid that their friends, relatives or their companies will experience car theft.)

Table 7: Status and Fear (Probability from 1 to 10 = maximum, 2007)

	Car theft	Burglary	Robbery	Rape	Violence
Male	5.63	5.34	4.01	2.09	3.74
Female	5.39	5.62	4.62	3.56	3.93
Car owners	5.85	5.5	4.26	2.79	3.77
Without car	3.93	5.44	4.58	3.02	4.17

We can take car ownership as a rough measure of social status as well. In that case we have to mention the higher fear declared by the lower class in respect to violent, physical attacks.

As a bonus, we add information about trust in institutions,² such as the authorities. It has confirmed our positive picture of growing potential for adaptation (Graph 7). The dropout in 2006 could have been caused because the context of the questionnaire was a bit different. There is practically no change in the distribution of attitudes (Table 8) concerning satisfaction with the Police.



Graph 7: Trust in Institutions (% of very trusted + rather trusted)

² More detailed analysis can be found in this volume in the study by P. Homolová.

Table 8: Satisfaction with the Police (%)

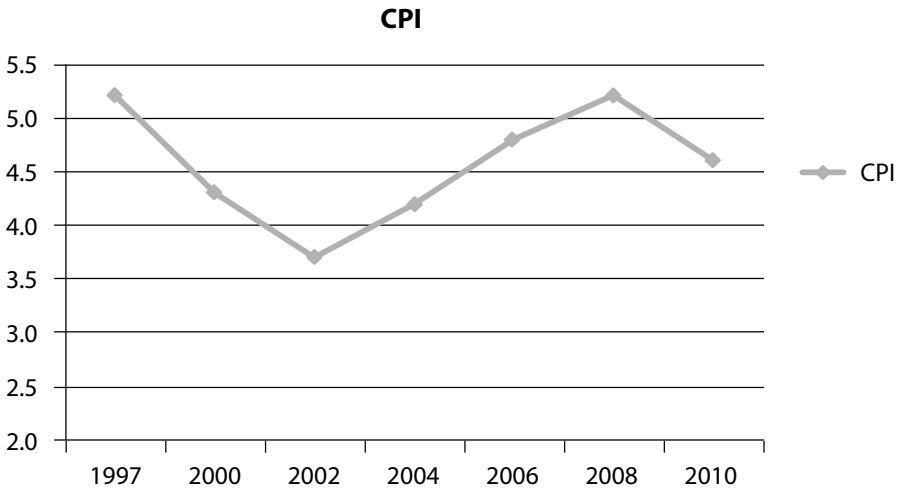
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2006	2007	2011
Very satisfied	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2
Rather sat.	24	22	23	27	28	23	25	34
It depends	53	51	54	51	49	48	48	48
Rather dissatisfied	19	22	18	18	17	22	21	12
Very dissatisfied	3	5	4	3	5	5	4	3

Corruption as a New Fear?

As stated above, the complementary aim of this study is to explore the dramatic increase in the fear of corruption in this country as well. Although at first glance the use of the concept of moral panic seems to be appropriate in this context, we do not believe that the state of public opinion in this respect fulfills all these characteristics. However, it offers an alternative interpretation due to the fact that the phenomenon is associated with active participation of the population, and declared attitudes – one way or another – are related to life experience. Therefore, they are not merely processing external stimuli, e.g. information made public by the media. We also assume that the degree of concern about corruption is still relatively subdued by solid trust in institutions; on the other hand, it may escalate under the influence of social deprivation.

From a methodological point of view, we find the topic challenging enough. In addition to determining the attitudes, we want to verify the possibility not only of detecting the feelings and opinions, but also of asking people directly about the involvement in the processes of everyday corruption (although apparently “minor”). Then it would be possible to discuss the topic not only in terms of fear or concerns but also in terms of experience. Only after that does the fundamental question make sense. It shapes the specific climate of corruption.

Previously, we also raised the issue of who is actually concerned about corruption, so we would like to mention our former paper on a corrupt climate (Buriánek 2009). This article fulfills its objective to show the position of the Czech Republic in an international context. As is apparent from the available resources (Jansa, Bureš 2011), Transparency International ranked the Czech Republic according to its CPI (Corruption Perception Index) in 53th place in the world (2010). The attached graph also shows that after the “crisis” around 2002, there has been a further decline in the index, i.e. the estimated increase in corruption.



Graph 8: Corruption Perception Index in the Czech Republic
 Note: An index value 10 indicates the minimum level of corruption.
 (Source: Jansa, Bureš, 2011, p. 28)

Since corruption very quickly became the number one problem that disturbs people, we could expect that it will change the view of the respondents on the level or stage of corruption. The standard used indicator confirmed the dramatic trend surprisingly clearly (Table 9): It not only decreased the proportion of the undecided, but it clearly starts to dominate the share of those who perceive corruption as organized or even system penetrating. It should mean that corruption permeates all areas of life and becomes a necessary condition for the functioning of most social systems.

Table 9: Development of Opinion on Corruption in the Czech Republic (%)

Developmental stage of corruption	2002	2003	2007	II/2011	XII/2011
Isolated, accidental	14	13	11	8	5
Frequent, but still occasional	31	34	36	29	22
Organized	22	24	28	38	45
Systemic corruption	12	11	14	21	24
Do not know	21	18	12	4	3
	100	100	100	100	100

These opinions do not show significant social differentiation – they represent general beliefs. However, a sub-trend is beginning to emerge. Members of the lower class see the situation more sharply (at least 77 percent perceive corruption as organized) than the upper middle class (63 percent).

Hand in hand with this tendency, we see a clear correlation between concern over corruption and assessment of the current political system (Table 10). There is also a link to political orientation (toward the left).

Table 10: Associations of the Corruption Stage Evaluation (Average values on scales)

	Current political system	Left-Right
Stage of development of corruption	1 to 10	1 to 7
Rare and random, accidental	7.1	4.6
Systematic, but feisty, occasional	7.6	4.3
Organized corruption	4.9	4.0
Systemic corruption	3.9	3.6
TOTAL	5.4	4.0
N	1070	1057

We have an opportunity to note that the spectrum of the left-right political orientation scale shifted to the middle of the scale, although it was deflected to the right during the long-term period after the Velvet Revolution. Whether it is only affected by concerns over corruption is something we cannot yet clearly demonstrate empirically.

Table 11: Corruption and Citizens Feeling Safe on the Street in the Evenings (Actor 2011)

Feeling safe	“Corruption and bribes are encountered at every step ...”				
	Absolutely true	Rather true	Not quite	Totally untrue	
Very safe	50.5	26.7	20.8	2.0	100
Rather safe	45.5	41.3	12.3	0.9	100
Not too safe	54.8	35.7	7.4	2.2	100
Not at all safe	71.4	25.0	3.6		100
Total	50.7	37.0	10.9	1.3	100

Because of the subjective perception of the situation, it is not surprising that we have found a correlation between corruption concern and the feeling of safety outside during evenings. From this perspective, it would seem that it is a component of a broader cluster of attitudes, which is only emphasized differently at different stages of development. Further analysis should be carried out to illuminate the lifestyle practices in still more detail.

Corruption in Everyday Life Practice

Our first attempt at ascertaining the degree of citizens’ involvement in corruption practices was made in 2007. We asked about bids received or made, and on this basis we can make an idea of the degree of the population involvement in cycles of corruption. This proportion was estimated to be one-quarter (recognizing that we deal with a self-reporting methodology). More important, however, was the ability to compare the attitudes of those who are involved with the rest of the population.

Table 12: Offers of Bribes by Social Status (2007, shares in %)

	Offer of a bribe		
	received	given	“Corruption grows ...” statement
Lower class	12	15	64
Lower middle	13	16	57
Middle	19	15	48
Upper middle	40	29	35
TOTAL	19	17	51

It appears that a bigger corruption potential occurs at the level of the upper classes and that these “insiders” express tolerant attitudes toward corruption. In this case it is the share of those who in the question on the development of corruption accepted the answer that it is growing. They also have significantly positive “balance” of bids. We have to note that status is determined by the subjective opinion of the respondent.

Those who received a bid pronounced more fear of corruption (in the research in 2007, measured on a 10-point scale), but they also demonstrated a higher degree of tolerance in relation to both offering bribes and accepting kickbacks.

Table 13: Effect of Participation on Attitudes to Corruption (Range 1 to 10, means)

Bribe	Fear of corruption	Tolerance to offering	Tolerance to bribery
Was offered	5.3	3.32	3.76
Not offered	3.98	2.87	3.4

The people involved, however, do not differ from the others in the view on the stage of corruption in the country. Experience thus influences rather specific attitudes, but it has no demonstrable effect on an overall assessment of the situation.

A closer look at the involvement of citizens in the corruption cycle is reflected in a specialized research conducted in Prague during 2009. Outside a supply circle, there remained 69 percent of respondents, so less than one-third was involved. Twelve percent offered a bribe while nine percent received an offer. Ten percent of the respondents were involved in both directions. Moreover, in this survey the reply was followed by a question asking whether the offer was realized or the bribe was accepted. Although the answer may not have been entirely sincere, offered bribes proved to have been “finalized” in about one-third of the cases, while the offers made by the respondents were accepted in half of the cases. It should be added that the supply issues were related explicitly to a period of one (last) year! It turns out that corruption is reproduced in everyday life quite intensively, although accurate estimates of the number or amount or severity of bribes will be difficult to reach.

But this is true also for statistical records on the police because the willingness to report corruption is relatively low. In this survey, 45 percent of respondents stated that the report does not make sense, and only one-fifth of the respondents would call the police.

One-third would prefer anonymous lines, but these are currently being canceled due to low efficiency.

Reluctance to report has apparently nothing to do with confidence in the police because it has recently been increasing slightly. Sixty-eight percent of citizens currently trust the police to some degree (in the courts it is only 52 percent). A total of 37 percent of the respondents are more or less satisfied with police work while 45 percent answered that “it depends”.

In the EUROJUSTIS project³ the wording of questions was renewed with an emphasis on a good or bad job in the respect of police performance, but even here it was confirmed that the police are perceived better (average 2.8 on a 5-point scale) than courts (3.1). However, in respect to the frequency of corruption in the police and justice, the police came out considerably worse – averages on a scale from 0 to 10 were 5.2 and 5.1. Summing up the two ratings, it is possible to create an overall index of the level of corruption in the police and the courts, which has nearly ideal, i.e. a normal distribution (mean 10.3, standard deviation 3.9). This allows us to reliably show the different views in each category of the Czech population (Table 14).

Critical opinion was expressed by those who intensely watch television as well as by those respondents who do not watch television at all. Of course, we also examined a daily tabloids monitoring, but there no statistical association appeared. The most critical opinions come from people with basic education, members of the lower class having trouble making ends meet. Even here the greatest concern is declared by relative “outsiders”, people with the lowest corruption potential.

This is probably caused by a general attitude combined with a degree of anxiety. A respondent’s own experience with the police (a contact in the past two years) does not impair evaluation of both components; on the contrary, it improves them slightly (average 10.0), although we can simultaneously find a higher rate of delinquency among these respondents.

In order to analyze some other relationships, we have created a comprehensive measure of delinquency and of the degree of respecting the law (i.e. compliance – based on two items from the battery ESS). We compared acquired variables on the basis of correlations and then tentatively put them in multiple linear regression (with the level of corruption as the dependent variable). In the first step we found that the perception of corruption has little to do either with delinquency or with normativity (in terms of willingness to obey the law). Correlations indicate the presence of certain delinquent cluster variables, which correspond well to lower self-control (Travis Hirschi, Michael Gottfredson). Correlations are statistically significant but rather weak.

In the regression model, a certain degree of influence was retained by tolerance of theft and lower self-control. From the other variables applied, only assessment of household income played a certain role. (Age, gender and delinquent tendency had no significant effect.) The explanatory power of the model, however, was, generally speaking, very weak. Thus, corruption perception represents a relatively independent parameter, which is difficult to predict, although a link to the (low) social status there remains confirmed.

³ We joined the project later. Nevertheless, we conducted the pilot study in the Czech Republic respecting international design (adding some traditional measures at the end of the questionnaire).

Table 14: Who Assumes a Higher Level of Corruption among Police Officers and Judges (Composite index from 0 to 20)

EUROJUSTIS 2011 Level of corruption (police + courts)			Mean	N	St. dev.
		TOTAL	10.3		
Time spent watching TV					
No, not watching TV			10.7	20	3.4
Less than half an hour a day			10.3	43	3.9
Half an hour to an hour a day			9.6	127	4.0
From one to two hours			10.1	306	3.8
About two to three hours			10.1	411	3.9
More than three hours			11.2	265	4.0
ETA 0.129**					
Reads the major national dailies	Yes		10.1	721	3.9
	No		110.7	445	4.0
ETA 0.075*					
Corruption		Not at all concerned about	9.9	34	3.6
Very concerned			10.7	735	3.8
ETA 0.120**					
The basic level of education			11.2	174	3.8
ETA 0.095*					
Opinion on household income:		Enables carefree life	9.5	70	3.8
It is very tough to deal with current income			11.5	29	3.5
ETA 0.129***					
Status		Lower class	11.2		
Upper middle			9.4		
Prague inhabitants			11		

In conclusion, we compared the situation in the Czech Republic with most European countries participating in the European Social Survey Research (Table 15). We have created a ladder based on the evaluation of corruption within the police, but it is obvious that it is very similar to an evaluation of the courts. For clarity's sake, we demonstrated both extreme groups and the group near the center (average). Even though we see that the average range covers some post-communist countries, the Czechs find themselves near the bottom of the ladder.

Table 15: ESS 2010: Selected Countries Ordered by the Police Corruptibility (Means)

	Police works well/badly (1–5)	Police corruption (0–10)	Corruption courts (0–10)
Denmark	2.12	1.61	1.9
Norway	2.29	2.8	1.69
Finland	2.4	2.19	2.20
Estonia	2.42	3.88	3.84
Belgium	2.35	3.90	3.32
Mean ESS score	2.53	4.15	3.83
Spain	2.31	4.22	4.38
Slovenia	2.52	4.23	5.12
Greece	2.86	5.49	5.98
Czech Republic	2.67	5.57	5.37
Bulgaria	2.60	5.72	6.48
Russia	3.15	6.65	5.81
Ukraine	3.41	7.42	7.40

Conclusions

Specific questions on corruption in the police and the courts (as used in ESS) differentiated well across countries, but in terms of places where corruption occurs, it is just a small section. Therefore, a general indicator of development stages should be used for the purposes of international comparison because it does not react so sensitively to social differentiation. Gradually, it would be appropriate to introduce direct inquiries into the involvement in corruption circle, at least in respect to the bid offers. It turns out that direct questions on the subject are not so sensitive. From this we can deduce, however, a less favorable conclusion: To speak of corruption in our country is normal.

Corruption perception is based on attitude, but to some extent it reflects personal experience and the potential involvement. Insiders are less concerned about corruption and are more forgiving, as if they were better “adapted”. The mechanism of neutralization (David Matza) may also play a role. The people who are sensitive seem to be socially frustrated and angry (Jackson 2004). There could be a multiplied effect of deprivation at work (also in the sense of frustration that they “missed the right train” – for details see Buriánek 2009). Therefore, it remains true that indices derived from surveys of public opinion constitute only a relatively crude measure. In fact, our findings agree with analyses done by Michael L. Smith and Petr Matějů (Smith 2008: 53).

Czech society today is characterized by high levels of concern and negative assessment of the level of corruption. This situation is probably partly reinforced by the media, but in our opinion it is mainly a reflection of the state of the political scene. In this way it becomes a certain political risk in terms of both growing dissatisfaction and potential electoral votes that may be acquired by populist parties promising a quick solution. A certain advantage is perhaps the fact that the concern is still dampened by the trust in institutions, apparently also by some reliance on abstract systems (Anthony Giddens, see also Lee, Farrall 2009).

Our rather descriptive analysis of the public opinion perception of risk leads to a couple of obvious conclusions:

- Perception of risks is not paradoxical. Public opinion is realistic. Fear tends to be differentiated (socially, locally).
- An even stronger influence of the local conditions, including disorganization, should be supposed. The correlation with the character of the area of housing was also proven.
- During the transition, Czech society was “patient” and highly adaptive (probably due to the strong and generalized social expectations).
- The trust in institutions and “general attitudes” are stabilized, probably in part due to a decrease in crime rate during the last period.
- Concerns about corruption represent a new concretization (new subject or new streaming) of fear.
- However, they are also based on personal experience with bribery.

Our research has so far shown that corruption is not just a problem of public opinion, a widespread idea only. We could not speak about moral panic because up to one-third of the population may be involved in the chain of corruption that infiltrates everyday life. So it is not only the impact of the ongoing cases revealed at the highest level of politics and government, since the gradual erosion of standards occurs in everyday practices. Corruption has become a part of life (at least of some groups or strata).

Following the critical texts of the Czech philosopher Václav Bělohradský, we can recall the question of whether corruption means a pure deviant phenomenon or an inherent part of the system, which is based on the market principle using money as the key medium (and on the interrelated social inequality). But then we must ask why we find so much less fear of corruption in Denmark and other western democracies. It could mean that in the confrontation between democracy, or at least procedural justice, and pure profit a certain symbiosis is possible. It seems, however, that we boarded a train, which has only a few first class cars, and the wheels are pulling away strongly and somewhat ominously rumbling. The relatively positive message is that Czech society remains highly adaptive and relatively fearless. Nevertheless, the normalization of corruption could steer the train in a dangerous direction.

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