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Bachelor Thesis

Analyzing Photographs Sociologically: Photography as a Source of Insight into Social Structure and Social Change

Sociologická analýza fotografií: Fotografie jako zdroj poznání o sociální struktuře a sociální změně

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Acknowledgments

Declaration

I declare that I wrote this bachelor's thesis independently and exclusively using cited sources, literature, and other professional sources.

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci zpracovala samostatně a výhradně s použitím citovaných pramenů, literatury a dalších odborných zdrojů.

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In Prague: Signature:

Abstract

The bachelor thesis analyzes a set of photographs taken during the normalization period (1969-1989) in Czechoslovakia using visual fact analysis, semiotic analysis, and sociological structuralist analysis. Firstly, this thesis investigates classical theories of photography with the objective of comprehending the complexities of the photographic medium and identifying key factors to be considered during the analysis of photographs. Furthermore, it explores the use of photography within the field of sociology, with a focus on the techniques employed to interpret and analyze photographic materials. The analysis provides insights into the social structure and characteristics of the normalization period in Czechoslovak society, such as the militarization of society, the prevalence of communist propaganda, and the emphasis placed on labor as one of the pillars of the regime. The analysis also sheds light on everyday life during the period, including recreational practices, unhealthy habits, and family dynamics. Moreover, the thesis emphasizes the significance of using photographs as a complementary tool to other sociological methods in research.

Keywords

photography, sociology of photography, visual sociology, social structure, normalization (ČSSR)

Abstrakt

Bakalářská práce analyzuje soubor fotografií pořízených v období normalizace (1969-1989) v Československu pomocí analýzy vizuálních faktů, sémiotické analýzy a sociologické strukturalistické analýzy. Práce se nejprve zabývá klasickými teoriemi fotografie s cílem porozumět komplexnosti fotografického média a identifikovat klíčové faktory, které je třeba brát v úvahu při analýze fotografií. Práce dále zkoumá využití fotografie v oblasti sociologie se zaměřením na techniky používané k interpretaci a analýze zkoumaných fotografií. Analýza poskytuje vhled do sociální struktury a charakteristik normalizačního období v československé společnosti, jako je militarizace společnosti, převaha komunistické propagandy a důraz kladený na práci jako jeden z pilířů režimu. Analýza poskytuje vhled do každodenního života během normalizace, včetně rekreačních praktik, nezdravých návyků a rodinné dynamiky. Práce dále zdůrazňuje význam využití fotografií jako doplňkového nástroje k jiným sociologickým metodám ve výzkumu.

Klíčová slova

fotografie, sociologie fotografie, vizuální fotografie, sociální struktura, normalizace (ČSSR)

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1. Introduction

Photography has gained acknowledgment as a powerful tool for capturing the world around us and conveying meaningful information. In sociology, photography is used as a visual medium to document, analyze, and represent social phenomena, providing unique insights that complement other research methods. This thesis aims to analyze photographs from the normalization period in Czechoslovakia (1969-1989). Various methods, informed by sociological knowledge of the era, will be utilized to attain a deeper comprehension of the social structure of the society.

The motivation for this research topic is to develop a deeper understanding of the normalization era in Czechoslovakia by analyzing photographs. Photographs offer a unique visual insight into social life during this period, which is important for those who did not experience it firsthand. This research can illuminate the experiences of those who lived through normalization and inform younger generations and foreigners about this period. Simultaneously, this thesis is motivated by the curiosity to investigate different approaches to interpreting photographs in sociology, aiming to identify the most effective methods that can enhance our understanding of the social structure and contribute to the advancement of sociological knowledge.

To accomplish this goal, the thesis will begin by exploring classical theories of photography by renowned theorists such as Roland Barthes, John Berger, Susan Sontag, and Vilém Flusser, which will shed light on the complexities of the photographic medium and important factors to consider when examining photographs. The thesis will then explain the use of photography in sociology, including different methods used to interpret and analyze photographs. Finally, the political and social context of Czechoslovakia during the normalization period, including key elements constitutive of the social structure of the society, will be provided as necessary background for understanding the photographs that will be studied.

Using sociological methods of analysis, the thesis will analyze a selection of photographs taken during the normalization period. By identifying visual manifestations of the social structure within these photographs, the thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

Q1: What kind of sociological insight do documentary photographs provide into the social structure of Czechoslovak society during the normalization period?

Q2: Which method(s) of interpretation and analysis of photographs are suitable for supporting sociological knowledge about the social structure of Czechoslovak society during normalization?

I. Theoretical Part

2.1. Theory of Photography

Several theoreticians have attempted to understand the photographic medium and its functions. The 20th century has produced authors such as Roland Barthes, John Berger, Susan Sonntag, and Vilém Flusser, whose philosophy *of photography* is in many ways applicable to contemporary photographic issues. Although they may disagree on certain topics, all the authors mentioned above share a similar approach to photography: posing ontological questions about the photograph in order to justify its place in the world. While most of their writing revolves around artistic, aesthetic, and theoretical aspects of photography, the connection of photography to society is inherent and omnipresent. In the following sections, I will be discussing the fundamentals of each author's approach to photography and highlighting the sociological relevance contained in the texts.

2.1.1. The Essence of the Photograph

Why is it that certain photographs capture our attention while others do not? The core of Barthes's philosophy seems to stem from a similar stance as Protagoras, that man is the measure of all things. In the context of photography, Barthes (2020, p.16) believes that in order to understand the complex medium, one must start with individual, subjective experiences and from there move on to general and universal qualities. According to Barthes (2020) who himself was no photographer, a photograph truly captivates us if it contains *punctum*. He operates with the terms *studium* and *punctum* as two attributes that a photograph should have if it is to be significant. Other terms such as *operator* (photographer), *spectator* (viewer), and *target* (subject of the photograph) are used as well (Barthes, 2020, p.9). The *studium* is the sum of different symbolic systems - cultural, social, historical, etc.- that can be identified in a photograph. It is all that is coded within the photograph, including the intentions of the photographer. Usually, the *studium* is the first thing that attracts us to a photograph (Barthes, 2020, p.25-27).

For example, Image 1 (Appendix) depicts four older people at a cemetery. The photograph is labeled as All Souls Day, Olomouc 1979, which is a day when people remember loved ones that have passed away, usually visiting their graves. In this photograph, we can assume that the subjects are spouses visiting the grave of a family member or a friend. It is just as possible that the woman in the wheelchair is visiting the grave of her husband and the people standing behind her are there as her entourage. We can identify the season, examine the clothes of the subjects, make out the burial practices, etc.

According to Barthes (2020, p.51), not all photographs contain *punctum*, a unique and personal quality, one that pierces the *studium* to get inside the *spectator*. This *punctum* is subjective, it is not a priori coded within the photograph and can transform over time (Barthes 2020, p.53). I would assume the punctum in Image 1 (Appendix) is the wheelchair. It seems that the woman is sitting on a chair that has been placed on a wooden pallet with wheels. This leads me to pose the following questions: Was this a standard wheelchair back in the day? Is the chair attached to the pallet or can the woman fall down any second? Is she able to walk?

2.1.2. Functions of the Photograph

The most basic function of a photograph is to document or record moments in time. From the advent of the camera, wedding photographs and family portraits were among the first "events" to be memorialized (Sonntag, 2002, p.8). This saw the democratization of "the portrait", since, prior to photography, portraits were mainly done through painting and were typically reserved for the wealthy and powerful. With the emergence of photography, however, it became possible for individuals, families, and groups from all social classes to have their portraits taken. Later, photography expanded to include depictions of city life and street scenes. Additionally, photography became a tool for documenting the cultural and physical characteristics of societies, helping to create a visual record of social customs, traditions, and physical landmarks. This development paved the way for the emergence of journalistic and reportage photography as a new genre during the mid-19th century (Sztompka, 2007, p.26).

Ultimately, Eastman Kodak's invention of the hand-held camera in 1888 further enabled mass amateur photography (Sztompka, 2007, p.27). Photographs could now serve as evidence of travel and leisure activities, much like is done today (Sonntag, 2002, p.9). Essentially, when we show someone a photograph, we are telling that person to look at something that has happened and that we have deemed worthy enough to have photographed. However, it may just as well have been any other photograph of any other event or object (Barthes, 2020, p.6).

Why photograph this specific moment and not some other? Berger (2013, p.19) identifies a paradox at play here. Typically, people use photographs as a way to remember things that are no longer present, and while a photo captures what can be seen, it also inherently refers to what cannot be seen. For this reason, Barthes (2020) is of the opinion that photography is unclassifiable. As Flusser (2013, p.83) notes, the photographs that we take are just one possibility out of many programmed into the camera, and they correspond to a specific scenario in a game of chance. Since the other possibilities will happen randomly in the future, the photographic world is in constant flux, with each photo replacing the next. Essentially, each photo is like a roll of the dice in the game of chance (Flusser, 2013, p.83).

2.1.3. Memory and Time

As has been stated, photographs record a fragment of time. The way a photograph is composed does not really tell us much, as the real meaning of a photograph comes not from how it looks, but from the timing of when it was taken (Berger, 2013, p.19). It's not just about choosing what to photograph, but also about when to photograph it. Barthes (2020) believes that "the photographer's organ is not his eye (...) but his finger (...)" (Barthes, 2020, p.15). Photographs allow us to capture moments we do not want to forget by relieving our minds of the task to store that information. However, the relationship between photographs and memory is more complex.

According to Berger (2013), each photograph presents us with two messages. The first message concerns the literal content of the photograph, such as the people or objects depicted in the photograph. The second message arises from the photograph's

ability to freeze a particular moment in time and create a sense of dislocation and rupture, which he refers to as a shock of discontinuity. This shock is due to the fact that a photograph removes the message from its original context, creating a space for interpretation. Even though photographs can capture moments in the same way that our memories do, there is an important distinction to be made here (Berger, 2013, p.62). The things we remember are the result of a continuous experience, whereas a photo captures a single, disconnected moment in time. When attaching meaning to a photo, we're essentially creating a context for it, linking it to a larger narrative that extends beyond that isolated moment (Berger, 2013, p.64). This element of time is where Barthes (2020) finds a second type of *punctum*.

If we look at Image 2 (Appendix), there is studium to be found - technology, clothes, setting, etc. The woman is dressed differently than the man, implying that the woman might be an employee talking to her boss. The setting seems semi-formal but probably work-related due to the presence of some documents and binders on the table. It appears that the subjects were in the middle of a conversation when the photograph was taken. The sincere and gentle smile of the woman suggests that she was not taken aback by the intrusion of the photographer. What is the *punctum* in this photograph? Based on Barthes (2020, p.94) the *punctum* here would be "these people are no longer alive". This can be found basically in all historical photographs. The specific way the photograph plays with time is one of the reasons Barthes (2020) refers to the photograph as a *mad image* (the person is no longer present, but it's also true that they existed in the past), " (...) a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time (...)" (Barthes, 2020, p.115).

In a sense, the photograph is a dangerous medium that society aims to regulate. According to Barthes (2020), it does so in two ways- by making it into art and by generalizing it. If we label photography as art, photographers could be compelled to subject themselves to the same standards of art like painters for example, even though they are working in a different medium. To gain recognition as an art form, photographers would seek to validate their work by the same aesthetic standards. In addition, they pursue similar modes of exhibition to be respected as artists (Barthes, 2020, p.117). Secondly, Barthes (2020, p.119) contends that in today's society, people

are more likely to be influenced by the images they see rather than by any particular set of beliefs or values. This leads people to consume images that are often manipulated or created to convey a certain message or idea. The universalization and quantum of images we see daily have made them seem monotonous and uninteresting, creating a sense of detachment from the world around us.

2.1.4. Photographs and Reality

Barthes (2020) views photographs as spaces where the subjects are frozen in time, "(...) anesthetized and fastened down like butterflies" (Barthes, 2020, p.57). Whereas the cinematic medium, for example, creates a "blind field" or an area of unseen space around the frame, creating the illusion of an ongoing experience, photographs do not have this effect (Barthes, 2020, p. 56). Flusser's (2013, p.17) approach on the other hand considers photographs to be more flexible, especially when it comes to their meaning. Photographs are open to interpretation and may possess multiple meanings based on the viewer's individual perspective. This is because they do not just capture the subjects or events, but also the emotions, moods, and feelings that go with these. The way we interpret photographs is not universal but shaped by the cultural and social context in which the photograph is viewed (Flusser, 2013).

Flusser (2013, p.11) goes on to explain the reason that meaning in photographs may seem straightforward, even though that is necessarily not the case. This is because photographs are not necessarily symbols that need to be decoded, rather they display manifestations of the world and allow us to catch a glimpse of reality, albeit indirectly. This directness can be deceptive, and it can be naive to assume that photographs are entirely objective. Berger's writing basically reiterates similar ideas. According to Berger (2013, p.19), the meaning of a photograph is something that everyone must complete for themselves. Berger believes that photographs, unlike other art forms, do not possess a language of their own and do not rely on a system of symbols or signs. Essentially, photographs directly quote from the appearances they depict. In this sense, photographs provide information in a way that is not dependent on any language. Instead, they act as a kind of visual record of reality. Photographs directly capture visual elements of the world, meaning that they do so through a direct process of

capturing light and visual information. Due to this, they can be seen as a direct and unmediated or unmanipulated representation of reality (Berger, 2013, p.68-69).

Distortion of reality can be done in photography by adding color. Both Barthes (2020, p.81) and Flusser (2013, p.50) agree that while it may seem that a colored photograph is truer to reality, the opposite is true. Black and white photos are more authentic due to the chemical process of light shining through the apparatus- it is a direct imprint. Color was added back into this seeming reality and falsified the photograph's theoretical origins (Flusser, 2013).

2.1.5. Society and Photographs

In my view, Flusser's approach to photography is the most closely linked to the central concerns of sociology among the theoreticians examined in this thesis. Through his exploration of the relationship between society, photography, and technology, Flusser raises sociologically significant questions about the role of images and machines in shaping our understanding of the world. Flusser (2013) argues that photography had a profound impact on our understanding of the world and that it could both liberate and enslave us. To understand the relationship between society and images, Flusser begins by discussing the constant historical struggle between texts and images.

According to Flusser (2013, p.21), technical images or photographs, in this case, are a way to make complex concepts more accessible and understandable. By using technical images alongside written text, it becomes easier to grasp the meaning of the text and to better understand the information being conveyed. The 19th century was a period that saw the emergence of general historical consciousness and greater availability of information to people. With the invention of the printing press and the introduction of schooling, the ability to read and write became widespread. As a result, people across social strata began to develop greater historical consciousness. They were able to access cheap texts like books and newspapers, allowing them to learn about various topics. However, scientific literature and complex traditional images (such as artworks) remained largely inaccessible to the masses due to their complexity.

Therefore, technical images aided in grasping these difficult concepts (Flusser, 2013, p.21-23).

However, in contemporary society, technical images have become so dominant that many people are considered "illiterate" when it comes to reading and comprehending written texts. Despite this, those who are considered "illiterate" in the traditional sense are not completely excluded from participating in culture, because they can access and comprehend the cultural messages conveyed by visual images. In other words, visual literacy has become just as important as traditional literacy in understanding and engaging with the culture of today's society (Flusser, 2013, p.67). Flusser's overall philosophy emphasizes the limitations of images and text in our attempts to understand the social world. It is vital not to rely too heavily on images or words as substitutes for direct experience, and to be aware of the ways in which our use of images and text can shape our understanding of reality (Flusser, 2013).

2.1.6. Society and Technology

The camera is a product of culture. It was created by mankind as a result of cultural development, just like other tools, which were created to make life easier. Most tools are seen as an expansion of our bodily capabilities. Under this logic, the camera would be an extension of the eye. Flusser (2013, p.28) identified two categories of cultural items: those that are designed to be consumed and those that are produced to make consumer goods. Under which category does the camera fall?

The answer lies in the shift from industrial society to the post-industrial society. In industrial society, the primary category was labor. The purpose of tools and machines was to transform natural resources into objects. However, in the post-industrial society, the focus shifted to information rather than work. The camera, which is not intended to transform the world physically but rather to change its meaning symbolically, produces symbols and information that have value in today's society (Flusser, 2013, p.35). Flusser is clearly aware of the transition happening in post-industrial societies, where symbolic power, rather than material power, is a defining feature of the new information society. Furthermore, he highlights that the value of a photograph is not primarily in the physical object itself, but rather in the message or

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significance that it conveys. This reflects a broader shift in values of modern societies away from material possessions and towards information and communication (Flusser, 2013, p.29).

2.1.7. Photography and Social Status

In his book, *Understanding a photograph*, Berger carries out a contrasting analysis of two photographs of men in suits. Both photographs were taken by August Sander at the beginning of the 20th century. Image 3 (Appendix) depicts a group of musicians, while Image 4 (Appendix) portrays urban missionaries. Berger (2013, p.36) notes that the photographs reveal a great deal about the social status of the men. The musicians' clothing makes them appear to be of upper-class standing, despite them being working-class individuals. One can tell by the suits deforming their bodies underneath.

On the other hand, the suits of the missionaries do not seem to convey this discrepancy. For them, the suits enhance their physical appearance, conveying the same message as their faces. The clothes confirm their status and experience. The issue here is what Antonio Gramsci called class hegemony, where the working class accepts certain standards of the ruling class as their own. The contradiction between the daily experiences of working-class individuals, involving hard manual labor and a different lifestyle, and the upper-class clothing they appropriate makes their social status even more apparent (Berger, 2013, p.39).

Berger's (2013) analysis demonstrates how photography can reveal social structure and change through the visual representation of clothing and appearance. By analyzing the clothing and appearance of the subjects in the photos, Berger reveals how these elements communicate social class, profession, and social norms. Furthermore, the photos show how the meaning and significance of clothing can change over time and across social contexts, reflecting broader changes in social structure and culture. As a result, photography can be a powerful tool to understand the social dimensions of culture, history, and society.

2.2. Sociology and Photography

The phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words" may hold true when photographs are subjected to meticulous analysis. In a sociological context, deconstructing this phrase reveals that a photograph can contain valuable sociological insights regarding social structure, social stratification, current social concerns, and subcultural phenomena. This section will discuss the use of photography in sociology and how it can be employed as a resource in sociological research. Moreover, a chapter dedicated to visual sociology as a sub-discipline will be incorporated.

2.2.1. Visual Sociology and Visual Studies

The visual side of contemporary Western societies plays a role in constructing social life. We are continuously exposed to a variety of visual technologies (photography, video, digital graphics, film, etc.) and the images they convey. Rose (2023, p.17) recognizes that these images are not impartial representations of the world, but instead, they provide particular interpretations and representations. Given the importance and impact of the visual world, it is not surprising that multiple fields, such as cultural studies, visual studies, or visual sociology, have emerged with the objective of comprehending its significance and effects on our world.

Despite shared similarities, visual sociology and visual studies are distinct from each other in several ways. Elkins (2003) defines visual studies by distinguishing them from cultural studies and visual culture. Cultural studies take a critical theory approach to examine culture in the broadest sense, while calling for social action by using various disciplines, such as history, gender studies, sociology, and film studies. In contrast, visual culture has a primary focus on the visual and is less geared toward social activism. Visual studies, a contemporary field similar to visual culture, involves studying visual practices across all areas (Elkins, 2003, p. 1-7).

While both visual studies and visual sociology focus on how visual culture affects social structure norms and values and both fields use methods including semiotics, discourse analysis, and content analysis, there are key differences (Sztompka, 2007). Firstly, visual sociology tends to focus more on the social and

cultural dimensions of visual images, whereas visual studies study a wider range of visual materials, including art, film, and popular culture (Rose, 2023). Secondly, visual sociology is primarily grounded in sociological theories, while visual studies use theories from a range of disciplines such as art history, film studies, and cultural studies (Elkins, 2003).

Visual sociology is a relatively new field that seeks to use visual materials as primary sources for sociological research. Compared to other established sub-disciplines of sociology, such as criminology or political sociology, visual sociology is still in its infancy and not yet fully established as a field of study (Sztompka, 2007, p.8-9). However, according to Harper (2012, p. 243), visual sociology has gained momentum in recent years due to its unique and innovative approach to studying society. The use of visual methods allows sociologists to explore new avenues of research and expand the scope of their findings. The visual approach can be applied across the discipline, offering a new perspective on traditional topics such as family dynamics (through family photo albums) or corporate behavior (through television advertising) (Harper, 2012, p.243-245). Moreover, for a long time, photography was seen as a tool that primarily captures social phenomena or merely as a visual aid to illustrate written or spoken texts. It was not until later that photography gained recognition as an important medium for social research, with the potential to stand on its own as a primary source for sociological inquiry (Sztompka, 2007, p.8-9).

The interest in photography was quite profound in American sociology since the beginning. In the early days of social photography, photographers such as Dorothea Lange, Walter Evans, Russel Lee, Arthur Rothstein, and others, dedicated themselves to capturing the poverty and struggles of Depression-era America. Their work was heavily influenced by various social science theories, making them some of the pioneers in the field of social photography (Becker, 1974, p.3). Unfortunately, the positivist paradigm that was prevalent at the time did not quite view photography as an observable, measurable, and quantifiable medium, free from subjective interpretation (Henny, 1986). We are aware that photography is practically the opposite. However, once other theoretical perspectives such as symbolic interactionism, phenomenology,

and ethnomethodology challenged this approach by recognizing the subjective nature of human experience and the importance of meaning-making processes in the interpretation of social phenomena, a new door opened for the analysis of subjective visual materials, such as photographs (Sztompka, 2007, p.8-9).

In the 1970s, visual sociology emerged as an independent field of study, separating itself from visual anthropology and visual ethnography. However, it was only in the 1980s that visual sociology began to be institutionalized within the sociological environment. During this time, the *International Society of Visual Sociology* was founded, and the journal *Visual Sociology* was established. Despite these efforts, visual sociologists are still considered a marginalized minority, confined to a professional niche within academia. Some of the earliest works in the field include John Wagner's *Images of Information* and Howard Becker's *Exploring Society Photographically*, which provided an overview of research projects within the new discipline (Sztompka, 2007, p.9).

When it comes to present-day visual sociology, Cipriani & Del Re (2012) suggest that triangulation is becoming a trend. This research procedure seeks to mitigate personal or methodological bias by using a combination of diverse methods to construct a more accurate representation of the same phenomenon. One example of how photographs can be used in the triangulation method comes from the work of Harper (2012), who used aerial photos, surveys, ground-level photographs, and in-depth interviews to study a rural community in the United States. By combining these different methods, Harper (2012) was able to gain a more complete understanding of the community's relationship with the surrounding landscape.

2.2.2. Uses of Photography in Sociology

When it comes to the relationship between sociology and photography, both appeared around the same time in the 19th century. Although one may be seen as an art form and the other as a scientific discipline, they share similarities on several levels. Becker (1974, p.3-4) proposes the desire for social exploration is a common denominator between the two. Early photographers used photography to capture

remote societies and peculiarities to show the rest of the civilized world, similarly how ethnographers employ photography to document their findings in research. As photography evolved, it became a medium for reporting on social events and news. This transformation also gave rise to a new branch of photo-essayists who used photographs to document various sociological topics, such as social structure, institutions, or occupations. Beyond documenting the world around them, photographers began to capture pivotal political events, such as civil rights movements, which have been known to have impacted legislation and government functioning multiple times (Becker, 1974).

Photography is being used to enrich sociological knowledge in two ways. The first involves analyzing and interpreting existing photographs to extract sociological insights about society. Visual sociologists use this method to explore the semiotics of various visual communication systems, such as those present in advertising, newspapers, magazines, or personal photo collections. This method involves analyzing the visual content in connection to sociological inquiries. The second method involves actively creating new photographs that are specifically designed to explore sociological concepts. This approach involves intentionally using photography as a means of generating sociologically relevant data (Harper, 1988, p.55).

Once photographs are obtained, they can serve as a rich source of information for sociological research. The question remains, how to sort through the limitless array of potential interpretations beyond the photograph's surface? Becker (1998, p.7) draws a parallel between the analysis of photographs and statistical tables, commonly utilized by sociologists to interpret and present empirical data. Statistical tables are designed to organize and present key information in a clear and easily understandable manner, using labels and categories to help viewers easily identify and comprehend the data being presented. Photographs, however, lack such classification and therefore necessitate individual interpretation and contextualization by the viewer.

The classical articles by Becker (1974) provide guidance on how to become a sociological photographer. He emphasizes the importance for sociologists to recognize the value of photographic content focused on various sociological topics, as there is an

increasing number of high-quality photographs available. Becker suggests that sociologists should not discard these photographs simply because of concerns about their scientific validity. In essence, sociologists must cultivate a nuanced approach to the interpretation of photographs, which entails closely examining the photo, since the intended message can more often than not be missed (Becker, 1998, p.5-6). According to Becker, (1974, p.13-14) a sociologist could start his research by capturing anything they see that seems worth looking at. However, this initial activity may be visually and cognitively incoherent. To refine the analysis, he must carefully examine the photographs, asking who is in the photos and what they are doing. Becker cautions that the answers will not come all at once but rather through "a process of progressive refinement and constant testing against new information" (Becker, 1974, p.14).

Photographers, on the other hand, ought to acquire a more profound comprehension of society. To achieve this objective, photographers may engage with sociological theory and literature, while also familiarizing themselves with their subjects. Ideally, this would involve an extended period of interaction, during which photographers would build relationships with their subjects and engage in discussion, inquiry, and active listening, while also amassing a significant volume of photographic material. Once photographers have acquired some sociological ideas, the next step is to ask questions of inquiry (Becker, 1974).

2.2.3. Function of Photographs in Sociological Research

As visual media becomes increasingly prevalent in modern society, it is important for sociologists to consider the benefits that photographic images can offer in their research. Sztompka (2007) provides a comprehensive list of six such benefits that can enhance sociological analysis and understanding. They are as follows:

1. Stimulation of imagination. When a sociologist analyzes photographs, it can stimulate their awareness and creativity, as well as expand their sociological imagination through visual sensitivity. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the sociological theme present in the photographs (Sztompka, 2007, p.73).

2. Heuristic inspiration. Photographs can serve as a source of heuristic inspiration in sociological research, by exposing social worlds that may have been previously unattainable. This exposure can stimulate the formation of new hypotheses and categories, resulting in a more nuanced understanding and clarification of existing sociological concepts (Sztompka, 2007, p.74).

3. Descriptive inventory of visual facts. Photography can serve as a valuable means of recording and documenting visual information that may be temporary in nature. This can facilitate a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of interpretations and provide insight into developmental trends and ongoing changes (Sztompka, 2007, p.75).

4. Pretext for discussion. Photographs can be used as material for photographic interviews or in focus groups, providing a visual stimulus for discussion and analysis (Sztompka, 2007, p.76).

5. Supply of illustrative sociological material. Photography can provide illustrative material for sociological concepts, categories, and patterns in textbooks and journals, helping to convey sociological research to a broader public (Sztompka, 2007, p.76).

6. Practical purposes. Photography can be used for practical purposes beyond sociology, such as in advocacy for certain values or in social critique and protest (Sztompka, 2007, p.77).

In any case, we must be aware of the fact that photographs are not objective statements about social reality (Becker, 1974). This is in part due to the role of the photographer, who is an important variable in the process. The photographer decides what is worth documenting, as well as the use of techniques such as lighting, framing, and composition, which can all influence the way the viewer interprets the image. Moreover, the viewer's interpretation of a photograph is also influenced by their own social, cultural, and historical context (Becker, 1974, p.21). The conventional positivist perspective maintains that scientific knowledge seeks to discover objective truth, whereas the postmodernist view challenges this notion and asserts that all knowledge

is subjective. Sztompka (2007, p.51) invokes a critical realist perspective, which occupies the middle ground between positivist and postmodernist perspectives. This perspective sees photography as a valuable addition to the array of research methods and techniques in sociology by recognizing that photographs portray real-life situations and reflect real social phenomena and patterns. While acknowledging the possible limitations and biases, Sztompka still asserts that there is an objective reality that exists independently of our perceptions (Sztompka, 2007, p. 49-51).

3.1. Czechoslovakia during Normalization

3.1.1. A Brief History 1948-89

After the end of World War II, several countries in Central and Eastern Europe came under communist rule. Undoubtedly, the Soviet Union's key role as a major power fighting against Nazi Germany and its substantial military presence contributed to the fact. While a large segment of society viewed the Soviet Union's 1944-1945 liberation efforts positively and saw it as a persuasive argument in support of communism, considering the social inequality at the time, the practical implementation of communism in these nations involved undemocratic and violent methods, which resulted in widespread political oppression. These methods reached their height during the years immediately following the takeover in February 1948 (Machonin, 1993, p.232).

Until then, Czechoslovakia was an economically prosperous nation with a democratic political system. The population was a relatively homogenous, middle-class one with significant representation from petty bourgeoisie and white-collar workers. These groups held a prominent position in society, serving as influential reference groups for the remainder of the population. However, the communist regime had an agenda to establish the working-class lifestyle as the standard and therefore lowering living standards across society. The aim was to reduce social disparities by eliminating the middle class and promoting working-class values. This was done by restricting services, collectivizing the peasantry, and undermining the status and rewards of the intelligentsia (Večerník, 2003, p.1). It is commonly understood that the definition of Soviet-type totalitarianism comprises the following key components: "the absolute political monopoly of the highly centralized and hierarchized Communist Party, which can be termed a 'partocracy'; the strong influence of a party, state, and economic bureaucracy, and the ruling and redistributive role of a class-like social group usually called the nomenklatura" (Machonin, 1993, p. 234).

Throughout history, Marxist ideals of achieving a truly egalitarian society have proven to be unattainable, often leading to restrictions on individual freedoms and human rights violations. The Prague Spring reforms of 1968 aimed to create a more

meritocratic and democratic social structure and were seen as a call for a more humane form of state socialism (Machonin, 1993, p. 235). Tragically, the reform movement had been halted by the invasion of the Soviet Union and four of its Warsaw Pact allies, gradually reversing the progress that had been made during that time (Taborsky, 1973, p. 207). The period from the spring of 1969 marks the beginning of normalization and lasted until November 1989 when the communist government was overthrown.

There were several reasons for dissatisfaction among the population of Czechoslovakia, which ultimately led to the collapse of the regime. Among them was the inefficient and authoritarian bureaucracy, along with the limited political liberty and economic opportunities that offered little autonomy and limited prospects for economic advancement. (Machonin, 1993, p. 242). Moreover, the system was not meritocratic, rewarding people based on their allegiance to the communist party, while disregarding those who had actual qualifications (Machonin, 1993, p.235). This escalated into the Velvet Revolution of 1989 when politically active groups such as dissidents, persecuted individuals, democratic intellectuals, and students took to the streets and ended the 40 years of one-party, totalitarian rule over Czechoslovakia (Machonin, 1993, p. 243).

An important political dissident who played a pivotal role in the transition to a democratic state was Václav Havel, who went on to become the president of Czechoslovakia following the fall of communism. Havel was a visionary who was deeply concerned with the nature of communist power and its effects on human life. In addition to his political pursuits, it is worth noting that some of his essays closely relate to sociological topics. In 1978, Havel wrote an essay titled "The Power of the Powerless," in which he analyzed the relationship between the power system and authentic human life. Havel believed that the crisis of Czechoslovak society during the normalization period stemmed from the split between the systemic dimension of power, economics, and official ideology on the one hand, and the pursuit of a good private life on the other (Musil, 2012, p.159-160).

Havel argued that to improve society, people needed to take personal responsibility, rebuild their relationships with others, and revive values like trust,

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openness, and solidarity. The establishment of structures that could support these values was also crucial (Musil, 2012, p.160).

3.1.2. Characteristics of Normalization

As previously stated, the beginning of normalization is linked to the spring of 1969, following the unsuccessful attempt to implement democratic and pro-market reforms. The goal of the new power elite was "to change the social order of Czechoslovakia, created by the historical development in the post-war period, including its changes in the 1960s, into a different order, in which the state will clearly prevail again, through powerful administrative interventions and mass corruption" (Machonin, 2005, p.124) In other words, the purpose was to "normalize" society back to conservative social and political values, which emphasized loyalty to the ruling Communist Party and the state. The use of the term "normalization" in this context is ironic, as it suggests that society simply required a return to established norms by the Communist regime, thereby restoring the standard societal norms. Therefore, the use of the term "normalization" is not only ironic but also misleading, as it obscures the nature of the events that occurred (Machonin, 2005, p.124-125).

During the post-war period in Czechoslovakia, there was a emphasis on the militarization of society, which became a prominent aspect of ideological propaganda from the late 1940s until the late 1960s (Hlaváček, 2021, p.153-154). The Communist regime relied on the army and other armed forces to maintain its political dominance (Bašta, 2013, p.9). The People's Militia (Lidové Milice), formed in 1948 as an armed unit, worked alongside the police and army to suppress protests and anti-socialist elements (Kyndrová, 2011, p.168). Despite their role in maintaining the regime's power, the Militia was never officially anchored in legislation, making them a de facto "party army." Over time, the Militia evolved into a well-organized armed force with various tasks, including guarding premises, suppressing riots, and engaging in combat during wartime. Following the Warsaw Pact invasion led by the Soviet Army in August 1968, members of the People's Militia were among the first to cooperate with the occupiers (Bašta, 2013, p.9-10). In the following year, the People's Militia collaborated with the SNB, which was the national police force comprising VB (Public Security)

and StB (State Security) as well as the army to suppress protests (Blažek, 2013, p.10; Kyndrová, 2011, p.170-171). During the 1980s, the People's Militia was a unified armed force led by the Communist Party, comprising 81,800 members in total, out of which 63,200 were deployed in the former Czech Socialist Republic (Blažek, 2013, p. 346).

To eliminate any potential threats to the regime stemming from progressive and reformist ideas, it was necessary to remove individuals from various sectors, including the press, media, research, education, as well as the economic and state apparatus. This resulted not only in changes in the political leadership but also caused a significant shift in the employment status of various professionals. Many individuals had to leave their previous jobs and take up positions that required lower qualifications. This caused a change in the overall societal atmosphere, as people began to worry about losing their jobs and not being able to find work in their field. This impacted not only the intellectuals but also technical experts (Kalinová, 1999, p.15). As a result of these purges, around half a million people were dismissed from their jobs. (Machonin, 2005, p. 125). Despite official statistics suggesting otherwise, there were significant sources of inequality, hidden or understated in official statistics (Večerník, 2003, p. 2).

One factor contributing to inequality was that household budgets were significantly burdened by food expenses as a result of extremely low real incomes. To address this, people would seek non-cash benefits or in-kind incomes. Members of collective farms had the advantage of being able to keep small pieces of land to produce their own food, either for personal use or for sale. Party officials also enjoyed privileges, such as access to free or low-priced goods and services that were unavailable to ordinary citizens. Additionally, the elite (managers, administrators, directors, party officials, etc.) had extensive opportunities to misuse their economic power and convert ownership of goods from state to private, contributing to hidden ownership rights. The above-mentioned factors led to inequalities in housing costs during this period (Večerník, 2003, p. 2-4). "The politically privileged groups were given the first option on state apartments originally aimed at solving the housing needs of low-income families" (Večerník, 2003, p. 4).

When discussing the normalization period in Czechoslovakia, it is essential to consider Michal Pullmann's alternative perspective, which challenges the conventional view of state socialism as a solely oppressive, totalitarian regime that terrorized its citizens into perpetual fear. Pullmann (2017) asks how we can explain the fact that people often criticized and supported the regime simultaneously. He argues that the history of communist Czechoslovakia is not solely defined by monster trials, party purges, and camps. Instead, the majority of the population lived their lives outside of communist power and ideology, prioritizing more mundane concerns. Pullmann draws on the work of Milan Otáhal, who introduced the concept of "social contract," in which people traded political freedoms for social security. The citizens of Czechoslovakia were not simply victims of oppression but used the available resources to pursue their natural life goals, outside of ideology. Ultimately, Pullmann suggests that the population's indifference to the regime may have represented stronger support for its stability than the secret police and ideological manipulation (Pullmann, 2017, p.27-37). I believe that it is crucial to approach historical events from different perspectives, as it enriches our understanding and contributes to a more comprehensive discourse. However, it is important to emphasize that the normalization period was, overall, a period of oppressive rule and that its negative effects on society cannot be overlooked. While it is true that even many may have been content with the socialist regime, it is also important to recognize that others suffered under it. The complexities of the time do not excuse the regime's oppressive practices and human rights violations.

3.1.3. The Second Society

The communist government in Czechoslovakia did not tolerate any opposition, and with no officially sanctioned institutions or organizations that could challenge the regime, it was almost impossible to improve living conditions through official means (Machonin, 1993, p. 238). However, some groups, spanning the domains of politics, economics, and culture, were determined to challenge the legitimacy of the totalitarian regime through various means. During the 1970s, a group was formed in Czechoslovakia as a response to widespread political and social discontent. The group comprised individuals who were formerly affiliated with the communist party, religious activists, and young people who felt marginalized by society. Charter 77 was

formed as a result of the developments that occurred after the Prague Spring, with a particular focus on advocating for human rights (Kusin, 1987, p.363).

From a cultural perspective, an alternative culture had emerged in Czechoslovakia driven by the discontent of the younger generation with the government. This subculture, which included music genres like jazz and rock, was targeted by official campaigns and considered a potential threat. What is more, "alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, juvenile delinquency, and vandalism became endemic and the cause of serious concern for the authorities" (Kusin, 1987, p.383). As early as the mid-1960s, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia initiated a nationwide campaign targeting young people with long hair, known as "máničky" which roughly translates as "long-haired," as part of a series of actions against various youth groups labeled as hooligans (Pixová, 2013, p.323). Similar campaigns resurfaced in the first half of the 1970s, using the slogan "If you have long hair, don't come among us" (Blažek, 2013, p.14). In the late 1970s, the regime's violence policy was primarily directed toward marginalized groups, which not only included long-haired but also punk rockers, Roma, dissidents, the underground movement, and Charter 77 (Moravanská, 2017, p.160).

The cultural, economic, and political activities mentioned above were all unofficial and constituted a "second society" that disassociated itself from official ideology. Despite the lack of official recognition, the existence of this "second society" played a role in the Velvet Revolution and the post-communist transformation of the country. The second society was not macro-institutionalized but instead functioned at the microstructural level through interpersonal contacts and the creation of an extensive social network (Machonin, 2005, p. 128).

3.1.4. The Second Economy

Moreover, there were private economic activities that developed unofficially and with partial official toleration. These activities were mainly individual or family-based and were conducted in the gray economy (Machonin, 1993, p. 238). The family unit was the foundation of the "second economy", and most of them focused on creating

better living conditions for themselves using their own resources. This included not only household economic activity but also smaller agricultural cooperatives, as well as industrial and service enterprises. However, they still had to show loyalty in their employment and official activities controlled by the authorities (Machonin, 2005, p.128).

3.1.5. Sociological Research and Data during Normalization

The government prevented the collection and analysis of data that could contradict the official ideology. Overall, during the 1960s, sociology in Czechoslovakia made considerable progress in terms of expertise and rapidly caught up with the international standard in both quantity and quality of sociological research (Machonin, 2004, p. 643). During a time when the communist regime was becoming more lenient, the first survey on social stratification was conducted in 1967. The biggest divide in society was between the ruling class and the general population. The findings showed that social stratification was based on factors such as the complexity of work, level of education, and quality of lifestyle. The main differences were found in the intimate sphere of family life rather than in the public sphere of job positions. The idea of industrial society suggested that countries that followed socialist principles and had advanced industries were successful in their own way and could be considered as a viable alternative to the Western market society model. Although two extensive surveys on the class structure were conducted during the normalization period (in 1978 and 1984), there was no thorough analysis of social stratification and mobility. This was partly due to the conservative and rigid atmosphere at the time, and partly because researchers were hesitant to produce results that did not align with the political goal of social homogenization (Večerník, 2003, p.4-5).

3.2. Social Structure of Normalization Czechoslovakia

The concept of social structure is interpreted in various ways within sociology but generally refers to the interconnected web of relationships among different components of a given social system (Sztompka, 2007, p.90). The sociological encyclopedia defines social structure as the way in which the essential and lasting components of a social system are organized, defining the overall nature of the system, or establishing the conditions necessary to regulate changes in society (Keller, n.d.). When examining the social structure during the period of normalization, the main factor taken into consideration is labor, which is why changes in the structure of the economically active population are primarily studied (Kalinová, 2012, p.267). Social structure changes are influenced by demographic developments like birth rate, which impact employment, education, healthcare, and household income. In the 1970s, there was an increase in the birth rate in Czechoslovakia, leading to uneven population growth and changes in the age structure. The economy performed poorly in the 70s and 80s with slow growth in labor income, resulting in increased involvement in the economic activity of women and working-age individuals in general (Kalinová, 1999, p. 74-75).

Additionally, gender, sector affiliation, and power distribution contributed to income differentiation through redistributive processes. Education and qualifications were important in determining status and income, but loyalty and obedience to the Communist Party were also significant factors. Emigration waves occurred, with young and qualified individuals leaving the country, causing generational shifts and changes in the educational composition of the workforce (Kalinová, 1999, p. 74-79). Throughout the four decades of socialist rule, the population went through significant changes, resulting in a nationally homogeneous and urbanized society with a decreased representation of the rural population and an increasing proportion of elderly individuals (Kalinová, 2012, p.271-275).

In the last 20 years of the regime, household structures shifted towards smaller households with relatively decent living standards, and there was a rise in the number of divorced individuals, which resulted in an increase in single mothers living with

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younger children. Changes in employment sector structure also led to differentiation based on social, qualification, and income characteristics, with a decline in agriculture and industrial growth, and an uneven growth in the tertiary sector compared to developed countries (Kalinová, 2012, p.271-275).

In the forthcoming sections, the primary focus will be on clarifying the key factors that have contributed to the formation of the social structure of Czechoslovak society during the period of normalization.

3.2.1. Social Mobility

After World War II, there was a significant movement of 4.5 million people due to migration and eviction of the German population, which temporarily increased the number of small and medium-sized farmers through land reforms. However, the nationalization and liquidation of crafts resulted in a decrease in the number of independent business owners. The period spanning from 1948 to 1953 witnessed notable shifts in social composition and status. This included structural changes in employment, including the introduction of a centrally planned economy, cross-sectoral and regional transfers of people, mass involvement of farmers in industry and construction and high employment of women. These changes had long-term consequences, resulting in a discrepancy between qualifications, status, and power-sharing (Kalinová, 2012, p.268-269).

3.2.2. Family and Pro-natalist Policies

As mentioned, household structures shifted towards smaller households (Kalinová, 2012, p.271-275) and the family unit became the foundation of the "second economy", with a focus on creating better living conditions using their own resources (Machonin, 2005, p.128). The establishment of the state socialist system created opportunities for marriages between individuals with different educational backgrounds. However, in the later period, particularly in the 70s, as the educational structures of women and men became more equal, the possibility of heterogamous marriage diminished again (Machonin, Tuček a kol., 1996, p. 173-174).

Following the introduction of pro-population measures, the Czech lands experienced a significant surge in population, peaking between 1974-76 with an average of 60,000 more children born each year compared to 1970 (Kalinová, 1999, p. 29-30). These measures included the extension of maternity leave to 26 weeks and the introduction of maternity benefits in 1970, which was further expanded in 1971. In 1973, child benefits were given based on the number of children, and preferential loans for newlyweds were also introduced to further support families in their early years of marriage (Rychlík, 2015, p. 40-41).

However, from 1980 onwards, there was a decline in the birth rate that persisted into the 1990s. In the 1980s, efforts were made to support families with children, but these measures were largely compensatory in nature, aiming to offset the impact of inflation, and did not result in an increase in overall birth rates. The dynamics of birth rates were also influenced by factors such as the higher employment rate of women, low household income, and education of women, which gradually increased over time (Kalinová, 1999, p. 29-30). Income disparities varied significantly by age group, with households with small children experiencing the lowest growth rate of personal income. The increased provision of child benefits resulted in elevated social benefits for households with dependent children (Kalinová, 1999, p. 49).

3.2.3. Workforce

During the normalization period, social policy was a prominent aspect of the Communist Party's political agenda. The communist regime's primary focus was on achieving full employment to maintain social stability in society. Economic planning was carried out with the goal of ensuring employment for all, which the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia viewed as an essential requirement for a socialist economic system, rather than maximizing profit (Rychlík, 2015, p.39).

Income policy was a factor contributing to social over-employment, as the relatively low wages of men necessitated the income of two household members to maintain a reasonable standard of living (Kalinová, 2012, p.115). As women gained higher education, this model of dual-income households became a prevalent lifestyle. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the proportion of the population that was

economically active significantly increased, comprising 51.4% of the total population and 90.6% of the working-age population in the 1980s (Kalinová, 1999, p. 30-32). This was a response to concerns about a small increase in the working-age population, leading to the mobilization of resources from women, the elderly, and youth (Kalinová, 1999, p. 30-32). In 1970, around 30% of the post-productive population worked for the right to a senior pension, with these workers constituting over 12% of total employment. They often worked in low-paying jobs such as porters and cleaners, serving as a source of cheap labor (Kalinová, 1999, p.51)

Despite fluctuations in economic growth, including periods of slower or declining economic growth, the employment rate remained relatively stable. Notably, even during times of low economic growth, the employment of women in the post-productive age group remained high, and the proportion of women in employment did not change significantly, even in the 1980s (Kalinová, 2012, p.113). Female employment, including during maternity leave, became a prominent feature of the population's lifestyle in the 1980s, with women accounting for almost half of the economically active population and over 60% in the retail sector. It is worth mentioning that the job market also underwent changes during this period, with minimal growth in industry and agriculture, and limited development in the tertiary sector (Kalinová, 1999, p. 30-32).

3.2.4. Income Differentiation

Income inequality increased during the 70s and 80s due to unofficial economic income, and wages between men and women remained unequal. It is difficult to make wage comparisons based on levels of education. For instance, in 1984 and 1988, workers with secondary or university education earned more compared to those with primary education. However, wage differences were more influenced by the industry of employment than education level. Wage disparities were observed based on factors such as job type, industry, demographic characteristics, and position in organizational structure, rather than qualification readiness and performance. Additionally, in the 1970s, the wage gap between executives and workers widened, leading to an increase in the number of executives and contributing to the growth of bureaucracy in society (Kalinová, 1999, p. 37-41).

3.2.5. Income Dedifferentiation and Redistribution Policies

In Kalinová's (1999) work, income differentiation was identified as one of the aspects of society. However, it is worth noting that the implementation of redistribution policies to some extent counters this differentiation. Moreover, alongside income differentiation, there was a prevailing trend of income dedifferentiation. Under central planning, redistribution was achieved by various means such as benefits, health and social services, wage system, and price policy, impacting all aspects of production and consumption. In Czechoslovakia, socialist reforms aimed to eliminate income from private businesses in both urban and rural areas. Social policies moderated income and consumption differences, with persistent wage leveling and economically unjustified price reductions for employees. However, redistribution also concentrated power in the hands of a small group in the 1970s. Due to economic stagnation in the late 1970s, unlimited redistribution became unsustainable (Kalinová, 1999, p. 43-46).

Despite limitations, the redistribution system provided job security and basic health care for many residents, leading to attitudes of complacency, and reliance on familiar routines without the need to contribute, resulting in uniform consumption patterns, permissiveness, and pseudo-activity (Kalinová, 1999, p. 54).

3.2.6. Consumption

During the period of normalization, basic needs were mostly met, which included enough food, consumer goods, and housing for the population, similar to other Eastern European countries like German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. However, the quality and distribution methods did not match the economic level and income of society. Moreover, this minimum standard did not fully address the issue, as people naturally desired a higher standard of living. The regime struggled to provide certain goods that were in demand, especially luxury items that required foreign exchange for import, resulting in a shortage or availability only on the black market. (Rychlík, 2015, p.44). Prices, supply of goods and services, and price policy played a role in shaping income and consumption patterns. While the supply of animal protein was comparable to other countries, the availability of fruits and vegetables was lower. Unhealthy consumption patterns, such as high consumption of animal fats, low

intake of vitamins, and excessive use of alcohol and cigarettes, had negative impacts on health (Kalinová, 1999, p. 58).

By the late 1980s, color televisions, refrigerators, and cars were common in almost every household.Higher-income groups indulged in luxury consumption and home ownership (Kalinová, 1999, p. 57-60).

3.2.7. Housing and Cottages

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was significant progress in improving housing standards, with mass construction of panel housing resulting in the completion of 1,263,000 new apartments in the 1970s and nearly half a million in the first half of the 1980s (Kalinová, 1999, p. 60-62). In the 1991 census, there were 200, 194 cottages, holiday homes, and cabins in Czechoslovakia. The phenomenon of "cottage culture" was driven by several factors, which included worsening environmental conditions in cities, a desire for self-sufficiency in the private economy, a way to supplement the lack of fruits and vegetables, limited travel opportunities, and escapism (Kalinová, 1999, p. 60-62).

3.2.8. Education

Education and industry structure were significant factors influencing development tendencies. In 1970, most of the active population had primary education (40.4%) and only a small percentage were university graduates (4.8%) (Tuček a kol., 2003, p.57). The new educational system concept introduced in 1976 impacted the preparation for working-class occupations, but the prestige of these occupations declined, resulting in lower educational levels in society and increased social contradictions (Kuchař & Šubrt, 1989, p.535-536). There was a decrease in university admissions in the 1980s. In general, Czechoslovakia achieved a relatively high proportion of secondary education graduates, but a slightly lower proportion of the population attained university education (Kalinová, 1999, p. 68-71). There was a long-term stagnation in tertiary education development in the 70s and 80s, with slow growth, increased demand, and lack of financial resources leading to a decline in the value of education in society, discouraging students from pursuing higher education (Kalinová, 1999, p. 70-71).

Based on data obtained from a representative sample of the adult population in 1984, it was observed that during the period of normalization, there was a discernible decline in the ordinal correlation between income and education level, as well as work complexity. This means a significant decrease in the association or relationship between income and these factors, suggesting that other influences were at play during that time. This era of increased egalitarianism, characterized by a new wave of prioritizing political activism and loyalty over education and expertise, devalued the latter factors (Machonin, 2005, p.126).

II. Empirical part
4. Methodology

At this point, it is necessary to narrow down the scope of the material and methods being used in this thesis. Visual sociology encompasses a wide range of visual materials; however, this thesis will focus solely on photographs. For this reason, this thesis will adopt a sociology of photography approach, as opposed to a visual sociology one. Sztompka's methods of analysis (2007), including hermeneutical and semiotic analysis, as well as sociological structuralist analysis, will be used to analyze photographs in the empirical part of this thesis.

The aim of this empirical part is to identify visual manifestations within the selected photographs that reflect the social structure of Czechoslovakia during the normalization period, as previously established by sociologists while demonstrating various sociological methods of analyzing photographs. The selected photographs depict several findings about the social structure of Czechoslovak "normalized" society. While direct deduction of social structure facts from the photos is not possible, they do reveal and elaborate on pre-existing knowledge about it and its tangible manifestation. By interpreting photographs through Sztompka's critical realist perspective, the aim of this thesis is to analyze and reveal social facts pertaining to the social structure depicted in them.

To overcome the limitations imposed by the normalization period, which curtailed freedom for sociological research or journalism, triangulation will be utilized to enhance the scope and depth of analysis (as established by Cipriani & Del Re, 2012). To clarify, this method of analysis is not strictly triangulation, which typically involves the use of three sources. As a result of the limitations of the topic, this thesis will utilize a combination of 2 sources, sociological data and photographs, to provide a more nuanced understanding of the social structure. This approach can be considered a form of "bimodal triangulation". Given the scarcity of available data and analysis on the topic, it is necessary to consider alternative sources of insight, such as photographs. By doing so, we are not only able to expand our perspective beyond statistical data and

published works but also gain unique insights into the social reality of the period through visual representation. This chapter will outline the process of selecting photographs for analysis and describe the methods of interpretation that will be utilized to examine these photographs for potential insights into the social structure of Czechoslovak society during the normalization era.

4.1. Selected Photographs

Czech photojournalism experienced a significant decline during the 1970s, largely due to the strict regulations imposed by the Federal Office for Press and Information. These restrictions mainly excluded non-official images from domestic events. However, the field of documentary photography thrived during this period, as it was mostly created outside of specific commissions and without immediate publication in the press or books, allowing for more artistic freedom. Sociologically oriented documentary photography was a prevalent style during this time, with creative groups such as *Dokument* (*Document*) and *Oči* (*Eyes*) focusing on depicting typical aspects of middle-generation life through their photography (Birgus & Mlčoch, 2010, p. 99-100).

Moreover, documentary photography has evolved from being a simple form of memory into a medium that speaks for itself and invites interpretation from the viewer's perspective. While photography traditionally served to document the past and preserve the present for future generations, today, it has become an active creator of the past. By capturing real-life events and situations, documentary photography offers an insight into the social reality of the time. As such, documentary photography has become more open to interpretation due to the emergence of the so-called "author's artistic document", which allows the author to use artistic photography procedures to critically evaluate and interpret the documented reality while still maintaining the basic principles of credibility and truthfulness (Kotík, 2011, p.74). Therefore, documentary photographs appear to be the most suitable material for analysis as they were created with a certain level of independence from official censorship and were not primarily intended for sociological research purposes.

To identify suitable photographs for analysis, a review was conducted of available photographic material from the normalization period, sourced from the internet portfolios of photographers and their published monographs. The selection process was not based on a rigorous design, but it involved the evaluation of hundreds of photos. The selection was informed by the existing literature and aimed to identify photographs that could provide insight into the important features of the normalized structure. While this approach was not entirely objective, it was motivated by the goal of exploring the topic of social structure within the normalization period. The analyzed photographic material, which is monochromatic and documentary in style, was sourced from various outlets such as monographic publications and official websites of Czech and Slovak photographers, featuring their original works. Photographs of the following photographers are analyzed: Gustav Aulehla, Bohdan Holomíček, Josef Koudelka, Dana Kyndrová, Iren Stehli, and Pavel Štecha.

4.2. Methods of Analysis of Photographic Materials

The methods presented in this subsection for analyzing photographs are mainly drawn from the original contribution of Piotr Sztompka, a sociologist from post-socialist Europe, in his work *"Visual Sociology: Photograph as a Research Method."* In the context of analyzing photographs, I believe Sztompka's work represents an important contribution to the field of sociology. While other methods of analysis, such as those presented by Gillian Rose in "*Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials,"* exist, Sztompka's methods have been selected for this thesis.

4.2.1. Analysis of Visual Facts

The analysis of visual facts is a method that can be used to discover important aspects of society, culture, and social structure. By analyzing photographs, sociologists can comprehend the visual manifestations of various aspects of social life, which allows them to reveal the essential regularities, particularly those related to human activity. However, the visually observable manifestations of social life are vast, and some social objects and phenomena are more important than others (Sztompka, 2007, p.35-37). Therefore, to systemize these facts, Sztompka (2007, p.47) suggests using an analytical matrix of contexts and aspects in which social life is manifested. The

significant social contexts, according to Sztompka (2007, p.38), include family household, work, consumption, travel, illness, death, education, religion, politics, science, art, recreation, sports, war, and natural disasters. In each of these contexts, six aspects can be distinguished, namely individuals, activities, social interaction, collectivity, culture/technology, and social environment (Sztompka, 2007, p.38).

Table 1 displays an example of how the analytical matrix proposed by Sztompka can be used to systemize the facts related to social life and structure manifested in photographs, which were found during the research conducted for this thesis. In addition, Table 1 was used to systemize the data obtained during the selection phase, which aimed to identify the photographs suitable for analysis. However, due to the nature of the research topic, some social contexts, such as travel, religion, science, and natural disasters, were not included in the matrix. This exclusion was due to the limited visibility of these contexts in the photographs encountered during the research.

Aspects/ Contexts	Individuals	Activity	Interaction	Collectivity	Culture/ Technology	Environment
Household	child	watching TV	playing games	family	furniture	apartment
Work	worker/miner	work	cooperation	group of workers	heavy equipment	factory
Consumption	customer	consumption	ordering	diners	chafing	canteen
Illness	patient	writing prescription	doctors conversation	sick on the bed	bedding	maternity ward/ oncology
Death	corpse	funeral	comforting crying mourners	mourners	coffin	cemetery/funeral
Education	student	studying	congradulating/ thanking	students	blackboard	school/classroom
Arts	musician	playing an instrument	conversing	band	saxophone	concert
Politics	KSC officials	court/speech	waving	audience	propaganda	celebration
Recreation	cottage owner	land cultivation	discussion	group of cottagers	shed	gardening colony
Sport	exerciser	lineup	purchase of refreshments	spectators	appliances for gymnastics	stadium
War	soldier	invasion	arresting	squad	tank	city

Table 1.

4.2.2. Hermeneutical Analysis

The hermeneutical analysis is a method that focuses on the subjectivity of the photographer and the subjects depicted in photographs. It is essentially an analysis of the subjective, with the primary focus being on determining the motivation of the photographer. Uncovering the underlying intentions allows for better reading of the photograph while considering the danger of distorting the image of society caused by the artistic aspirations of the photographer. This also factors in the categorization of the photograph, such as whether it is an advertisement, propaganda, documentary, portrait, or any other type. Each category of photographs is associated with its own set of motivations, emotions, and intentions (Sztompka, 2007, p. 80-84).

Interpretation of the photograph is also sometimes facilitated by the description or caption below the image, which anchors the meaning and highlights what to pay attention to. Most sociologically relevant photographs predominantly display people, and they too can be the object of interpretation. Interpreting the subjective meanings that guide the subjects requires deciphering the signs, such as physiognomy, facial expressions, posture, and body language. It is worth noting that our hermeneutical interpretation of a photograph, in search of motivations and intentions, will always be partially superficial. Therefore, it is essential to approach interpretation with empathy and a conscious, critical effort to set aside our prejudices (Sztompka, 2007, p. 80-84).

4.2.3. Semiotic Analysis

The semiotic analysis aims to decode the cultural meanings hidden behind signs and symbols present in images. While hermeneutical analysis deals with the individual psyche of the author or depicted subjects, semiotic interpretation looks for the rules of meaning that are common to the entire collectivity (Sztompka, 2007, p.84). According to Ferdinand de Saussure, the fundamental unit of semiology is the sign, which is composed of two distinguishable components that are only separable on an analytical level. Although these two parts make up the sign, they are not inherently related. The signified, which refers to the object or concept being represented, and the signifier, which is the sound or image attached to the signified, have a conventionally agreed-upon relationship that is imposed by one's culture (Rose, 2023, p.177).

When dealing with photographs, Charles Peirce's typology of signs, which includes icons, indexes, and symbols, may be more useful. Icons refer to signs that share a strong resemblance in form or shape with the object or concept they represent. This type of sign is prevalent in photographs. Indexes, on the other hand, are signs that are associated with their referent through a regular, typical, and repeatable relationship (Rose, 2023, p.183). A crowded street with people holding umbrellas when it is raining is an instance of a social index (Sztompka, 2007, p.85). Symbols are signs that carry conventional meanings that have been established within a given culture (Rose, 2023, p.183). Examples of symbolic signs include the cross, which is associated with Christianity, or a flag, which represents a state (Sztompka, 2007, p.85).

To conduct a semiotic analysis of a photograph, it is necessary to identify the signs and their types present in the photograph, followed by differentiating denotation, which is what the image visibly represents, from connotation, which includes the more complex associations and feelings evoked by the image. Finally, signs are combined into broader units called codes, which can be characteristic of certain areas of social life or specific environments (Sztompka, 2007, p.86).

4.2.4. Sociological Structuralist Analysis

According to Sztompka (2007, p. 84-89), sociological structuralist analysis is a method that builds on the foundations of semiotic analysis by uncovering underlying structures that shape observable social situations, phenomena, and events. However, this approach diverges from the classical structuralist standpoint and should be employed within the framework of sociology. Unlike semiotic analysis, which focuses on the signs present in a photograph, the sociological structural analysis aims to reveal the hidden structures that determine the form of social situations and events. It proposes that these manifestations are not random but instead emanate from hidden social structures that determine their form. In the context of photography, images showing social life are external signs of such structures, with their interpretation requiring the revelation of these hidden denotations and connotations.

A possible approach to examining social structure within the field of sociology is by utilizing Sztompka's INIS framework. This framework incorporates four

structures that encompass a broader understanding of the various dimensions associated with the named structures: Interaction (I1), Norms (N), Ideas (I2), and Life Chances (S). Sociological structuralist interpretation involves uncovering these structures that are concealed behind the visible manifestations of social life. Interaction (I) refers to activities as well as social interactions, while Norms (N) or the normative structure refer to social rules, desirable behavior, values and morals, expectations within a society as well as habits and customs. Ideas (I) or the ideational structure is composed of widespread beliefs, opinions, and prejudices that are held within society. Finally, Life Chances (S) refer to the differentiated possibilities of access to socially valued goods, such as wealth, power, prestige, or education (Sztompka, 2007, p. 84-89).

4.2.5. Discourse Analysis

A discourse is a set of statements that shape our thinking and actions toward something. It is a type of knowledge that influences how we perceive and interact with the world around us. This relationship between discourse and our understanding of the world is tied to power dynamics. Various discourses are in competition with each other, and certain ones become dominant due to their association with powerful institutions (such as those with coercive powers like the police or prisons), as well as their claims to hold absolute truth (Rose, 2015, p.215-217).

Discourse analysis offers a valuable approach to investigating the processes involved in both the creation and consumption of photographic images. It seeks to uncover the intended audience of a photograph and how they actively participate in the creation and modification of its meaning through the practice of viewing. Photographs are polysemic, meaning they can carry multiple potential meanings, and their interpretation can be influenced by a range of factors. In addition to individual psychological and cultural factors, the interpretation of photographs can also be influenced by a range of social characteristics such as age, gender, education, ethnicity, nationality, occupation, and class. These factors can shape the viewer's perspective and influence the meanings they assign to a photograph (Sztompka, 2007, p.94-96).

Moreover, discourse analysis sheds light on how photographers, advertising agencies, and other institutions use photographs as a means of communication and

persuasion. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which photographs are produced and consumed, as well as the power dynamics that exist within these contexts (Sztompka, 2007, p.94-98). Furthermore, discourse analysis takes into account the role of the audience in creating and modifying meanings and reveals how each discourse determines a different way of seeing the social world and persuades us that this particular vision is true (Rose, 2015, p.221). This approach is particularly relevant in the case of advertising photography, where the creator aims to evoke a specific response from a clearly defined group of consumers. By examining the ways in which photographs are produced and consumed within various social and cultural contexts, discourse analysis provides insights into the complex ways in which meaning is created and communicated through visual imagery (Sztompka, 2007, p.97-98).

4.3. Selected Methods for Analysis

To analyze photographs for insights into social structure, it is important to select the most useful methods of analysis. Visual fact analysis is an effective method to organize the different visual manifestations and will be employed on a descriptive basis, without using the matrix. Hermeneutical analysis, which focuses on the subjectivity of the photographer, will not be utilized in the analysis, as the subjectivity of the photographer is not a dominant factor in the selected documentary photographs. On the other hand, the semiotic analysis will be deployed as it has the potential to uncover the connotations of the analyzed photographs and unveil the underlying social facts of the normalization period. Furthermore, a sociological structural analysis will also be used, since Sztompka's INIS scheme is crucial for bringing together the other methods of analysis and uncovering the hidden structures of social life, particularly the structure of life chances (S) in the case of this thesis. Finally, discourse analysis will not be employed in this thesis, as the focus is not on the effect of photographs on the audience.

5. Analysis of Social Structure in Photographs

To begin the analysis, the selected photographs have been organized into specific categories to systematically assess various dimensions of the social structure. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of diverse manifestations of normalization. The following categories have been chosen, and for each category, examples of photos that would fit under the category are provided.

1. **Political Change and Transformation:** invasion, demonstrations, Velvet Revolution, emerging democratic political organization

2. **Non-democratic, Hierarchical Political Organization and Militarization:** communist celebrations, elections, rallies, communist party officials, courts, military parades, security forces (VB), Militia, tanks

3. **Income Dedifferentiation of Society:** unhealthy dietary habits, tobacco and alcohol consumption, queues for basic goods

4. **Employment and Labor:** gender-based division of labor (roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women in economic activities, post-productive economically active individuals, role of housewives), youth employment and participation in the workforce, informal or unregulated economic activities (grey economy)

5. **Family Structure and Dynamics:** housing conditions, leisure activities, natalist policies, economic conditions characterized by scarcity or limited availability of resources, cottage recreation

The process of analyzing each chosen photograph will involve a sequential approach, starting with an analysis of the visual facts (VF), followed by a semiological analysis (SeA), and concluding with a sociological structuralist analysis (StA).

5.1. Political Change and Transformation

VF: Image 5 (Appendix), captured by Josef Koudelka during the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops in Prague in 1968, depicts a chaotic scene. In the background, smoke billows, indicating the use of violent measures during the invasion. A crowd of people in the background on the right watches the unfolding events, while a flag, likely the Czechoslovak flag, is visible in the background. In the foreground, a young man is interacting with three soldiers sitting on a tank. His facial expression conveys frustration, and he appears to be verbalizing his concerns. The soldiers are armed with weapons, including a submachine gun, but seem passive, with one soldier folding his hands in his lap. It could be inferred that during the time the photograph was captured, the soldiers were likely passing through the city rather than being actively involved in an offensive action. Image 5 captures the tension and emotion of the moment, with the young man confronting the soldiers during the turmoil of the invasion.

SeA: Image 5 contains various icons such as soldiers, civilians, tanks, and weapons. The smoke in the background indexes the use of violent measures during the invasion, while the weapons carried by the soldiers index their role as armed forces. The Czechoslovak flag in the background serves as a symbol representing the country, possibly signaling a protest or defense effort. The denotation of the image is a chaotic scene during the invasion with smoke in the background and a young man confronting armed soldiers. The connotation of the image evokes emotions of tension and resistance against an invading force, as well as an imbalance of power between the soldiers and civilians.

StA: In Image 5, the most notable social interaction (I1) is the young man confronting the soldiers on the tank, expressing his concerns or frustrations while the soldiers listen passively without responding. This interaction highlights the power dynamics and control between the invading forces and the local population. The behavior of the soldiers suggests the norm (N) of restraint and discipline, while the crowd's cautiousness suggests a norm of self-preservation. The idea (I2) of frustration and concern towards the invading forces reveals a resistance to their presence and actions. This also suggests a negative perception of the forces and their actions.

Regarding the chance structure (S) depicted in Image 5, the soldiers' weapons imply a greater likelihood of accessing power. In contrast, the young man's situational power is restricted due to his civilian status, resulting in lower chances of influencing the situation.

Image 6 (Appendix), captured by Milan Štecha on November 17th, 1989, during the Velvet Revolution, shows police officers in winter uniforms with riot helmets and ballistic shields forming a line to stop protesters. On the ground, one can observe lit candles, while in the background, there is a banner whose message is uncertain, but it might bear the word "Svoboda," which translates to "Freedom." Notably, at least two people are seen extending their hands to the officers, offering carnations. This gesture may be an analogy to the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974, known for its transition from authoritarian dictatorship to democracy (Varela & Alcântara, 2014, p.151-152).

Image 6 contains several identifiable indexes and symbols. The police officers' winter uniforms with riot helmets and ballistic shields form an index between their attire and their role in the protest. The banner with the word "Freedom" signifies the absence of liberty during the totalitarian regime and probably indicates a call for a society that is democratic. The most notable symbol present in Image 6 is the carnation, which symbolizes peaceful resistance and nonviolent protest. Additionally, the carnation can also be seen as a symbol of hope and solidarity. Image 6 denotes police officers forming a line to stop protesters, with lit candles on the ground and people offering carnations to the officers. Image 6 may connotate a discrepancy in beliefs between law enforcement and protesters, as well as the possibility of nonviolent protests and optimistic attempts to bring about change.

In Image 6, the protesters are engaging in social interaction (I1), offering carnations to the police officers as a peaceful and non-violent gesture of resistance. Several social norms (N) describing desirable behavior and values can be seen in Image 6. The police officers' attempt to maintain law and order reflects a norm of control in the face of civil unrest, but also undemocratic authoritarian oppression. The protesters' use of candles and flowers reflects a norm of non-violent protest. The carnation reflects the belief (I2) of the protesters in the power of peaceful resistance to bring about

change. The protest itself reflects the widespread desire for the right to free assembly and freedom in society. Differentiated possibilities of access to power (S) can be seen in Image 6. The police officers have greater access to power and control compared to the unarmed protesters. The protesters, on the other hand, have access to the power of protest and the potential for change through collective action.

5.2. Non-democratic, Hierarchical Political Organization and Militarization of Society

Image 7 (Appendix), taken by Dana Kyndrová in 1977 in Prague, showcases the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. In the forefront of the image, a young man can be seen selling newspapers, most likely Rudé Právo, while a woman buys newspapers from him. It is possible that this is his part-time job or that he is a university student working for extra money. In the center of the image, we see a man in a uniform with a baton strapped to his belt, standing, and observing a conversation to his left. On his right, there is a man dressed in a suit reading a newspaper, most probably Rudé Právo. Next to this man is another officer who is wearing a different uniform. All these people are standing in front of a photo store, with flags of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union of different sizes on the building. There is also a banner hanging on the facade of the building that reads "Se sovětským svazem na věčné časy", translating to "With the Soviet Union for eternity", further emphasizing the communist ideology of the event.

Image 7 reveals various icons, indexes, and symbols that provide insights into the socio-political context of the image. The visual manifestations of communist propaganda, such as the flags of the Soviet Union, and the banner with the slogan "With the Soviet Union for eternity," serve as indexes that signify the dominant ideology of the event. The subjects depicted in the image index diverse roles and activities carried out during the rally. Moreover, the newspaper Rudé Právo serves as a indexical representation of communist ideology and serves as a medium for spreading information aligned with the dominant political narrative. The denotation of the image is a rally commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. However, the connotation of the image evokes associations with communist ideology, propaganda, militarization, and surveillance.

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The forms of interaction (I1) captured in the image, such as the young man selling newspapers to the woman and the man with the baton observing a conversation, provide clues about the social dynamics at play. The image highlights the norm (N) of loyalty and obedience to the Communist regime, which is conveyed through various elements such as the large banner, the uniformed officers, and the presence of Communist propaganda. The image reflects the ideational structure (I2) of the Communist regime and the outcomes of the Great October Socialist Revolution. The young man selling newspapers and the woman buying them suggest the importance of staying informed about political affairs. The image implies a possible distinction in opportunities and access to valuable resources (S), as evidenced by the young man selling newspapers, which could indicate that he is using it to supplement his income while studying. The military presence and uniformed officers also suggest potential power inequality in society.

Image 8 (Appendix) was taken in 1977 by Dana Kyndrová during a rally in Prague at the same event as Image 7. It depicts a group of mostly young individuals, who are likely university students, standing in front of a statue. They are holding a banner with the text "Pod vedením KSČ za šťastný život mladé generace" translating to "A happier life for the young generation under the Communist Party leadership". Additionally, we can identify the Czechoslovak and socialist flags, as well as signs featuring Gustav Husák and Leonid I. Brezhnev. On the left, a girl is seen holding a festival pompom, while several children sit on the steps of the statue in the background.

There are several indexes and symbols that can be identified in Image 8. The banner in the image serves as a significant symbol, advocating the Communist Party as a guiding force for the younger generation. The presence of flags can serve as an index and as a symbol. They serve as indexical signs when indicating the political context of the event and aligning it with communist ideology. As symbols, the Czechoslovak flag represents the country. The active engagement of the participants in holding and displaying the banner indicates their involvement and potential support for the event. The image denotes a rally in Prague in 1977, where people can be seen holding a banner and celebrating. The image evokes connotations of communist ideology, youth

activism, and support for the Communist Party, as indicated by the presence of communist symbols, the message on the banner, and the age group of the participants.

This image captures several notable interactions (I1). The subjects interact with the photographer, with some facing the camera and smiling. Children in the image appear less concerned about the photographer and are seen interacting with each other. The image provides evidence of social norms (N) prevalent in Czechoslovakia's society, where young individuals were encouraged to actively participate in political events and express support for the Communist Party. The presence of young people and children suggests exemptions from school and involvement in communist public rituals and political activities. The image predominantly depicts the communist ideology aspect of the event (I2), with the banner promoting the Communist Party and the display of communist symbols. The young age of participants suggests access to social participation (S), but likely with limited opportunities to voice opinions or effect change.

Photographer Dana Kyndrová captured the ambiance of the May Day celebration in Prague in 1986 with Image 9 (Appendix). The celebration was meant to honor workers and labor, which was a pillar of the communist regime. The background of the photo shows the lettering "Máj - svátek pracujících celého světa" which translates to "May - the holiday of the workers of the whole world." The central figure in the photo is an older man wearing a uniform of the People's Militia, as indicated by the letters "LM" (Lidové Milice) on his right arm. The man has a copy of the newspaper Rudé Právo in his pocket, which was the propagandistic daily newspaper and central press organ of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. He is also wearing several medals on his chest. In the background, there are several dozen people gathered to celebrate the holiday, including a young boy on the right side of the photo who is likely accompanied by his parents. Some people in the photo are holding parade wands and banners, including the militiaman who is holding one in his left hand.

Image 9 contains various icons, indexes, and symbols that illustrate the holiday's purpose of commemorating labor while also highlighting the military aspects of society. The lettering "Máj - svátek pracujících celého světa" in the background serves as an index, representing the holiday of workers of the whole world. The older

man in the People's Militia uniform, with the medals on his chest, serves as an index, indicating the militarization of society. The presence of the newspaper Rudé Právo in his pocket is an index of communist propaganda. The medals on the chest of the older man in the People's Militia uniform can also be analyzed as indexes that indicate his contributions to the Communist Party or the regime. The image denotes the celebration of the May Day in 1986, which aimed to pay tribute to labor and workers, and features the presence of a People's Militia officer. The image connotates the significance of labor within communist ideology, along with the emphasis on militarization to maintain order and ideological control.

Within Image 9, the focal point is occupied by the Militia man who stands as the central figure, displaying a possible awareness of the photographer's presence. Meanwhile, in the background, social interactions (I1) unfold, with potentially numerous individuals gathered at the event. The image captures the societal expectation and desirability (N) for citizens to participate and celebrate workers and labor during the May Day event. The dominant ideational structure (I2) present in the image is that of the Communist ideology, highlighting the importance of work, as well as loyalty, as evidenced by the People's Militia officer. The uniform and medals worn by the Militia man provide insight into his life chances (S) and suggest the existence of a hierarchy within the Communist Party. This suggests that he occupies a position of greater status and authority within the Communist ruled society, granting him access to power and prestige.

Image 10 (Appendix), taken by Dana Kyndrová in 1986, shows an election committee in Prague. The men in the photo are mostly dressed in formal attire, emphasizing the significance of the event. The ballot box, bearing the state symbol, is visible on the right, with the Czechoslovak flag and state symbol displayed on the blackboard behind the men. A framed photograph of President Gustav Husák is seen on the left. Although piles of voting ballots are visible on the table, the image implies that the elections have not yet commenced. This is suggested by the fact that the men have time to pose for the photograph, and there are no voters present in the picture.

Image 10 depicts icons such as the ballot box, the framed photograph, and the election committee. The piles of voting ballots on the table index the act of voting. The

framed photograph of President Gustav Husák is a symbol, representing the Communist Party's authority and power in the country. The Czechoslovak flag and state symbol on the blackboard symbolize the country. Image 8 denotes the election committee in (semi) formal attire on the day of the elections. However, the image connotes limitations on political freedom and constrained voter choices, since elections were reduced to a mere formality during the normalization period, as most candidates were affiliated with the Communist Party.

Image 10 shows the election committee members posing for a photograph, indicating a staged interaction (I1) that was likely directed by the photographer. The image does not capture any interactions between the committee members and voters. The people depicted in the photograph follow the established protocols and regulations (N) of the election process, which include dressing formally and using election paraphernalia such as state symbols, ballot boxes, and voting ballots. Furthermore, the presence of the Czechoslovak state symbol and flag and the framed photograph of President Gustav Husák reinforce the norm of patriotism to the country and loyalty to the Communist regime. The ideational structure (I2) reflected in Image 10 is that of the official ideology of the Communist regime, which is reinforced by the affiliation of most candidates with the party. The limited options for voters resulting from the Communist Party's dominance suggest that there are constraints on political selection, which may limit the public's ability to bring about social or regime change through legitimate means (S).

5.3. Income Dedifferentiation of Society

Bohdan Holomíček captured Image 11 (Appendix) during the normalization era, depicting a crowd of mostly women gathered outside a store waiting for it to open, with the specific location and date remaining unknown. The shop sign reads "Lahůdky" or "Delicacies" and other signs indicate the sale of vegetables and poultry. The women stand in line or form a scattered crowd, while two men across the road seem to be watching them. The shop appears to be part of a cooperative named "Jednota".

In Image 11, the icon observed is the shop selling different basic goods while the indexes are the queues. Most people in the queue are women, who are likely there to buy goods for their families. This indexes traditional gender roles and societal

expectations of women as shoppers. The image denotes long queues of mostly women in front of shops during the normalization period. The connotation evokes associations with scarcity, hardship, and the impact of societal norms and gender roles.

The image depicts people queuing in line to enter a shop and buy basic goods (I), reflecting a social norm (N) of waiting in line for essential goods that applies to everyone, regardless of their profession or status. This reflects a sense of dedifferentiation among people from different backgrounds who are all subjected to the same societal expectation. However, the traditional gender roles portrayed in the image suggest a belief (I) that women are responsible for shopping and caring for their families. This reflects an ideational structure of gender-based societal expectations. The image also shows the life chances (S) of people from varying social backgrounds having to wait in line for basic goods. Moreover, the differentiation of gender roles highlights a form of social inequality in shopping responsibilities.

Image 12 (Appendix) was taken by photographer Iren Stehli as part of her photographic cycle "Fast Food Fish" between 1976-1977, depicting various manifestations of the analyzed categories. Specifically, Image 12 shows two men who can be seen standing and eating their meals. The man in the center of the image is seen carrying his food to his chosen place of consumption. It can be inferred that all the men are consuming either fish or other forms of animal protein. In the background, a queue of individuals is visible, awaiting their turn to order, with a female employee working behind the counter. In the foreground, an older woman is shown clearing empty plates.

The image features several visible icons, including customers in a restaurant and the presence of food. The workforce is also evident. The food being consumed, which appears to be fried fish or meat, may index unhealthy dietary behaviors of the people present. The number of empty plates being handled could index the busy nature of the restaurant, perhaps indicating lunchtime or dinnertime. The image denotes individuals eating at a fast-food establishment while others are engaged in work-related activities. The image connotates dedifferentiation, as it is possible to assume that people from different social positions, ages, and occupations come together to consume unhealthy food due to a likely lack of access to healthier options. The image also highlights the representation of women and elderly people in the labor force.

Additionally, it may suggest the importance of socializing and bonding over food, even though in this case, it may be a quick solo meal before returning to work or home.

The image captures various social interactions (I1), including a young man acknowledging the presence of the photographer and different groups of people eating together and possibly engaging in conversation. The social norm (N) of queuing up to order food is depicted in the image, along with the consumption of fast food which is often linked to unhealthy dietary habits. This may indicate a cultural preference for convenience and efficiency over health and nutrition, particularly in a work-oriented society. The employment of women in the establishment may reflect the idea (I2) that contributing to their family's income is necessary and expected, both by the regime and by their own conviction. The life chances (S) of the individuals eating at the fast-food establishment may reflect limited access to healthier food options due to their time and budget constraints, as well as work obligations, which may, in turn, have negative implications for their health and well-being.

5.4. Employment and Labor

Iren Stehli's photographic cycle, Prague Shops, captured a range of women of different ages working in various shops from 1976-1995. The cycle features 12 photographs that provide rich photographic material into the extent of women's workforce participation in different jobs. Image 13 (Appendix) portrays two elderly women sitting behind a booth with several handwritten signs around them. The signs range from "prosíme nekouřit", which translates to "please do not smoke" to legible parts such as "výhry-sportky", which roughly translates to "winnings-lottery". It seems that the women in the image are selling lottery tickets. The woman on the right appears to be holding a lottery ticket.

Icons visible in this image have been described in the visual fact analysis. The image features indexes such as the signs displaying "prosíme nekouřit" (please do not smoke) and "výhry-sportky" (lottery winnings), which strongly suggest that the women in the photograph were engaged in selling lottery tickets and that smoking was prohibited in the vicinity of their booth. The photograph denotes that two elderly women are working at a booth selling lottery tickets. The connotations of the image

suggest a broader narrative of the older women of pension age working in low-paying jobs and highlight the participation of women in the workforce.

The image captures a limited range of social interactions (I1) as only the women's interaction with the photographer is visible. It is unclear whether they interacted with each other or customers. However, the image does present a social norm (N) of the prohibition of smoking in the enclosed public space, which is conveyed through the signs. The image suggests an ideational structure (I2) that views lotteries as a possible leisure activity. The life chance structure (S) depicted in the image highlights the elderly women potentially working to secure a pension or the absence of access to higher-paying jobs and resources. It could also highlight lotteries as a hazardous way for individuals to enhance their economic status.

5.5. Family Structure and Dynamics

Image 14 (1986) by Dana Kyndrová in Prague and Image 15 (1980) by Gustav Aulehla in Javorník, depict children of various ages, possibly indicating the natalist policies of the regime. Image 14 (Appendix) shows a well-dressed family during a May Day celebration in Prague. The girl in the photo is wearing a scarf, which might make her part of the Pioneer Organization of the Socialist Union of Youth. She can be seen either saluting or blocking the sun away from her face. The young boy is dressed stylishly, wearing pants with a distinctive pattern and possibly multiple colors. The mother is wearing sunglasses and carrying a bag or purse. On the right of the image, two officers can be seen saluting. On the other hand, in Image 15 (Appendix), the mother is seen carrying her child with no stroller visible, and the boys in the image appear to be underdressed. The man, probably the husband is carrying two bags. The family seems to be situated at a local square and walking on a muddy road. By looking at the image, the families seem to be of different economic backgrounds, with the family in Image 14 being likely better off than the family in Image 15.

Image 14 depicts a family unit participating in a parade, with various icons such as family members and bags visible. Additionally, the crowded streets and tram tracks in the background serve as indexes to indicate the location as a city, while the parade wand indexes celebration, and the sunglasses index a sunny day. The scarf worn by the girl potentially indexes the Youth Union. On the other hand, the rain puddles in Image

15 indicate that it had rained, and the jackets worn by the family members suggest cold weather. The state of the street, as well as a house in the background indexes a smaller town. The shopping bags held by the family members indicate a possible shopping trip. Image 14 denotes a family celebrating a national holiday, while also connotating the government's support for larger families as a part of their social policies as well as the social obligation to commemorate important holidays as directed by the regime. Image 15 denotes a family on a rainy day, possibly returning from a shopping trip. The photograph connotes a more isolated community in a smaller town, given the state of the street and the absence of other people in the photograph. Unlike Image 14, there is no indication of a national holiday or any government propaganda. Instead, the photograph captures a more ordinary, everyday moment of a family going about their business.

In Image 14, different social interactions (I1) can be seen, including the girl saluting or blocking the sun, the young boy looking at something on his shoe, and the woman looking at the photographer. In Image 15, the family is seen walking on a muddy road, with the mother carrying the child, possibly ruminating about something as the man is turned towards her, likely having a conversation. The images imply a normative (N) and ideational structure (I2) that promotes the government's natalist policies and the family as the basis of a socialist society. The girl in Image 14 also reflects the idea of the youth being an important part of socialist construction. The family in Image 14 appears to be better off than the family in Image 15, indicating differentiated possibilities of accessing consumer goods or education (S). The clothing and accessories of the family in Image 14 suggest a higher income level, while the family in Image 15 seems to have fewer resources, with no stroller visible and the boys underdressed.

Pavel Štecha's photographs offer valuable insights into the experiences of those who owned cottages as a means of escaping the urban environment and finding peace in the countryside. Image 16 (Appendix) is part of his "Cottage Owners" photographic cycle between 1970-1972 in the surroundings of Prague. His images depict people escaping the city to their cottages for recreation. In image 16, an older couple poses for the photographer, likely in the comfort of their own cottage. They are dressed lightly,

probably on a warm summer day with the man wearing a hat. On the table in front of them, we can see consumables such as alcohol and cigarettes, a book, binoculars, an ashtray, and bottle openers. Both are smoking a cigarette. It is possible that the beverage is homemade since there appears to be no label on the glass bottle.

In addition to the previously mentioned icons and indexes, such as alcohol and cigarettes as icons, and the hat and light clothing as indexes of a warm day, the photograph also depicts reading material as an index, which could imply that the couple enjoys reading during their leisure time. The binoculars on the table index the possibility of wildlife or birds in the surroundings of the cottage, and the presence of alcohol and cigarettes indexes unhealthy habits. The photograph denotes an older couple enjoying a relaxing day in their cottage. The absence of any other people in the photograph suggests a private and secluded environment. The overall atmosphere connotates a sense of escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.

The focus is primarily on the older couple and their leisurely activities in their cottage. An interaction (I1) that can be inferred is the one with the photographer, potentially asking the woman to go and stand behind her husband for a better photograph, as it appears they were sitting across from each other. The presence of alcohol and cigarettes could suggest the norm (N) that smoking and drinking were considered acceptable leisure activities. The image may reflect the ideational structures (I2) that reading was perceived as a recreational pursuit aimed at providing an escape from the monotony and concerns of everyday life. It is likely that the couple owns the cottage, which may suggest a level of material well-being (S) and access to resources that enabled them to afford such a property away from the city.

6. Discussion

After conducting the analysis, it has become apparent that the selected photographs offer insights into the social structure of Czechoslovak society during the normalization period. The findings that have resulted from the interpretation and analysis of the photographic material support and expand the existing sociological literature on social structure of the normalization society. The visual fact analysis, semiotic analysis, and sociological structuralist analysis have demonstrated the effectiveness of these photographs as a visual aid in supporting or reflecting the existing sociological knowledge.

The primary contribution of studying the photographs has been the ability to apply the knowledge gained from the literature about the social structure and observe its manifestations in multiple photographs. While sociological data presented by researchers like Pavel Machonin and Lenka Kalinová provide objective information, they lack the direct perceptual nature that photography offers (Berger, 2013, p.68-69). The inherent complexity of the presented data about the social structure can make it intangible for those without a sociological background or contextual familiarity with the normalization period to comprehend them. Therefore, it becomes advantageous to have visual representations, such as photographs, that can bridge the gap between abstract concepts and numbers and the underlying social reality conveyed by the social structure data. This, for example, includes visualizing the individuals belonging to specific social groups, such as militia or unqualified workforce, as well as manifestations of communist ideology or the dynamics of family life.

In my analysis, I found the captions under photographs to be particularly beneficial (Sztompka, 2007, p.80-84; Becker, 1998, p.4). For instance, Dana Kyndrová often included details such as the date of the photograph, and in some cases, brief contextual information about the events captured in the photograph. These annotations in her monograph proved to be valuable resources for the viewer. Moreover, when conducting the analysis, I found the combination of semiotic and sociological structuralist methods to be the most informative and useful. The semiotic analysis allowed me to comprehend the underlying dynamics and interpret the photographs in terms of signs. Subsequently, utilizing the sociological structuralist approach, I was able to uncover various

structures that revealed the most significant insights. Overall, this combination of methods proved to be highly helpful in extracting valuable information from the photographs.

The analysis revealed the militarization of Czechoslovak society, which commenced with the depicted Soviet invasion (Taborsky, 1973, p.297) in Image 5 and persisted until the end of the normalization era (Blažek, 2013, p.346), as demonstrated in Image 6. The presence of law enforcement was also notable in Images 7, 9, and 14, indicating a strong emphasis on maintaining social control (Bašta, 2013, p.9). Additionally, the photographs showed the prevalence of communist propaganda, as evidenced by its appearance in several images, including Images 7, 8, 9, and 10. This suggests that communist ideology was a constant influence in the governance and daily life of Czechoslovak society during the normalization period.

Another key finding of the analysis was the importance of unqualified labor in Czechoslovak society during this period. The photographic cycle "Prague Shops" by Iren Stehli showcased women of different age groups working in the retail sector, further emphasizing the importance of labor in Czechoslovak society (Kalinová, 1999, p. 30-32). Unfortunately, due to the scope of this thesis, these observations could not be analyzed. However, the importance of full employment (Rychlík, 2015, p.39) and labor, further supported by Kalinová's (1999, p.30-32) observations regarding the employment of women, the elderly, and youth, was evident in Image 12 and Image 13.

The analysis provided valuable insights into the everyday life of the population during the normalization period. For instance, Image 16 illustrated the recreational practice of spending time at one's cottage as a way to escape the city, as noted by Kalinová (1999, p.60-62). Image 16 revealed the unhealthy habit of alcohol and tobacco consumption, while Image 12 shed light on unhealthy dietary habits (Kalinová, 1999, p.58). In addition, Images 14 and 15 provided insights into the family structure and dynamics, possibly reflecting the pro-natalist policies of the regime (Kalinová, 1999, p. 29-30). These images also enabled hypothesizing about the possible socioeconomic disparities among the families depicted (Berger, 2013, p.39). Although these images offered a glimpse into everyday life during the normalization period, it is

important to note that a more detailed analysis would have provided a deeper understanding of the complexities of the everyday experiences of the population.

In my perspective, this thesis has contributed to the field of sociology by demonstrating how photographs can play a role in developing and enhancing our sociological imagination. It highlights the diverse aspects and facts about the social structure that can be identified when applying sociological imagination to the analyzed photographs. Notably, certain traits may not be immediately apparent, especially when employing sociological structuralist analysis and examining ideational and life chances structures. Throughout the analysis process, it was essential to look beyond the surface of the photographs and consider the complex interplay of social factors to identify the relevant information. Personally, I believe that the interpretation of the photographs in my research has stimulated my creativity and sociological imagination, enhancing my visual sensitivity to sociological facts in the process (Sztompka, 2007, p.73).

In conclusion, it must be acknowledged that a substantial portion of the conducted analysis is subjective, as observed by Sztompka (2007, p.49-51) who noted the subjectivity involved in interpreting photographs. Barthes also highlights the subjective aspects of photography (2.1.4. Photographs and Reality). Nevertheless, utilizing Sztompka's critical realism approach, this thesis has emphasized the significance of photographs in sociological research. By approaching the analysis with caution and acknowledging the potential biases and subjectivities that may impact interpretation, the underlying fact remains that photographs indeed depict real-life situations and reflect sociological phenomena, specifically, in the context of this thesis, the social structure of Czechoslovak society.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore selected photographic material taken by Czechoslovak photographers during the normalization period in Czechoslovakia (1969-1989) to gain sociological insights into society's social structure (Q1). To acquire these insights, it was necessary to apply different analytical methods and determine which of the methods were most suitable for supporting sociological knowledge about the social structure (Q2).

The works of several theoreticians, including Roland Barthes, John Berger, Susan Sontag, and Vilém Flusser, were used as a foundation to explore various aspects and complexities of photography in this thesis. The application of photography in sociological research, particularly in visual sociology, was also discussed, along with the methods of analysis derived from this field. The thesis also provided an overview of the historical, political, and economic context of the normalization period, which required clarification on multiple aspects. Additionally, a chapter was devoted to the social structure of Czechoslovakia, highlighting significant dimensions that could be observed in the photographs.

The initial stage of the analysis involved creating categories that could organize the visual representations of social structure. Each category was assigned specific examples to provide further clarity and definition of its scope. Visual fact analysis was then employed to identify and categorize the social facts visible in each selected photograph, relevant to the topic at hand. Semiotic analysis was subsequently utilized to explore the signs and meanings behind the social facts and disclose any connotations that may be present. Finally, Sztompka's structuralist method was applied to structure the analyses and uncover any interactions, norms, ideas, or life chances that could be inferred from the subjects depicted in the photographs.

It should be noted that I acknowledge the limitations of my analysis and recognize that there are many aspects of the literature that could be further examined. However, as I aimed to employ diverse methods and conduct a comprehensive analysis of a smaller set of photos, there were inherent constraints in analyzing every detail of the material. Furthermore, I am aware that drawing definitive conclusions based on a single photograph is as a rule not feasible. To gain a better understanding of social

structure, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive analysis of diverse photographic material that depicts visual manifestations in different settings or contexts. Moreover, such analysis would enable the exploration of other dimensions of social structure beyond what is depicted in the limited set of analyzed photographs (such as marginalized groups, scarcity of goods in the economy, or cultural aspects). It is crucial to approach photographs as one piece of evidence among many and interpret their findings with empathy and based on relevant literature.

In terms of future research, it is recommended to expand the scope by including a larger number of photographs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the sociological information and draw more significant conclusions. Additionally, future research could focus on sociologically relevant dimensions of the experience of different segments of society, such as women, minorities, and dissidents, which was not feasible in this thesis. Another area of future research could investigate photographs of the normalization period's effects on Czechoslovakia's economy, society, and culture, and compare them to other communist regimes of the era.

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9. Appendix

Image 1.

Image 2.
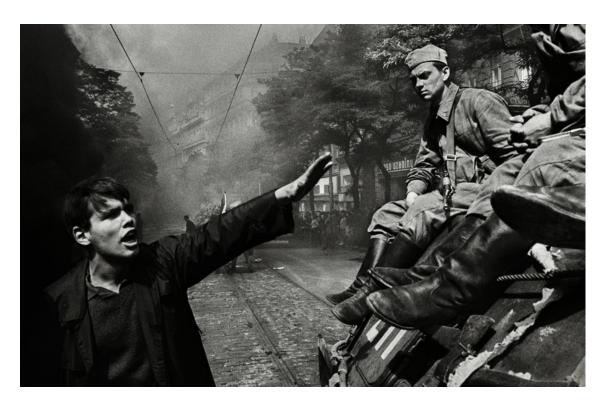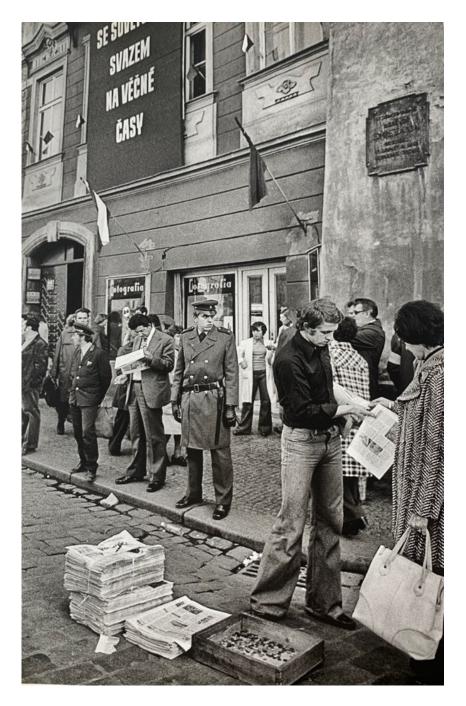
Image 3.

Image 4.

Image 5.

Image 6.

Image 7.

Image 8.

Image 9.

Image 10.

Image 11.

Image 12.

Image 13.

Image 14.

Image 15.

Image 16.

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Image 15. Aulehla, Gustav. (2009). *Fotografie : Photographs 1957-1990.* Kant.

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