
Discourses of Thrift and Consumer Reasonability in Czech State-Socialist Society*

MARTIN HÁJEK and TOMÁŠ SAMEC**

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague

Abstract: The article examines how notions of thrift, saving, and frugality were present and active in the state-socialist discourses of economic behaviour and what meaning these notions carried. The research is based on three kinds of data: the official state-socialist public discourse of economic behaviour as presented in transcripts of parliamentary speeches, household guides and manuals, and eyewitness accounts of the state-socialist era recollected in oral history interviews. Such a multi-faceted corpus of discourse data made it possible to examine factual and normative aspects of thrift in state-socialist discourses and compare them with the accounts of everyday practices and tactics that may well contradict the official discourse. The analysis reveals that (a) notions of thrift and saving were strongly present throughout the period in all discourses examined, (b) both terms underwent a semantic shift from a productive to a restrictive meaning over time, and (c) both notions were eventually publicly sidelined by the emphasis on raising revenue. Despite fading from public discourse in the late 1980s, the notion of thrift had by then become instilled in the subjective understanding of the 'reasonable consumer', a concept that can therefore be considered a precursor of the contemporary concept of consumer responsabilisation.

Keywords: thrift, saving, discourse analysis, socialism, consumers, consumer responsabilisation

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** Direct all correspondence to: Martin Hájek, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, U Kříže 8, 158 00 Prague 5, Czech Republic, e-mail: martin.hajek@fsv.cuni.cz; Tomáš Samec, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, U Kříže 8, 158 00 Prague 5, Czech Republic, e-mail: tomas.samec@fsv.cuni.cz.

The present-day discursive representation of consumer behaviour in Czech society is marked by a visible inconsistency. On the one hand, experts and the media praise rising household consumption as contributing significantly to the growth of the national economy (or so we are told). On the other hand, insistent warnings, likewise supported by experts, against over-indebtedness, both individual and public, appear regularly in those same media. Uncertainty about what is a 'desirable' level of consumption becomes apparent in the context of household saving behaviour. Czech households' bank savings are relatively high compared to their debts and continue to grow despite almost negative interest rates. Consequently, money-saving Czechs are relatively reluctant to make use of consumer credit or other advanced financial services; the most accepted and practiced form of debt is a mortgage loan. The structure of Czech household financial assets is rather conservative: according to OECD categories, currency and deposits made up 50.4% of all Czech households' assets, which is the second-highest proportion in the European Union. Slovakia, Slovenia, and Poland likewise rank at the top of this list.

Although it is not our ambition to explain the causes of these numbers, a point of departure would be the 'consumer conservatism' that exists in the Czech Republic and (some) other post-socialist countries. In our opinion, the roots of the phenomenon lie in (a) the recent experience of the limits and dangers of the free market following a short period of witnessing its 'marvels' and after the greedy consumerism of the 1990s [see Weiner 2007]; and (b) long years of experience with the state-socialist 'economy of shortage' [Kornai 1992] and the concurrent discourses of saving and thrift in which a large part of the current Czech population (people aged 40 and older) were socialised. In a sense, the latter was a precondition for the former.

In this paper, we focus on the socialist discourses of thrift and saving that have contributed significantly to the current discourse. By doing so, we mean to point out to the reader that while the consumer practices of saving, thrift, or waste in the Czech(oslovak) economy or family do not constitute our primary focus, the character of the discourse and the particular semantics attached to the concepts of thrift and saving are fundamental for understanding the actions of all actors in this economic field. We regard discourse as a formative rather than solely a descriptive device shaping which notions might be articulated (and how) and what could be seen as valuable: be it objects, things, practices, or subjects [Foucault 1971]. We realise, however, that there was no stand-alone economic discourse in state-socialist society. Rather, there was an ideologically driven discourse of a 'progressive' socialist society built on the Marx-Leninist legacy, which purposively blended economics, politics, logic, and rhetoric. Therefore, while referring to the literature on the performativity of discursive accounts in the context of the economy and economic actions [MacKenzie 2006; Callon 2007; Butler 2010; Cochoy 2010; Clarke 2012; Brassett and Clarke 2012; La Berge 2015; Morris 2016], we are aware that here we are applying it to the specific conditions of an overtly

performative discourse. Specifically, our research aims to contribute to the understanding of how public discourse shapes and (trans)forms subjectivities through a process of ascribing a particular type of consumer responsibility to them.

In order to include the relevant discursive spheres in the analysis, we examined three important contexts in which the ideology and experience of thrift was enacted in Czech society. In our data, transcripts of parliamentary debates and speeches from 1948 to 1989 represent the ideologically loaded discourse of the state-socialist public sphere; household guides and manuals serve as the material for studying the discourse of economic behaviour more concerned with everyday matters than are political speeches (even if the manuals were nonetheless ideologically framed); and finally, oral-historical narratives of individuals who lived under socialism reflect the discourse of the subjective experience of the socialist economy, including its ideological aspects.

Analysing these data, we discovered that the official economic discourse throughout the whole socialist period of 1948–1989, as well as most eyewitness testimonials, praised saving and thrift as applied to all available resources—including time—as morally valuable. The discourse of thrift permeated all levels of society, from worker households to the parliamentary speeches of the highest functionaries. During the period under study, however, saving and thrift were successively articulated as two distinct semantic forms. They were framed either as *productive*—purporting that improved organisation and innovation aimed at decreasing the waste of resources would increase their availability, thereby immediately accelerating economic growth and helping to achieve a higher standard of living; or *restrictive*—emphasising the need to limit (in whatever way) consumption due to worsening economic conditions. This semantic bivalence in the notion of thrift (both as a state of economic ‘thriving’ and scaling down) is not unknown [Podkalicka and Potts 2015; Yates and Hunter 2011]. What our study revealed is the particular dynamic of the shift in emphasis from one meaning to the other during the state-socialist period. In fact, we observed a dual shift in the (re)articulation of thrift: in the public discourse, the semantic transformation went from the productive meaning of thrift (saving resources *in order to* build socialism) to the restrictive meaning (saving *because of* a lack of resources), while in household/family discourse, the shift was in the opposite direction, from the post-war restrictive meaning (having to make do with little) to the later productive one (rational household management). It is interesting to compare these shifts to the semantic form present in public discourses on consumption in capitalist societies in the West. Moreover, our research revealed that there was no straightforward relationship between discourse and praxis: for one thing, the discourse of thrift did not preclude wasteful behaviour (economising one resource could lead directly to the squandering of a different one); for another, the post-war socialist definition of thrift and saving as a form of innovative social organisation was silenced by growing prosperity. These findings substantiate the performative character of economic discourse aimed at shaping practice rather than reflecting it.

The planned socialist economy: shortage and waste as two sides of the same coin

As self-described in official documents, the state-socialist economy was a centrally planned system with collective ownership of the means of production. In reality, planning was greatly influenced by a play of interests, wherein planning engineers attempted to design a politically constrained scheme outlining what was to be produced, sold, and consumed based largely on distorted data received from lower levels of the economic-bureaucratic hierarchy. Data were distorted because in order to officially meet the demands of such a plan, companies developed a wide range of tricks, including manipulating information regarding their production capacities, creating secret stocks of resources, and engaging in barter transactions with other enterprises. Such survival strategies resulted in inefficient resource management and, consequently, continual resource deficits, which is what contributed to the emergence of the 'shortage economy' [Kornai 1992: 233 ff.].

The economy of shortage affected the domain of business (e.g. it often reversed the traditional pyramid of organisational control [Mlčoch 2004]), as well as the domains of individual and family consumption. Having to deal with a shortage of various goods was so typical that Kornai, in his book on the political economy of communism [1992], used a multiple decision-and-action shopping process as a prototypical example of coping with the shortage economy. In contrast to today's shopping practices, the main problem at the time was not the lack of money to purchase some desirable good or service, but rather the time- and energy-consuming processes of searching for a good or service, queuing up for it (if it was indeed found to be available), seeking an available substitute, postponing purchase, or, eventually, abandoning the idea of acquiring it altogether [Alexeev 1988: 18]. Consequently, people had to learn the art of getting the things they needed in the shortest and most satisfactory manner possible [Shevchenko 2002: 851–854], rendering the ability to procure almost anything a highly prized skill, a fact that was clearly reflected in the prevailing public discourse's much more frequent references to such activities as saving, budgeting, or being thrifty than to activities related to spending.

The chronic lack of goods was one side of the coin, the second being a chronic waste of resources not simply attributable to poor planning. Apart from the general public discourse praising thrifty behaviour, there were no individual or collective incentives to support being economical or prudent with collectively owned resources (energy, raw material, machines, etc.); no enterprise feared bankruptcy, and no employee feared being fired for inefficient or unnecessary waste-generating work. As long as the plan was fulfilled or even exceeded, all wasteful behaviour was tolerated. Another significant cause of shortage was that people took materials and equipment from their workplace for their own personal use [see Smolyak 2014], which, while illegal, was not considered morally wrong. A dictum that circulated widely in Czech society in the 1970s and 1980s

was: 'Whoever doesn't steal from the state, is stealing from their own family.' In fact, the attitude represented in this saying was regarded as problematic or wasteful only from the perspective of managers, who then had to search for more supplies and materials in order to fulfil the production plan; from the perspective of the person stealing, it was considered wasteful to leave useful things in the enterprise's—i.e. nobody's—stock (for an insightful account of the discursive construction of the distinction between public and private property in Eastern European socialist societies, see Gal [2005]).

The specific features of socialist and post-socialist consumerism

The early post-collapse approach in scholarship to the socialist economy [e.g. Kornai 1992; Verdery 1996] depicted the reality of state socialism as mostly dull and grey, and the possibilities for consumption as inherently insufficient to meet household needs and demands. This argument is understandable inasmuch as these features (a) were the ones most apparent in a comparison of Eastern and Western societies at the time, (b) corresponded with the early anti-consumerist ethos of communist ideology, which limited consumption to human needs [Fehér, Heller and Márkus 1983; Buchli 1999; Gronow 2003]. However, recent literature that uses the present situation in post-socialist Eastern Europe as an additional point of reference describes a more complex picture, in which socialist consumption can also be viewed as challenging and thrilling [Fehérváry 2009: 427–430; Bren and Neuburger 2012: 4] because of its 'prosumer' [Toffler 1980] character. Seen through the lens of post-communist nostalgia [Todorova and Gille 2010], earlier strategies for pursuing goods in short supply have been retrospectively appraised positively by some and contrasted with the 'boring' shopping experience offered by the post-transformation economy [Albinsson, Wolf and Kopf 2010: 417]. Lack encouraged people to mobilise their social networks [Berdahl 1999], and pushed them to use their imagination and creativity and to develop special knowledge and DIY skills, such as repairing and recycling items [Chelcea 2002], sewing one's own clothes, decorating the apartment [Fehérváry 2009: 437], and self-building houses, cottages, and garden allotments [Bren 2002; Gibas et al. 2013: 19]. From this perspective, socialist 'prosumer thrift' can be linked to the semantics of 'thriving', i.e. attaining prosperity through innovation and stewardship. The consumer situation of the time also allowed for the fulfilment of dreams through the occasional consumption of Western goods (for example, such as Slovenian trips to Italy [see Švab 2002] and by longing for Western artefacts available in Poland [see Burrell 2011]).

Another important facet in comparing the consumer reality of socialist and post-socialist times is the contrast between the discursive politicisation of consumption during the former and its subsequent de-politicisation during the transformation period. Consumption under the socialist regime was not merely the practice of obtaining and consuming goods, but proved to be a field of activ-

ity where the power of the state (and Party) could be exercised. Besides various consumer policies, the state promoted ideologies of thrifty and rational individuals/families [Patico and Caldwell 2002: 287–288] and of a paternalist state that takes care of its citizens [Fehér, Heller and Márkus 1983; Búriková 2006: 84–85]. However, the exercise of power was not just a top-down process. Individuals and families could also wield influence by strategically defining certain unsatisfactory conditions, such as the scarcity and/or low-quality of certain goods in shops, the misconduct of shop clerks, or the homogenisation of people's needs during planning as political issues [Fehérváry 2009: 446–450; Hájek, Dlouhá and Samec 2014]. Discursively politicising such deficiencies in the socialist world of consumption could (and indeed frequently did) undermine the Party's and the state's institutional legitimacy. Some authors even argue that discontent and unsatisfied consumer desires were the force that brought the socialist regime down [Stitzel 2005; Búriková 2006: 86–88].

Consumption in socialist society was determined not only by the socialist regime itself, but also by pre-socialist norms concerning economic behaviour in general and consumption in particular. The effect on consumer behaviour was twofold: there was a direct impact through people's tending to behave according to the norms in which they were socialised, and an indirect one through the communist elite's presentation of the pre-socialist, (petty-)bourgeois norms of consumption as a deplorable anachronism that had to be eradicated once for all. Interestingly, the notion of thrift played an important role in the economic discourse of both periods. Ossowska, in her book from the mid-1950s, characterised two different rationalities associated with the notion of thrift: the ego-centred bourgeois one and the emancipatory socialist one [Ossowska 1986: chap. 4]. In a more recent account, Pellandini-Simányi describes an active fusion of pre-socialist and socialist consumer norms into 'pragmatic beliefs' derived from a particular notion of the good life [2016]. In our research, we observed a similar intermingling of petty bourgeois and socialist notions of thrift in family/household discourse, while public discourse was dominated by ideologically-driven polarisation.

Data and methods of analysis

The aim of our research was to study discourses of thrift and saving in Czech(slovak) socialist society (1948–1989). In order to cover all relevant sources, we analysed three kinds of data: the official state-socialist public discourse of economic and frugal behaviour (present in the transcripts of parliamentary speeches), expressions of state-socialist ideology targeting individual households (present in home-economy household manuals), and the accounts of consumption practices of eyewitnesses of the state-socialist era (as present in transcripts of oral history biographical interviews). The key characteristics of these text corpora are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the text corpora analysed

	Time period, temporality	Size	Discursive mode	Form	Inner structure	Type of analysis
Transcripts of parliamentary speeches	1948–1990, actual	Approx. 25 000 pages	Spoken / written	Official, institutional	Plenary speeches, discussions	Keyword-driven, qualitative content analysis
Household manuals & guides	1958–1989, actual	10 books	Written	Official / everyday	Chapters on household maintenance & economy	Qualitative content and critical discourse analysis
Oral history biographical interviews	1940–2002, retrospective	210 interviews	Spoken	Everyday	Workers (61), intelligentsia (51), dissidents (66), communist functionaries (32)	Keyword-driven, qualitative content analysis

In assembling this multi-faceted corpus of data we strove to ensure two things. First, we sought to capture the whole period of state socialism because its ideology and economic policy, while steadily referring to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, nevertheless changed their flavour several times between 1948 and 1989. Second, aware of the obvious discrepancy between the official discourse and everyday discourse, we tried to include both of them in the corpus. As regards ideological discourse, it is satisfactorily represented in our data in the transcripts of parliamentary speeches (PS) and household manuals (HM). The latter could also contribute to the everyday discourse as they had to be written in such a way that ordinary people could read and use them. On the other hand, they are considerably normative and therefore we cannot assume they represent the experience lived by real people [McFall 2008: 70]; in fact, we assume the contrary—that the household manuals were in fact published in an effort to change people's behaviour. Oral history biographical interviews (OHBI) are a kind of data that is not fully comparable with historical documents, since they originate in the present. We included them because they reflect the ideological discourse of the socialist past to the extent that they assimilate it, make it explicit, or dissociate from it. We used these narrative recollections to validate our interpretation of historical discourses.

Previous studies of thrift have often noted the variety of meanings associated with this notion, 'depending on the historical, situational and discursive context in which [the concept] is used' [Podkalická and Tang 2014: 423]. This is the subject of our study. Nevertheless, the contextuality of the notion of thrift is reflected in lexical variation, at least in Czech, that has remained overlooked. In our research, we associated thrift (*šetrnost*) with such words as *hospodárnost* (stewardship), *spořivost* (saving behaviour), *úspornost* (economising), *střídmost* (frugality). *Šetrnost* (thrift), *spořivost* (saving behaviour), and *střídmost* (frugality) refer to personal qualities or virtues, while *hospodárnost* (stewardship) and *úspornost* (economising) relate rather to management or policies. But generally, they all fall within a similar semantic field indicating a wise, careful, prudent, and sensible form of economic behaviour.

Our method of analysis was chosen to accommodate the size of the corpus studied. In the case of the parliamentary speeches and oral history biographical interviews, we first used a quantitative approach in a textual analysis and searched for keywords relevant to thrift (see above), their antonyms (waste, spendthrift, etc.), and related economic terms (money, investment, speculation, consumer, etc.). Next, we retrieved all occurrences of the keywords and the surrounding text within a paragraph or within a fifty-word frame in the case of oral narratives. The subsequent qualitative analysis consisted of reading selected passages and performing an open coding of the contexts, meanings, and pragmatic use of the keywords in the discourse. As we explain above, we constantly kept in mind that the oral narratives are retrospective and selective post-socialist accounts of a personal and social past [Hájek, Havlík and Nekvapil 2014]. Depending on the availability of data, the analysis of parliamentary speeches was carried out in RQDA (R package for Qualitative Data Analysis, <http://rqda.r-forge.r-project.org>) and

the analysis of OHBI in KonText, a web-based text analysis application of the Institute of the Czech National Corpus (<https://kontext.korpus.cz>). Both software packages made it possible to 'jump' from a selected excerpt with the keyword to the original text, so we regularly checked our coding in the original text in order to prevent de- or mis-contextualised reading.

Household manuals or, more precisely, the chapters dedicated to household economy, were initially analysed using the approach of qualitative content analysis [Mayring 2000] focusing on the concept of saving (*šetření*). The categories for coding were: (1) saving as a goal as such, or saving as a means to getting something else; (2) the subject of saving (what was saved); (3) the context of the saving practice; (4) the practical means of saving (e. g. use of the family budget). In the second step we focused on the ideological framing of practical advice in household manuals [Fairclough 1992; Van Dijk 1998; Van Leeuwen 2008] and we explored the performativity of manuals according to their discursive construction of the good socialist household/consumer.

The contextuality and reflexivity of all textual data (referring to the texts' historical and social contexts—in our case the social and political position of the speaker, historical events such as the Soviet occupation in 1968, and the 'normalisation' period between 1970 and 1984, etc.) were constantly taken into consideration throughout the analysis. The reflexivity of the analytical process also drew on the authors' differing experiences of the socialist era—one experienced it first hand while growing up, the other knows about it mostly indirectly. Their resultant distinctive pre-understanding of texts provided the basis for a fruitful discussion of various analytical interpretations of textual data [for a similar interpretive arrangement, see Kabele and Hájek 2008].

The semantics of productive thrift—a means to enhance agency

As indicated in the theoretical section, the socialist economic discourse of thrift was characterised by a dual semantics: productive and restrictive. Productive thrift aimed to increase factory production, the household standard of living, the efficacy of work, and time for leisure activities. The restrictive mode, on the other hand, referred to practices that reduced individual and/or collective agency—for example, by simply cutting down the input of raw materials in industry, or limiting the amount of tropical fruit on the market. The semantics of productivity were already evident in parliamentary speeches in the 1950s, purposively positioned in opposition to the putative capitalist modes of thrift; socialism was rhetorically presented as more effective and, thanks to central planning, also more efficient than the capitalist economy:

Therefore, thriftiness and frugality, which must be the guiding principles for all those who manage public funds, take on, in our country, an active and creative character unfamiliar in capitalism: to economise well does not mean to sit on money, but rather

to look for new ways of, for instance, making administration less expensive; to search for new ways to organise labour, eliminate duplication, strengthen control, think about managing manpower, etc. (National Assembly, 52nd meeting, 9 March 1951)

In such a context, the socialist versions of thrift and economising were depicted as different from those of capitalism, where, according to the official accounts, they represented the mere accumulation of money. ‘Socialist’ thrift, in contrast, called for the better organisation of work, and economising was related to innovation and intelligence—the better work is organised, the more frugal and thrifty it is. And the more saving that is achieved, the more the economy grows and the socialist regime thrives and is strengthened. Gradually, purposeful and overt efforts to economise in factories became a standard part of the work experience and offered the possibility of moral and financial reward, as described in the following quotation from a working-class narrator:

That meant, first of all, that commitments to secure the plan for the fourth quarter of the following year were made as a matter of course ... The guys in the workshop decided that they would clean the machines, which of course they were supposed to do, that they would conserve material, which was also supposed to be done; people in logistics would save fuel, there would be no accidents—mostly things like that. And usually that’s the way it was all accomplished. And when it was accomplished, that was a reason to get some kind of remuneration. (ID101, male, worker)

Looking into the household manuals, we see the semantics of productive thrift aimed mostly at time efficiency and the good organisation of work; for example, the books advise that by planning what to buy before going shopping rather than making a decision on the spot, people can save a significant amount of time [Břízová and Krchová 1958: 593]. Interestingly, for households time is usually considered the first resource to save, and money comes only second:

Time, financial assets, and our own energy are the three main components that have to be managed [when running a household] and are closely related to each other. Sometimes we have to decide which task we should leave to the services of professionals, and which we can do ourselves ... The proper organisation of all household work is the most important issue when managing time, energy, and money. [Dubský 1981: 31]

Saving time was important especially for employed women, who worked a ‘second shift’ in the household, and for whom time could sometimes be even more valuable than money: help with most domestic work (cooking, cleaning, taking care of the children) could not easily be purchased. Good time management thus enabled more tasks to be accomplished and created room for leisure.

In a similar vein, saving could also bring about a direct ‘profit’ directly—at least according to the following quotation from parliamentary discourse:

When we talk about savings, the outcomes of the work done by the improvement movement must not be forgotten. As an example of a proposed innovation to conserve material, I want to mention a suggestion for improvement from comrades Novák and Havlík, whose waste-cutting plans have saved 23,503 kg of dynamo sheets in the process of pole pressing. That means a profit of about 26,000 crowns [the Czech unit of currency] for the plant. (National Assembly, 17th meeting, 17 April 1957)

The declared ‘profit’ from economising in the production of sheet metal was more metaphorical than real—the money saved did not, as such, represent a profit in the strict economic sense; it being labelling as such confirms the positive ideological connotation savings had in the official discourse. Its high ideological value was also one reason individuals and collectives regularly competed over who could save up the most resources and over who could submit the highest number of registered ‘improvement proposals’ [see also Gille 2007: 59 ff].

This sort of savings ‘profit’ could ideally also be generated by economical households and was seen to benefit not only those households but society as a whole. A household manual from the 1950s explains the benefits of seasonal sales of vegetables or the ‘white weeks’ for purchasing bed and table linen, describing them as being ‘to our benefit’ (because we save the money) ‘and at the same time [helping] to use up the surplus in our economy’ [Břízová and Krchová 1958: 593]. However, as far as maximising resource efficiency was concerned, ten years later, in a book called *Math for Households*, the same authors rejected the reckless saving of money in favour of the skilful and smart use of non-monetary resources available to the family, emphasising the better organisation of human activity:

Although financial income remains the foundation of our standard of living, it is not the only thing that makes it up. Our skill also applies to the way we make use of energy, time, abilities, and activities, both our own and those of whom we work with. A crown incorrectly saved at the expense of other opportunities can mean a loss in the overall economy. [Břízová and Krchová 1968: 7]

However, in their biographical interviews, the eyewitnesses of socialism did not present thrift and saving in the same ideological light and ethos of ‘building up socialism’ as did the official discourses. Saving was nonetheless considered an appropriate way to raise an individual’s or family’s sense of agency by making it possible to purchase a car, a house, or go on holiday. This relationship holds true in the inverse sense as well; those narrators who acknowledged their limited agency related it to their unwillingness to save:

Narrator: We didn’t really travel anywhere. I do not even think there was money for that. One didn’t want to save.

Interviewer: One did not want to save?

N: One didn’t want to save. I really don’t know what to tell you. (ID 81, female, worker)

Note how the negative moral connotation of an aversion to saving may be a threat to the identity the narrator is presenting and is neutralised by the narrator's use of an odd passive and impersonal grammatical form, 'one didn't want to save' (*nechtělo se*). The expression is so unusual that the interviewer did not understand it and repeated it to make sure that she had heard correctly. The narrator then herself again repeated the very same expression, suggesting that there was no need for any further explanation; she closed the topic by stating that there was nothing more that could be said.

The ability to save and remain debt free was thus positively evaluated as something to be proud of, as is evident in the following quotation (and again, saving here is not connected to restriction and limitation but to activity, i.e. to earning money and industriousness):

Yes, we saved, but we saved because we wanted to have something. We were used to it. My husband is one of many children, I am one of many children, and we were happy to be earning and that we could save up for everything through our diligence, and we never had to take any loans, not for anything. (ID 210, female, worker)

The semantics of restrictive thrift in advanced socialism—the need for 'rationalisation'

Except for during a relatively short post-war period of general shortage, the restrictive semantics of thrift only appeared in public discourse as late as the end of the 1960s and became dominant in the 1970s. This semantic shift was associated with the official declaration that 'Socialism has triumphed in our country!' (Constitution, 1960) and with that the moral superiority and efficiency of the centrally planned economy over the capitalist regime had thus been proven in practice. To put it differently, a just socialist society had already been built, and the task remaining at hand was to make it more and more prosperous (and to eventually transform it into communism). However, the economic stagnation that had started in the second half of the 1960s was intensified by the rising prices of oil in the 1970s and the technological deficits of socialist industries, showing that the socialist economy, while effective, was far from efficient. In the second half of the 1970s, Czechoslovak competitiveness on the international markets was therefore affected, and the economy lacked the 'hard' currencies needed to buy resources and technology from other countries. The situation was perceived as serious by government and Party officials, leading them to adopt the 'Set of Measures to Improve the System of Planned National Economic Management after 1980', which aimed to reduce the extensive use of resources both in industrial enterprises and in everyday consumption. Given that socialism had already been built, these measures could not be discursively framed as the *building* of socialism, but rather as its *improvement* through the universal *rationalisation* of every aspect of production and consumption.

An official definition of 'rationalisation' can be found in the contemporary *Czech Dictionary of Foreign Words* [Klimeš 1983: 580]:

- a) an arrangement in accordance with principles based on reason;
- b) a set of measures aimed at a more efficient, economic way of working, of production, etc.; comprehensive socialist r. = r. concerning not only production itself, but also its management and administration, primarily contingent on the activity and initiative of the workers (unlike capitalist r., which is focused primarily on increasing the intensity of the exploitation of labour, the socialist r. aims to increase all factors of performance growth, while at the same time eliminating strenuous work and improving working conditions).

'Comprehensive socialist rationalisation' was rhetorically contrasted with capitalist rationalisation and, like in the 1950s, two modes (socialist versus capitalist) of thrift emerged in the ideological discourse of the 1970s and 1980s. While capitalist rationalisation was described as limited to work efficiency and having a severe impact on the workers (labelled as victims), socialist rationalisation was presented as comprehensive and its application beneficial to all. Although it was primarily simple ideological rhetoric, there was nevertheless an evident discursive effort to present socialist thrift as a win-win game. The principal difference between rationalisation and the thrift of the previous 'building socialism' era was that the former was not concerned with achieving a satisfactory level of production and consumption, but rather with sustaining its growth under unfavourable conditions.

Regardless of the positive phrasing used in describing rationalisation and improvement, in simple language it principally translated into a call for a policy of limited consumption:

Securing the Republic's energy needs has to be sought not only through coal mining and power generation, but also increasingly in the rationalisation of consumption. We must conserve, from the plant to the home—simply everywhere! It is necessary to implement strong measures to save energy in literally every workshop. It will also be necessary to carry out an awareness-raising campaign among the population, so that they understand the situation and accept fuel and energy management as a life necessity. (Czech National Council, 10th meeting, 18 December 1978)

Thus the new expression 'rationalisation of consumption' became ubiquitous; until the 1970s rationalisation almost exclusively concerned the sphere of production, but from the 1970s onward, personal consumption was discursively added to the general rationalisation effort. On the other hand, and somewhat contradictorily, an emphasis on the steady increase in the level of consumption and the standard of living was used more and more frequently as an important political legitimisation of the socialist regime [Fehérváry 2009; Stitzel 2005]. The

term 'rationalisation' was now used to indicate the effort to prevent any unnecessary expenses, in much the same way as present-day managerial euphemisms are [Keyes 2011].

In the manuals written for households, the notion of thrift did somewhat mirror this semantic shift, even if not mechanically. Instead of 'rationalisation' in organisations they focused on 'rational' consumer subjectivity. The concerns of ordinary consumers were understandably not the same as those which preoccupied the political elites; moreover, unlike efficiency of production, the standard of living gradually increased during the 1970s. Thus, the pressing question became how to ideologically justify the need for thrift and frugality. The dominant discursive strategy we encountered in the manuals was to emphasise the link between individual consumption and the national economy (the relevance of the 'national economy' trope in the discourse of household economy is not limited to the setting of socialist economy [cf. Aitken 2007: 84–110; Greenfield and Williams 2007]). When a consumer acted unreasonably (i.e. not thriftily), economic damage was done not only to her or him, but to society at large:

Thrifty and rational consumption therefore influences the overall standard of living in the country, in a similar way that economic production does. It is definitely necessary to reject the idea that being able to afford to waste what the society produces is a sign of a high living standard. [Hájková 1984: 7]

Besides interconnecting individual and national consumption, this discursive shift accompanied the change from a moral and ideological connotation and justification of thrift and frugality to the 'rational rules of consumption', bringing money into play again after several decades of being in 'discursive exile'. Quite newly, financial instruments such as the state-subsidised 'premium savings account for young people' (requiring an initial parental deposit) were encouraged as gifts for newlyweds. Authors of household manuals also expected people to be able to calculate whether the purchase of given goods would be economically advantageous or not. Moreover, the manuals demonstrated how to run households like enterprises, adhering to the same principles and practices:

Amortisation can be determined for each object in a household: it is enough to know its purchase price and to estimate how long it is supposed to be in service. For example, a sewing machine's purchase price is 3000 Czechoslovak crowns and the estimated operating life is 15 years. The annual amortisation amount is determined by calculating: $3000/15 = 200$. For the sewing machine to be used in accordance with basic economic rules, the housekeeper should achieve an annual economic effect of at least 200 crowns by using it. If the machine is not used, then the funds to purchase it have been wasted. [Hájková 1984: 55]

In our opinion, the rationalisation argument had an ambivalent impact on the discourse of thrift and frugality. On the one hand, it enabled the communist and

economic elites to call for higher production efficiency and limited consumption without needing to rely on—at the time already unconvincing—building-up-socialism rhetoric. Economically, rational behaviour was supposed to appeal to everybody, from the CEOs of big companies to the last consumer. On the other hand, rationalisation disconnected saving and thrift from its traditional (both socialist and pre-socialist) moral and ideological framework. The bond that discursively linked the economic and moral realm in the 1950s and 1960s began to crumble and was replaced by a new terminological coupling: economy and rationality. This tendency can be clearly observed in one of the manuals, which ends with a test and a typology of readers based on points scored for correct answers; the category of readers with the fewest points is described as follows:

Unfortunately, you're an economist only against your will, and on top of that with reservations. Your economic thinking and actions are for the most part irrational. You commit a series of errors that are good for neither your family nor society. You should look to take steps towards improvement. [Hájková 1985: 300]

The discursive retreat of thrift—the need to raise income

The third discursive shift began in the 1980s, when some MPs condemned saving money as irrational when 'practised at any cost', i.e. regardless of having good reasons to do so. The notion of productive thrift disappeared, and now thrift and frugality were seen as potentially weakening the economy and representing economic conservatism. The priority became raising income.

Overall, it is necessary to appreciate the fact that the draft state budget—in terms of revenue and expenditure—is balanced. Nevertheless, generating sufficient sources of revenue will certainly be more difficult than carrying out the budgetary expenditures. I do not think that the solution lies in 'scrimping' on small items, in saving at any cost, but—while economising responsibly—in substantially increasing the efficiency of the national economy by lowering requirements for the input of labour and material resources. (Czech National Council, 7th meeting, 20 December 1982)

The argument for rationalisation makes it possible to change the semantics of thrift from restriction of expenses to the increase of income. However, the cause of the shift is not evident, at least from the analysis of parliamentary speeches. We may speculate that the introduction of IT into industrial production and elsewhere could have been the cause; unlike mechanical machines, which could be maintained by careful and economical management (i.e. repairs, avoiding overuse, regular upkeep), IT had to be bought abroad. The growing obsolescence of industry and technology rendered thrift and saving a conservative approach. After the second half of the 1980s, the economic priority became raising revenue rather than competing to save up money or resources. This became apparent im-

mediately after the Velvet Revolution, when one of the pre-revolutionary members of parliament made a suggestion:

Let me, finally, suggest that we speak to the fact that it is right to economise and to take measures towards saving. But, at the same time, we acknowledge the axiom that anyone can save, even a dope, but the smart earn as much as is needed. (Czech National Council, 25th meeting, 29 March 1990)

Although thrift and frugality were not questioned altogether ('it is right to economise and to take measures towards saving') they became relegated to second place because of their restrictive nature. Instead, in public discourse, the most productive and economically smart general strategy for all became the effort to raise revenues. Notice the expression: 'anyone can save, even a dope', which implies the existence of a particular, no matter how simple, 'saving' skill. While this characterisation may sound unjustified in the context of the wasteful socialist economy, it does not necessarily represent a contradiction: economic problems were not caused by the inability to save *per se*, but by faulty incentives which generally led to prioritising the fulfilment of plans over the thoughtful administration of resources [see Gille 2007].

The notion of a socialist consumer as a reasonable consumer

In the previous sections we could observe that thrift and saving were complex in both a discursive and practical sense. The discursive complexity resides in thrift's double semantics (productive and restrictive). In the practical sense, fruitful thrift and saving were not trivial achievements and required the mobilisation of a particular combination of skills, know-how, and social capital. Again, the quotation from the household manual may be recalled here to illustrate the importance of consumer reasonability: 'The well-considered and timely purchase saves time and money.' [Břízová and Krchová 1958: 593] The manuals praise households that are able to model their consumption practices on those (discursively) established for factories and the economy as a whole. In other words, such households (a) keep their own emotional consumption in check and rely on techniques such as consumption planning, family budgets, and structuring expenses according to 'real needs' (all of which were defined as proper and socially desirable); (b) mobilise reasonability in the service of the needs of the national economy, which was the second goal of the ideology represented in manuals and speeches:

If we are not to turn into exhausted, never perfectly satisfied consumers constantly looking for things that we often do not even need and acquiring them at the cost of unreasonable sacrifices, we must be able to navigate our way through the available options. We don't need, and cannot have, everything that we see around us. Some

things need to be renounced and some things prioritised. The point of a good manager and of a financial balance is to choose wisely from the given options. [Břízová and Krchová 1968: 2]

Economic and rational consumption therefore influences the overall standard of living in the country in a similar way that economic production does. [Hájková 1984: 7]

The official discourse was in contrast with people's understanding of how and why reasonability should be exercised. In the biographical narratives, we frequently encountered that the goal of families was not to help society, the Party, or national economy, but to secure a certain standard of living for themselves and, implicitly, an acceptable amount of autonomy from the political regime. The reasonable consumer was thus one who was able to save up to purchase and consume desired goods (i.e. make money, and use knowledge, skills, or social networks to acquire goods); the reasonable consumer was nonetheless also one who was able to adequately take advantage of the system as described in the quotation further below referring to gathering clippings that had been thrown into the dump by an enterprise, as well as in the following one:

These child benefits existed, like, already in 1989, those were some decent figures. If you, for example, got almost 2000 for three kids [per month], then the families saved, get this, that 2000 ... and a car cost 55 000. In three years of child benefits, easily, I always used to laugh, that from child benefits one could easily save up for a car. Whereas if you had one child and you got a benefit of perhaps 330 crowns, then how long would you be saving for it? (ID187, female, intelligentsia)

An important attribute of this thrift-related reasonability is thus the implicit resistance to the governmentality of the ideological account of saving. By stating that saving all received child benefits for three years amounts to the price of a new car, this respondent is actually implying that misusing state child support was morally acceptable behaviour. Therefore, such practices were often not questioned, no matter the extent to which the goal of saving went against the official (original) purpose of the benefit money. At the same time, the business-like exploitation of the system (e.g. regularly re-selling material stolen in a factory) could be seen as cunning and not morally right.

Eyewitnesses' self-descriptions as reasonable consumers in their biographical narratives also revealed the ambivalence of the meaning of saving and waste. In the following quotation, the expression 'Whoever doesn't steal from the state, steals from their own family' is explained by the narrator, who argues that taking from the factory stock for private use was both necessary and thrifty at the same time, as the goods would otherwise be wasted:

N: Not that I never stole anything, god forbid. That sort of man probably didn't exist, because it was not possible to do things differently, because when I started to build

the cottage, I went to Staviva [a shop with building materials] and I wanted 14 packs of fibreglass. And she [the saleswoman] asked me, 'Is that private?' – 'Well, for the cottage.' – 'No way. We can only sell to enterprises.' – 'So where do I get it?' – 'Go to the company and steal it.' So what could I do? I did not steal, but I drove to Jirkov, took the clippings that they had thrown into the dump, and drove away with them. If I could have, I would have avoided it. It's not that I lived off that, no.

I: And was it often necessary to do things in such a way?

N: I'd say all the time, because there was no cement, no vegetables ... I saw them in Zelenina [a fruit and vegetables shop] throwing them away ... they unloaded wagons with oranges and then shovelled them into a dump because they had frozen, and nobody knew that they had arrived. In the old town of Most there was a vegetable warehouse where frostbitten vegetables used to be thrown away right into the dump. And the shops were empty. I saw how they brought a wagon of cement to the field, then it rained [the cement got wet and became unusable], a bulldozer made a hole and piled all those bags in there—god forbid someone should steal them, they would have locked him up for stealing national property—so it all ended up there and it was OK. I saw how many railway tracks were packed into the dump, and nobody cared. (ID162, male, worker)

This story demonstrates how the narrator both saved the thrown-away material from decay and obtained it for free. Presenting himself as a responsible consumer, he described companies wastefully getting rid of a variety of things which sometimes could be re-used in everyday living. He added that he had not wanted to profit from such 'recycling' by re-selling the material, as that would have rendered the action immoral. Similarly, we observed in other biographical narratives that saving and thrifty behaviour in the domestic (i.e. individual and familial) realm was also discursively coined as the reasonable and moral answer to the waste being perpetrated by state institutions. The fact that saving was said to be realised by people despite—rather than in harmony with—these institutions is also an interesting feature of socialist consumer attitude, probably having consequences for the post-socialist understanding of consumer responsibility.

In this sense, a reasonable consumer is the one who respects both opportunities and their limits, and knows: when to save up or to spend (e.g. goods happen to be available in the stores or when there is a real need for them); when to get (receive, steal, or save) the adequate amount from the state to permit a sustainable co-existence of state and individuals/families; when it is more advantageous to buy cheap rather than expensive goods, and vice versa; when to repair a broken thing, and when to throw it out, etc.

Although the ideological effort to mobilise households for the sake of the national economy proved a failure in the end, people had acquired a reasonable consumer attitude—one that takes various factors into account in the effort to carry out consumption 'properly'. A part of consumer reasonability was an awareness of the inability of the system, i.e. state producers, to provide all the goods desired, resulting in widespread cheating in both the quantity and qual-

ity of the goods offered by state shops and services. The following is a quotation from a parliamentary speech:

I think that it is not necessary to analyse these undesirable practices [in customer service] in too much detail and specify them concretely. We all know them, such as, for example, the practice of placing the customer complaints and suggestions book in a place that forces the consumer to ask for it and explain what he wants to write and why, or even to show his identity card. Further ... scam prices, quality or measurements; undesirable (sic) concealment of goods, saving the goods for preferred clients, violation of a shop's opening hours, etc. (Czech National Council, 17th meeting, 25 June 1985)

It is obvious that in the shortage economy, public calls bringing attention to 'the rightful demands of consumers' for both quality and quantity of goods and services were regularly not met. In consequence, consumers learned to approach any ample goods and services on offer with suspicion, doubting claims about their positive characteristics. This sceptical attitude to consumption was deeply embedded in moral subjectivity, family practice, and has undoubtedly outlived the post-socialist period.

Discussion

Our findings show that notions of thrift and saving were present throughout public discourses in Czech socialist society, as well as in the narratives of eyewitnesses of the period. However, the meaning of thrift during that period varied: in the 1950s, it was the semantics of productivity that dominated, while in the 1960s and 1970s the semantics of restrictive rationalisation became more prevalent; eventually, in the late 1980s, thrift was sidelined by an emphasis on raising income. It is interesting that a similar but not identical trajectory has been described for capitalist societies—the United States in particular. The capitalist story, in short, began with the old puritan frugality of 'inner-directed worldly asceticism' [Weber 1958] and was, at the beginning of the 20th century, 'revised and rearticulated from what was understood as a blind, unthinking saving to the efficient, planned management of resources' [Marron 2009: 64]. While it was the saving up of money and prosumer activities that productively disciplined consumers in state socialist societies, the main factor in the United States was the massification of consumer credit [Marron 2009; Calder 1999; Trumbull 2014].

There was another difference between socialist and capitalist discourses on thrift. In the former, behaving thriftily in the productive sense (making more or better quality with less) was officially presented as the way to build a prosperous socialist society. The meaning of thrift did not thus equal puritan asceticism; there was no intrinsic asceticism in saving steel by improving technology, in gathering

used paper or in economising in order to buy a car. When asceticism was mentioned, it was in relation to situations of exceptional hardship, both individual and collective; in normal times, such frugality was not depicted as necessary or desirable. A possible reason for not using the semantics of restrictive thrift in the early socialist discourse was that it was incompatible with the communist ideology of building a better common future for all. Actually, when more frugality and less consumption were called for, it was not expressed in purely restrictive terms, but rather in terms of 'comprehensive socialist rationalisation', which, in a sense, resembles today's economic rhetoric of 'negative growth' and 'downsizing'. In general terms, the semantics of productive thrift is related to the optimistic 'constructive' mode of economic discourse, while the restrictive semantics makes its appearance in the 'protective' economic discourse that surfaces in times of a threatening crisis. The correspondence between the condition of the economy and the prevalent semantics of thrift in discourse is only relative; however, as we have seen in the political discourse of the 1950s, a critical lack of resources did not preclude the constructive mode of discourse, just as relative prosperity did not prevent the regime from advancing thrift's restrictive aspects.

When comparing public and household discourses of thrift in socialist society, the public version appears as more 'progressive' than that of households, an observation that seems to hold true as a universal rule of modern societies rather than being specific to state socialism. The lag between public and private thrift semantics is easy to observe in the household manuals, which, while reflecting ideological discourse, had at the same time to be acceptable to the population. In the 1960s, when the official discourse of thriftiness was equated with the rational management of available resources, household guides still placed emphasis on the ethical dimension of thrift as being akin to the practice of a kind of self-discipline, i.e. of the superiority of reason over sentiment. As late as in the 1980s, the rationality of the cost-benefit calculation entered into manuals and guides, reflecting the then preferred semantics of thrift. At the same time, however, the notion of thriftiness was fading from political discourse, and the imperative of increasing income began appearing in its stead. Full emphasis on focusing on earning more—virtually absent in household guides till that time—finally gained ground only after the revolution in the 1990s in the form of 'how to get rich' paperbacks. In view of the private/family discourse represented in our data by the oral history accounts, the meaning of thrift appears to be rather eclectic. This fact can be explained by the retrospective character of these narratives combining the ethical aspect of thrift and saving with more pragmatic economic attitudes and the effort to raise income in order to get access to (better) housing, a car, and travel.

By focusing on discursive practices we had to neglect non-discursive practices and actions, which entered the study only as narratively re-constructed non-directly-verifiable accounts; in our interpretation we therefore avoided taking words for deeds. Nevertheless, inasmuch as using words also has performative power [Austin 1975], our research should not be regarded as a plain textual analy-

sis. In the perspective of discursive performativity we found two interesting phenomena: (a) the objectivisation of thrift and (b) the subjective responsabilisation of consumers. While the former was an unintentional consequence of ideological discourse, the latter was purposively constructed.

The process of discursive objectivisation of thrift started with the politicisation of its productive semantics; as we have shown, claiming to be thrifty in a productive way was not only a declaration of an economic/rational or virtuous action—it was (even more strongly) a sign of the right political attitude. Saving resources developed into an officially-sponsored competition between individuals and collectives. The ability to create more with little thus lost the stigma of being associated with shortage, and while perceived as something anyone could do and profit from, it attained the privileged status of a practice equated with a public good. Paradoxically, the practice of ‘saving productively through invention’ in time turned at least partly against the regime when ordinary people’s efforts to invent techniques to save led them to also find ways to use public or state resources for their own personal or family purposes. This development contributed to transforming people’s already half-hearted attitude toward the regime into an effectively parasitic relationship [Možný 1991]. When in the seventies the government once again called on all economic agents to renew thrifty behaviour (‘rationalisation’) because of the inefficacy of the national economy, the call had virtually no effect whatsoever—nobody wanted to provide their thrift-related skills and know-how for the state’s sake.

To address our interest in the performance of discursive responsabilisation of consumers, we focused on household manuals and guides. These books categorised certain economic practices and subjectivities as desirable and correct, while incorporating what MacKenzie [2006] coined ‘generic performativity’ [see also Clarke 2012: 263–265; Morris 2016: 247–249]. In particular, the manuals did not only make running a rational and responsible household into a moral issue, they also offered practical tools to help with its management. These tools included structured family budgets and the record-keeping of expenses aiming to create a rational economic unit: the household managed as a firm. We argue that incorporating affective management [Deville 2014: 476–484] by ideological appeals on the one hand, and practical instructions and material devices to aid in fulfilling the target (i.e. consolidating the household as a rational and thrifty economic unit) on the other, lead to a more robust performance than mere textual utterances and discursive accounts, which can ‘misfire’ [Butler 2010] and fail.

The subjectivity implied in the manuals and guides was that of a rational and calculating agent responsible for the (economic) good of herself, her family, and for the whole of the national economy; in the texts, consumer responsibility was assigned explicitly through direct statements and implicitly through the outlined practices and tools provided. The responsabilisation of ‘ordinary’ households thus had already appeared during the socialist era, and does not, therefore, represent the hallmark of a ‘new’ financialised reality [cf. Greenfield

and Williams 2007; Saegert, Fields and Libman 2009]—the implication being that socialist discourse of thrift had formed a discursive and practical basis for what in contemporary literature is termed the financialisation of everyday life [Pellandini-Simányi, Hammer and Vargha 2015; García-Lamarca and Kaika 2016; Lai: forthcoming]. This process of the financialisation of the day-to-day relies heavily on the notions of self-care and self-responsible citizens using financial products to *secure* themselves for the duration of their life rather than relying on traditional state-organised means to provide for their welfare [Doling and Ronald 2010: 165; Giesler and Veresiu 2014; van der Zwan 2014: 112]. We highlight that such a process was already evident in certain accounts of socialist discourse of thrift.

MARTIN HÁJEK is an associate professor of sociology at the Institute of Sociological Studies, Charles University. His main research interests are methodologies of text analysis (discourse and narrative analysis), normative orders of society, sociology of state socialism, and collective memory. He is the author of a monograph on various types of textual analysis in social sciences and has published widely in peer-reviewed journals. Currently, he is leading a project on discourses of appropriate economic behaviour (2015–2017).

TOMÁŠ SAMEC is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Social Science, Charles University, and a researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. He focuses on discursive financialisation in the context of housing and on qualitative methods of analysis of economic discourses, and especially on the combined use of discourse and narrative analysis.

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Appendix: Text corpora used in the analysis

1. Stenographic records of the proceedings of the Czechoslovak and Czech Parliament are available at the Joint Czech and Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library <http://www.psp.cz/en/sqw/hp.sqw?k=82>

- a. 1948–1960 National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic
- b. 1960–1968 National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
- c. 1969–1990 Czech National Council

2. List of household manuals and guides

- a. Břízová, Joza and Krchová, Božena. *Naše domácnost*. (Our Household) 1st ed. Prague: Práce, 1958. 653 pp., [54] with the illustrated supplement *Knižnice domáčího hospodaření* (Home Economics Library); vol. 13.
- b. Břízová, Joza and Krchová, Božena. *Dobrá rada pro každou domácnost 2*. (Good Advice for Every Household) Revised ed. Prague: Práce, 1967. 350 pp., [48] with the illustrated supplement *Knižnice domáčího hospodaření*; vol. 21.
- c. Břízová, Joza and Krchová, Božena. *Počtenice pro domácnost*. (Household Arithmetic) 1st ed. Prague: Práce, 1968. 32 pp. *Sešity domáčího hospodaření*; vol. 34.
- d. Břízová, Joza. *1000 rad pro domácnost*. (1000 Household Tips) 4., revised and expanded ed. Prague: SZN, 1981. 188 pp. *Sbírka ekon. a encyklopedických publ. / SZN*.
- e. Dubský, Jan. *Rádce moderní domácnosti*. (A Guide for the Modern Household) 2nd ed. Prague: Práce, 1981. 31 pp. *Knižnice domáčího hospodaření*; vol. 110.
- f. Hájková, Eva. *Jak ušetřit v domácnosti*. (How to Save in the Household) Prague: Mona, 1984. 64 pp. *Emka*; no. 56.
- g. Hájková, Eva. *Ekonomem i proti své vůli*. (The Accidental Economist) 1st ed. Prague: Horizont, 1985. 300 pp. *Na pomoc národnímu hospodářství*.
- h. Hájková, Eva. *Na zlatou rybku nečekej*. (Don't Wait for a Gold Fish) 1st ed. Prague: Horizont, 1988. 291 pp. *Tribuna ekonomiky a politiky*.
- i. Pinková, Alice et al. *Rady pro domácnost*. (Household Tips) 1st ed. Prague: SZN, 1988. 254 pp. *Sbírka ekon. a encyklopedických publ.*
- j. Holubová, Božena. *Vedení domácnosti: pro II. ročník SOU učebního oboru chovatelka*. (Managing the Household) 2nd ed. Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1989. 193 pp., 4 pages of illustrated supplements. Secondary school textbook. ISBN 80-04-24260-X.

3. The oral history life-course interviews were produced between 2002 and 2012 by the Centre for Oral History (Czech Academy of Sciences) as part of a project on Czech society in the period of normalisation. The data set includes 210 biographical narratives of blue-collar workers, members of the intelligentsia, dissidents, and communist functionaries born roughly between 1935 and 1955, placing them in their productive years during the last two decades of the communist regime. The average age of interviewees was 61-62. The narrators' identities have been anonymised. More details about both collections can be found at the COH website <http://www.coh.usd.cas.cz/en/catalogue-and-interview-collections>.

- a. Interviews recorded as part of the project *Political Elites and Dissidents during the Period of So-called Normalization—Historical Interviews*, (2003-2004).
- b. Interviews recorded as part of the project *An Investigation in the Czech Society of the 'Normalization' Era: Biographic Narrations of Workers and Intelligentsia*, (2006-2007).