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“Future of Policy making” Europe and the world in 2030

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Introduction

The aim of the present study is to assess changes which have occurred in Western democracies in recent years, mostly in the United States and in the European Union. On the one hand, they are connected with organizational or technological phenomena, e.g. the popularization of the Internet. On the other hand, they concern changes occurring under the influence of economic globalization and the increasing role of international cooperation.

Growing political activity in the area of electronic media is an example of the aforementioned technological changes. It can be observed, among other things, in the involvement of political parties on the Internet, especially in periods before elections. Political mobilization of societies by community websites, among other things, is another sign of it. This concerns, in particular, anti-system movements or ones searching for alternative forms and new directions for the development of democracy.

The role of other media in shaping voting behaviour and the political scene is on the increase. This is manifested by an increasing role of political marketing in contemporary democratic systems. It is accompanied by gradual disappearance of programme-related debate in mass media and also a tendency for marginalization of this debate to include only niche communities (expert and technocratic ones). Electronic media are not only an element of democratic control of the authorities, including the transparency of public life. In numerous cases, they are an instrument for creating political events, and in the same way of shaping the political scene in a given country.

A tendency to reduce the influence of voters on public life and the policy of public authorities are another element of changes in contemporary political systems. This results from many factors. First of all, the influence of extra-democratic external factors, such as the impact of international organizations (international law) or global markets (e.g. financial ones): they often have a greater influence on political decisions than domestic voters. The phenomenon of decreasing influence of election democracy is connected with the disappearance of programme-related debate (and the growing role of political marketing, which means inter-party competition limited to the symbolic and image dimension). The crisis of election democracy is also manifested by the decreasing or consistently low voter turnout in the majority of Western countries. Problems of the democratic system deepen together with the prolonged economic crisis (which started in 2008). The more and more frequent anti-system movements are a sign of this tendency. They boycott election-based democracy or reject the existing political elites.

An attempt to include various social groups in the governing process, called *governance* or *good governance* is another phenomenon¹. This mostly applies to the operations of the administration and public actions it takes. This is expressed by increased influence on the implementation of public policies by non-governmental organizations, including think-tanks and institutions representing various social interest groups. In principle, they are to prevent crisis phenomena in democratic system, i.e. to increase citizen participation in public policy. According to some opinions they create alternative forms of democracy. They do not always support election-based democracy and they can even weaken it.

¹ Cf. T. G. Grosse (2009): *Dylematy dobrego rządzenia (good governance). Wnioski dla Polski*. Studia Polityczne, no. 23, p. 113-150.

The aim of the analysis proposed in this text is not only to present the most important trends towards changes in contemporary democracy but also to assess them in a critical manner. I would like to examine the claims about problems of this system and find out whether they are justified or exaggerated. Are they caused only by temporary economic difficulties or are they of more permanent nature? Are new political phenomena - including technological ones or those connected with the development of civil society - create an opportunity to improve the quality of democracy operation? Or are they more likely to accelerate disadvantageous changes in this system? My aims also include an assessment of how the changes occurring will affect public policy making in the future. The situation occurring in the European Union, both on the Member State level and on the European level will be a particular example of analysis.

1. Main principles of democracy

The word democracy derives from Old Greek (δημοκρατία) and it means “rule of the people”. The essence of a political system bearing this name lies in the authorities elected and governing according to “the people’s will”, i.e. the will of citizens of a given society. They form a political community which chooses representatives of authorities in the election process. Therefore, right to be in power in democracies mostly comes from the political act of a general election. It is considered to be the foundation of contemporary democracy common in Western culture. The right to vote is also citizens’ most important right and responsibility. It is the fundamental manifestation of social participation in the political system².

Political authorities chosen in the election process should implement “the people’s will”. It is a very significant principle which has far-reaching consequences for the shape of the political system. It means that “the people’s will” is superior to decisions taken in a political system. Thus, it is considered more important that ideological or religious principles, social visions or the way of defining national interest by any social elites³. If any serious political disputes arise, and, in particular, for decisions which have far-reaching social consequences - the final decision should be taken by citizens. This is the reason why a direct democracy instrument, i.e. general referenda, have been introduced.

The election campaign period is of significant importance for referenda and for electing representatives. It is understood as a time of debate about possible or desired directions in the public policy in which social opinions are shaped (e.g. citizens’ political will concerning the future policy of public institutions). This is a period of discussion during which various opinions and justifications for directions of political action should clash.

The principle of selecting representatives to hold power according to the principles of political competition⁴. This is about political rivalry conducted according to the principles of equality and the choice between persons and political groups which propose different political actions. This is also called “the principle of pluralism”. The most important consequence of pluralism is the division into governing parties and opposition in legislative institutions (parliaments). In Western democracies it has been adopted as the standard of the operation of political parties. They have various programme-related proposals depending on the adopted values or the most important economic, ideological and social divisions occurring in a given political community⁵. Usually, political scientists divide party systems into multi-party and two-party ones⁶. In the latter case it is connected with the majority electoral law which promotes main political forces. In a multiparty system, usually proportionate electoral law applies which prefers smaller political parties which receive less support from voters). The two-party system is

² S. Verba, N. H. Nie, J. Kim (1978): *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Study*, Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press.

³ Cf. G. B. Powell (2004): *Liberal democracies*, In: M. Hawkesworth, M. Kogan (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, Routledge, London – New York, p. 205-222.

⁴ Cf. J. Bryce (1921): *Modern Democracies*, New York: Macmillan, p. 119.

⁵ Cf. S. Lipset, S. Rokkan (1967): *Party System and Voter Alignments*, New York: Free Press; R. Rogowski (1989): *Commerce and Coalitions: How Trade Affects Domestic Political Alignments*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁶ A. Lijphart (1999): *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance In Thirty-Six Countries*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

considered to ensure the possibility of easier selection and greater stability of the executive powers. The proportionate system, on the other hand, facilitates political representation in a community characterized by great internal differentiation.

The breaking of the principle of pluralism may be a sign of crisis or lack of mature democracy. This phenomenon is usually illustrated by long-term strengthening of the governing party and the marginalization of the opposition, also by means of administrative measures. The crisis is also characterized by too great a division between the governing party and the opposition, which excludes cooperation or achievement of compromise in the public interest⁷. The same pertain to increasing activity of extra-parliamentary groups - anti-democratic ones (i.e. rejecting the democratic system) or anti-establishment ones (negating the existing political elites).

The principle of pluralism is directly connected with the principle of openness and transparency of public life. In consequence, media play a special role in relating political events and programme-related debate. The principle of pluralism should also be respected by the media. This means that in an ideal model they should create the same possibilities of presenting opinions for various political communities (and especially for representatives of the government and the opposition). This model is abandoned more and more often in favour of a distinct involvement of main media (and journalists) on the side of specific political groups. In this situation, the principle of pluralism requires that the entire community should not support only one side of a political dispute. Different views or political groups should find possibilities of communicating with society by means of the media. Moreover, as regards the aforementioned principles of openness and transparency - the obligation to inform public opinion about actions taken has been imposed on institutions of power (political and administrative ones).

The cyclicity of elections and the principle of accountability of politicians holding power are another consequence of respecting "the people's will". It mostly applies to the possibility of having representatives of the government account for promises made during election campaigns. Therefore, it is the content of an election campaign is of fundamental importance. The campaign should give the possibility of choosing the programme option that will work best for the society on the one hand and verify the promises previously made, on the other hand. In contemporary Western democracies both functions of a content-related debate should be fulfilled primarily by the media.

Another fundamental principle of democracy is the election of representatives of authorities by the majority of votes. This means that the government and other executive power institutions are elected using the criterion of the majority of votes received in an election. The same principle applies to a vast majority of legislative decisions taken by the parliament. For this reason, the aforementioned institutions of power are defined in political power as majoritarian. The adoption of the constitution is, among other things, an exceptional situation in the work of the parliament, as it is a superior set of laws in force in a given political community. It usually requires a higher level of approval by politicians than a mere majority of votes. In some cases, the procedure for adopting the constitution also requires support granted directly by citizens in a referendum.

⁷ Cf. M. Duverger (1954): *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, New York: John Wiley, pp. 419-420.

The special importance of the constitution is connected with the fact that it provides a basic legal framework for democratic functions. Constitutions not only describe the most important democratic procedures and competences of governing bodies but also the most important rights and obligations of citizens. Granting fundamental rights and liberties both to the entire "people" (as it is subject to political power) and to each person separately is regarded as one of basic characteristics of democracy. It is consistent with liberal political philosophy which constitutes the source of modern Western democracies. According to this philosophy rights and liberties of an individual are of fundamental importance for durability and stability of a democratic system. The constitution guards these rights. At the same time it protects citizens against the authorities designs on using public functions to limit citizen rights. The constitution is also the most important instrument for protecting minority rights (including liberties and responsibilities of the opposition) against the potential dictate of the majority chosen in the election. In this way the collection of principles included in the constitution is a limitation of the rule of taking decisions by the majority in a democratic system⁸.

The institutions of supreme courts (or constitutional courts) usually strengthen the respect for the constitution. Their tasks include verification whether laws passed in majority institutions (i.e. by the governing majority) do not violate the constitutional standards. It is also an element of separation of powers. It is usually reflected by the triple division into legislative, executive and judicial powers. It is assumed that they should be independent from each other and control each other. Independence of courts and their independence on the influence of the governing political majority is of particular importance. Courts also control conformity with law and supreme courts supervise conformity with the constitution. The legislative and executive powers, on the other hand, are usually closely connected with each other by the governing majority chosen in the election. This enables close cooperation of these institutions in accordance with the programme of government-forming parties. The opposition fulfils the controlling function for the government on the part of the parliament - in accordance with the threefold separation of powers. This is why guaranteeing fundamental rights to the opposition is so important (which is manifested by the institution of parliamentary immunity). They include freedom of speech, access to media and public programme-related debate. The obligation to make available all information about actions taken is yet another fundamental right.

An additional limitation introduced in some democratic systems for the majority rule may result from the wish to respect ethnic divisions. In such a situation other institutions protecting minority rights are established, e.g. special privileges in the electoral regulations or coalition requirements to appoint a government are introduced for them. Such political systems are referred to as consensual, as opposed to majority-based ones⁹.

Political scientists are convince that the aforementioned principles are the very essence of a democratic system. There exists a certain diversity of their application in social practice, e.g. due to the tradition of the development of political institutions or the culture of a given community. Nevertheless, it is thought that the breaking or failure to meet any of the aforementioned principles indicates a crisis of democracy. It can also result in a situation in which the system in a given country fails to meet fundamental

⁸ G. B. Powell (2004), s. 205.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 211.

conditions to be considered a democratic system by the international community or specialists.

However, other criteria which can sometimes affect the stability of a system under analysis are worth paying attention to. Geopolitical conditions are among those mentioned the most frequently by specialists¹⁰. History provides examples of abolishing democracies as a result of geopolitical changes. This is what happened after World War II in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries. There are also opposite examples in which the democratic system was imposed by an external superpower (or superpowers). This is what happened after World War II in Germany, Japan and South Korea.

Apart from that, the durability of democracy is affected by the existence of a strong middle class and lack of significant differences in income among citizens¹¹. This is what makes democracy the political system which have favoured the development of redistributive role of the state and the establishment of a welfare state in Europe, the USA and other countries following this pattern of governing in the post-war period¹². Both the disappearance of a relatively affluent middle class and excessive differences in the income among a political community are a sign of difficulties of democracy. For this reason, a long-term economic crisis poses a significant threat to the stability of democracy, as it usually leads to pauperization of numerous social groups and increases differences in the income.

Sometimes, other requirements for stable democratic systems. They include citizens' level of education, and, in particular, the ability to read (as a component of informed participation in the programme-related debate). Too great ethnic or religious differences are also considered to be an obstacle to democracy. They may hinder the development of a political community as well as the establishment of appropriate redistributive instruments which are necessary to keep political stability¹³.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

¹¹ M. Weber (2003) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Mineola: Dover Publications.

¹² Cf. K. Polanyi (2001): *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Beacon Press, Boston; A. Przeworski, M. E. Alvarez, J. A. Cheibub, F. Limongi (2000): *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-being in the World, 1950-1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹³ Cf. Alesina A., Glaeser E. (2004): *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 133-182.

2. New role of the media

In accordance with what I wrote above, mass media play the key role in democratic systems, especially during election campaigns. It is assumed that they should be an objective platform for presenting various political programmes in accordance with the principle of pluralism. Moreover, they should create opportunities for the crystallization of the will of a given political community as regards the most desirable directions for public activity in the next election cycle. This means the necessity of presenting various views as far as the programme is concerned and of convincing society to adopt them. Moreover, the media should control institutions which hold power. It is particularly important for the principle of accountability of political elites for their election promises. As it seems, the aforementioned functions of mass media are not always fully implemented. Instead, their new role begins to be primarily connected with creating (and not controlling) political reality.

One of processes affecting the public media in democratic states includes their growing commercialization¹⁴. This applies to the concentration of main institutions and their partial internationalization within large groups of companies. For some countries it has a significant influence on political powers (the role of the Mediaset group in election successes of Sylvio Berlusconi). Commercialization is also reflected by the change in the language of media narration towards increased spectacularity, short, colourful pieces of news which influence viewers' emotions and attract their attention. This also means a lesser and lesser interest in conducting a content-related political debate on the part of mass media owners and publishers. The willingness to attract the largest number of viewers (and increasing their ratings for advertisers) denotes homogenization of the transfer of information, which is adopted to the average taste of viewers.

In electronic media, in particular, on TV, which has the largest number of viewers - it is heading towards looking for or even creating political spectacles. They are often based on interpersonal conflicts or other emotions. They use simplified and temporary narrations which frequently resort to stereotypes. Political rivalry conducted on the basis of images in the media, positive or negative political marketing, not excluding socio-technical manipulations are of fundamental importance. Experts¹⁵ pay attention politicians' tendency to present their own image (self-presentation or self-creation in the media) and not to election-related persuasion defending specific content-related views. In this situation, the chance for an honest debate with the use of arguments or visions of the program is becoming smaller and smaller. The main media monopolize the transfer of information in society to a large extent and at the same time they push programme-related deliberations to niche communities (expert, academic or technocratic ones). The policy conducted in the mass media is limited to the art of political marketing and it ceases to be a public mission aimed at the implementation of a specific social programme.

Informal connections between the interests of economic and financial elites, the media and the world of politics¹⁶ are another phenomenon related to the commercialization of

¹⁴ More broadly: J. Curran (2011): *Media and Democracy (Communication and Society)*, New York: Routledge.

¹⁵ S. Bilakovics (2011): *Democracy without Politics*, Harvard University Press.

¹⁶ Christophers B. (2010): *Envisioning Media Power: On Capital and Geographies of Television*, Plymouth: Lexington Books.

the media. This leads to greater and greater partiality of private media in favour of selected political forces or their susceptibility to inspirations stemming from political circles or the government. The media usually support political groups conducting a policy which is advantageous for the aforementioned economic interests, circles with liberal views (especially as regards economic matters) which stand a chance of gaining (or keeping) power in the state.

The media support is not always granted in an asymmetrical manner towards just one political option. A division within mass media similar to the existing divisions between the main political forces is a frequent occurrence. This is how it works in the United States of America¹⁷, for example. Nevertheless, such a model of mass media seems to be harmful to democracy. The political involvement of media hinders an objective programme-related debate and it promotes political marketing. The degradation of the mediation function (intermediate) between society and politicians is a good example of the phenomenon under discussion¹⁸. It applies to the evaluation of proposals put forward by politicians, which is made by independent experts or scholars. In reality, they become more and more politicized or are selected by media publishes according to specific political preferences. All the more so, that such persons usually belong to the broadly understood political elite and move from a position in the governmental administration to business or an expert think-tank in a flexible manner¹⁹. They are highly skilled at sensing changes in the public opinion and manipulating it. In this way, they become a convenient instrument of media policies or marketing of a specific political force.

The power of the media impact on society results in a situation in which they cease to merely report on political events and they begin to create them. At the same time, their active role in the political game does not involve a similar level of responsibility as in the case of political parties or individual politicians. It is possible because they do not undergo the procedure of election verification. They prefer to use their privileged position in the political system in a conscious manner to influence the political scene. In consequence, the evolution of the role of the media in contemporary democracies hinders the implementation of numerous fundamental principles of this political system.

¹⁷ Cf. D. A. Graber (2009): *Mass Media And American Politics*, Washington: CQ Press.

¹⁸ More broadly on this topic: S. Bilakovics (2011).

¹⁹ Cf. J. Wedel (2009): *Shadow Elite: How the World's New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government, and the Free Market*, New York: Basic Books.

3. Technological changes and the quality of democracy

One of the most important changes generated by new technologies is the popularization of the Internet and other information technologies in societies' everyday life. From the point of view of the quality of the democratic functions they have at least three areas of impact²⁰. Firstly, they become the space for using administrative services. The advantages of the Internet include the rate of information exchange and the interactivity of information transfer, which creates a lot of possibilities for facilitating the settling of official matters by citizens. According to some opinions²¹, the growing informatization of social and political life also poses some threats. The most important of these concerns the growing control over citizens by the state, to the detriment of their basic liberties guaranteed by the constitution. Secondly, information technologies broaden the possibilities of access to information about the authorities' operations. They can increase the openness and transparency of political and administrative authorities for society and are an instrument of social control over the authorities. Thirdly, information technologies, and especially the environment of the Internet become yet another forum for public debate, including also election debate. As it seems, it is potentially the most important function this technology can fulfil in a democratic system. It is also an opportunity for social participation in the work of the administration, which primarily increases the opportunity for consulting public policies.

The Internet environment is another electronic medium which becomes a potentially important platform for a political debate in contemporary democracies. The range of this medium is lower than that of television, for instance. Nevertheless, the Internet fulfils the function of the multiplier for other mass media in many respects. The majority of newspapers, magazines and radio and TV stations have their own Internet websites. Thus, the Internet popularizes the existing circulation of information and political arguments. It also creates greater access to bottom-up creation of information and opinions which is of considerable importance for democracy. It means that, apart from main media operating in a given society, it is possible to create an independent or alternative transfer of information in a decentralized manner²². This technology makes it possible to create new political movements, by community websites, among other things. They are more difficult to control or censor by the authorities, which is promoted, among other things, by the possibility of keeping relative anonymity on the Internet.

The fundamental problem of the Internet understood as a potential agora for the public debate is the fact that it suffers from information inflation. Such information also includes pieces which clearly degrade political culture and even threaten the stability of the democratic system. Among the deluge of information and cognitive chaos, the Internet user employs various "filters" grouping or sorting information and opinions. Such a function can be fulfilled by the leading media and their information portals. At the same time, it means that dominating processes which affect these media also spread to the Internet. For example, if content-related debate disappears from the leading media to give way to political promotion or even partiality of information transfer - the same

²⁰ More broadly: D. Barney (2000): *Prometheus Wired: The Hope for Democracy In the Age of Network Technology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; J. Fountain (2001): *Building the Virtual State: Information Technology and Institutional Change*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press.

²¹ Cf. J. S. Brown, P. Duguid (2000): *The Social Life of Information*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

phenomenon will appear at their websites. The use of websites in accordance with the user's interests or social contacts is another kind of "filter" for such a user. It is quite noticeable at community forums. They are more and more often not so much of an opportunity for honest public debate but rather an opportunity for political marketing and popularization of selected public opinions.

It is undoubtedly connected with stronger and stronger commercialization of the Internet and the use of this medium for advertising purposes. The Internet is used in a similar way by politicians, especially during election campaigns. Therefore, instead of an honest programme-related campaign, there is a strong tendency to treat this technology as an instrument for manipulating voters, increasing the attractiveness of one's own political image and the popularization of a negative image of one's political adversaries. In this way, the Internet succumbs to general phenomena which also affect other electronic media. As I mentioned before, this is connected with their weakening interest in content-related debate which is replaced by image-related and colourful presentations - media spectacles, which, however, have little importance for public policy. This is also promoted by the ways of filtering the deluge of information available on the Internet. The logics of the operation of such "filters" largely coincides with mechanisms observed in main public media. Content-related debate is marginalized in this situation and usually limited to expert or specialist websites.

To sum up the reflections which have been presented so far, it can be concluded that the potential of the Internet as the platform for content-related political debate has not been fully used. It is connected with another phenomenon observed by the experts. According to them²³, the specificity of the information transfer on the Internet is the impression of the simultaneity of actions, i.e. the overlapping of events from multiple time sequences. This results in the lack of historical continuity. This increases the possibility of creating political narrations used to manipulate the public. It is also detrimental to the implementation of the accountability principle for which declarations previously made and their subsequent more or less effective fulfilment are of fundamental importance. Considering the simultaneity (or ahistoricism) of the language of the Internet, the possibility of accounting for election promises is reduced.

²² Cf. T. W. Luke (2004): *The Politics of Cyberspace*, In: M. Hawkesworth, M. Kogan (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, Routledge, London – New York, pp. 1327-1341.

²³ M. Castells (1998): *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*, tom 2, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 350.

4. Reduced influence of voters

Critics of contemporary democracy put forward a thesis concerning the decreasing influence of voters on the fundamental decisions of politicians or on the course of the most important economic and social processes in a given country. It is connected with the change in the mass media functions presented above and the disappearance of content-related debate concerning political community. However, the increasing role of international organizations and economic globalization is a much more serious challenge for democracy. They cause a large number of national rights of politicians to be transferred to the supranational level or they simply escape the power of national politicians. Meanwhile, democratic institutions still operate on the national level (or the local government level). The problem of legitimization deficit for supranational institutions has not been fully solved. They are based on the so-called intermediary legitimization from the level of member states. Nonetheless, growing competences of international organs result in the emergence of the phenomenon of insufficient democratic authorization for their authority. The growing impact of these institutions and international law as well as cross-national economic markets on state authorities is yet another phenomenon. In this way, external factors often have a greater influence on decisions of domestic politicians than local voters.

It is worth quoting rich literature concerning the weakening of the role the national state with the development of globalization²⁴. It includes opinions²⁵ concerning the transfer of power from the national level to the supranational level, which results in a tendency for greater integration both globally and regionally (also in Europe). Other concepts pinpoint the decreasing importance of elites and national institutions and the transfer of power to supranational elites and institutions which create a supranational formula of a capitalist empire²⁶. A gradual loss of control over economic processes by national authorities and the decreasing role of national democratic institutions is a common characteristics of these concepts.

The stream of research devoted to the development of a cross-national economic elite is particularly well-developed in political science²⁷. The dynamic growth of international corporations and the growing role of global financial markets is the basis of this process. Since the 1970s, its influence in the political sphere has been on the increase, weakening the importance of local voters at the same time. On the one hand, it strives for privatization of a range of public services or regulations which up to date have been the domain of public offices (supervised by voters). On the other hand, it enhances the

²⁴More broadly on this topic: R. Walter (2011): *States and markets*, Review of International Studies, vol. 37, pp. 691-713.

²⁵ Eg. K. Ohmae (1995): *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies*, London: Harper Collins; S. Strange (1996): *The retreat of the State : The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁶ Cf. M. Hardt, A. Negri (2000): *Empire*, London: Harvard University Press.

²⁷ Sklair L. (2001): *The Transnational Capitalist Class*, Oxford: Blackwell; Robinson, W. I. (2004): *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Transnational Production, Transnational Capitalists, and the Transnational State*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; B. van Apeldoorn (2002): *Transnational Capitalism and the Struggle over European Integration*, Routledge, London – New York; W. I. Robinson, J. Harris (2000): *Towards A Global Ruling Class? Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class*, Science & Society, Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 11–54; W. K. Carroll (2010): *The making of a transnational capitalist class, Corporate power in the twenty-first century*, London – New York, Zed Books.

importance of international regulations, which, as I mentioned above, are controlled to a weaker degree by the national political community²⁸. Economic cross-national elites merge with technocratic elites (employees of international organizations) or enter a closer and closer symbiotic relationship with a part of national elites (subject to socialization at the supranational level).

The growing income differentiation in society, the decreasing reach of the middle class and enormous concentration of wealth in a narrow industrial and financial elite. The United States of America is an example of such processes²⁹. Currently, approx. 400 of the richest Americans hold greater wealth than 150 million citizens of this country with the lowest earnings. This increases the political influence of American plutocracy. This happens, among other things, through the mechanism of subsidizing election campaigns by companies and private persons and taking over influence on main private media by the aforementioned elite. Tax solutions advantageous for the richest Americans and other legal regulations adopted by the Congress are the result of this influence. According to some opinions³⁰, the reconfiguration of political influence in the USA causes this country to head towards oligarchy to a greater and greater extent.

²⁸ More broadly: T. Büthe, W. Mattli (2011): *The New Global Rulers. The Privatization of Regulation in the World Economy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

²⁹ Cf. J. Hacker, P. Pierson (2010): *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer--and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*, Simon & Schuster, New York; Larry M. Bartels (2008): *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*, Princeton – New York: Princeton University Press.

³⁰ Von Schulz, T. (2011): *Die Ein-Prozent-Macht*, DER SPIEGEL, No. 43, 24.10.2011.

5. Institutions of social and civil dialogue

Despite the fact that the active and passive right to vote is the most important method of citizens' participation in democracy, there exists a range of other forms of social participation in public actions. They can be divided into two main mechanisms³¹. The first of these involves the so-called social dialogue, which is also called democratic corporatism³². It is mostly connected with the dialogue between employer and employee organizations (primarily trade unions). The other one is called civil dialogue or a pluralist system of interest groups³³. It applies to a broader spectrum of organizations than those participating in the social dialogue. The common characteristics of both forms of the dialogue is the fact that they do not participate in public policies using election procedures, so at the entry to political processes. They participate in the shaping of these policies somehow "at the exit" of the aforementioned processes, so at the stage of task implementation by public administration. Due to this fact, they cannot replace democratic election procedures. They only supplement them by the participation of groups of citizens interested in the implementation of the specific policy. In principle, it should serve the goal of strengthening democracy by higher participation of citizens in public matters. And it is also treated as rescue for weakening democracy.

Social dialogue was introduced in some European democracies already at the end of the 19th century³⁴. It was originally used primarily for all bilateral negotiations between employees and employers concerning the so-called industrial relations³⁵. With time, it was included in the dialogue with state institutions, especially in matters which concerned economic policy, labour regulation, corporate governance etc. In some countries, the government sometimes mediates in negotiations conducted between entrepreneur organizations and trade unions (within the framework of the so-called trilateral institutions). The processes of economic globalization combined with a tendency to economic liberalization gradually limit the importance of social dialogue. Research shows³⁶ that especially the importance of trade unions is decreasing in the OECD³⁷ countries. Fewer and fewer matters are solved by social dialogue institutions. The influence of these institutions in relations with political authorities is also decreasing. However, it does not mean the weakening of the influence of business organizations.

Civil dialogue is usually organized by public administration and a lot of various social organizations take part in it. Starting from organized social groups which are the

³¹ More broadly: T. G. Grosse (2007): *Dialog społeczny i obywatelski w Unii Europejskiej*, In: R. Towalski (ed.): „Dialog Społeczny. Najnowsze dyskusje i koncepcje”, Centrum Partnerstwa Społecznego „Dialog”, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa, pp. 53-74.

³² P. Katzenstein (1985): *Small States In World Markets*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 32; A. Lijphart (1999), Chapter 9.

³³ P. Schmitter (1981): *Interest intermediation and regime governability*, In: S. Berger (ed.): *Organizing Interests In Western Europe*, New York: Cambridge University Press; Streeck W., P. C. Schmitter (1991): *From National Corporatism to Transnational Pluralism: Organized Interests in the Single European Market*, Politics and Society, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 133-164.

³⁴ T. G. Grosse (2010): *Co decyduje o zmianie systemu społecznego? Przykład niemieckiego i duńskiego systemu dialogu społecznego*. Studia Polityczne, no. 25, pp. 101-128.

³⁵ *Industrial relations* is a multidisciplinary field that studies the employment relationship.

³⁶ J. Peters (2011): *The Rise of Finance and Decline of Organised Labour In the Advanced Capitalist Countries*, New Political Economy, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 73-99.

³⁷ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

recipients of public services (e.g. using the social security system), through business organizations (e.g. connected with the individual sectors of the economy) to various social groups (consumer, ethnic, ecological ones, those defending civil rights etc.). Critics of social dialogue emphasize³⁸ that the access of these groups and their influence on the course of public matters largely depends on the administration itself (or politicians participating in the executive power). Moreover, the fact that it is not always known what is the social representativeness of the individual groups is a problem. As opposed to political parties, their social influence is not verified in general elections. The critics also pinpoint that the importance of individual organizations is determined by their resources, primarily financial ones, but also expert ones. This results in unequal possibilities of expressing opinions and, thus, unequal influence on political power. Experts draw attention to the fact³⁹ that business organizations are the strongest in the civil dialogue. The importance of organizations representing general social interests or preventing the growth of social inequalities.

Within civil dialogue expert organizations, referred to as think-tanks, have special importance in consultations of public policies. Their greatest advantage lies in the fact that they extend (and sometimes even organize) the possibility of conducting programme-related debate. They introduce expert knowledge into it and this knowledge is useful for public policies and not only purely academic, which is important. In principle, they should be autonomous both for the government and the current administration, political parties and even academic institutions. In reality, they are connected with these circles in a more or less formal manner⁴⁰. This results from considerable turnover of experts between administration and non-governmental organizations⁴¹ - an interesting and well-research example of such a situation is the neocoservatist circle in the USA⁴². It is also connected with a tendency for official or hidden politicization of many such organizations. According to some opinions⁴³, it limits society's ability to control the government and the government's ability to control the state.

The so-called political networks are another form of social participation in power. They are relatively durable and they consists of various public actors (e.g. officials) and private ones (representatives of professional organizations, experts etc.). Iron triangles, known from the United States of America⁴⁴, are an example of such structures. They consist of officials of federal agencies, politicians who are members of a specific Congress commissions and private interest groups. They frequently operate in quite a narrow area of public matters, for example, connected with some sector policy. They exert significant influence on the directions of such a policy in the long-run. These are relatively poorly institutionalized networks so they act on the basis of informal or even personal

³⁸ Eg. F. J. Granados, D. Knoke (2005): *Organized Interest Groups and Policy Networks*, In: T. Janoski, R. R. Alford, A. M. Hicks, M. A. Schwartz (ed.): *The Handbook of Political Sociology. State, Civil Societies, and Globalization*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 287-309.

³⁹ T. Lowi (1967): *Making Democracy Safe for the World*, In: J. N. Rosenau (ed.): *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy*, New York: Free Press, pp. 295-331.

⁴⁰ Cf. D. Stone, A. Denham, M. Garnett (1998): *Think tanks across nations : a comparative approach*, Manchester, New York : Manchester University Press.

⁴¹ A. Z. Kamiński, J. Kurczewska (1994): *Institutional Transformations in Poland: The Rises of Nomadic Political Elites*, In: M. Allestalo et al (eds): *The Transformations in Europe*, Warszawa 1994.

⁴² More broadly: J. Wedel (2009).

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ E.g. G. Adams (1981): *The Iron Triangle: The Politics of Defense Contracting*, Council on Economic Priorities, New York: Transaction Publishers.

connections. Enormous specialist knowledge and the possibility of ensuring long-term political continuity to public policy (above the election cycles). It makes it possible to realize strategic goals, although it may also be connected with insufficient flexibility of adopted solutions. Critics⁴⁵ argue that these networks decrease market rivalry by awarding privileges to selected business circles. Moreover, they limit democratic principles of the influence on state policy. It is connected, among other things, with the fact that politicians chosen in elections who have a democratic political mandate are limited by informal administrative and business structures affecting the specific public policy.

To sum up the reflections presented so far it must be concluded that social or civil dialogue institutions can counteract the process of weakening election-based democracy. In some cases, these processes can be accelerated, for example, by an excessive increase in the influence of interest groups which do not have a democratic mandate or by limiting the power of politicians elected in general elections.

⁴⁵ Rhodes R. A. W. (1996): *The New Governance: Governing without Government*, Political Studies, vol. 44, pp. 652–667.

6. Influence of European integration

The development of European integration is of significant importance for the condition of the democratic system in Europe. The thesis about a double crisis of democracy put forward by numerous political scientists is the most important for this issue. The crisis is an immediate effect of the development of political integration in the Old Continent⁴⁶. It mostly applies to the deficit of democracy in the European Union (the EU) where the public competence (*policy*) are developed and it is accompanied by poor development of political institutions (*politics*). This results in a situation described by the statement "*policy without politics*", which means the growing scope of EU decisions regarding public policies which do not have an appropriate democratic mandate. At the national level, an opposite phenomenon can be observed - in accordance with the motto "*politics without policy*". It refers to the decreasing number of decisions concerning public policies with well-developed political institutions. This results in a crisis of democracy and voters' disappointment. Politicians who have a strong election mandate have lesser and lesser influence on the shaping of public affairs, as a range of decisions in this area have been transferred to the EU level.

EU decisions are delegated to technocratic institutions to a large extent. They do not have an election mandate, nor can be accounted for voters⁴⁷. Moreover, the practice of avoiding democracy at the national level can be noticed, which is best exemplified by unwillingness to approve treaty changes by means of referenda. This was caused by the fiasco of the constitutional referenda in France and in the Netherlands (in 2005). In this way, citizens' participation in European policy is perceived as a threat to the progress of European integration. Meanwhile, further delegation of power to the EU level and the limitation of independent rights of local political communities is so serious a systemic decision that it would require approval similar for that needed for constitutional changes.

In part of the EU decision-making process - the democratic legitimacy results from the national level in an intermediate manner⁴⁸. This mostly applies to the participation of representatives of individual governments in the Council's institutions. It also includes the work of the Members of the European Parliament who are chosen in a national election. The extension of the political authorization process is a characteristic feature of the intermediate legitimization. In practice, it contributes to weaker and weaker control of voters over political decisions taken at the EU level. All the more so, because of the fact that the political process on the EU arena is the outcome of the participation of various entities whose strength of influence corresponds to the democratic mandate. The impact of technocratic institutions is an example here - such institutions - as mentioned before - do not have an appropriate democratic mandate. Moreover, diplomatic experience and expert knowledge as well as geopolitical and economic strength of the

⁴⁶ Cf. V. A. Schmidt (2006): *Democracy in Europe. The EU and National Politics*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press. More broadly: T. G. Grosse (2008): *Europa na rozdrożu*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa, Chapter 4.

⁴⁷ P. Mair (2007): *Political Parties and Party Systems*, In: P. Graziano, M. P. Vink (ed.): *Europeanization. New Research Agendas*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills - Basingstoke, pp. 154-166.

⁴⁸ More broadly: T. G. Grosse (2008): *Deficyt demokratyczny w UE i metody jego przezwyciężania*, In: U. Kurczewska (ed.): *Deficyt demokracji w Unii Europejskiej a europejskie grupy interesów*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, pp. 75-96.

individual actors matter the most in the European level policy making. The democratic mandate is of lesser importance for the actual influence on the decisions here.

The strong anchoring at national-level political institutions is a significant feature of "intermediate" legitimacy. In fact, there are no democratic political institutions of pan-European importance in the European Union. I mean a political community with a dominant European identity (and not a national one), a fully European general election, political parties operating on the European scale which are not a federation of separate national parties. There is no pan-European public debate or mass media. As the political system of the European Union is based on and is not legitimized by national institutions the fact that national interests are currently so strong at the European level should come as no surprise.

Political scientists emphasize⁴⁹ that the decreasing influence of voters and political parties on the course of European affairs is a general trend in Europe. Members of the European Union are frequently accused of insufficient public debate as regards issues connected with European integration⁵⁰. It is connected with the fact that national democratic institutions are primarily interested in domestic problems. This also results from the complexity of European problems. It is also connected with transferring decisions in many areas of public affairs to the EU level. Some experts⁵¹ indicate the phenomenon of depoliticization of public and election discourse in national political systems. This results in shifting the interests of political elites from content-related matters to image-related or symbolic issues. At the same time, it makes it difficult to choose the programme by voters and to hold politicians accountable for their election promises.

The tendency for generalization or convergence of views on European issues, as well as in national public policies which are co-decided at the European Union level, is another sign of European integration. The approximation of views includes primarily the political mainstream - governmental parties and the largest opposition forces. Some experts call this phenomenon "cartelization of the political system in Europe"⁵². It applies to successive liberalization of views in the moral and economic spheres (pro-market), which makes it possible to approximate positions between leading left-wing and right-wing political parties⁵³. General support for European integration also connects these circles. Liberal views are also becoming the basis for European values and for political correctness used in the public discourse on the EU arena. The cartelization of the political system is advantageous for European integration but it hinders democratic functions. It

⁴⁹ Cf. P. Mair (2007), p. 161, R. Ladrech (2010): *Europeanization and National Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills - Basingstoke, p. 133.

⁵⁰ Cf. C. Parsons (2007): *Puzzling out the EU role in national politics*, Journal of European Public Policy, vol. 14, no 7, pp. 1135-1149.

⁵¹ R. Ladrech (2010), p. 213.

⁵² C. Leconte (2008): *Addressing the 'communication gap': the difficult connection of European and domestic political spaces*, In: W. A. Maloney, J. W. van Deth (ed.): *Civil Society and Governance in Europe. From National to International Linkages*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham – Northampton, pp. 151-169.

⁵³ Cf. C. M. Radaelli, T. Exadaktylos (2010): *New Directions in Europeanization Research*, In: M. Egan, N. Nugent, W. E. Paterson (ed.): *Research Agendas in EU Studies. Stalking the Elephant*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, pp. 189-215; G. Marks, C. Wilson (2002): *National Political Parties and European Integration*, American Journal of Political Science, vol. 46 (3), pp. 585-594; E. Edwards (2009): *Products of their past? Cleavages and inter-party dissent over European integration*, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna.

restricts the principle of pluralism and political competition. This may lead to the gradual separation of the political establishment from its own citizens.

In the literature on the subject, the strengthening of the influence of the executive power over the legislative power in Europe is quite a common thesis⁵⁴. The reduced role of national parliaments and greater importance of technocrats (both at the EU and national levels)⁵⁵. The phenomenon described here⁵⁵ also leads to the strengthening of groups currently holding governmental power, especially when they conduct policy in accordance with the European political correctness. It also concerns the strengthening of the leadership within a party if it controls the government⁵⁶. This results from political support stemming from European institutions and the possibilities of increasing the power authority owing to diplomatic contacts⁵⁷. The use of EU authority for the introduction of socially difficult reforms is another example here. It is worth noticing that despite the fact that it usually facilitates the introduction of painful changes it may also lead to attributing the political responsibility for potential costs to the EU. It also leads to reduced social acceptance for European integration.

The phenomenon of political cartelization around European policy brings about a side effect consisting in the division into pro-European and Euro-realist (Euro-sceptical) parties. The scepticism for integration processes develops, among other things, as a result of difficulties for national authorities elected in a democratic manner and national independence. According to experts⁵⁸, growing social support for eurosceptical movements as well as their transfer from the margin to the political mainstream are phenomena which are becoming more and more frequent.

The aforementioned phenomena become more intense under the influence of the economic crisis (which started in 2008). Research shows⁵⁹ that the number of protests against European integration increases in periods of a downturn in the economy. Moreover, together with the crisis of the common currency system, the pressure of EU institutions and European partners on the most indebted member states grows to make them introduce painful social reforms⁶⁰. On many occasions, it is accompanied by the violation of the local democracy. Forcing Greek authorities to revoke the announced referendum concerning the readiness for further sacrifice by society (in November 2011). At the same time, the voters' bottom-up pressure against actions imposed by the EU or aimed at saving the monetary union grows.

The clash of these two opposing forces, i.e. international pressure and voters' pressure - leads to instability of democratic systems in member states. Only in 2011, it led to pre-

⁵⁴ E.g. J. O'Brennan, R. Tapio (ed.) (2007): *National parliaments within the enlarged European Union*, Routledge, London.

⁵⁵ Cf. discussion on this issue: K. H. Goetz, J-H. Meyer-Sahling (2008): *The Europeanisation of national political systems: Parliaments and executives*, Living Reviews in European Governance, vol. 3, no. 2, <http://europeangovernance.livingreviews.org/>, 30.06.2011.

⁵⁶ T. Poguntke, N. Aylott, E. Carter, R. Ladrech, K. R. Luther (ed.) (2007): *The Europeanisation of national political parties*, Routledge, London.

⁵⁷ C. Leconte (2008), p. 157.

⁵⁸ Cf. Imig D. (2002): *Contestation in the Streets: European Protest and the Emerging Euro-polity*, Comparative Political Studies, vol. 35, no. 8, pp. 914-933; R. Ladrech (2010), p. 132.

⁵⁹ Cf. K. Uba, F. Uggla (2011): *Protest Actions against the European Union, 1992-2007*, West European Politics, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 384-393.

⁶⁰ Cf. T. G. Grosse (2011): *Europeizacja jako mechanizm władzy: przykład funkcjonowania strefy euro*, In: *Nierówności społeczne a wzrost gospodarczy. Modernizacja dla spójności społeczno-ekonomicznej*, Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, Katedra Teorii Ekonomii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych, Zeszyt nr 19, Rzeszów 2011, pp. 7-30.

term change of governments in Ireland, Portugal, Slovakia, Greece and Italy⁶¹. Social protests take place in the streets of cities of other EU member states, including Spain, Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, France, etc. They are of distinctly political nature. They are not only critical of the current government but also of the entire political elite or the operation of the democratic system in Europe. This is characteristic of the Indignant Movement which started in Spain but quickly spread to the majority of EU countries (and the United States of America)⁶². Long-term and acute economic problems not only increased the political tension. They also showed problems of democracy in the area of integrating Europe.

Problems of democracy are also noticed by politicians and European officials. One of the methods of counteracting these difficulties is the support for the development of civil society. The popularization of non-governmental organizations and promoting their participation in the European policy is to be a new formula of a democratic system, on the one hand (an alternative for election-based democracy) and, on the other hand, it is supposed to strengthen the legitimacy of actions taken by the EU. Critical opinions on this issue appear among political scientists. They claim that civil dialogue cannot replace election-based democracy⁶³. Social organizations face the basic problem of social representativeness. It is also difficult to decide which arguments are the most important in the case of opposite interests represented by various organizations. There are no systemic mechanisms of holding these organizations accountable by society (such as elections in the case of political parties). It means that non-governmental institutions cannot eliminate the democratic deficit at the EU level. However, they can increase social participation in EU policies, thus improving the social climate around the European integration.

Community institutions, especially the European Commission vigorously support non-governmental organizations. They transfer EU funds, among other things, thus extending their organizational abilities and involving them in the implementation of EU policies. They also create other kinds of opportunity structures which promote the establishment of new organizations and their participation in European policies⁶⁴.

Specialists are inclined to express the opinion⁶⁵ that the actual influence of non-governmental organizations during the development of European law and policies is insignificant but it is rising slowly⁶⁶. There are no treaty regulations defined the participation of these organizations in the decision-making process. The provisions of Art. 11 of the Treaty on the European Union⁶⁷. It ensures to citizens and representative associations freedom of speech and public exchange of view regarding EU actions. It

⁶¹ *Papandreu jest kolejną ofiarą europejskiego kryzysu zadłużenia*, Gazeta Wyborcza, 2011-11-07.

⁶² *Oburzeni koczują w największych miastach Europy*, Rzeczpospolita, 16-10-2011.

⁶³ F. W. Scharpf (1999): *Governing in Europe: Effective and democratic?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford – New York; G. Baker (2002): *Civil Society and Democratic Theory: Alternative Voices*, Routledge, London – New York, p. 44, p. 111.

⁶⁴ W. A. Maloney, J. W. van Deth (2008): *Conclusion: Europeanization, multi-level governance and civil society*, In: W. A. Maloney, J. W. van Deth (ed.): *Civil Society and Governance in Europe. From National to International Linkages*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham – Northampton, s. 241-252.

⁶⁵ S. Saurugger (2010): *The social construction of the participatory turn: The emergence of a norm in the European Union*, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 49, s. 471-495; W. A. Maloney, J. W. van Deth (2008), p. 243, 245, 250.

⁶⁶ D. Della Porta, M. Caiani (2009): *Social Movements and Europeanization*, Oxford University Press, Oxford – New York.

⁶⁷ *Wersja skonsolidowana Traktatu o Unii Europejskiej*, Dz. U. UE, 30.3.2010, C83, p. 21.

imposes on EC institutions a general obligation for social consultations and civil dialogue. It introduces the possibility of bottom-up legislative initiative (on the part of no less than one million inhabitants who are citizens of a considerable number of member states). There is a considerable dispute concerning the interpretation of these regulations which to a large extent has blocked their practical implementation⁶⁸.

Non-governmental institutions act in favour of more efficient implementation of European law in member states⁶⁹. It is connected, among other things, with the monitoring of the method of implementing EU regulations, for example, in the area of environmental protection⁷⁰. They are also an instrument of influencing local public opinion or local governmental decision-makers by European institutions. This can be connected, for example, connected with ensuring greater efficiency of operation of European operations in national law or greater conformity of local law with European values or political correctness. 3rd sector organizations serve the popularization of European ideas, including cosmopolitan views, liberal views or views promoting the development of European integration. The support for these organizations on the part of EU institutions primarily serves the purpose of European integration, although it may also enhance social participation in public policies implemented in member states.

However, it should be noted that some experts⁷¹ are critical of EU support for the 3rd sector. They think that it primarily strengthens the largest organizations which have the greatest opinion-forming influence or considerably influence public authorities. This leads to the phenomenon of the oligarchization of civil society. It so happens because an elite specialized in European problems arises. It has a stronger contact with public institutions, including European ones, as well as with the media than with its own society and its problems. As a result, it does not represent its society in the dialogue with public institutions in an efficient manner and it also hardly participates in the formation (or strengthening) of civil society⁷². The aforementioned institutions are often under considerable pressure exerted by both European institutions and their own national governments - mostly due to funds for the implementation of individual projects⁷³.

⁶⁸ S. Saurugger (2010), p. 484.

⁶⁹ D. Della Porta, M. Caiani (2009).

⁷⁰ Börzel, T. A. (2006). *Participation Through Law Enforcement. The Case of the European Union*, Comparative Political Studies, 39(1), pp. 128–152.

⁷¹ W. A. Maloney, J. W. van Deth (2008), p. 242.

⁷² Defined as bottom-up social initiatives or movements. *Ibidem*, p. 244.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 246.

7. Politics in the contemporary world

Above mentioned issues and processes should be put in the context of contemporary world to be able to ask fundamental questions for the AUGUR project:

1. Is the shape of political system the same in the majority of global economy? if no, on what conditions depend the country's stage of political development?
2. If and how does contemporary financial crisis affect process of policy making?
3. the above mentioned phenomena of diminishing role of voters (and growing role of undemocratic bodies) in the decision making process, should be considered as something positive or negative?

Ad. 1.

There are no doubts that global economy is not homogenous both from the point of view level economic and political system. It is impossible to analyse situation in every country in the world, so let's try to see how it looks in:

- US,
- EU,
- BRIC countries.

Although level of economic development in the EU and US is similar, there are significant differences in process of policy making:

- In the US there is two-party system, so role of professional politicians is much more important than in the EU. In France, Italy or Poland political activist often prefers to have his own party, in the US one has to operate within Democrats or Republicans which are professional organizations with clear hierarchy;
- In the EU there is additional very important body – EU common institutions. Even if EU's budget is quite small (1,07% of EU GDP), its role in setting regulations is bigger and bigger.

There are also important differences in the political system in BRIC countries. These is a mix of pure authoritarian system (China), formal democracy however with bigger than usual role of ruling leader (Russia) and democracies (Brazil and India) which are very different from UE and US due to the level of economic development and structure of the society.

Stage of development of political system depends on many factors, but I think that crucial indicators are:

- Employment rate – it tells us what share of working population participate in economic activity, so they are interested have opinion on issues like taxes, business regulations;
- Level of education, for example measured by share of adult population with tertiary education – it matters for both participation in the political discourse and its quality – importance of populist movements;

- Urbanization – social life (political parties, NGO's) in the cities is much more developed than in the rural area;
- Access to the internet – ability to have access to updated information and data,
- NGO's role in society,
- Income inequalities and size of middle class.

Ad. 2.

Impact of the crisis on economic situation is very important and complicated, but another question is whether it also affects process of policy making. Few issues should be mentioned:

- Problems grouped as “financial crisis” are very complicated and majority of society do not understand what is going on, so role experts is very important to provide information to the society,
- Crucial decisions are made behind close door in the undemocratic bodies like EBC or IMF,
- There is threat of alienation of the societies from the elites – popular statement is: “Why are suffering from the crises caused by few super-rich and super-greed guys?”
- Because of huge borrowing needs of the governments, its dependence on the so called financial markets are bigger and bigger,
- It is hard to imagine important “anti-capitalistic” moves like Tobin’s tax or tight regulations of the financial sector,
- Due to the needed fiscal austerity, there is no room for active social policy,
- Growing unemployment makes working class more and more depressed, so for example role of trade unions is diminishing.

Ad. 3.

More and more power in the hands of technocrats and diminishing voice of voters has its advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, it is better that technocrats deal with the issues, because:

- Many problems are so complicated (for example regulation of the financial sector) that they can not be discussed in the open forum,
- Many issues are politically neutral, so its better to leave it for the technocrats,
- Technocrats are resistant to the populism.

But on the other hand, that in the same time there are some serious problems, like:

- Decisions made by the elite-technocrats can not be accepted by society,
- There is a threat od division of society for: we - the people and they – elites who know nothing about the “real life”,



- Social activists and others with idealistic approach to the politics will abandon political career because they realise that today policy is a domain of boring technocrats and not charismatic leaders.

Conclusions

Democracy in Western European countries and the United States of America is going through considerable changes. Due to the crisis, not only political tension becomes visible but also dysfunctions and limitations of the democratic system. The most important element of the change in the political system involves the reduction of the influence of voters on public life and the policy of authorities. This results from many factors. First of all, the influence of extra-democratic external factors, such as international organizations (and international law) or global markets (e.g. financial ones). They often have a greater influence on political decisions than domestic voters.

The role of the media in the political system is on the increase. This phenomenon is manifested by the fact that they are not only an element of democratic control over the authorities but, on numerous occasions, they create political events. In this way, the political scene in a given country is shaped. The dominance of mass media in influencing voters as well as the specificity of the language of the media and their commercialization result in a greater role of political marketing in contemporary democracies. It is accompanied by gradual disappearance of programme-related debate and also a tendency for marginalization of this debate to include only niche communities (expert and technocratic ones).

Some changes result from the introduction of modern technologies, which is exemplified by the growing political activity on the Internet, especially in periods around elections. Political mobilization of societies by community websites, among other things, is another sign of it. This concerns, in particular, anti-system movements or ones searching for new directions for the development of democracy. As it seems, new forms of mass communication do not change the dominating tendencies on the market of electronic media. They become a platform for increasing content-related public debate and accounting for election declarations.

Also social and civil dialogue counteract the problems of contemporary democracy in an insufficient manner. They do increase the participation of citizens in powers and also increase the quality of public debate in the case of some expert organizations (think-tanks). However, it cannot eliminate weakening mechanisms of election-based democracy (or democratic deficit in the European Union). It can, however, increase the influence on the authorities of the most powerful (and the richest) interest groups which do not have an appropriate political mandate. It all shows that there exists a real threat that the political system in Western countries will evolve towards oligarchization, despite the fact that formal democratic institutions will be maintained.

Phenomena accompanying European integration are a separate challenge for democracy. This situation is best described by the thesis of political scientists concerning double problems of democracy in Europe - both at the level of member states and the deficit of democracy in the EU itself. The cartelization of parties and the possibility of the separation of some Europeanized political elites from their own electorates are another sign of the difficulties under discussion. The aforementioned difficulties can be easily observed during the economic crisis which started in 2008. The clash between the pressure of the international community (and the challenges of the stabilization of the economic situation) and the expectations of the local political community are

characteristic phenomena. The aforementioned tension translates into difficulties in solving basic economic problems which aggravates the political deadlock in Europe.

So far the European Union has not been able to face the challenges of the emerging political system. In particular, the problem of the deficit of democratic legitimacy has not been solved. In a situation of the long-term economic crisis this can lead to serious problems of European integration. The consistent construction of federation institutions in the EU or the withdrawal from the integration according to the community model to the cooperation between governments is a possible solution in this situation. In the case of the first solution, the development of competences of the European Parliament would have to be developed in a consistent manner and it would be necessary to strive for changes in the election regulations towards fully European ones (and not as it is the case now - actually national ones)⁷⁴. It would be necessary to increase the role of other election mechanisms in the European policy. I mean, e.g. the election of the President of the European Council in a general election or a greater role of referenda undertaken in the entire area of the EU concerning individual (and socially controversial) matters of European policies.

Changes occurring in contemporary democracy affect public policy-making to a greater degree. This process requires not only specialist knowledge but also appropriate social consultations (in accordance with the good governance concept) and the ability to promote a given policy in the mass media. Not only professional activities but also informing the public opinion about them is the immanent feature of public actions. It more and more often requires activities conforming to the political marketing logic, i.e. presenting the greatest advantages of a given policy for citizens. The Internet is an important platform for social consultations and subsequent promotion of the specific public policy under the conditions of contemporary democracy.

As previously mentioned, the role of citizens' participation in process of public policy implementation increases. It mostly concerns the ability to involve social organizations in public actions, both at the planning and implementation changes. The major challenge for decision-makers is to maintain the balance between various interest groups and collect the largest possible number of organizations with high social representativeness.

Taking into account the European level in policy making processes is of considerable importance. It concerns the monitoring of actions taken at the EU level and also the provision of information about them to public opinion. The earliest possible involvement in these actions both by active participation of representatives of administration and by social participation. The ability to combine and create mutual synergies between national and European policies also constitutes a challenge.

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⁷⁴ Changes in the regulations proposed in the draft resolution of the European Parliament concerning the proposal changing the Acto concerning the election of representatives to the European Parliament in a direct election of 20 September 1976 (2009/2134(INI)). Cf. *Report*. European Parliament, Committee on Constitutional Affairs, 28.4.2011, A7-0176/2011.

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