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Implications of Globalization for the Idea of Civil Society

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The aim of this paper is to present how globalization processes and theories influence the idea of civil society, especially in the matter of relation of civil society with the state which is the best example of development of that idea. From the perspective of political thought one can ask an important question about implications of globalization processes for the idea of civil society – mainly in global civil society discourse which moves account from the state at transnational level.

The proposed analysis is based on the hermeneutic methodology. Presented theories relate to specific authors (wide spectrum of political philosophers, but also anthropologists and sociologists), therefore, it is more an interpretation of presented phenomena than their description. To understand their meanings, it is important to clarify and justify their theoretical context.

The paper addresses issues such as: globalization processes as theoretical explanation of contemporary world, the development of the idea of civil society and the concepts of global civil society.

General remarks about globalization as an explanation of contemporary world

Anthony Giddens in one of his lectures explained globalisation as a process of shrinking of time and space. But under the name of globalization we can understand also something more, an abstractive and non institutional political, social, economical, cultural and demographic processes that do not depend on geographical location and that take place locally and a kind of identified social relations on a global scale thanks to which regional

phenomena have its counterpart in other part of the world. There is no longer global knowledge centre, but rather transnational relations in the form of “complexity without borders” where nearly any change that took place in the local community may encourage others to find a new way of behaviour.

In the newest anthropological social and political researches globalization is more seen as regionalization rather than creation of one system. It does not lead to destruction of local contexts, but to formation of a new identity and forms of expression in culture, politics or society, where global products and signs are used in local situations. To explain this thesis we can start our reflections from two main political interpretations of globalization. One of them is related to Francis Fukuyama’s work and describes globalization mostly as ‘Homogenization’ of different parts of the world in which countries become closer to one other. The second one belongs to Samuel Huntington concepts and emphasizes the idea that Globalization creates a very ‘Heterogeneous’ cultural and political world system¹. To make it more clear let’s put here a few examples of proposed division.

With the homogenous perspective we can relate the concept of *Global village*² McLuhan describes how the globe has been contracted into a village by technology and the movement of information. Today it is even difficult to imagine world without technology. This also applies to politics. Another example describing the homogenous perspective of globalization is the concept used by sociologist George Ritzer in his book *The McDonaldization of Society* (1993). McDonaldization is a reconceptualization of rationalization, or moving from traditional to rational modes of thought, and scientific management. Where Max Weber used the model of the bureaucracy to represent the direction of this changing society, Ritzer sees the fast-food restaurant as having become a more representative contemporary paradigm³.

But globalization is functioning at complicated multi-level and associated processes of interpretation, translation, mutation and adaptation of global contents. And not always it results in homogenization of contents. It can cause opposing reactions connected with promoting of own culture. The sentence that world is a global ecumen does not mean that it is one homogenous world with common values. The essence of this processes describe

¹ E. Pietrzak, *The Global Village or Complex System?* [in:] W. Basak, *Social and Legal Aspects of Functioning Individuals and Group*, Publishing House Alternative, Brest 2011, p. 44.

² Term *globalization* first time appeared in The Webster Dictionary in 1961. Three years Marshall Theory of ‘global village’ is closely associated with Marshall McLuhan, popularized in his books *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964). Today, the term ‘global village’ is mostly used as a metaphor to describe the Internet and World Wide Web where physical distance is even less to the real-time communicative activities and therefore social spheres are greatly expanded by the openness of the web and the ease at which people can interact with others that share the same interests. Therefore, this technology fosters the idea of a conglomerate yet unified global community.

³ The characteristic of post-modern society is based on: 1. Efficiency – the optimal method for accomplishing a task. In the example of McDonald’s customers, it is the fastest way to get from being hungry to being full. Efficiency in McDonaldization means that every aspect of the organization is geared toward the minimization of time. 2. Calculability – objective should be quantifiable (sales) rather than subjective (taste). McDonaldization developed the notion that quantity equals quality, and that a large amount of product delivered to the customer in a short amount of time is the same as a high quality product. 3. Predictability – standardized and uniform services. “Predictability” means that no matter where a person goes, they will receive the same service and receive the same product every time. 4. Control – standardized and uniform employees, replacement of human by non-human technologies.

indigenization⁴, creolization⁵ – that focuses on the inflow of commodities to a place as opposed to the outflow ideas from the homogenization concept, and glocalization⁶, where locality and globality are not cultural oppositions, but rather principles, which penetrate each other like in a popular sentence “Think globally act locally”.

Genesis and development of the idea of civil society

The idea of civil society has been discussed since ancient times. For us the first important case of its development is related with the position of the state. Aristotle identified it with the political community which was formed by people – social beings that live in a state (*polis*) which meant one common place where their social nature could be developed. Marcus Tullius Cicero understood political society (*societas civilis*) as a synonym of civic society. The republic was a special state – community of people who accept the same rules and work together for the common good⁷.

The idea came back to European philosophical thought at the end of 17th century when modern society was being created in Great Britain⁸. As interesting, civil society was created at the same time as the concept of an individual and as Jürgen Habermas writes it could be only created in a free country, by free people who had their own opinions about the surrounding world and who had the courage to share them in public⁹.

Jean Jacques Rousseau like his ancient predecessors did not distinguish state from civil society. This idea could only be realized within a social contract which both sides were represented by equal citizens who shared the same will. John Locke, still identified civil society as a community that was established by citizens under a contract in order to protect the economy, which he treated as the first social pre-organization that had existed in the state of nature¹⁰. Liberal philosophy started to identify civil society with specific political system rather than with state which is characterized by: the rule of law, limited and sovereign political power, wide-ranging sphere of individual freedoms such

⁴ To ‘indigenize’ means to transform things to fit local culture. Due to imperialism and the impetus to modernize, many countries have invoked Western values of self-determination, liberalism, democracy and independence in the past, but now they are experiencing their own share of economic prosperity, technological sophistication, military power and political cohesion, they desire to revert to their ancestral cultures and religious beliefs.

⁵ It is the process of seeing how commodities are assigned meanings and uses in receiving cultures. Locals select elements of the receiving culture in order to construct their own hybrid medium. Cultures become creolized as a consequence of the fusion of disparate elements that are both heterogeneous and local.

⁶ The concept popularized by Roland Robertson, who argues that the only one perspective for describing globalization is local perspective.

⁷ Cicero, *O państwie*, [in:] *Pisma filozoficzne*, Warszawa 1960, p. 44–45.

⁸ Among Middle Ages’ authors that dedicated their works to problems of people’s sovereignty and state power were: Marsylus from Pauda, Niccolo Machiavelli and Jeana Bodin. In spite of this we cannot say that their works contain the ideas interesting to us.

⁹ J. Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, Surkamo, Frankfurt/Main 1990.

¹⁰ These ideas were changed during the rise of absolutism in Europe (Austria, Prussia and Russia) and as a consequence the civil society definition also changed. State was becoming distant to its citizens. The rights of social groups that before had participated in the political power decreased, the bureaucracy grew, the taxes raised, corruption and nepotism were present. The civil society changed from political society, even in Locke’s version, to its complete contrary.

as freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of establishment and right of private property¹¹.

Partial division of civil society from the state took place between the 18th and 19th centuries thanks to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who decided that civil society was one of three elements of social development. The other two were family and state¹². For the first time civil society was fully separated from the state by Alexis de Toqueville in the middle of 19th century. He defined state as formal system that represented political power: institutions and mechanisms of power execution. Civil society was part of the relations between citizens who for the sake of common good participated in public sphere by taking part in the decision making process. Toqueville classified civil society as relations between them, distinguishing it from political society that was understood as relations between citizens and political organisms¹³. Karol Marks reduced the civil society's definition even more, according to him it was only related to economy. He understood civil society as economical relations that, for him, were the base and put the state and its institutions in the outhouse (Marks 1995, 5). Both were interrelated, however in this relationship civil society had the dominant role. In the definition of Antonio Gramsci civil society does not include all of the production relations, but all of the ideological and cultural relations; not the whole of trading and industrial lives, but whole of spirituals and intellectual ones¹⁴. As an effect the relations between the state and civil society are closer. He believes, similarly to Marks, that the state should be just a temporary creature that will disappear because it will be absorbed by the civil society.

Authoritarian, totalitarian as well as political and ideological divisions of the world after WWII changed the concept of civil society. For many years this category was not analyzed. It was pushed out by the idea of democratic and open society that was introduced by Karl Popper who presented it in contrast to closed societies typical for the totalitarian systems.

When this idea came back during the time of real socialism it got a new meaning. The grassroots movement against the none accepted political power became the civil society's symbol. This negative point of departure created a situation in which newly established nongovernmental organizations worked against the state institution. The good example of it was the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, Spain, Portugal and in African countries.

Modern interpretations of the idea of civil society can be characterized by three traditions: liberal, communitarian and democratic. Liberal tradition, where the idea of civil society is based on citizens' rights and freedoms, requires individuals to ensure the association of the interest groups. Citizenship has here economic and rational nature. In communitarian tradition the idea of civil society is based on the values selected by the community, citizenship shows community nature. Democratic tradition is a debate

¹¹ J. Locke, *Dwa Traktaty o Rządzie*, bk. II, ch. VII–IX, par. 77–142, PWN, Warszawa 1992.

¹² G.W.F. Hegel, *Zasady filozofii prawa*, PWN, Warszawa 1969, p. 226–227. Hegel was using state definition in two different meanings: in first he was differencing it from the civil society and family, in the second he identified it with them because he believed they couldn't exist outside the state.

¹³ A. Toqueville, *O demokracji w Ameryce*, vol. 1, Znak, Kraków 1996, p. 193.

¹⁴ A. Gramsci, *Zeszyty filozoficzne*, PWN, Warszawa 1991, p. 440.

where the idea of civil society is based on communication and interaction. Citizenship is of democratic dialogue nature. In that dialogue its political awareness, decision-making process and consensus on values can be realized.

According to contemporary concepts of civil society created by American communarians as Charles Taylor or Michael Walzer civil society exists where there are independent associations respected by the government¹⁵ and is a space where people associated freely, also in nets of relationships connected to family, business, ideology, interests in order to fill this space¹⁶. All of them put the civil society between the political and private spheres as a third sector. For Ralph Dahrendorf civil societies are characterized by existence of autonomous organizations and institutions that represent people's free will¹⁷. Norberto Bobbio¹⁸ states that the dispute about the civil society is in reality debate about state definition¹⁹.

The essence of the dispute is the question whether civil society should function within the state's framework or outside of it. The first option which combines the idea of civil society with the state is called social – democratic and concentrates on the assumption that civil society cannot function without state's help, it is the state that must control conflicts, fight against inequality of different groups, prevent exclusion and promote political freedom and pluralism. On the other hand, the second opinion is connected to liberalism and is based on individual's autonomy and freedom. This individual forms part of a civil society that protects him/her from civil servants' power.

In the modern world civil society has been absorbed by the state and because of its new elements that up till now have been part of civil society have become part of a state. At the same time, private institutions like family, sex or sexuality have also incorporated it and as a result there are many new elements in private sphere that before belonged to the government's competencies. Due to all of it the contemporary political thought is characterized by search of a new subject that would be able to enter the political arena as a substitute of the currently falling apart civil society²⁰.

¹⁵ Ch. Taylor, *Kiedy mówimy: społeczeństwo obywatelskie* [in:] K. Michalski (ed.), *Europa i społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Kraków 1994, p. 59.

¹⁶ M. Walzer, *Spór o społeczeństwo obywatelskie* [in:] J. Szacki (ed.), *Ani książkę, ani kupiec. Obywatel. Idea społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w myśli współczesnej*, Znak, Kraków 1997, p. 7.

¹⁷ R. Dahrendorf, *Zagrożone społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, [in:] K. Michalski (ed.), op.cit., p. 7. He includes political parties, trade unions, factories, social movements, free professions, autonomous universities, independent churches and foundations in them.

¹⁸ N. Bobbio, *Spoleczeństwo obywatelskie*, [in:] J. Szacki (ed.), op.cit., p. 58.

¹⁹ Victor Perez Diaz describes two civil society's areas: Civil society, *sensu largo*, as a social and political team of institutions that consists of five elements: public power that is constrained and responsible before the society; rule of law; public sphere that forms part of interested citizens; free market economy free from violations and corruption; and various associations of free citizens. Civil society, *sensu stricto*, means social organizations that are outside the state institutions and are not controlled by the government. In this situation civil society is less independent from the state and includes organizations and associations that are autonomous from the government: created directly by citizens.

²⁰ Definition of peoples that for many years organized mass imagination and was a base for such terms as nation or state is not valid any longer. It seems that a concept that is becoming important is 'population' which came into use thanks to the success of biopolitical categories. José Ortega y Gasset claimed that a new age of hyperdemocracy was emerging in which masses would be acting without parliaments and political representation, without taking into account norms and legal rules and would only use physical

The idea of global civil society

At the end of the 20th century public space became dynamic and complex where new nonlinear structures were constantly being created. Globalization, the spread of technology and the democratization create a new architecture of socio-political relations. At the international level, besides states as actors of the political life also emerged transnational organizations, multinational corporations, NGOs, social movements and networks. Manuel Castells believes that nets create new social morphology and new type of social structure. This vision is connected to the whole and changing global order²¹.

In the second half of the 20th century there was an explosion of global civil associations and organizations, whose objectives were global. This kind of society's subjects is connected to its "place on Earth", but they are not limited by this place. They function in a dynamic way, in various institutions and nets at the same time. Paul van Seters sees it as:

- independent international non-governmental organizations,
- society forming the inner structure and coordinating their activities with international NGOs,
- international non-governmental organizations which have an impact on global international politics²².

John Keane says that global civil society is *a dynamic nongovernmental system of interconnected socio-economic institutions that straddle the whole earth, and that have complex effects that are felt in its four corners. Global civil society is neither a static object nor unfinished project that consists of sometimes thick, sometimes thinly stretched networks, pyramids and hub-and-spoke clusters of socio-economic institutions and actors who organise themselves across borders, with the deliberate aim of drawing the world together in new ways. These non-governmental institutions and actors tend to pluralise power and to problematise violence; consequently, their peaceful or 'civil' effects are felt everywhere, here and there, far and wide, to and from local areas, through wider regions, to the planetary level itself*²³. So, global civil society is something more than nongovernmental organizations, it includes individuals, companies, events, non-profit organizations, social movements, various communities, celebrities, intellectuals, *think tanks*, charities, lobbies, protest movements, web sites, trade unions, employers' federations, international commissions, sport organizations. All of them form a multilevel thick interconnected space. It exists in relationships and social dynamics. It is characterized by common traits – peaceful attitude, fight against violence and lack of tolerance²⁴.

Globalization, increasing risk and turbo-capitalism makes the state is not able to keep up with the incoming changes, so global civil society can take the form of global coun-

force as a medium. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri think that only when masses, size and multitude are taken into account we can talk about democracy.

²¹ J.N. Rosenau, *Governance in Globalizing Space*, [in:] J. Pierre (ed.), *Debating Governance. Authority, Steering and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 12.

²² P. Seters, *Approaching Global Civil Society*, [in:] A. Thompson, J. Walker (eds.) *Critical Mass: The Emergence of Global Civil Society*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2008, p. 25–42.

²³ J. Keane, *The Global Civil Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, p. 8.

²⁴ J.N. Rosenau, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

terpower and become both moderator and facilitator of changes, which restores the balance of risks manifested in the concept of sustainable development giving democracy a global dimension²⁵. Therefore, we can say that modern reflections on civil society on a global scale are drawn from three narratives²⁶.

- In the discourse of liberal civil society separated from the state and the economy individualism and human rights strengthen.
- In the theory of cultural hegemony of Antonio Gramsci, state uses force to maintain the power, a strong state is legitimized by a strong associations and separated from the market, the hegemony of the state is not absolute and creates an opportunity for social opposition.
- Critics of globalization see in global civil society an opportunity to create a new world order.

The first two concepts are based on the idea of counterpower, the third shows that it may constitute at any time. In the liberal narrative civil society normally acts as a passive counterpower and becomes active only when governments violate their autonomy. In the alterglobalist narrative in normal conditions civil society is active counterpower and may become passive after leading reforms to the world order. Concepts of Ulrich Beck and Manuel Castels fit to this trend. While Beck uses the term “global civil society”, Castels reserves them for pre-industrial society, and rather avoids it. He refers to the new social movements, but says that in the future it may emerge from them, civil society of the Information Age. Beck defines it more descriptively, Castels rather normatively. However, in both facets object of study covers a common area of public sphere.

And this is actually the definition of global civil society in both cases. Therefore, we can say that global civil society is generally speaking of the structures and activities coming to the intersection of the sphere of the state, the private sphere and the economic sphere. It materializes in collective activities, which are not aimed at state governance or economic profit.

Conclusions

The global socio – political scene has become a place that gives many different possibilities and choices, where people can be subjects. We can even state that assumptions about global homogenization of culture is connected only to weak definition of culture reduced to materialistic goods and the ways of its distribution.

The state is still an important element, but its role has changed. It becomes rather a broker or a communication centre that allows cooperation among different system members. This vision is connected to the whole and changing global order. However it does not mean a global government, but rather establishment of mechanisms that will

²⁵ M. Albrow, F. Holland, *Democratizing Global Governance: Achieving Goals While Aspiring to Free and Equal Communication*, [in:] A. Thompson, J. Walker (eds.), op.cit., p. 251–281.

²⁶ M. Gamble, M. Kenny, *Ideological Contestation, Transnational Civil Society*, [in:] R. Germain, M. Kenny (eds.) *The Idea of Global Civil Society. Politics and Ethics in Globalizing Era*, Routledge, London–New York 2005, p. 1–16.

coordinate these political issues that can't be solved by a state or regional organizations. It involves coordinating of states and other actors' actions that should be defined as "governing around the world and not governing the world"²⁷. There is no longer just one actor – state- but there are many actors that cooperate, work independently or even get into conflict.

The most important element of that model are relationships and social dynamics, then the fact that local communities are connected with a global network, which is totally a new situation and peaceful attitude against violence and lack of tolerance. The democratization of the socio-political life and process of globalization gives citizens the feeling of influence on the organization of the social life. The sphere of political participation is not an arena behind the precipice, but a real area of acting based on political commitment of citizens, political passion and beliefs that people really can change something. That two first points cannot be achieved without rising civil awareness civil education and of course without focusing on ethics, especially ethics of care²⁸, which implies that there is moral significance in the fundamental elements of relationships and dependencies in human life.

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²⁷ J.N. Rosenau, op.cit., p. 181.

²⁸ Normatively, care ethics seeks to maintain relationships by contextualizing and promoting the well-being of care-givers and care-receivers in a network of social relations. Most often defined as a practice or virtue rather than a theory as such, "care" involves maintaining the world of, and meeting the needs of, ourselves and others. It builds on the motivation to care for those who are dependent and vulnerable.

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