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The concept of Europeanization : selected theoretical and methodological issues (part 1)

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**THE CONCEPT OF EUROPEANIZATION.
SELECTED THEORETICAL
AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES (PART 1)**

1. Introduction

On 1 May 2004, Poland officially became a member-state of the European Union. Historical significance of the date would make one perceive the day of accession as a breakthrough, a kind of zero-point in the Polish history. In reality, however, taking into account dynamics and direction of institutional and social change, Poland has been under the influence of European integration since at least mid-1990s. Fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria, reinforced by the periodic reports by the European Commission¹, which evaluated progress in preparing Poland for the membership constitute a most clear cut evidence of formal impact of European integration on the Polish institutional system. The impact may be traced however in many other dimensions, by analyzing for instance the socializing effect of the negotiation process, programmes of pre-accession assistance, processes of collective and individual learning that have been stimulated by exchange between Polish political, administrative, academic etc. elites with their Union counterparts.

A review of publications concerning European integration in Poland² reveals that the process of formal and, especially, *informal* adapt-

¹ Cf. e.g. European Commission. 2000. *Regular Report from the Commission on Poland's Progress Towards Accession*. 8 November COM 0709 fin. Brussels: EC.

² The review included the catalogue of the National Library in Warsaw and books on sale in the academic bookshops of „Liber” and Główna Księgarnia Naukowa im. B. Prusa between January 2003 and June 2004.

ing³ of Polish state structures, public institutions, social institutions, public policies, organizations, interests and identities of political actors and/or public discourse etc. to new rules of political, economic, social and cultural game, associated with the EU system has not been analyzed by Polish authors too often⁴.

With the exception of publications in law and political science, oriented towards formal-legal aspects of the change⁵, only rarely there appear papers that analyze the impact of European integration at the national and sub-national level in Poland taking advantage of the concept of *Europeanization*⁶. The infrequency is all the more curious that for at least ten recent years, the concept is frequently and successfully employed in theoretical and empirical research on impact of the EU institutions, policies, discourses etc. on systems and cultures of not only EU member-states but also other countries which remain in the EU sphere of influence⁷. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to present selected aspects and problems related to defining and employing the concept of *Europeanization* in research and analyzes of European integration, which are conducted by Europeanists in Western Europe. The ensuing part of the paper will raise the question whether it makes sense and if it is possible to use the concept with regard to on-going institutional and social change in Poland.

³ Cf. *goodness of fit*.

⁴ *EU-monitoring* published by F. Eberta Stiftung in co-operation with Małopolski Instytut Samorządu Terytorialnego is one of the exceptions.

⁵ Cf. C. Mik (ed.), *Europeizacja prawa krajowego: wpływ integracji europejskiej na klasyczne dziedziny prawa krajowego* [Europeanization of domestic law: impact of European integration on classic areas of domestic law]. *V Ogólnopolska Konferencja Prawnicza, Toruń, 4–5 listopada 1999*, Towarzystwo Naukowe Organizacji i Kierownictwa „Dom Organizatora”, Toruń 2000.

⁶ Ever more often there appears the term „Europeanization”, undefined and theoretically not grounded, taken for granted, cf. W. Sanetra (ed.), *Europeizacja polskiego prawa pracy*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2004.

⁷ E.g. Norway, Switzerland (ARENA papers; Epiney A. 1998. *Schweizerische Demokratie und Europäische Union* b.d. i m.w. (cyt. w: K. H. Goetz, S. Hix (red.), *Europeanised Politics? European Integration and National Political Systems*. Frank Cass 2001). See also: A. Gąsior-Niemiec, *Traces of Europeanization. Poland*, “Polish Sociological Review” 2002, no 2 (138) for possible reasons why the interest in the concept of „Europeanization” in Poland is so little.

2. A history outline of the concept Europeanization

West European studies into European integration have diverged into two directions:

1) 1st generation studies entail creating supranational structures, policies and discourses – *communitarization; bottom-up integration*;

2) 2nd generation studies refer to the impact of supranational structures, policies and discourses on national and sub-national structures, policies and discourses – „Europeanization”⁸.

Most simply, for analytical purposes, the relationship between the two kind of processes might be defined in causal terms. Namely, Europeanization of national systems could be perceived and analyzed as a (direct or indirect) effect of the processes of communitarization.

Although „Europeanization” has thus become already a generic name to describe the second generation of analyzes dedicated to European integration, its theoretical foundation is still fragile. Despite the growing volume of publications in which the term is employed, establishing chairs and institutes of Europeanization⁹, no coherent theory of Europeanization has been proposed so far. The fact that the concept has been introduced only recently to the discourse of European integration studies, decidedly empirical focus of most researchers who use the term

⁸ Cf. *top-down integration*. A generally acknowledged basis for definitions of the concept is provided by Ladrech. Europeanization is according to him an incremental process which leads to such a change of irection and shape of policies that political and economic dynamics of the European Community becomes part of the logic which organizes national policies and national political process (R. Ladrech, *Europeanization of domestic politics and institutions: the case of France*, “Journal of Common Market Studies” 1994, no 32 (1), March, p. 69). Stressing institutional and organizational dimension of the process, Ladrech emphasises pressure to adapt, institutional learning and political change. The basis for defining Europeanization was later enriched with more cognitive and ideational dimension of political process, the component related to individual action and the role of discourse (cf. e.g. C. M. Radaelli, *Whither Europeanization? Concept Stretching and Substantive Change*, EIoP Papers 2000, no 4 (8) at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-008a.htm>; A. Gąsior-Niemiec, *Traces of Europeanization. Poland*), which makes it possible to use the concept while analyzing multi-level and multi-directional interactions between the Community system and the systems of the member-states.

⁹ Cf. *Europeanization Units* at universities in Sussex, Bradford etc.

as well as complex, dynamic subject matter to which it refers, might be named as main reasons for the status quo¹⁰.

The theoretical immaturity makes most of the authors try to define the contents of the concept of „Europeanization” anew. The advantage is that one may monitor the evolution of the concept and its theoretical developments on a regular basis as well as trace their empirical verification. The disadvantage is, in turn, that many of the proposed definitions are incommensurable. On the other hand, there is also a tendency to overuse the term since it has become fashionable.

3. Mechanisms of Europeanization

Knill and Lehmkuhl¹¹, considering the contents of the concept, proposed a typology of processes which may be treated as basic mechanisms of Europeanization. Having defined „bottom-up” conditions of adaptive pressure that comes from the EU system – on the basis of Scharpf’s classification¹² – they proposed three basic models of shaping and spreading cognitive maps, institutions and public policies within the European Union:

- *Positive integration*: an obligatory, model regulation introduced at the Community level leads to direct implementation of certain norms, structures and patterns of action in the EU member-states’ systems (cf. environmental policy);
- *Negative integration*: a model deregulation introduced at the Community level leads to change in the mapping of institutional options and/or resources in a given sector which are accessible to national (sub-national) actors; the change may result in variegated adaptive reactions in the member-states’ systems (cf. transport policy);

¹⁰ J. P. Olsen, *The Many Faces of Europeanization*, ARENA Working Papers 2001, no 1 (2).

¹¹ C. Knill, D. Lehmkuhl, *How Europe Matters: Different Mechanism of Europeanization*, EioP 1999, no 3 (7); cf. also T. Boerzel, T. Risse, *When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, “EUI Working Papers RSC” 2000, no 56.

¹² F. W. Scharpf, *Games Real Actors Play. Actor-Centred Institutionalism in Policy Research*, Westview Press: Boulder, CO 1997.

– *Framework integration*: a general direction of change is promoted in certain sectors and areas, which is reinforced by normative pressure (cf. railway policy).

According to the authors, three basic types of adaptation within the member-states' systems correspond to the three models of adaptive pressure:

- *absorption*: (forced) holistic, formal change of the institutional model in a state¹³;
- *accomodation*: gradual (frequently fragmentary and incremental) formal and/or informal change of a state's institutional model¹⁴;
- *transformation*: a cognitively and normatively motivated by the EU as a kind of an „epistemic community”, change in beliefs and expectations on the part of main actors in a state's institutional system; it may lead to a fundamental change of approach to a given issue, sector etc.¹⁵

4. The use of the concept of Europeanization in research

The concept of *Europeaization* is frequently used to analyze adaptive changes that occur in the EU member-states with regard to mutual relations, composition and competences of legislative, executive and judicial institutions (both in their vertical and horizontal, internal and external arrangements). Moreover, it is employed with a reference to arrangements, interactions and resources of main systemic actors as well as in analysis of formulation and implementation of particular public policies. The concept is also taken advantage of while doing research into changes at the level of consciousness, both mental and behavioural, which take place under the influence of activities (often of symbolic nature) which are staged at the Community level, including side-effects of human interrelationships (socialization)¹⁶.

¹³ Cf. *institutional compliance*.

¹⁴ Cf. *changing domestic opportunity structures*.

¹⁵ Cf. *policy framing*.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. T. Boerzel, T. Risse, *When Europe Hits Home...*

5. Summary

Following the period of studies dedicated to processes of creating institutions, policies and community norms (communitrization), it seemed necessary to intensify research and theoretical reflection into multifarious feedback of communitarization on the systems and cultures of EU member-states. A wider circulation of the concept of Europeanization in the academic discourse constitutes thus another stage in the development of studies in European integration. The concept of Europeanization – despite obvious theoretical and methodological *lacunas* – promises hope for ever better conceptualization and operationalization of the subject matter, that is changes, both formal and informal that occur in institutional and social systems of EU member-states under the influence of adaptive pressure which originates with the Community institutions, policies and discourses.