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CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE NETHERLANDS AND POLAND

– LEARNING FROM THE DUTCH?

Key words:

civil society, social capital, public discourse, voluntariness, the Netherlands-Poland

Introduction

The article presents a theoretical framework for analysing country-specific civil society developments and uses the Netherlands and Poland as case studies. Specifically, it employs a model of civil society developed by Dutch sociologists Paul Dekker and Andries Van den Broek. Unlike previous definitions, this model reflects a broad and interdisciplinary range of concepts of civil society located within an ideal social order. Scientific validity of this model will be confirmed in two ways. First, its indicators will be applied to the assessment of different levels of country-specific civil society developments. Second, its principle of voluntariness will be used to interpret two normative social trends of religious behavior and historical experience in Poland.

The article begins with an outline of interdisciplinary scope, historical developments and contemporary definitions of civil society concepts. The breadth of the topic limits the scope of this article to a couple of definitions and variations in civil society models. My analysis will be also restricted to a couple of results obtained in research to date.

Second, I will undertake a qualitative analysis of the developments in the civil societies in the Netherlands and Poland. They are situated on the opposite poles to each other and thus are suitable for my comparative analysis. On the one hand, the indicators of the 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept' will be used to measure the civil society developments in the Netherlands, which is one of the highest ranked models

in Europe¹. On the other hand, these indicators permit gauging deficits, which can explain the weak developments of the civil society in Poland.

Third, I will investigate voluntariness, which is a central principle of the 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept'. A conceptual space will be developed to allow for further examinations of particular normative social trends such as historical experience and religious behavior and their impact on the civil society developments in Poland.

Historical overview

In accordance with the interdisciplinarity and timeless validity of concepts of civil society, an investigation of their theory and practice becomes one of the most important and interesting challenges for social sciences.

First, studies of civil society are situated at the intersection of political science, sociology and psychology. They are taken up in research on democracy and democratic governance, social and political participation, social norms and cultures and social psychology. The scope of the notion of civil society has been brought into focus by a Polish sociologist and philosopher Jan Kubik very trenchantly: *The social arrangements found huddling under the umbrella of 'civil society' are so diverse that the danger of conceptual stretching becomes very real*². Gordon White points in turn to the elusiveness of the precise meaning of civil society among political theorists³.

Second, the notion of 'civil society' has a long development history of the ideas of state and nation, in particular reflections on the role of people's activity within the area of public interest.

¹ According to R. Bijl (2010), the Scandinavian countries rank higher than the Netherlands, however, I have chosen the case of the Netherlands because of my previous studies of this topic in the Netherlands. R. Bijl, *The social state of the Netherlands*, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, SCP, The Hague 2010, p. 221.

² G. Eisele, *European Civil Society. A glance at recent literature*, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Nachwuchsgruppe „Europäische Zivilgesellschaft und Multilevel Governance“, Münster 2005, http://nez.uni-muenster.de/download/eisele_european_civil_society.pdf, p. 1, 15.02.2013.

³ Ibidem, p. 1.

Historically, Aristotle drew a distinction between private sphere (oikos), including social, civil interests of citizens, and public zone (ecclesia) represented by governments or other public institutions as well as the centrally situated agora – a ‘meeting point’ for the above two⁴.

Modern social science has been founded on modification of the civil society assumption. Polish sociologist Professor Andrzej Siciński emphasizes the significance of the English social thought developed in the 17th and 18th centuries and its main representatives: John Locke and David Hume. Locke, according to Siciński, perceives civil society as a social order based on social contract which is in contrast to the natural society created by God⁵.

Similar interpretations have been proposed by an 18th century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his famous work entitled ‘Social Contract’. He described the civil society as one where people have sovereign rights. He put forward an idea that they had the right to self-determination within the state at the expense of government⁶. Concepts developed in the 19th and 20th centuries by a German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and an Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci focused on the question how society should be organized instead of asking what a society was in reality⁷.

Over time, the notion of civil society has changed its primary ‘civil’ meaning to emphasize a ‘democratic’ character of society. This interpretation has been developed by an Austrian-born British philosopher Karl Popper who used it to oppose the concept of civil society implemented in the totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe⁸.

⁴ M. Wiczyński, *Spółeczeństwo obywatelskie w Polsce – czy ma przyszłość?*, 2006, http://www.polityka.org.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=503&Itemid=48, 15.02.2013.

⁵ A. Siciński, *O idei społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, Wiedza i Życie, <http://archiwum.wiz.pl/1996/96063600.asp>, 15.02.2013.

⁶ *An Introduction to Kant's Political Philosophy, via Rousseau*, <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/sefd0/crsold/tt1034/tt1034kant.htm>, 15.02.2013.

⁷ A. Siciński, *O idei społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, Wiedza i Życie, <http://archiwum.wiz.pl/1996/96063600.asp>, 15.02.2013.

⁸ Ibidem.

Current conceptual approaches

Two main ways in which the concept of civil society is interpreted nowadays are explained below.

Firstly, Jan Kubik distinguishes two analytical types of definition of civil society. He perceives it (a) *...as a public space, institutionally protected from the state's arbitrary encroachment, within which individuals can freely form their associations...*⁹ and (b) as *...a set of social groups, whose members deliberate or act collectively to accomplish common goals*¹⁰. Such definitions sketch the main assumption of the civil society model which is central to positioning of individuals and their collective action towards the public interest. However, these definitions do not consider inclusive positions of the state and the economy, particularly the third (civic) sector, whereas other scientists do include both components. The latter represent the second, broader approach to interpreting civil society.

An example of such broader definition can be found in the works of Dutch sociologists Paul Dekker and Andries Van den Broek. They introduce civil society as a model situated between community (a), market (b) and state (c) and involving stakeholders such as voluntary associations, local clubs, networks at a community level or at work or family, friendship ties (a), nonprofit organisations, pressure groups, professional organisations, trade unions, local business communities (b), national governments, local authorities and political parties (c)¹¹. By referring to Streeck and Schmitter, Dekker and Van den Broek describe the triad: community, market and state as an ideal social order. They suggest that civil society itself is a fourth, separate element of social order interacting with the triad but being determined by its own factors. Table 1 below presents more ways of analysing such definition of social order.

⁹ G. Eisele, *European Civil Society. A glance at recent literature*, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Nachwuchsgruppe „Europäische Zivilgesellschaft und Multilevel Governance“, Münster 2005, http://nez.uni-muenster.de/download/eisele_european_civil_society.pdf, p. 1, 15.02.2013.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 1-2.

¹¹ P. Dekker, A. Van den Broek, *Civil Society in Comparative Perspective: Involvement in Voluntary Associations in North America and Western Europe*, in *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, Vol. 9 No. 1 (1998), p. 14.

Table 1.

	community	market	state	civil society
guiding principle	solidarity	competition	hierarchy	voluntariness
dominant collective actors	families, neighbourhoods	business firms, political parties	bureaucratic agencies	associations
prerequisite for participation	ascription	purchasing power	legal authorisation	commitment
principal decision rule	consensus	demand and supply	authoritative adjudication	debate
medium of exchange	esteem	money, votes	coercion	arguments
type of goods generated	solidaristic goods	private goods	collective goods	mixed goods
positive externalities	mutual affection, collective identity	prosperity, accountability	security, justice	social capital, public discourse

Source: P. Dekker, *Voluntary associations, volunteering and the ideals of civil society*, CIES (Research Center on Economics and Society), http://www.grupcies.com/boletin/images/stories/PDFBoletin/Articulo1_Edic_59.pdf, 15.02.2013, p. 5.

The positive externalities and the guiding principle of civil society illustrated in Table 1 are central to the analysis that follows. First, social capital and public discourse will be applied to measure the levels of civil society developments. Second, voluntariness will be used to interpret the country-specific social trends.

According to Dekker and Van den Broek, more research grounded in the above model is desirable. They propose that the application of their concept should oppose the fear of presumed decline in social and political engagement which is in turn connected to an increasing role of rationalization and individualization in the second half of the 20th century in Western Europe. They outline a newly developing role of a social actor as follows: *Civic commitment to the common good is supposed to be eroding, due to various interconnected trends associated with modernization: rationalization, at the expense of traditional religious values and moral obligations; the ascent of individualism, manifesting itself in values of autonomy, self-realization, and personal freedom; and the concomitant rise of “calculative citizen”, which hampers pro-social behavior in general and volunteering in particular*¹². The main challenge is to counteract the stagnation of the development of social life among the ‘modern’ citizens and to find the factors which could determine the ‘socialization’ and

¹²ibidem, p. 17.

the 'mobilization effect'. This in turn would likely stimulate the political, social and economic competence and involvement of citizens.

The conceptual framework developed by Dekker and Van den Broek provides a basis for the case studies that follow. It pays attention not only to sociological, but also political and economic (third sector) issues of societal action. As it will be remarked below, all three elements of social order (that is sociological, political and economic) determine the level of development of civil societies.

Indicators of civil society

Positive externalities presented in Table 1 are interpreted by Dekker and Van den Broek as two main indicators specifying the desired development of their civil society model. That is why social capital and public discourse offer frames for assessment of developments in civil society.

In defining the first indicator, Dekker cites a political scientist Robert D. Putnam: *Social capital is used here in the collective sense of '...features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions'*¹³. According to Dekker and Van den Broek, social capital is generated by the development of regional civic community based on deepening of horizontal social relationships *as indicated by individual involvement in community affairs and in the presence of a tight network of organizations, ranging from trade unions to sport clubs to choirs*¹⁴. In this context, social capital will be assessed in the following case studies by measuring the level of social relations, their connections to social trust, and societal attitudes towards social organisations.

The second indicator is public discourse, which, according to Dekker, *refers to the formation of public opinion, collective values and goals and struggles over the*

¹³ P. Dekker, *Voluntary associations, volunteering and the ideals of civil society*, CIES (Research Center on Economics and Society), http://www.grupcies.com/boletin/images/stories/PDFBoletin/Articulo1/Edic_59.pdf, p. 4, 15.02.2013.

¹⁴ P. Dekker, A. Van den Broek, *Civil Society in Comparative Perspective: Involvement in Voluntary Associations in North America and Western Europe*, in *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, Vol. 9 No. 1 (1998), p. 18.

state and public policies that are related to these processes¹⁵. Dekker values its importance for strengthening political democracy and for increasing economic and administrative performance. Generally speaking, public discourse is generated by social involvement in public affairs. Its level will be assessed by measuring public interest in political affairs and partaking in, or influencing the political processes.

Dekker and Van den Broek explain that the first indicator correlates strongly with the second one, summing up this interconnection as follows: *Focusing on individual behavior, most stories start at social trust as an individual asset of social capital, continue with social participation, lead to political competence and involvement, and finish with an appreciation of its impact on public discourse and democracy*¹⁶.

I have chosen the above indicators to operationalize the assessment of the levels of civil society developments because of their wide-ranging conceptual scope and suitability to interrogate a wide range of actions and diverse elements of contemporary social order. Francis Fukuyama points to the conceptual stretching of the first term as follows: *social capital is an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals. The norms that constitute social capital can range from a norm of reciprocity between two friends, all the way to complex and elaborately articulated doctrines like Christianity or Confucianism*¹⁷. Kirt H. Wilson and Rosa A. Eberly perceive the term public discourse as *rhetorical processes and products articulated, circulated or performed, deliberated, and rearticulated in the public sphere by private people come together as publics or movements*¹⁸.

¹⁵ P. Dekker, *Voluntary associations, volunteering and the ideals of civil society*, CIES (Research Center on Economics and Society), <http://www.grupcies.com/boletin/images/stories/PDFBoletin/Articulo1 Edic 59.pdf>, p. 4, 15.02.2013.

¹⁶ P. Dekker, A. Van den Broek, *Civil Society in Comparative Perspective: Involvement in Voluntary Associations in North America and Western Europe*, in *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, Vol. 9 No. 1 (1998), p. 18.

¹⁷ F. Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society*, IMF Working Paper, WP/00/74, 2000, <http://poseidon01.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=423027122029097008117017102108088085023056033007026070025111055028117025046033047112002110030098020095069100036005023013027105118100099007111068120&EXT=pdf>, p. 3, 20.04.2013.

¹⁸ K. H. Wilson, R. A. Eberly, *Rhetoric and Public Discourse*, <http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/22866 Part IV Intro.pdf>, p. 425, 20.04.2013.

In addition, both indicators also reflect an interdisciplinary model of civil society including private relations and public affairs. If the indicators permitted interpreting either only private or only wider societal relations, they could not be used to compare the different levels of development in the civil societies in the Netherlands and Poland.

Comparative country studies

The aim of this section is to explain a relationship between the two indicators and normative developments of civil societies in the countries under review and test the applicability of the 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept'.

The choice of the Netherlands and Poland follows from research conducted by a Dutch sociologist Rob Bijl for the Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP, which reveals a stark difference in the level of development of civil society in these two countries: *the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands exhibit a high level of social trust. Of the 20 countries compared, political interest is highest in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. By contrast, Portugal, Poland and the Slovak Republic score low on both counts*¹⁹.

1. Case study: The Netherlands

The Netherlands represents an example of a highly modern, well-developed civil society. The following scrutiny begins with assessing the level of social capital measured here by analysing the intensification of diversified social horizontal relationships. Bijl comments on the most basic levels of social relations: *Around 85% of the Dutch public report that they have contact with relatives at least once per week; two-thirds see their neighbours at least once a week; and eight out of ten have contact with friends or acquaintances at least once per week. Some 4% of the Dutch public have contact with relatives, friends or acquaintances less than once per*

¹⁹ R. Bijl, *The social state of the Netherlands*, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, SCP, The Hague 2010, p. 221.

month²⁰. Moreover, the vast majority of the Dutch are satisfied with their social relations. Admittedly, the Dutch have been investing less time in social contacts over last ten or 15 years, but this decline is not remarkable. In any case, such results demonstrate existence of the very first stimulator for the high level of social trust in the Dutch society²¹, which should confirm the relevance of inclusion of family and friendship ties into the civil society model²².

Social relationships can be also appreciated by measuring the rates of public involvement in civil society organisations. Bijl reports very high rates also in this area. *With the exception of nature and environmental organisations, half the population were affiliated to one or more organisation in 2007 (...) If nature and environmental organisations are included, then according to the most recent survey 45% of people are not members of any organisation*²³. The result of 55% of the Dutch belonging to a civil society organisation ranks the Dutch society as one of the highest in the European context.

Total numbers of NGO members are also impressive, taking account of the fact that the Netherlands has just above 16 million inhabitants. Membership in nature and environmental organisations exceeds four million²⁴, while sport federations bring together just under five million members²⁵. Even though the organised membership among the Dutch have been falling since the middle of the 1990s, nature and environment-related activities, sport and international aid, human rights and consumer interests maintain stable or upward trending curves.

Engagement of the Dutch in voluntary activities is also high. Firstly, Helmut K. Anheier and Lester M. Salamon point out that 38% of the adult Dutch population

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 224.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 224-225.

²² One of the most noticeable differentiations among many civil society definitions refers to the problem of including or excluding the factor of family and friendship relations, See: P. Dekker, *Voluntary associations, volunteering and the ideals of civil society*, CIES (Research Center on Economics and Society), <http://www.grupcies.com/boletin/images/stories/PDFBoletin/Articulo1 Edic 59.pdf>, p. 4, 15.02.2013.

²³ R. Bijl, *The social state of the Netherlands*, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, SCP, The Hague 2010, p. 225.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 225.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 238.

reported volunteering in 1995, which puts them in the top rank among the European countries²⁶. Secondly, Salamon et al. (2003) reveal that nearly 15% of the total Dutch workforce is in the not-for-profit sector, which is also the highest proportion in Europe²⁷. Thirdly, 43-44% of the Dutch are reported to have been volunteering (for organisations, not individually) over the last ten years²⁸.

Such active involvement in civil society organisations corresponds also with an active financial aid for them. Bijl stresses that 88% of the Dutch households financially support good causes²⁹. This is an extremely high proportion among the European countries. Moreover, private households are mostly donating for social organisations. Specifically, *almost EUR 4.3 billion was donated to good causes in 2007, of which more than 45% was given by households. Businesses account for just under 31% of donation, followed at some distance by lotteries (9%), funds (8%) and legacies (6%)*³⁰.

The Netherlands ranks second in Europe, behind Denmark, on the rates of public interest and political engagement.

Firstly, Bijl indicates some fluctuations in development of political interest among the Dutch. *The majority who would like a greater say in the administration of municipalities and provinces has shrunk substantially. This does not however apply for the preference for directly elected mayors and for referendums; both ideas still enjoyed the strong support in 2009 that they had ten years ago and more*³¹.

Participation rates in elections of mayors and referendums are very high: respectively 72% and 82%. Simultaneously, the interest in local political themes remains great and is even greater than interest in national or international political issues.

²⁶ H. K. Anheier, L. M. Salamon, *Volunteering in cross-national perspective: Initial comparisons*, in *Civil Society Working Paper 10*, July 2001, <http://www.avso.org/voluntary/Int%20DOC/volunteering.pdf>, p. 9, 6.10.2012.

²⁷ P. Dekker, *Voluntary associations, volunteering and the ideals of civil society*, CIES (Research Center on Economics and Society), http://www.grupcies.com/boletin/images/stories/PDFBoletin/ArticuloI_Edic_59.pdf, p. 4, 15.02.2013.

²⁸ R. Bijl, *The social state of the Netherlands*, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, SCP, The Hague 2010, p. 227-228.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 225.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 225.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 228.

Secondly, Bijl's studies reveal strong support for protest activities among the Dutch. *Fairy stable (...) is the acceptance by around two-thirds of the population of protest behavior if someone believes a law to be completely unjust; an equally stable proportion of around 50% say that they themselves would probably protest if they held that view*³².

Unlike the above results, the rates of membership in political parties are low and decreasing. According to a report by Peter Mair and Ingrid van Biezen, only 2.5% of the Dutch electorate were members of a political party in 2000, a decline of nearly 2% over 20 years³³. Bijl acknowledges that this is a problem, but posits that this is not a decisive factor in assessing the level of the Dutch political discourse in general³⁴.

The above scrutiny proves that the indicators of the 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept' permit assessing the level of the civil society development in the Netherlands. First, the strong social capital is assessed by measuring very well developed horizontal relationships such as strong family and friendship ties, social participation in NGOs as well as social trust in them expressed by volunteering and financial support. Second, the intensive political discourse among the Dutch can be confirmed by the high participation rates in elections and referendums, great interest in local policy issues and strong acceptance for and participation in protest activities.

2. Case study: Poland

As in the first case study, the level of social trust is considered here first. According to the European Social Survey (ESS), Poland ranks very low, generating 3.79 points on a 10-point trust scale and occupies one of the last positions among the

³² Ibidem, p. 229.

³³ P. Mair, I. van Biezen, *Party membership in twenty European democracies, 1980-2000*, in *Party Politics*, Vol. 7 No.1, SAGE Publications, London 2001, <http://www.olemiss.edu/courses/pol628/mairbiezen01.pdf>, p. 16, 15.02.2013.

³⁴ R. Bijl, *The social state of the Netherlands*, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, SCP, The Hague 2010, p. 231.

European countries³⁵. This result can be further illustrated by an assessment of social relationships and membership in and support for social organisations.

It is worth noting that the family ties in Poland are very strong, whereas relationships with all social groups other than families score low and they can explain the weak development of social trust in Poland. According to the Public Opinion Research Center (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej – CBOS), definite trust concerns 81% of relations to close family and only 38% of these with distant family, 20% in case of friends and acquaintances, 16% in relations to neighbours or 4% in relations to strangers³⁶. Polish sociologists Michał Wenzel and Jan Kubik explain this phenomenon as follows: *In 1970s, Stefan Nowak, a renowned Polish sociologist, proposed a hypothesis about the existence of ‘social vacuum’ in Poland. In this conception, Polish society is a ‘federation of families and friendship groups united in a nation’. The family ties are strong, but voluntary relations are weak. Group activity tends to be defined by kinship and each such family network acts in opposition to, and has interests incompatible with the others*³⁷. Accordingly the Polish case, the civil society model can apply the primary social interactions to analysing civil society provided that this model distinguishes family ties from other social relations.

The weak social relations in Poland illustrated above correlate with low level of membership in social organisations and associations. According to the ESS, only 5.5% of adults have worked in non-political organisation or association in the last twelve months³⁸.

The Diagnoza Społeczna 2011 survey provides outcomes encompassing a broader spectrum of public actors: *In 2011 in Poland, 14.8% of respondents*

³⁵ M. Wenzel, J. Kubik, *Civil society in Poland. Case study, Prepared for international conference The Logic of Civil Society in New Democracies: East Asia and East Europe*, Taipei, June 5-7, 2009, http://www.cbos.pl/PL/wydarzenia/04_konferencja/Civil%20society%20in%20Poland.pdf, p. 27, 15.02.2013.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 28.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 28.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 22.

*belonged to some – organisations, associations, parties, committees, councils, religious groups or clubs. (...) 85.2% did not belong to any organisation*³⁹.

Furthermore, not only membership rates are low but support for social organisations is weak. ‘Study on Volunteering in the European Union Country Report Poland’ reveals the rate of only 13.2% of the adult population in Poland being engaged in voluntary activity for an organisation or a group 2007⁴⁰. According to a report prepared by Natalia Hipsz and Katarzyna Wądołowska for CBOS in 2011, 16% of Poles volunteered in the last twelve months for an organisation or institution, which is only a small increase in comparison to 2007. Admittedly, 80% of the surveyed public declares that they worked unpaid and in an individual way (not for any organisation) for the benefit of others last year, however, only 36% of them helped unknown people and 20% worked for the benefit of the environment, local community or local place⁴¹. Such results confirm the existence of the above mentioned ‘social vacuum’ and prove that Poles are more willing to assist family members or closest friends than engage in social interactions with neighbours or strangers.

Statistics on the level of engagement of Poles in public discourse are also low. First, Poland has low participation rates in country elections which are poor not only by the EU standards but also in comparison with all other Post-Communist EU Member States. According to a comparative study by Mikołaj Cześniak, Poland ranks lowest with an average participation rate of 47.3, compared with the second lowest rate of 58.1 for Lithuania while the average participation rates for all other concerned counties are in the range of 60% to 70%⁴². Participation rates in local elections are

³⁹ J. Czapiński, T. Panek, *Social Diagnosis 2011. Objective and subjective quality of life in Poland*, Contemporary Economics, “Quarterly of University of Finance and Management in Warsaw”, Vol. 5, Issue 3, September 2011, <http://ce.vizja.pl/en/download-pdf/volume/5/issue/3/id/260>, p.189, 15.02.2013.

⁴⁰ *Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report Poland*, <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/files/Biblioteka/National%20report%20PL.pdf>, p. 2, 15.02.2013.

⁴¹ N. Hipsz, K. Wądołowska, *Aktywność społeczna Polaków – poziom zaangażowania i motywacje*, Fundacja Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa 2011, <http://erw2011.gov.pl/static/upload/komunikat-1.pdf>, p. 1-5, 15.02.2013.

⁴² M. Cześniak, *Partycypacja wyborcza Polaków*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa, <http://isp.org.pl/uploads/filemanager/Program%20Prawa%20i%20Instytucji%20Demokratycznych/partycypacjaWyborczaPolakw.pdf>, p. 5-6, 15.02.2013.

even lower than these at national level, showing that the Polish public attaches less importance to local political issues than to national ones.

Second, protest participation rates in Poland are also low. *In comparison with other EU countries, protest activities are not widespread in Poland (...). As far as participation in legal demonstrations is concerned, Poland is at the bottom of the ranking, with Hungary [scoring] very close. Polish people are slightly more eager to sign petitions*⁴³. In the quoted document, Wenzel and Kubik refer to the ESS data for 2002–2007 and point out the very low rate (1.5%) of people who participated in a lawful public demonstration and the rate of 7.4% of Poles who signed a petition⁴⁴.

Research on the political party membership indicates weak attachment, too. It is in fact worse than in the Netherlands. Party membership rate in Poland was at 1.2% of electorate in the year 2000, which represented the worst such result in the European context⁴⁵. According to the Social Diagnosis 2011, merely 2.6% of Poles declared an activity for the cause of political parties or other action groups. This is also one of the worst results in the European context⁴⁶.

The above analysis confirms that the indicators introduced by Dekker and Van den Broek can outline country-specific civil society developments. The weak social capital among the Polish public is illustrated with weak social ties (except for family ties) and weak participation in and support for social non-profit actors (where unpaid work for the benefit of closest relatives is an only exception). Secondly, the low level of political discourse is demonstrated by extremely low rates of participation in the national elections, low levels of participation in protest activities or petition signing and low levels of membership in political parties. All these characteristics confirm that Poland remains a country where civil society has not yet fully developed.

⁴³ M. Wenzel, J. Kubik, *Civil society in Poland. Case study, Prepared for international conference The Logic of Civil Society in New Democracies: East Asia and East Europe*, Taipei, June 5-7, 2009, http://www.cbos.pl/PL/wydarzenia/04_konferencja/Civil%20society%20in%20Poland.pdf, p. 21, 15.02.2013.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 21.

⁴⁵ P. Mair, I. van Biezen, *Party membership in twenty European democracies, 1980 – 2000*, in *Party Politics*, Vol. 7 No.1, SAGE Publications, London 2001, <http://www.olemiss.edu/courses/pol628/mairbiezen01.pdf>, p. 16, 15.02.2013.

⁴⁶ J. Czapiński, T. Panek, *Social Diagnosis 2011. Objective and subjective quality of life in Poland*, Contemporary Economics, „Quarterly of University of Finance and Management in Warsaw”, Vol. 5, Issue 3, September 2011, <http://ce.vizja.pl/en/download-pdf/volume/5/issue/3/id/260>, p. 207, 15.02.2013.

Guiding principle of civil society

This section deals with the principle of voluntariness (Table 1), which, if implemented, can stimulate the development of civil society. Dekker refers to an American sociologist Mark Warren who explains voluntariness as the purest form of associative relations being embodied in associations that, according to Table 1, are dominant collective actors of civil society⁴⁷.

Such associative relations are central to civil society in the models developed by Warren and Dekker and Van den Broek, however, their conceptual borders remain vague. On the one hand, Warren locates the associative relations between the public sphere of 'political' and 'economic society' and the private sphere of family and friendship ties, excluding both from his concept. On the other hand, Dekker and Van den Broek do stress stronger interconnections between all four societal elements: community, market, state and civil society. They include family and friendship relations and consider strong interaction with state and market.

Furthermore, Dekker proposes that there is a strong correlation between simple voluntary activity and the two central indicators of civil society. Firstly, social capital is interpreted primarily as social trust. Dekker suggests that volunteering builds a decisive determinant for increasing social trust among the public. *Interaction in voluntary associations is supposed to advance trustworthiness and feeling of trust between citizens*⁴⁸. Accordingly, the levels of social relations and the rates of membership in and support for social organisations can be regarded as products of social trust which is determined by volunteering.

Secondly, Dekker suggests a positive statistical contribution of the density of voluntary associations to political involvement including voting or organizational membership. He refers to several other studies including his own, Almond's and Verba's, Van Deth's, Putnam's and Warren's concluding that membership in non-political voluntary associations increases the civic competence and that their

⁴⁷ P. Dekker, *Voluntary associations, volunteering and the ideals of civil society*, CIES (Research Center on Economics and Society), http://www.grupcies.com/boletin/images/stories/PDFBoletin/ArticuloI_Edic_59.pdf, p. 4, 15.02.2013.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 7.

members are more likely to be politically active. Such membership stimulates 'civic skills' and 'civic virtues', informs and mobilises the public⁴⁹.

Social trends and civil society – looking for causality

It is open to debate how well an "umbrella" principle such as voluntariness can explain in practice the two chosen normative social trends: religious behavior and historical experience and their impact on civil society developments.

Both trends are commonly interpreted as stimulants for a civil society. According to Fukuyama, *Social capital is frequently a byproduct of religion, tradition, shared historical experience, and other factors...*⁵⁰. Religious behavior and historical experience represent important influences on the public behavior in Poland, yet the civil society indicators are weak. This section will use voluntariness to interrogate these two seemingly contrasting characteristics of the Polish society.

The causal relationship between the prominent social trends and weak civil society indicators can be analysed once voluntariness is located between them. Neither religious behavior nor the historical experience should be seen as pure determinants of civil society developments. Thus their impact on promoting the voluntary attitudes among a society (that is pure associative relations – Table 1, Dekker's interpretation of voluntariness) will be shown before confirming the above causal relation.

First, the religious behavior. On the one hand, the religious attitudes among the Polish public are very common. According to the Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny – GUS), 88.9% of the Polish public consider themselves to be members of churches, other religious organisations or movements (97.3% of all surveyed who have given an answer to this question)⁵¹. The CBOS reports that 54% of

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 8-9.

⁵⁰ F. Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society*, IMF Working Paper, WP/00/74, 2000, <http://poseidon01.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=423027122029097008117017102108088085023056033007026070025111055028117025046033047112002110030098020095069100036005023013027105118100099007111068120&EXT=pdf>, p. 15, 20.04.2013.

⁵¹ *Ludność. Stan i struktura demograficzno-społeczna. Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2011*, GUS, Warszawa 2013,

Poles practise at least once a week, while only 8% do not take part in any religious observances. Although the curves of partaking in religious practices trend downwards, the decline in rates over the last two decades has not been dramatic⁵².

On the other hand, characteristics of the contemporary religious behavior in Poland do not show any significant social attitudes that could serve the voluntariness. Faith and religious attitudes concern primarily such factors as tradition, custom and ethics of familial and sexual relations⁵³. These factors are crucial to the development of religious observances and moral values among the people, but they do not directly determine associative relations to enhance the trustworthiness and increase the civic competence.

Furthermore, sociologist Irena Borowik distinguishes three forms of religiosity in Poland. Only the people participating regularly in religious observances, accepting religious dogma and simultaneously feeling a strong relationship with their church represent the religious attitudes, which have an impact on a community action (in religious organisations, families, neighbourhood or at work). According to Borowik, such 'ardent', practising Catholics are more eager to act prosocially (e.g. to help others in need) than 'conformists'. But most people who consider themselves to be religious, represent either a selective religious activism or only ritual and institutionalized practices. Specifically, the ritual, 'folk Catholicism' is connected to a socialization, which promotes primarily a virtue of obedience instead of supporting active, critical and reflective attitudes towards others⁵⁴. Such attitudes are central to develop a voluntary activity, because they determine conscious public behavior and stimulate people's activity in local societies.

Jan Grosfeld emphasizes that the impact of religion on social activities in Poland is diverse. On the one hand, religion can constitute an open community to

http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/LUD_ludnosc_stan_str_dem_spo_NSP2011.pdf, pp. 99-100, 20.04.2013.

⁵² *Zmiany w zakresie wiary i religijności Polaków po śmierci Jana Pawła II*, CBOS, Warszawa 2012, http://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2012/K_049_12.PDF, p. 3, 20.04.2013.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 13.

⁵⁴ I. Borowik, O zróżnicowaniu katolików w Polsce?, in *Chrześcijaństwo, Świat, Polityka*, Zeszyty Społecznej Myśli Kościoła, UKSW, No 2 (6) 2008, Warszawa, <http://www.politologia.wnhis.uksw.edu.pl/zeszyty/publikacja6.pdf>, p. 24-25, 20.04.2013.

promote common social values and active social attitudes towards others. On the other hand, some religious attitudes reflect negative emotions such as fear, which undermine a sense of community among the people and thus limit relations with others. Grosfeld concludes that there is no clear correlation between contemporary religious behavior and such factors as individual identity and freedom⁵⁵, which are also crucial to the development of conscious, voluntary attitudes in public space.

Admittedly, the religiosity provided a space for local social activity and thus promoted voluntary attitudes before 1989. Polish sociologist Mirosława Grabowska writes that the Church offered freedom and individual values which opposed communist oppression⁵⁶. But the contemporary religious attitudes do mostly focus on customs and moral issues and they do not underpin active voluntary relations in local communities. The impact of the religious behavior on promoting the voluntary attitudes cannot be proven such that the causal relation between this social trend and the civil society developments in Poland cannot be confirmed as well.

Second, shared historical experience. Throughout the last three centuries, Poland had experienced traumatic annexations and suffered from numerous forms of oppressions, which have contributed to the development of a strong, national collective identity. National uprisings in the 19th century, the underground struggles during World War II and social and political movements in the 1980s have also had a crucial impact on the development of a strong sense of community of interest which has opposed the vertical political power of occupiers and later the communist authorities and thus has strengthened horizontal relationships.

The current shared historical experience does not contribute to the development of horizontal relations and thus the promotion of the voluntary attitudes. The first reason is that the communist regime has strengthened vertical ties between an individual and the state and thus weakened the horizontal relationships.

⁵⁵ J. Grosfeld, *Religijność... ale jaka?*, in *Chrześcijaństwo, Świat, Polityka*, Zeszyty Społecznej Myśli Kościoła, UKSW, No 2 (6) 2008, Warszawa, <http://www.politologia.wnhis.uksw.edu.pl/zeszyty/publikacja6.pdf>, p. 29-32, 20.04.2013.

⁵⁶ M. Grabowska, *Religia, jednostka, wspólnota*, in *Chrześcijaństwo, Świat, Polityka*, Zeszyty Społecznej Myśli Kościoła, UKSW, No 2 (6) 2008, Warszawa, <http://www.politologia.wnhis.uksw.edu.pl/zeszyty/publikacja6.pdf>, p. 15, 20.04.2013.

As Fukuyama explains, the state's centralisation and involvement in the private and social sectors contribute to undermining social trust and civil society⁵⁷.

In my opinion, the correlation between a state's social policy and societal attitudes towards the public sphere (weak civil society indicators) can be interpreted inversely. The current societal attitudes in Poland do not oppose any vertical power as was historically the case. The opponent interpreted as a 'foreign' hierarchical political power has disappeared and nowadays it does not mobilize the society to strengthen its ties and develop its horizontal relations.

Above interpretations show that the political oppressions had unified the Polish society by its struggles for liberation of the country and thus contributed to the promotion of the voluntary attitudes. Nowadays, paradoxically, political freedom does not encourage the society to volunteering. Thus the impact of this social trend on the civil society developments in Poland cannot be confirmed.

The voluntariness can be also used to interpret the lack of causality between the strong family relations and the civil society indicators in Poland. The prominent social ties with the closest relatives are insufficient to enhance the social trust, because they are not included in the above conceptual framework of voluntariness. As a result, they do not stimulate associative relations and thus social trust and social capital.

The principle of the 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept' – voluntariness – permits interpreting why the prominent normative social trends do not determine the development of the civil society in Poland. Even though the strong religious behavior and shared historical experience have intensified horizontal relations among the Polish public in the past, the current impact of the both social trends on a prosocial action is weaker. As a result, the Polish society lacks voluntariness, which is in turn central to both social capital and public discourse. This 'negative' case study also proves the scientific validity of the 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept'.

⁵⁷ F. Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society*, IMF Working Paper, WP/00/74, 2000, <http://poseidon01.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=423027122029097008117017102108088085023056033007026070025111055028117025046033047112002110030098020095069100036005023013027105118100099007111068120&EXT=pdf>, p. 15-16, 20.04.2013.

Above conclusion begs a question: what can explain the weak civil society indicators in Poland The literature on civil society suggests such factors as: high unemployment rate, poverty⁵⁸, an insufficient political support for the third sector, lack of the coherent and compulsory system of civic education⁵⁹, an insufficient impact of electronic media (internet) and electronic administration (e-government) on the development of the civic activity⁶⁰, among others.

Further studies on the role of the above trends in shaping the civil society in Poland should focus first on analysing their impact on the voluntariness. If the examinations showed that some social trends are weak or none in Poland, they could investigate their hypothetical effect on the development of the voluntary attitudes. Thus they would permit concluding that their lack either hampers civil society developments or remains rather irrelevant for them.

Conclusion

Among many definitional frameworks of civil society, studies conducted by Dutch sociologists Paul Dekker and Andries Van den Broek provide an exhaustive conceptual framework of an interdisciplinary civil society model. It is located within an ideal social order including also the triad of community, market and state.

Developments in civil society can be assessed by measuring the two main indicators of the 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept': social capital and public discourse. Specifically, social capital can be assessed by measuring the level of horizontal social relationships developed among individuals and social groups such as families, friends, neighbours or strangers as well as the rates of membership in, and support for social organisations. Public discourse can be assessed by measuring the level of political interest and participation such as participation rates in the national elections and

⁵⁸ H. Sasinowski, *Spółeczeństwo obywatelskie i jego rola w budowie demokracji*, http://zneiz.pb.edu.pl/data/magazine/article/133/1.3_sasinowski.pdf, p. 40, 28.04.2013.

⁵⁹ P. Gliński, *Spółeczeństwo obywatelskie w Polsce – dwadzieścia lat przemian. Trzeci sektor*, Academia, PAN, <http://academia.pan.pl/dokonania.php?id=525>, 28.04.2013.

⁶⁰ T. Masłyk, *Aktywność obywatelska w spółeczeństwie informacyjnym. Perspektywa socjologiczna*, Uniwersytet Śląski, Wydział Nauk Społecznych, Instytut Socjologii, Katowice 2007, <http://www.sbc.org.pl/Content/11926/doktorat2797.pdf>, p. 5, 28.04.2013.

referendums, protest behavior, readiness to sign a petition or rates of party membership. Application of the above conceptual framework to characterizing different levels of civil society developments in the Netherlands of Poland permits confirming the scientific validity of the model proposed by Dekker and Van den Broek.

The 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept' perceives voluntariness as a guiding principle of civil society. Both scientists define this term as pure associative relations embodied in associations which, in turn, are the dominant collective actors of civil society. Voluntariness is central to civil society because it generates its indicators. First, volunteering is a decisive determinant of social trust which shapes social capital. Second, voluntary attitudes contribute to the political involvement of the public. Such framework has offered a space for discussion about the Polish phenomenon, where historically strong country-specific social trends have been found to not determine the level of developments in the contemporary civil society. Interrogating the role of voluntariness – the guiding principle of the 'Dekker-Van den Broek concept' – permits concluding that social trends should be measured not to determine directly civil society developments, but rather to determine first associative relationships.

Future studies of civil society can take advantage of the Dutch model of Dekker and Van den Broek. It is a wide-ranging and interdisciplinary model, which pays attention to social, political and economic attitudes in a society. It provides a conceptual space for assessing different levels of civil society developments and offers a way of understanding the role of normative social trends in shaping civil society developments. As such, it could also facilitate consideration of other social trends in Poland or comparative studies of other countries.

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Abstract

The article proves the scientific validity of a model of civil society developed by Dekker and Van den Broek, which includes community, market and state. Its main indicators: social capital and public discourse are applied to compare the developments of civil society in the Netherlands and Poland. This model includes a guiding principle – voluntariness. It serves to interrogate a correlation between the strong normative conditions: religious behavior and shared historical experience on the one hand, and the weak level of the civil society developments in Poland on the other.

SPOŁECZEŃSTWO OBYWATELSKIE W HOLANDII I POLSCE – CZY CZERPAĆ KORZYŚCI Z NAUKI HOLENDERSKIEJ?

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje model społeczeństwa obywatelskiego rozwinięty przez Dekker'a i Van den Broeka, uwzględniający złożony ład społeczny obejmujący triadę społeczeństwo-rynek-państwo. Jego główne wskaźniki, kapitał społeczny i dyskurs publiczny, zastosowane są w analizie naprzeciwległych przykładów holenderskich i polskich. Artykuł poddaje analizie centralne uwarunkowanie koncepcyjne modelu, a więc wolontariat, które służy interpretacji fenomenu korelacji silnych trendów społecznych, religijności i wspólnoty historycznej, oraz niskiego poziomu społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w Polsce.