

Andrzej Rychard

Entrepreneurs, consumers and civility: the case of Poland¹
(draft version)

1. The aim of the paper

The aim of this text is to answer the question to what degree economic participation in a post-communist country can contribute to building civil society.

The point of departure of this analysis is the fact that Poles' participation in politics is relatively weak- as it is in wider public activity, and their participation in the market is stronger. It is not my intention to prove that one kind of participation can replace the other. I am not therefore asserting that since politics does not build civil society, the market can do the job " for it ". I would like however to show that certain characteristics of Polish participation in the market may also have consequences "outside the market", ie consequences essential for building civil society.

I realise that political and economic participation are fundamentally different, and I write about this in a later section. Here I draw attention to the fact that political participation usually takes the form of collective activity, whilst its economic counterpart usually has an individual character, although unfulfilled economic needs may give rise to collective claims. Generally consumers are more individualized than citizens. I am therefore not saying we can talk of the substitution of one kind of activity by the other. What interests

me is only what the consequences of participation in the market can be for civil society - this is the question which informs my analyses.

My arguments begin with showing the weakness and specificity of political participation. Next I set out the characteristic traits of economic participation and their possible consequences for the building of civil society. In this analysis of economic participation I will take into account both participation in the role of entrepreneur as a well as in that of consumer

The relation between market and civil society belongs to the classical areas of interest of social thought. The present text nevertheless is not an attempt at discussion with classical theorists. Its ambition is much more modest. It will set out introductory hypotheses about the possible consequences for civil society of Poles' engagement in the market. The attempt to relate these empirical hypotheses to existing theoretical concepts will be undertaken only at the next stage of my work

2. The weakness of political participation

In sociology and in political science the term "political participation" has a well-established meaning. By analogy we can speak of economic participation understood as the total of forms of social participation in economic life, including both those within and those outside the market² as well as formal and informal participation. This wide

1. An earlier version of this text was prepared at the institute of Philosophy and Sociology PAN for the volume "Polish Anxieties" edited by H.Domański, A.Ostrowska & A.Rychard (in Polish). The present text is a modified version of the latter and was prepared for the CiSoNet conference, Madrid, September 2004.

². I base my remarks here on the well-known distinction by Polanyi and his collaborators (cf. N.Smelser, R.Swedberd, 1994, p.15), according to which there are three mechanisms of integration of the workings of economic systems: reciprocity, redistribution and exchange. Only the third kind assumes market relationships. This means that the market systems constitutes only a sub-class of economic systems and that in fact the three ideal types of mechanism may co-exist. In connection with this, economic participation may also by analogy equally mean market and non-market forms of participation. With reference to the situation in Poland we can note here eg M Marody's (2002) conception of public and private institutions in Poland and of institutions of social protection as means of multiple participation (although it seems that she assumes rather too strong a relationship between types of occupation and forms of ownership (eg the market with the private sector, and fulltime employment with the public sector) We can't after all exclude subjection of full-time employment to market regulation, regardless even of the sector of ownership)

perspective allows a certain hypothetical comparison of two forms of participation: political and economic. I leave my theses on this subject to a later part of the paper.

The weakness of Polish political participation can be investigated on two levels: the engagement of society in politics or the ways in which political actors themselves such as leaders or parties take part in politics. I believe that the weakness of Polish politics results from the weakness of the two elements which are mutually interconnected.

Let's begin with social participation in politics. Poland is not the exception among post communist countries in the matter of weakness of political participation. Participation in general elections is of the order of 40-50%, lower in referendums, and somewhat higher in the case of direct presidential elections. In addition interest in politics is not at the highest level, and engagement in party-political activity is weak.

Is however that climate of aversion to politics and of political non-participation a typically Polish phenomenon? In order not to fall in with the frequently encountered tendency to explain everything as the so-called Polish peculiarity, it is good to see the thing in a comparative perspective. Let's assume that one of the elements creating a climate of social acceptance of populist politics could be a lack of interest in politics. Let the second such element be the conviction that politicians are only to a very small degree, or not all, concerned with what ordinary people think. Further let's assume that those who are both not interested in politics and believe that politicians are not interested in them constitute in society a group susceptible to populist slogans. Simultaneous acceptance of the two views means a double lack of interest, or is also an expression of "symmetrical alienation": people from politics and politicians from people. Let's now see how the proportions of those convinced of the existence of that symmetrical alienation look in different countries³.

3.Data from the European Social Survey conducted by IFiS PAN in 2003. The indices shown are the percentages of those who responding to the question, "How would you describe your interest in politics . Are you..." chose "not very interested" or "are you not interested at all" and also to the question "Do you think that in general politicians attach any weight to what people like you think" chose the reply"

Table 1. „Symmetrical alienation” in politics in the view of respondents from 19 countries

(N= 1182-2899)

Country	Percentage
Spain	72.5
Czech Republic	67.4
Greece	66.3
Italy	62.7
Portugal	60.7
Poland	56.2
Slovenia	55.2
Luxembourg	50.6
Ireland	49.5
Hungary	49.0
Finland	47.1
Gt.Britain	44.0
Norway	40.8
Germany	35.3
Israel	34.5
Sweden	34.0
Switzerland	33.8
The Netherlands	30.4
Denmark	29.4

Source: Europejski Sondaż Społeczny, IFiS PAN

practically no politician attaches any weight to what people like me think” or the response “very few attach any weight to that” or the response “some attach weight to that”

If we now look at the responses received we see that they have an interesting structure. Without exaggerating the meaning of multiple factors decisive for the position of a given country in the hierarchy created by the indices we see that countries where the feeling of symmetrical alienation is relatively strong (ie involving more than half of the population, which of course is an arbitrary threshold) it is the countries of southern Europe, coming rather from the Catholic tradition, and among them two of the post-communist countries included in the survey, while the countries with a relatively low feeling of such alienation (below 50%) are the group of mainly protestant, Scandinavian countries representing rather the north west Anglo-Saxon part of Europe and one of the post-communist countries along with Israel. It is hard to talk of a very unambiguous pattern, although certain elements of regularity are visible.

For our analysis, it is important that Poland is in a high position, although not the highest. We should add too that practically all countries from the group feeling a high degree of this double alienation have in their history recent experience of autocratic, anti-democratic governments, mobilizing populist feeling, while there are distinctly fewer countries with this experience in the second group (practically only Germany and Hungary should be included in that category). It is also interesting that three post communist countries Poland, the Czech republic and Hungary, normally mentioned in the same breath when analysing the so-called 'advanced' countries of transformation are here located at various levels. This indicates once again that the fall of communism uncovered the differentiation among the countries of this region which had hitherto been hidden by the monolithic form of an imposed regime (E.Mokrzycki, 200X , p.?). Generally, however the table may be perhaps also one more illustration lending conviction to the notion of the weight of path dependency and dependence on previous institutional tradition or cultural pasts.

Returning now to Poland, it is worth remembering that some researchers (see G Ekiert....) believe that the distinctiveness of Polish political participation is weakness in its conventional forms such as in participation in elections, membership of parties but with relatively stronger engagement in unconventional activity such as various kinds of

protest movement. To a certain degree this is true, but we should nevertheless remember that what is conventional and what is unconventional in politics is dynamic and varies. Some actions with at the beginning a non-conventional character become conventional in the sense that they become an institutionalised element of political ritual.

Sometimes one can have the impression that various types of protest and conflict function in Poland in such a way all sides play long familiar roles. It is this weakness of participation in politics which leads K.Pełczyńska-Nałęcz (1998) to assert the empirically supported thesis that both conventional and unconventional participation are characteristic rather for groups located high up in the social structure. Her researches also show that the present boundary between positive participants and protesters is eroding. Both these groups are being separated by an ever-clearer boundary from those who do not participate in politics. And this is at present one of the most important divisions in Poland. The problem of non-participation therefore becomes yet more important.

The distinctiveness and weakness of Polish politics are also increased by processes running through the political scene. Above all here we should note the paradoxical fact that some politicians would like to be beyond politics. They know that Poles are in a large part averse to politics, and they make use of this aversion. They prefer to present themselves as experts, located outside the quarrels of politics (this is for example a strategy frequently used by President of Poland). When success in the referendum on Polish accession to the EU was important to the authorities, they did all they could to present the vote as non-political, and with the aid of this non-political character, encourage people to vote – something which succeeded. Sometimes, too, new political groups in formation, at least at the beginning, avoid the name “political party” knowing that it prompts bad associations. Playing on anti-party and anti-political feeling results in further weakening of politics (A.Rychard, 2002, 2003).

Politics nevertheless has to take place. It is carried out mainly through various kinds of informal procedure whereby the claims of various social groups come to representatives of the administration. These claims already have a systemic character leading to the

creation of the mechanism of 'negotiation democracy' (E.Mokrzycki, 2002 p. 140 ff.), understood by the author as a system which through the institution of constant negotiation of their claims with the authorities by powerful social groups, leads in fact to the building of a "second political system" bypassing normal institutions and democratic procedures. Sociologists have also often (apart from Mokrzycki mentioned above, see also eg. J.Staniszkis, A.Zybertowicz) drawn attention to the fact that besides the visible official political arena there is in Poland also a second, less visible ring, where informal processes dominate. This is also one of the factors contributing to the distinctiveness of Polish politics.

Together then the factors mentioned, such as weak political participation and the psychological climate of "symmetrical alienation" could create fertile ground for closely linked populist politics. Nevertheless, this does not constitute the main outline. It is interesting that Poland is above all still a poor country, and the structure of economic interests is to a larger degree a structure of claims of individual groups rather than of the interests of "promodernization" groups. What is more as I have indicated elsewhere a position can be gained much more efficiently in Polish politics by championing the interests of the groups of losers [from transformation] (or at least of groups claiming to have lost) than to the groups of winners shyly emerging in the structure (A Rychard ,2003).

All this nevertheless does not constitute a sufficient condition for the emergence of strong populist offer in politics. Perhaps one of the reasons why these factors are not enough is the fact ascertained by R Markowski (2001) that Poles not participating in political life do not usually have extreme political views, but rather middle of the road views predominate. I regard this result as very important. Firstly it shows to be untrue the frequently encountered conviction that non-participants in political life usual do no have political views. Clearly this is not the case. Moreover there is a second important element: their views rather are moderate, so that their possible participation in politics would stabilize the main political current rather than expose it to swings towards extremes perhaps of a populist kind.

This empirical result is somehow in harmony with current observations, according to which for some Polish “non-participants” the abandoning of politics is not the expression of lack of political consciousness, but rather the opposite, the result of a conscious – essentially, political – decision. Therefore it is also necessary to be very careful when interpreting the data given above concerning “symmetrical alienation” as an inseparable element leading to populism, or to the acceptance of populist solutions. In fact, however an interesting phenomenon awaiting explanation is the contrary: why is it that in spite of minimal participation in politics and the feeling of alienation from it that could lead to populism, the process doesn’t take place. This would indicate that there is some other mechanism which is of significance for maintenance of the stability of the democratic order, which also limits the danger of populism. In accordance with the thesis of this article, this role can be fulfilled by various forms of participation in the market, or more broadly speaking, in the economy.

3. Economic participation: a chance to create a “citizens’ market”?

The boundary between the market and civil society is not always clearly and sharply defined. There are conceptions that link market activity with the civil sphere. However the relation between the market and civil society is not the main theme of this text. I am concerned rather about possible “civil” consequences of participation in the market. Analysing the problem, Kaja Gadowska (2002, p. 136) deals with the participation of Polish entrepreneurs in civic activity. This is one of the possible perspectives. I am however more interested in a different approach: it is not so much what additional civic activity entrepreneurs undertake, but rather how much there very market activity may have consequences for civil society.

It is necessary to remember here that under Polish conditions the decision to start business on one’s own account, especially at the beginning of transformation had not

only an economic character, but also a psychological and cultural aspect (A.Rychard, 1995, p. 319). Sociologists have concerned themselves with the subject of the role of the private sector in the generation of civil society links: Morawski writes on this subject (1998, p.262), and it is registered clearly in research by Grażyna Skąpska's group where the search for independence as a motive for undertaking business activity appears very often (J.B.Sobczak, 2002, p.53).

Let us return to comparison of Polish political and economic participation. Let's look at the question less narrowly, looking not only at participation but generally at the relation of the market to democracy. Here an interesting cleavage is visible already signalled elsewhere (inter alia. H.Domański, A.Ostrowska, A.Rychard, 2000, A.Rychard, 2002), but here I would like to present it more systematically. Poles questioned about their assessment of the economic situation and about assessment of the political situation are very critical, but this is a differentiated criticism. It is shown in the table below:

Table 2. Assessment of the political and economic situation. The average net ⁴ assessment from thirteen samples between October 2002 and October 2003

Political Situation	-46.7
Economic Situation	-65.2

Source: Social moods in October, communication from CBOS

The negative value of both indices shows the strong prevalence of negative assessments. Nevertheless in the case of politics these assessments are relatively fewer: respondents are less critical. It should be added that calculation of the average index of samples taken over the space of a year do as a matter of fact give an approximation to some general pattern, but they obscure the trends hidden under the overall index. To the extent that economic assessments were stable in this period, the assessments of the political situation

evolved clearly in one direction: they deteriorated. It is true, as the CBOS data shows, over a long period of time (from 1997 to 2003) a clear trend is visible of growth of negative assessments of the economy, a trend less clear in political assessments (Moods 2003 pp 2 & 5)

So nevertheless, in the social consciousness then the assessment of the economy is still even worse than the assessment of politics. If however we look at social behaviour then we see that the reverse rule comes into play: Poles participate relatively weakly in democracy, and decidedly more in the economy. This is equally the case when participating as consumers or as producers. Of course it is possible to argue that participation in the market is to a certain extent forced, whereas participation in democracy is matter of choice. It is true that people have relatively less choice as consumers, because the market simply encircles them. Also as producers they often were forced by circumstances to engage in private business (J. B.Sobczak, 2002 draws attention to this). Notwithstanding, for social assessments the consequences of that linkage to the market of the fact of forced activity probably do not have strong significance. What is fundamental is real involvement in market relationships.

It seems that it is stronger in Poland than involvement in „democratic relations”. Could it be then that Poles are to a greater degree consumers (and producers) than citizens? Let us look at this problem in more detail. Before further analysis we note however that the fact of stronger involvement in the market than in democracy is certainly not a typically Polish phenomenon: it results to a large extent from the specificities of political and economic participation. They are not completely balanced forms of participation of citizens in the institutional order. I recall here the reservation which I have already formulated earlier –that we should remember that participation in the market is naturally “commonplace” whereas political participation has a certain natural “celebratory “ character.

4. The net assessment is the difference between the percentages of the good and bad assessments. The smaller the difference, the higher the net assessment

We will begin analysis of participation in the market from examination of the way Poles function in the role of producers. It is generally known that Polish capitalism is based in the greater part on the sector of small and medium businesses. At the end of the year 2000 they employed 65.5% of all employees and created 69.4% of gross added value outside agriculture, forestry and fishing (M.Marody, J.Wilkin, eds., 2003, p.151). At the same time however this sector is dominated by very small firms (of up to 5 people op.cit.). In the view of the authors of the publication referred to this shows the preservation of the existing set up where firms which do not have sufficient potential for innovation are geared mainly toward survival. Without denying that fact it is worthwhile also to remember the other side of the phenomenon: in spite of everything it means that a large portion of society is linked to the market.

It is as many authors note, an imperfect market with dominating elements of “pirate capitalism” (G.Skapska, 2002, p.29), where there are clear insufficiencies of social capital (including trust capital), where individual resourcefulness, sometimes of a parasitic character, prevails because the necessary institutional infrastructure is not developed (M.Marody, J.Wilkin, 2003, eds., pp.174-175). This all true, but we should remember that in the long run inclusion of a large part of society at the beginning of market regulation must bring far reaching changes. That happens under the condition obviously that this distinctive market does not come to a halt at the current stage and so does not undergo the processes which I have once called “premature consolidation”. I will return to this problem in a later section.

The extent to which Polish capitalism has become widespread need not be measured only by the scale of entrepreneurship at the small and medium level and its economic role. From the point of view of the themes under discussion here perhaps it is more important to ask about the social composition of the class of Polish entrepreneurs. This question is vital in so far as that at the beginning of transformation there was a fairly general stereotype according to which the basis of Polish capitalism was formed by the “enfranchised nomenklatura”. Without denying the phenomenon it is necessary to put it into the proper proportions. As the results of comparative research show the process of

changing political capital into economic capital did happen in Poland, but certainly on a scale smaller than held by public opinion (G.Eial, J.Wasilewski, 1995, p. 126-131).

Even if the scale of that conversion of capital had after all been larger, the former party “nomenklatura “, and so a relatively small group, could not have constituted the majority of the large stratum of entrepreneurs. Therefore also the results of another investigation by H Domański (1997 p.56) are only surprising at first glance. They show that in 1994 in the group of males in the employment category “private entrepreneur”, 41% were also formerly (‘formerly’ ie in 1988) private entrepreneurs, 38% were formerly workers. This means that apart from self –recruitment which was the strongest mechanism, the working class constituted a significant recruitment base for Polish business. We should remember this result because it forms one of the proofs of the “grass roots” character of Polish capitalism.

So to a certain extent both of the results presented, the one showing the dominance of small-scale entrepreneurship and that showing the blue-collar origins of a large part of Polish business, speak in favour of the thesis that Polish capitalism is popular in character [“folk capitalism”]. It is - with all the good and bad consequences of that state of affairs. Among the good ones we should count the social rootedness of business, and the bringing together of a large part of society in the beginnings of market rules. Negative consequences are the already mentioned deformation of capitalism conducted in the face of a deficit of various forms of capital, among which the biggest it seems is the lack of social capital. Nonetheless the peculiarity of the Polish market well-rendered in the title of a recent book about Polish entrepreneurial activity edited by Grażyna Skąpska (2003), “the Buddenbrooks or the Pirates”, is an empirical fact.

We cannot exclude that the relative success of market transformation in Poland is not so much the success of changes led from the top, but rather the result of processes of adaptation from the grassroots, during which not only society adapted, but also the market. It is often said in Poland that in our public life populism is a significant threat. In fact however populism did not lead to the destruction of politics and the economy.

Perhaps populism did not destroy the market also because it controlled it from inside, precisely in this sense, that Polish business, at least in its beginnings, has a strongly “popular” character. As a result we are dealing more with market populism than anti-market populism.

Let’s move on now to analysis of the meaning of the role as consumer. If we are to search for the main actor of the Polish changes, after noting the clear role played by workers and the intelligentsia leading to the fall of the old system it is worth turning our attention to the consumers. This is particularly important when we want to explain the relative success of the beginnings of building the new system.

Nota bene consumers - and more strictly speaking consumers’ aspirations - also played their role on leading to the change of system because they created the tensions which could not be resolved within a command economy (cf eg J.Sikorska, 1998). After the fall of the system their role grew further thanks to the fact that the hitherto large actors such as the Solidarność social movement and also the working class which constitutes its main backing, began to suffer internal divisions, and in some cases indeed disintegration, on account of the ever more clearly defined differences of interest. Against the background of these processes the anonymous mass of consumers trying to adapt to the new market reality became the heroes of transformation.

We noted the significance of the role of consumption in researches carried by IFiS when, on two occasions (in 1995 and in 1999), we asked respondents in which spheres of daily life they felt they have the greatest possibility of choice. We were concerned to gain knowledge about the anthropological climate of “everyday freedom” as felt by Poles. The results proved interesting from the point of view of their fundamental stability. Poles saw greater possibility of free choice as consumers than as workers or citizens (A Rychard 2000). That the market of consumption offered greater possibility of choice than “market of civil society” could lead to many interpretations. We see a fundamental difference in today’s situation with respect to the previous period: in the communist system in the

economy of ‘the producer’, the workers’ role gave much greater possibilities for influence.

Today its significance seems to be diminishing in favour of that of the role as consumer. This result may also provoke a question about the future institutional order if the people building it feel themselves to be more consumers than citizens. It is hard to find an answer to such a general question, but before we make an even preliminary attempt it is worth noting the change in the meaning of the role of consumer in today’s economy. In the view of J.Frenzen, P.M.Hirsch i P.C.Zerillo (1994, p. 405) the sociology of consumer behaviour sees today ever more clearly that the consumer is ceasing to be a passive customer and buyer. The consumer is becoming more active, may even be seen as a participant in the process of production, which is influenced by the consumer’s decisions. That active element of the consumer role is therefore an ever more important one.

The phenomenon of the evolution of the consumer role can also be seen in a wider aspect. Usually addressed as material consumption it is however much wider. And that wider consumer role seems to be particularly apparent in Poland. It can be said that together with the overcoming of the economic crisis, apart from strictly material needs, needs of another kind are becoming ever more visible. Something else can become a source of Poles’ dissatisfaction: not frustration resulting from unequal access to goods of an exclusively material kind, but frustration connected with inequalities of access to many other kinds of goods: education, health, a feeling of security. A certain kind of illustration of this evolution could be the recently published research by OBOP which compared feelings about what troubled Poles in 2003 with analogical feelings in 1992. The scheme below contains examples of the most symptomatic changes of feelings.

Table 3 Selected “difficulties and fears” felt by Poles in 1992 and 2003

	1992	2003
Cost of living, high prices	66	50
Lack of money	50	40
Unemployment	32	43
Burocracy, bad work/ incompetence of officials	23	32
Poor functioning of health service	14	22
Threat of crime	10	16

Source: TNS OBOP, for: What troubles us, what torments us (2003)

We see distinct changes. Poles already fear lack of money less than high prices Other fears too are clearer: some less concerned with strictly material matters. Let us also remind the results of research touched on earlier concerning perceptions of “everyday freedom”. They show that apart from the market of consumer goods, where many possibilities of choice are seen, Poles see less possibility for choice with respect to access to the health service, to education, to entertainment or in our influence on local government. This can be an area of new frustration resulting from non-fulfilment of needs which are becoming ever more important (A.Rychard, 2000, p.190, 2002, p.153)

We notice that the Polish system of institutions for resolving conflicts is constantly geared towards institutionalisation of industrial conflict, and political authority is also traditionally sensitised to dissatisfaction manifested by the most vociferous groups of workers. Perhaps it's because we deal with this type of conflict relatively well, in any case they do not hold up transformation. At the same time this might indicate unreadiness for new frustrations and conflicts arising in their wake. **We cannot resist the impression that the institutions of authority and the strong claimant groups of workers are locked in a ritual of dispute-negotiation, but that dispute already to a certain extent represents the departing (not without drama and noise) order.** Against this background, frustrations of another kind become ever more clearly visible. The system however has not succeeded in channelling them. What is more, perhaps even the groups

experiencing these frustrations have still not learned how to articulate their dissatisfaction and mobilize for protest. Acquisition of the know-how for collective activity is along term process of social learning.

The changes in the character of the role of consumer in today's Poland may lead to the conclusion that we are dealing with a specific process of making consumption somehow "civil". The citizen becomes an ever more active participant in the market, whilst the market widens, not only comprising material goods, and the non-material goods gain in relative significance. Nevertheless we can notice that in turn in the sphere of civil society significant changes are also taking place. Political marketing, its role in promoting figures who do not always bring some important content over and above the form of their message, indicates a process of "marketization" of citizenship.

These two processes run in parallel: perhaps to a certain extent the consumer becomes ever more of a citizen and the citizen ever more a consumer? That would lead to erosion of clear differences between the two roles. If it were possible to document clearly this hypothesis, it could then provide additional arguments about the significance of economic participation for building links in civil society, and again it is necessary to underline that acceptance of a wide definition of consumption seems to be an obvious position since in the modern world this phenomenon goes far beyond consumption of material goods.

Summing up, it is worth noticing that the study of economic behaviour may give us important knowledge about society in general. Polish sociology at least certainly in part has a tendency to look at society excessively through a political prism. At the same time as is generally known, this is only a fragment of reality engaging in addition only a fragment of social activity. Economic behaviour remains then mainly the domain of market research, not leading to the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity. It is worthwhile then sometimes to view Poles as consumers, or more broadly as participants in economic life. Then perhaps we have a chance to learn something about ourselves, and indirectly

perhaps also about something that has an influence on political participation or also more broadly on participation in public life.

4. What stands in the way of a consumer from becoming a citizen?

In fact it is not only consumers but also producers who are without a doubt hobbled by the deformities of Polish economic participation mentioned above. They create a series of barriers which are difficult to overcome.

Researchers have noted that after the first decade of transformation there appeared unexpectedly in Poland frustration among the group forming the nascent middle class (L.Kolarska-Bobińska, 2001). It turned out too that some of its members vote for the populist Samoobrona (R.Ziemkiewicz, 2001), and at all events many of its frustrated representatives find themselves in the immediate entourage of its leadership.

We have to agree with the authors of “EU monitoring” who put forward the thesis that Polish entrepreneurs after giving impetus to the first stage of transformation were not able, in view of the barrier of cultural competence, to “pass the threshold dividing straightforward management of a small enterprise from the new, more complicated phase of management, based on communication in the process of management and of undertaking organized activity, at best making efforts to improve competitiveness in the market by offering bribes or entering into the local “arrangement” between politics and business” (M.Marody, J.Wilkin, 2003, eds., p. 173).

Perhaps the judgement is over-generalized but it certainly applies to a section of Polish entrepreneurs, perhaps even to the majority. It depicts after all a very general phenomenon. Social actors are at the beginning the main dynamic force, but after a certain time with their participation a system is generated which somehow begins to outgrow the possibilities of those actors and instead of being a factor for change they

become a conservative force. To a certain degree this is the road travelled by Polish workers, overcoming communism and opening a road towards a market economy which threatened their interests. This role then began to be taken over by representatives of the nascent middle class (*nota bene* to large extent of blue-collar origin) which to some extent met the same fate. The system “tames” changes and can congeal in the state of premature consolidation mentioned above. Nevertheless that stagnation is probably only a stage in a long evolutionary process, because probably in accordance with its logic the next group can appear after a while, or else a factor making the situation dynamic again. What will fulfil this role in Poland? Will it be the new frustrations and needs mentioned above? Or perhaps a new institutional situation after accession to the EU? We still don’t know yet.

In order for economic participation to be able to lead to some form of catalyst for public participation it must become a means for overcoming social disintegration. The social vacuum, cogently identified by Stefan Nowak, still exists in Poland. Given the shortfall of civic engagement, could the impetus from the market help perhaps even partially to make up for it and to fill the role of a factor for social integration?

I do not believe that we can question in a serious way the existence in Poland of a society, a whole constituted of various kinds of social group, classes, strata somehow internally integrated or linked with various relations between themselves. The alternatives are to accept an extreme individualist position- saying as did Margaret Thatcher once, that there are only free individuals- or else paradoxically, the entirely opposite model of complete totalitarianism where there exist only masses of atomized individuals. In neither of those two cases can we say that society does not exist, but for fundamentally different reasons in each of them: with full individualism it is “unnecessary”, and in full collectivism is a threat.

In Poland as we know, neither were the collectivising plans of totalitarianism realized in full, nor did nascent capitalism inculcate individualistic habits. The combination of totalitarianism, and so of the essence of the pathology, with capitalism should not suggest

that I am comparing two equally valid systems: obviously this is not the case. None the less, taking the case historically to a certain degree this happened to us and to a large part of Europe: after a long-term experiment with incomplete totalitarianism, capitalism is being created. And as indicated by many authors, and above all by our own experiences, of the previous system and of almost 15 years of building a new system, in social life just as in institutional activity we find elements of both old and new.

In Polish sociology there is no agreement about the basic nature of Polish society. Although there is no dispute (more's the pity) it is possible to find opposed judgements formulated by sociologists- such as the opinion of Paweł Śpiewak referred to above that there are two Polands (2003) and also M Marody's (2002) concept of three Polands. We can also find the empirically well-documented opinion of Henryk Domański (1995) that the Polish social structure is clearly crystallizing and recomposing after a period of decomposition.

From a certain point of view the two judgements given as examples can be taken as contradictory: the implication of the thesis about two (or more) Polands is after all an assumption that here something like insular development is occurring, where it is difficult to talk about a whole, while the thesis about recomposition implies the opposite position-that not only does the whole exist, but that its internal structure is becoming ever more distinct. But do the two positions always have to be contrary? Is the implication of judgements of the first kind the assertion that in fact there is no society, and that it only exists when we take the second position?

We can reconcile the two views demonstrating that there are mechanisms linking those two Polands into one. These mechanisms however have two particular characteristics: firstly frequently (although not always) they have a pathological character, or at least hinder the development of society. Secondly, in order to find them, or in other words, in order to find what makes a society you have to go beyond the dominant perspectives: society frequently isn't where we go to look for it and sometimes is where we don't want to see it. The first feature of these mechanisms, that is their informal character, need not always give rise to the pathological. For the large part unfortunately however the case is

different. Researchers draw attention to the usefulness of Adam Podgórecki's category of "dirty community" for describing the ties in Polish social life especially when referring to economic life (G.Skapska, 2002, p.29).

This would indicate that we still cannot cross the threshold into market society in Polanyi's sense, as E Mokrzycki (referred to above) noted. Is this an uncrossable boundary? We draw attention here to the second feature of those intriguing mechanisms: they often occur in unexpected places. M Wieruszewska's group's researches show that the beginnings of civic ties may paradoxically be observed to large extent in a rather traditional Podlaska village, rather than in a modernized one in Wielkopolska which has survived transformation in a worse condition (M.Wieruszewska, 2002, p. 28). On informal territory, civic ties can also grow from traditional ties. So can they then with all the baggage of distinctiveness and pathology of Polish participation in the market still constitute an opportunity for future civic ties?

We do not yet know the answer to the question posed in this way. It is known however that to understand the specificity of Polish civic ties we should accept a wider definition of civil society. As I indicated earlier, Polish participation in public life carries an unconventional character, its informal manifestations are stronger than the formal. We cannot then limit ourselves at all to study of for example NGOs as the basic way in which civil society manifests itself. We should take into account civic ties and initiatives with a much less formal character. We will then more easily see that participation in the market has civic meaning. Many elements of Polish participation in the market, after all, bearing in mind the already mentioned "popular/folk" character, are not completely formal.

Still, taking this the broad sense of civic consequences gives rise to at least two kinds of problem. Firstly how do we differentiate engagement flowing from ordinary human ability to cope and motivated by economic interest, from engagement of a civic character. Or, secondly, how do we distinguish "good" informal ties from bad, pathological ones of a clientelistic or mafia kind? In the first question the means for solving the problem may be to concentrate, not so much on motives for action but on its objective outcome. It may

then turn out that, even action motivated by economic interest may have civic consequences. The second problem is probably more complicated. As I indicated earlier, in Poland many individual and group actions are integrated into a larger whole with the help of pathological mechanisms. These are the mechanisms of the “dirty community” described by Podgórecki. They are indeed sometimes the only means for ensuring a particular social unity. We come then to the phenomenon of “functionalization of pathology” described by J. Staniszkis (J.Staniszkis, 2001, p.105-106), where the pathological solution perpetuates itself because it is vital to the functioning of the system. Certain mechanisms of integration or informal action may have just this kind of character. Let’s recall that in the view of R.Putnam (1995) the means for distinguishing civic from clientelistic ties is their form: civic ties are usually horizontal, and clientelistic ones vertical, linking persons in various positions in a hierarchy.

Problem rodzaju więzi jest ważny, ponieważ można stawiać pytanie, jaki rodzaj kohezji społecznej zapewniany jest dzięki różnym sposobom uczestnictwa w rynku. Nie zawsze musi być to kohezja oparta o więzi obywatelskie i o tym trzeba pamiętać.

The problem of the type of ties is important because we can pose the question, what kind of social cohesion is ensured thanks to various ways of participating in the market. It need not always be cohesion based on civic ties, and this is worth remembering.

5. Concluding remarks

Finally let me reflect on the general features of the approach presented here. As I’ve already mentioned the dominant perspective in studies of post-communist transition focuses on macro-systemic analyses of the institutional changes, predominantly political and economic ones. As various researchers have already noted, this perspective is usually based on the teleological assumption that it is an ideological goal of a transition (building market and democracy), which determines and explains its course. The consequence of this assumption is overestimation of political and institutional changes as seen “from above”. The other consequence is that within the limits of this perspective we are not

able to explain the spontaneous political and economic processes, which lead to unexpected results (as for example the low level of expected socio-economic conflicts or successful political comeback of post-communist politicians).

As I've already written before this is mainly due to these adaptive strategies, and not due to successful implementation of designed changes "from above", that the market change in post-communist Europe has not been rejected by populations and that there were no serious social conflicts resulting from market transition. On the contrary, it is due to individual and small groups' dynamics and creative adaptive processes that economic crisis has been overcome. However, in the course of these processes market arrangements have been modified resulting in various deviations, including pathological ones. One of the goals of future research could be to identify to what extent these adaptive processes helped the system to transform and to what extent they have "frozen" the necessary changes and changed their initial direction. My preliminary hypothesis is that in the first stage of transition (let us say – 1990-1995) they served as the main agent of the dynamics, however, after successful completion of this stage, they slowed down the further changes then contributing to what I call "premature consolidation" of a system. To sum up, according to my approach, **what we are witnessing in Central and Eastern Europe is not the success of the transition itself, but more the way the transition has been "transformed" by the societies.**

The perspective adopted implies analysis of various manifestations of the "everyday transitions", including changes in organizational culture, coping strategies, and the ways social groups are using (and abusing) market and democracy. My initial claim is that post-communist societies seem more adapted to markets than to democracies which results in peculiar forms of social participation that is more consumer-oriented than citizen-oriented. However, even this consumer - oriented participation has some important potential civic consequences. The aim of the paper was to present some preliminary hypotheses on these consequences.

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