

PIOTR GLIŃSKI  
University of Białystok

## Twenty Years of Civil Society in Poland?

*Abstract:* This article synthetically presents the origins and development of civil society in post-1989 Poland. Having reviewed many years of research, the author proposes nine general theses which characterize these processes. 1) Civil society developed in seven basic socio-institutional areas including local communities, informal movements and initiatives, individual civic activity, some parishes and religious groups and the NGO sector. 2) Civil society in Poland is relatively small-scale and concentrated in enclaves. 3) Two major factors contributed to its development: bottom-up (grassroots) citizen activity and foreign support. 4) The Polish elite were a “grand absentee” in this process. 5) In addition to “betrayal by the elite,” other significant barriers to the development of civil society in Poland can also be identified. 6) The civil sector in Poland continues to be a wasted opportunity and potential. 7) After 2000 a specific, pro-developmental institutional change has been observed in the civil society area but has not yet produced positive effects. 8) Following the EU accession in 2004, partial “Europeanization” of civil society took place in Poland but its impact on the civil sector has been equivocal, at least so far. 9) Development of civil structures is essential for the normal functioning of democracy (at least in Polish conditions): civil society, based on the unique capacity to develop secondary groups, cannot be substituted in this role by quasi-civic, primary attachments and structures.

*Keywords:* democracy; civil society; non-governmental organizations; secondary groups; local communities; social movements; barriers to development; elite; foreign assistance.

### Introduction

After twenty years of transformation in Poland we have all but forgotten that one of the three main goals of transformation postulated in 1989 (in addition to development of democratic institutions and development of the market institution) was development of civil society. Even then, the Poles were warned that this perhaps would be the most difficult task of all but that without it Poland would not be able to cope with the challenges of civilization (Dahrendorf 1990: 86–91). However, in the early days of the Polish transformation, development of civil society was felt to be an obvious transformational goal. It was obvious because the transformation, the bloodless “Solidarity” and Round Table revolution, was a direct outgrowth of the ideas and practices of civil society. The initial ideas were the programs developed by the Polish (and central European) political opposition in the 1970s which were in fact a program for “oppositional civil society,” even though the Polish opposition did not use the term *civil society* yet (it did not know that it was “speaking prose” Szacki 1997: 17). Adam Michnik’s (1985) “new evolutionism,” which appealed to society to organize itself from the bottom up, was one such program. Western intellectuals recognized

these efforts, however, and published their famous “return to the idea of civil society” in Central-Eastern Europe (Cohen & Arato 1995: 29–82).

The practice of this inchoate civil society was already being forged in the oppositional structures of the 1970s but of course it did not erupt on such an imposing scale until the “Solidarity” movement in 1980–81 and although martial law was imposed in Poland on 13 December 1981, it continued to develop in the form of grassroots self-organizing processes in the 1980s. Naturally, the visit of the first Polish pope in history, John Paul II, in 1979 was a significant impulse for these pro-civil and pro-freedom transformations.

We should particularly bear in mind—and we often do not nowadays—that the concept of civil society lay at the roots of the first political program to be democratically elected by an independent nation (represented by “Solidarity”) in over forty years in this part of Europe, the program of the so-called First “Solidarity,” accepted at the union’s convention in autumn 1981. It is no coincidence that it was called the Program for a Self-governing Republic.<sup>1</sup> It is worth remembering that this program, really a program for the development of civil society, had three cardinal theses: 1) it postulated the self-organization of society in all its areas, branches and segments; 2) it postulated construction of moral foundations for the proposed reforms, including making those responsible for “infringing law and order” and “ruining the economy” accountable for their wrongdoing; 3) in the economic sphere it promoted the concept of employee self-government, genuine co-operative and social enterprise (Gliński 2006a: 56–59). The postulate to settle accounts with communism clearly and decisively as a specific symbol of historical justice and the founding, axiological myth of new, democratic and civic order which was to be developed in Poland, and which we find in this unique democratic testament expressing the will of the nation prior to 1989, merits special attention, especially in the context of its abandonment in free Poland.

I must say, anticipating somewhat the analyses and theses presented in this article, that we have “managed” not to realize the three basic postulates of the program for a Self-governing Republic within the last twenty years. In this article I shall only discuss the realization of the first postulate, development of civic society. Such development ought to involve both civil structures and institutions and civic culture. As I said before, this was the most difficult and time-consuming transformational task. According to Dahrendorf’s prognosis, realization of this postulate could even take sixty years (1990: 86–91). Therefore, perhaps we should not be surprised that, so far, civil reality in Poland has brought more disappointment and weakness than hope and power. On the basis of years of research<sup>2</sup> I suggest that the present state of affairs can be, necessarily synthetically, characterized in nine basic theses, somewhat elaborated for the needs of this article.

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<sup>1</sup> In fact only one chapter of the Program bore this title but it was the longest chapter (it contained 14 of the 37 program postulates) and definitely the substantively most important one (cf. Gliński 2006a: 55–59).

<sup>2</sup> Both my own research conducted over a span of more than twenty years and other Polish studies of civil society (for more on this subject see: Lewenstein 2004; Gliński 2008a).

### Nine Theses Concerning Civil Society in Poland

**Thesis I.** Civil society (“citizenship”) emerged in Poland in 1989, developed more or less dynamically, and is now present in seven basic areas.

#### *Civic local communities.*

Such communities certainly exist in Poland albeit to a very limited extent.

Sociological studies of Polish “locality” have found that local civil communities in Poland are usually characterized by: (1) the significant role of the local intelligentsia elite; (2) focus on the parish and “fostering a civic approach” by means of church organizations; (3) the significant role of “quasi-self-government” organizations (NGOs established on the initiative of the local power elite); (4) the significant role of local para-political organizations; (5) the activity of many *ad hoc* and often informal groups, initiatives and civil committees; (6) the significant role of civically active individuals and local leaders; (7) the important function of cultural and regional tradition in the development of civic attachments; and (8) the grass-roots and largely non-governmental nature of initiatives which facilitate the development of civic institutions (Kurczewski 2003: 275; Kurczewska 2002: 130–131; Gliński 2000; Gliński 2006: 99–111).

I must stress once again, however, that despite the positive transformational changes, Polish local communities relatively rarely take the form of civic communities. Local government in Poland, especially at the county and provincial (voivodeship) levels, endorse the “self-government without participation” model. This model is centralized (a high level of clientism between the local and central administrations), partied and oligarchic (Gąciarz & Pańków 2003). The processes of political communication and social partnership at the local level are poorly developed (Wódz 2004, 2006). Rivalry between self-government and nongovernmental “mandates,” despite legislative injunctions passed in 2003, is leading to universally poor cooperation between local administrations and NGOs (Gliński 2002, 2006a). The “real city of technocrats model” is clearly dominating the “fantasy city of community workers model” (Gawin 2004). Too often, local democracy degenerates into local oligarchy in the process of emancipation of local social life (Kurczewski 2003: 255). On those occasions when we can legitimately say that local civic or quasi-civic communities have developed, the romantic-egalitarian model of activity (identified by Joanna Kurczewska) is usually clearly predominant whereas the republican-democratic model is less pronounced. This means that, all too often, local citizenship in Poland is taking the form of paternalistic and clientist relations (with the dominant position of the local intelligentsia<sup>3</sup>) rather than reciprocal, partnership and participant networks based on shared activity of the whole community and internalized democratic civil virtues (Kurczewska 2002; Kurczewski 2003: 280–282).

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<sup>3</sup> By intelligentsia the authors of the quoted research mean a category identified according to such criteria as higher education, position and profession (so-called specialists) rather than classical cultural intelligentsia ethos.

Despite the enclave nature and weakness of the facet of civic activity we are discussing in this article, some hints of positive change can be detected in the formation of local civic communities. First, cultural tradition plays a major role, in the maintenance of civil attachments.<sup>4</sup> Second, grassroots participation programs realized by NGOs (e.g. Local Activity Centres or local fund programs and the “Act locally” program of the Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland; Lewenstein 2005; Gliński et al. 2002, 2004) are increasingly contributing to the civic nature of local communities in Poland. Third, institutional change involving, among other things, absorption of European funds, is gradually beginning to play a positive role in the development of local civic communities.

*Quasi-self-government institutions and auxiliary territorial self-government units such as village auxiliary units (about 40 thousand nationwide), housing estate committees, residents’ associations etc.*

This area of social life has been relatively poorly researched although several researchers have recently embarked on some interesting empirical investigations of these issues. One thing which needs to be pointed out is the qualitative difference in the development of civic relations in these institutions between town (Matczak 2006, 2008; Matczak & Figiel 2006) and village (Matysiak 2009). In towns, particularly large cities, formal relations generally predominate and civic participation is usually poor whereas in the villages there is still the tradition of local civic involvement, even if civic attitudes are quite frequently dominated by informal behaviour, neighbourly ties, acquaintances and connections.

*Social movements.*

I am mainly thinking about youth subculture, ecological, anti-and alter-globalist, world-view, para-political and religious movements and so-called “new” religious movements. The problem is that these agents are weak or even in a state of crisis in Poland today. One example is the crisis of the Polish ecological movement and the “self-destructive” tendencies of anti-globalist communities (Gliński 2006b). Only about from 0.2 to 0.3 percent of the Polish population declare participation in “social movements, global actions, campaigns addressed to large groups of citizens” (Gumkowska et al. 2004: 14). From the point of view of civil values, however, the communitarian and participative nature of social movements (Rafalski 2007) and their specific capacity to elevate the level of their participants’ cognitive and educational aspirations (Gliński 1996) are a good thing.

*Informal attachment-creating structures with very loose organizational forms.*

This area includes such phenomena as various ephemeral civic groups and committees, “ad hoc” civic campaigns, informal social self-help, the institutions of neighbourly

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<sup>4</sup> For example, cultural attachment to their “little fatherlands” exposed the natural civic potency of those local communities which managed to defend themselves against the negative (in their own opinion) consequences of the territorial administration reform in 1999 (Kurzewska 2002: 135).

attachment and village neighbourly self-help, “new” defence and identity communities (Dmochowska 2010) and Internet quasi-communities. Some sociologists (e.g. Andrzej Rychard) also include informal family and friendship attachments and economic social attachments relating to economic enterprise in this institutional category. Anna Giza (2009) calls the sphere of informal quasi-civic behaviour and institutions “cottage civil society.” Maria Lewicka, a social psychologist, argues that there is a relationship between neighbourly relations on the one hand and social activity and social trust, and hence the social capital rooted in neighbourly attachment, on the other hand (Lewicka 2009).

Some social researchers have drawn attention to the large scale of social participation in work organized by neighbours (Świątkiewicz 2004: 48). They also point out that neighbourly attachments are much more developed in the villages than in the towns and that 80% of the population of Upper Silesia engage in neighbourly self-help (Świątkiewicz 2004: 50–51). Of course not all collective behaviour based on neighbourly attachments is civic. Other researchers have found that even in regions with strong traditions of neighbourly help attachments are now eroding, mainly due to transformational and cultural changes (Wąż 2003). However, there is considerable evidence in favour of the view that parallel process of reconstruction of self-organizing structures at the level of neighbourly attachments is taking place, spurred by general pro-democratic changes.

In other words, informal civic group activity is being submitted to contradictory change mechanisms and factors and its final direction is by no means certain. In my opinion, informal civic activities have several basic characteristics: (1) they are extremely internally heterogeneous; (2) they are much more ramified and present in society than opinion polls suggest; (3) they are quite “democratic,” i.e. all social strata and groups are involved; (4) they are probably very regionally and culturally diverse; (5) the extent to which they are really civic, and their civic nature vary greatly but they may generally have a very important function in the development of civil society.

I must make it very clear that not all informal collective forms of activity are civic, even if they are perceived as such by the media, public opinion or a particular community. Sometimes they even involve processes which are anything but civic. This is particularly true of informal groups (and also organizations) associated with some “un-negotiable” ideology, with a firm but rigid identity, which are intolerant of those who think differently or have radical programs and manifest radical behaviour. Such communities, e.g. radical ecologists or feminists, anarchists and anti-globalists, sometimes behave in very uncivil ways, leading to the destruction of civil values (Gliński 2006b).

#### *Religious and parish communities.*

According to the sociologists, about 10% of Polish parishes are active in the civic sector. Social studies of poverty suggest that the parish is the basic link in the social support system. According to opinion polls, the most popular areas of expression of informal collective civic behaviour are religious and church

movements and initiatives (they always have the largest number of indications in participation studies, ranging from 2 to 4.5 percent; Gumkowska et al. 2004: 14; Wciórka 2004: 10; Baczko & Ogrocka 2008: 29). Other surveys have found that “church-related” civic activity may actually be much more widespread. For example, in Upper Silesia 40 percent of the population declare participation in various group activities organized by parishes (Świątkiewicz 2004: 48). Many researchers have also found a strong positive correlation between level of religiousness and civil involvement in Poland (Wciórka 2004: 16, 27, 29; Baczko & Ogrocka 2008: 35, 39).

### *Individual civic attitudes.*

I am thinking of attitudes such as responsibility and activity in the public sphere, social and philanthropic activity, compassion and sensitivity to the common good, involvement in the problems of society at large, as well as reliable, individual economic enterprise which contribute indirectly to the food of society.

The number of volunteers, i.e. individuals declaring that “they had devoted time (without remuneration) within the last year to nongovernmental organizations, or social or religious groups, associations or movements” increased considerably (from 10% to 21.9%) in 2001–2006. A 2007 survey revealed a sudden drop in number of volunteers (to 13.2%), however, and this trend, difficult to explain in substantive terms, continued in 2009 (12.9%) ([www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl)). Also, volunteering is not developing harmoniously throughout the whole NGO sector but is largely concentrated in large and rich organizations and hence, paradoxically, contributing to the exacerbation of within sector differences (Baczko & Ogrocka 2008: 14).

At the same time, however, according to CBOS [Social Opinion Research Center] the rate of individual-community civil involvement improved somewhat in 2010: 36% of the Poles declare active participation in NGOs and/or voluntary work on behalf of the needy and/or the local community (a 5% increase compared with 2007) ([www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl)). Also, in contrast to activity in NGOs (see below), inhabitants of villages and small towns are most active on behalf of the local community and when different socio-occupational categories are compared, farmers are more civically involved than the intelligentsia and managers (Wciórka 2004: 24–28).

Putnam’s social capital, i.e. an indicator of relational reciprocity and generalized social trust (Putnam 1993), seems to be a good indicator of individual civic activity. Until recently, this indicator was about 12–19 percent (depending on the study) in Poland. It increased to about 26 percent in 2008–2010 but is still one of the lowest in Europe, 3–4 times lower than in Scandinavian countries and two times lower than in the USA (Gliński 2004: 253–255; Wciórka 2004: 33; [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl)). In other words, individual civic activity is still a relatively infrequent attitude in Poland, largely due to the cultural degradation of society in communist Poland and the decline of traditional intelligentsia and civic values.

*Finally, institutionalized civic society is perhaps most visible in the NGO sector.*

The condition of the NGO sector in Poland is quite well diagnosed<sup>5</sup> and can be summarized in the following basic theses.

a) First, the NGO sector in Poland is relatively small, quite dynamic, young and still largely based on its members' voluntary work. About 63 thousand NGOs are registered in Poland, including about 55 thousand associations and over 8 thousand foundations. This number will increase to over 100 thousand if we expand the definition of NGOs to include trade unions, political parties, voluntary fire brigades (of which there are about 14 thousand), parent committees, churches and religious associations. The NGO sector in Poland is very dynamic and relatively "young:" several thousand new organizations register each year (about 4 thousand associations and 500 foundations on the average). However, only about two-thirds of the registered organizations are still active and 70% of the inactive ones "collapsed" within the first three years. About 90% of the organizations were established after 1989 (Gumkowska & Herbst 2008: 19–21, 2006, 2005; Dąbrowska et al. 2002).

About 120 thousand people are employed in the NGO sector (about 1% of the non-agricultural workforce) but as many as 74% of the organizations employ no permanent, paid staff and only function thanks to their members voluntary work.

The results of surveys of civic activity measured in terms of membership and declared and observed participation in strictly civic NGOs confirm the limited range of participation of the civic sector. We may assume (OBOP [Public Opinion Research Center]) that about 5% of the Polish population (excluding "Solidarity" members) were involved in NGOs in 1990. According to the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, by 1995 participation in civic NGOs had increased to 13%. We can therefore say that there was a considerable increase in civic involvement in Poland in the first half of the 1990s. However, by 1999 civic participation had dropped by 9% (Gliński 2000) and according to data collected by the European Social Survey conducted by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences at the end of 2002 12.4% of Poles belonged to civic organizations (ESS 2002).

In other words, the general conclusion from surveys is that "civic" participation in Polish society increased nearly threefold in the first half of the 1990s, dropped by nearly one-third, then stabilized at about 10% of the population by the end of the decade, only to enter a new phase of gradual growth after 2000.

It is also worth drawing attention to the enormous distance between Polish society and other European societies as far as civic activity (measured in terms of organizational participation and/or membership) is concerned. The Poles declare the lowest civic participation among all 21 nations investigated by the European Social Survey; we are at the very bottom of the list of European countries with very low social activity which also include Greece, Portugal and Hungary. The Czechs and Slovenians are much better and together with the Spaniards and the Italians they make up the group of moderately low activity countries. The remaining European countries, particularly

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<sup>5</sup> Largely thanks to the NGOs themselves, several of which (particularly KLON/JAWOR and the Institute of Public Affairs) have been conducting advanced studies of this sector (for more on research on civil society in Poland see: Gliński 2008a).

the Scandinavian countries, may even have a four-to-five times higher rate of civic activity than Poland (ESS 2002).

Reviews of the literature sometimes produce very different assessments of the scale of civic activity. Some studies, e.g. CBOS reports, even suggest that the rate for Poland is 26–28%. According to a 2006 survey by SMG/KRC, as many as 22.4% of Poles declare membership in NGOs, social or religious movements and in a 2010 CBOS survey 28% of Poles declared voluntary work in civic organizations (Baczko & Ogrocka 2008: 28; www.ngo.pl). The reason for these discrepancies is that most studies are concerned with social participation understood very broadly, i.e. including, for example, membership in political parties, trade unions, voluntary fire brigades or parent committees (where participation is rarely albeit increasingly civic) whereas the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology research tried to rate the scope of strictly civic NGO membership.

b) The greatest problem of Polish NGOs is their very bad financial condition. About 80% of NGOs in Poland have no substantial assets of their own and 73% complain of continual financial problems. These problems are further exacerbated by the enormous within-sector inequality. A few NGOs are rich but the vast majority are small and poor. The increasing differences in income in the NGO sector are also a source of concern. In 2001–2003 the proportion of very poor NGOs increased from 15% to 21%. In 2006 4% of the richest NGOs accumulated about 80% of the sector's income. I must make it very clear that both the “Europeanization” (use of EU funds) and the “economization” of the NGO sector have been leading so far to exacerbation of within-sector material inequality (Gumkowska & Herbst 2008: 25, 2006).

c) Enormous and multidimensional internal diversity is a typical feature of the Polish NGO sector.

In addition to the very important differences in the material status of NGOs and volunteer participation in their activities, outlined above, NGOs in Poland also differ greatly in terms of area (branch) of activity, social composition, size, professionalism, localization, and form and style of activity.

Most associations and foundations (according to the narrow definition of the sector), as many as 40%, operate in the “sport, tourism, recreation and hobby” category, 21% indicate culture and art as their main area of interest, 10.3%—education, 9.9%—social services and social work, 8%—health care, 5.9%—local development. Fewer than 3% operate in other areas (Gumkowska & Herbst 2006).

Analysis of existing survey data suggests that a significant change has recently occurred in the nature of the relationship between the respondent's place of residence and his or her declared collective civic activity. On the other hand, activity continues to be facilitated by higher education whereas the gender factor does not basically affect Poles' social involvement. The effect of age is very specific and ambiguous.

At the beginning of the decade, civic activity tended to concentrate in the large cities where 15.7% of the Poles declared group civic participation in 2002 compared with 12.6% in towns with up to 100 thousand inhabitants and 9.7% in the village (ESS 2002). Now, however, “the largest percentage of volunteers, donors and organization members is recruited from rural areas.” In 2007, 15.1% of organization membership

came from the village compared with 10.7% from towns with from 50 to 200 thousand inhabitants and 13.3% from large cities with over 200 thousand inhabitants (Baczko & Ogrocka 2008: 39). The authors of this last study suggest that the “migration hypothesis” can perhaps explain this effect: “this is presumably the effect of the emigration wave and its specific nature—many more people who are potential volunteers, donors or organization members migrated from the towns than from the villages” (Baczko & Ogrocka 2008: 34).

The place of residence criterion is closely related to the “centre-periphery” distinction which is largely determined by the localization of towns and administrative districts in the settlement hierarchy and communications network. From this perspective, four basic factors affect the presence and number of NGOs and the local community: (1) type of administrative district and town or city size; (2) situation of the administrative district vis-à-vis the administrative centre; (3) situation of the administrative centre vis-à-vis the large agglomeration; and (4) ease of access to the administrative centre (particularly its distance from the railway station) (Bartkowski 2002: 37–43).

By far the most civically active people are people who have higher education. In this group, from 19.1% to 36% declare civic participation according to various researchers. It has also been found that the group of young volunteers who do not yet have higher education because they are still studying is probably very numerous. More than half (61%) of the volunteers who regularly cooperate with organizations are under 30 years old (Gumkowska & Herbst 2005: 21).

And although the group of civically active people is still small (about 10%), as I said before, and does not exceed 30% among people with higher education, the positive dynamic and relatively large percentage of pro-civic declarations in respondents with secondary education may be a sign of the increasing modelling role of civic attitudes (probably of a solidarity-philanthropic nature, however) and of a new, fashionable, trend which will perhaps gradually supplant the crafty-Pole syndrome with the Pole-as-community-worker syndrome.

The significant role which education plays in the encouragement of collective civic activity in Poland has also been confirmed by qualitative studies of the NGO sector and civic communities. These studies suggest, for example, that the traditional, Polish intelligentsia ethos has greatly contributed to the development of civic group behaviour and institutions (Koralewicz & Malewska-Peyre 1998; Gliński 1996) but also to the attractiveness of patterns of civic involvement among representatives of youth subcultures and the unique phenomenon of educational-social advancement via civic activity (Gliński 1996).

Interestingly enough, both surveys and qualitative research (Chimiak 2003; Dudkiewicz 2004; Kurczewski 2003; Gliński 2006) suggest that the realm of collective civic activity in Poland is multi-dimensional and not just an intelligentsia enclave. The very fact that the NGO sector covers over a dozen or more fields of activity shows that it is attracting representatives of all social groups and that those working in the sector are spurred by complex motives which are often pragmatic and not always associated with intelligentsia ethos.

Slightly more women than men are employed in the NGO sector (about 60% of all employees), slightly fewer work irregularly as volunteers (39% of all volunteers), and still fewer are members of organizations (35% of all membership) (Gumkowska & Herbst 2005: 20).

Neither is the Poles' material status a significant discriminating factor as far as civic attitudes are concerned. The richest segment of society (with a net income per family member exceeding 1000 PLN) declares organizational membership significantly more often than remaining segments but there is no clear-cut difference between the richest and poorest Poles as far as declared volunteerism is concerned (Gumkowska et al., 2004: 16; Baczek & Ogrocka 2008: 38).

The Poles' collective civic activity is very heterogeneous, both in terms of content and organizational forms. In addition to large, professional organizations of the new type, we also find old post-communist organizations in the NGO sector, only some of which are now undergoing pro-civic transformation, various quasi-civic agents, but mostly small and weak albeit sometimes quite precious associations whose basic problem is how to keep up any activity whatsoever. One very important distinction concerns the extent to which NGOs are "civic." Only some organizational activities are *pro publico bono* activities. Others are "grey," "dark" or "dirty" forms of social activity (completely or almost completely in the service of group or individual interests, often not at all *pro publico bono* or at best neutral in that respect). The following broad categories of activities can be distinguished: (1) *pro publico bono* activities further divided into (1a) those serving the "external" public good and (1b) those serving the "internal" public good); (2) activities serving both the public good and the group's own interests; and (3) activities serving the group's own interests only.<sup>6</sup>

Of course the distinction between own interest groups and public interest groups does not do justice to the complexity of the problem of internal heterogeneity of the NGO sector. In a qualitative study of this sector in 2005 I tried to identify the most characteristic types of activity style (Gliński 2006). From this perspective, collective civic activity in Poland is manifest in 10 basic styles of NGO activity: (1) third-sector style with a generally modern, professional, NGO identity; (2) leadership style with a dominant civic leader; (3) nostalgic style typical of many post-communist organizations; (4) converted style typical of transformed old-style organizations; (5) phantom style whose dominant feature is failure to utilize the organization's potential; (6) radiating civic enclave style with typically high quality civic activity and impact on the organization's environment; (7) parapolitical style rooted in the principle of participation in public and political debate; (8) symbiotic style in which the basic organizing

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<sup>6</sup> It would be very difficult to conduct a reliable investigation of the exact proportions of the indicated activities in the service of the public versus private good in the entire NGO sector in Poland. Such an investigation would have to combine the advantages of a quantitative survey (representativeness) and the insightful precision of qualitative techniques. A qualitative study of the NGO sector in one provincial (voivodeship) capital was conducted in 2002 on a sample large enough to be representative and hence eligible to quantitative data analysis. The vast majority of the organizations realized the goals of internal and external public good (60%) and only a minority focused exclusively on their own interests (12.8%). One interesting category (15.7% of the organizations) clearly served its own interests but also contributed at the same time to realization of *pro publico bono* goals (Gliński 2006: 24–25).

principle is coexistence with external institutions; (9) business style in which members' material interests are most important; and (10) community style in which the basic organizing principle is the development and functioning of the community.

d) The Polish NGO sector has created a solid organizational infrastructure which facilitates its development and a professional managerial and regular staff, numbering many thousands. "Bad professionalism," a phenomenon familiar in the West (Rymsza 2006) and also recently observed in Poland, may pose a risk to the sector.<sup>7</sup> This problem notwithstanding, I must stress that the Polish NGO sector also suffers from a number of other significant flaws and internal problems.

There is a network of good, professional centres supporting the development of NGOs in Poland. Polish sponsoring and training organizations, watch dogs and think tanks are also operating in a professional way. A well-trained, professional NGO cadre has also developed within the last twenty years. A number of good practices and models of organizational functioning, goal attainment and resolution of social problems have also been produced but these, unfortunately, are too seldom implemented due to lack of funds. The sector's basic problem is not poor organizational culture, specialist knowledge or know-how, it is the lack of possibilities of multiplying good action models due to the already mentioned lack of material resources. For example, the problem of so-called institutional funding of the NGO sector in Poland has still not been resolved and neither has the problem of institutionalization of the sector's constitutional status within the model of Polish democracy.<sup>8</sup>

The professionalism of NGOs calls for some comments. There are three basic types of organizational professionalism:<sup>9</sup> professionalism in the narrow sense, the broader sense and the broadest, ethos/cultural sense.

In the narrow sense, professionalism means the ability to apply techniques which improve the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational activity (e.g. Internet, protocol writing or fundraising skills).

In the broad sense, professionalism also means adherence to the principles of transparency and accountability, substantive efficiency, ability to plan and implement all the organizations' tasks efficiently: from goal-setting and strategic planning through choice of means of realization, relations with the environment (social, political, media, self-government, NGOs etc.), widely understood membership programs (cooperation with volunteers, potential members, clients, beneficiaries, allies, enemies etc.), training programs etc. to activity monitoring, reporting, evaluation programs etc.

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<sup>7</sup> In a nutshell, bad professionalism means a narrow, "technocratic" approach to professionalism in NGOs which ignores self-regulation requirements and a professional approach to fulfillment of the organization's mission. This may lead to forsaking the mission in the name of nongovernmental projects (so-called grant dependency). For more on this see Gliński 2006: 66–98.

<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately the latest amendment to the Public Benefit and Volunteerism Act of March 2010 did not solve the basic problems concerning the material resources and political powers of the nongovernmental sector. Also, despite years of efforts, it has still not been possible to elevate the legal or even constitutional rank of the Public Benefit Activity Council or to lift the rank of the Civic Dialogue institution to the rank of the constitutional Social Dialogue institution.

<sup>9</sup> I am basically abstracting here from professionalism in sector/specialist matters.

Finally, organizational professionalism in the ethos/cultural sense also includes the NGO sector's ethical and self-regulatory principles; openness to technical and cultural innovation; flexible organizational structures; active search for new organizational solutions etc.; active shaping of the sector's culture, mission and sense of community; self-knowledge and self-reflection; a certain level of civic expertise; familiarity with techniques stimulating social activation and participation in local communities; and finally professional activity on the public forum.

We have many examples of such elements of professionalization in Polish NGO reality. More often than not, however, professionalism is "selective." Various organizations realize various elements of the professional model more or less consciously, usually in fragmentary form.

In practice, due to the extremely difficult conditions in which the sector has to function, the narrow type of NGO professionalism dominates. This type rarely ventures into areas which are hard to deal with professionally such as: sense, planning and realization of mission; development of organization membership; working with volunteers; activation of members and local communities; application of self-regulation procedures; sense of active responsibility for more general public issues. One of the consequences of this state of affairs in part of the "narrow specialization" NGOs is "project dependence" and "service provision" (Gliński 2006: 72–98).

I must point out that unfortunately the internal weaknesses and shortcomings of the Polish NGO sector are not limited to professionalization in the narrow sense. They also include such phenomena and processes as: inability to develop a modern membership base; difficulty developing a shared NGO representation; frequent violation of the sector's self-regulation and ethical standards; the sector's relatively low organizational culture; poor cooperation with business; paternalism of some organizations with respect to their clients; "oligarchization" of the sector elite or the tendency to enter into clientist relations with the sector's institutional and political environment; and finally excessive commercialization, governmentalization (dependence on state funding) (Rymśza 2006) and negative phenomena relating to the sector's Europeanization (Gliński 2009: 40–47).<sup>10</sup>

**Thesis II.** Civil society in Poland is relatively small-scale and enclave.

It follows from the preceding analyses that civil society in Poland after twenty years of transformation is relatively small-scale compared with most European countries. About 10% of the Polish population practice civil attitudes relatively consciously and on a permanent basis.

The data presented above concerning the scale of the NGO sector and survey declarations of civil involvement have been corroborated by sociological studies of local communities in Poland by, for example, Paweł Starosta, Marek Szczepański, Ryszard Skrzypiec, Joanna Kurczewska, Jacek Kurczewski and their collaborators. According to these researchers, from 5 to 20 percent of Poles are engaged in civic activity on a local scale (Starosta et al. 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. thesis VIII in this text.

In this context, considering the dominant tendency to manifest non-civic (or even counter-civic) attitudes, realization of civic values is usually limited to specific social-institutional enclaves with very little “radiation.”<sup>11</sup> The thesis concerning the limited, enclave nature of civil society in Poland was already formulated in the first half of the 1990s<sup>12</sup> and in my opinion, despite certain signs of improvement,<sup>13</sup> it is still the most accurate description of the condition of civil society in Poland.

**Thesis III.** Two major factors contributed to the development of civil society in Poland after 1989: the grass-roots activity of a small group of active citizens and foreign support.

This thesis applies mainly, but not exclusively, to the NGO sector. During the transformation this sector developed largely due to two major determiners: (1) self-development and self-education, a typical mechanism of many social and civic movements, and (2) broadly understood foreign aid.

The first of these two factors involved the “bottom-up” civic activity of a portion of society which, for various reasons, continuing the Solidarity or intelligentsia ethos, realizing a counter-cultural ethos, or acting in its own interests or defending its vital situation out of sheer necessity, decided to shape the foundations of social self-organization independently. This led to the rapid maturing and professionalization of part of the Polish NGO movement, i.e. (1) new forms of organizational activity (2) development of information and communication networks within and beyond the sector; (3) institutionalization of coordination and integration processes; (4) development of relations with the *environment*; (5) development of the *institutions of third-sector servicing and support*; (6) *professionalization* of the activities of NGO organizations (Gliński & Palska 1997: 381). It is worth pointing out that we can find traces of Solidarity tradition in this fascinating process of civic self-organization. Many third-sector activists had been in “Solidarity” and the democratic opposition (Mielczarek et al. 2006).

The second determining factor, foreign aid, has at least four aspects: financial, educational (mainly organizational *know-how*), cultural (reconstruction of the civic ethos) and political. This last aspect involves, among other things, the specific “boomerang effect.” Especially, in the context of EU integration, the political dimension of foreign aid is manifested in the pressure a variety of social actors indirectly exert on Polish political elites. Namely, these social actors involve EU institutions to influence local decision-makers.

**Thesis IV.** The Polish elite was conspicuously absent during the development and construction of civic society in Poland.

We may say with considerable certainty that whereas many of the institutions of Polish democracy were designed and implemented in top-down fashion, Polish civil

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Gliński 2006: 183–199; Gliński 2007: 125–148.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Gliński and Palska: 371–384.

<sup>13</sup> I am thinking about the aforementioned “radiation” and the “institutional change” discussed further on in this article.

society was developed in bottom-up fashion, with the help of foreign actors, by just a small portion of Polish society, often against the will of the so-called elite. This thesis mainly applies to the Polish political elite (whatever its ideological option, with a handful of personal exceptions), but also the cultural, media, business, or even intellectual elite. These circles usually demonstrate an air of distance, pity and contemptuous superiority toward grassroots civic self-organization. Suffice it to say that (1) there has been no reliable debate on the condition of civil society in Poland in any serious medium since the transformation began twenty years ago;<sup>14</sup> (2) in spite of the legislation which has been in force since 2003, pro public bono organizations in Poland have no access to the public media and it was not until 2005 that journalists and reporters who set the tone in public discourse began to pay attention to the problems of self-organizing society (probably for opportunistic political reasons, i.e., use of the “civic argument” in the political struggle with the governing PiS [Law and Justice]—LPR [Polish Family League]—Samoobrona [Self-defence] coalition); (3) although a change for the better could be observed in Polish political parties’ electoral programs as far as the importance attributed to civil society (Słodkowska 2005), analysis of politicians’ specific pronouncements and behaviours in 2001–2005 “[...] confirm the negligible interest of most politicians in matters relating to civil society [...]” (Piotrowski 2005: 16).

Already in the mid-1990s investigators of civic society in Poland called this situation “betrayal by the elite”. This term included, or perhaps even applied in particular, to the elite which originated in the former democratic opposition and part of the Solidarity elite, both of which had formulated civic political programs in the days of struggle with the communist system, but very soon lost interest in facilitating the development of civic institutions in independent Poland. Therefore, the elite also betrayed the Solidarity program for a *Self-governing Republic* (Gliński 2006a).

It was these elites which led to the dissolution of the local Civic Committees<sup>15</sup> (the so-called “war at the top”) and some of them were obviously wary of political pluralism at the beginning of the transformation. This attitude among the political elite was one of the reasons why Polish legislation was so backward as far as participant regulations were concerned.<sup>16</sup> Suffice it to say that the basic legal acts concerning NGOs (the 1984 foundation act and the 1989 association act) were passed in the 1980s and the new act regulating civic organizations was not implemented until 2004. We had to wait another six years for it to be amended,<sup>17</sup> and even then it was far from perfect.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The discussion which the daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* initiated in January 2010 with an incompetent and provocative article by a well-known feminist activist (Agnieszka Graff) was the first semblance of such a debate.

<sup>15</sup> This huge grassroots civic movement emerged spontaneously together with the political breakthrough in 1989.

<sup>16</sup> I mean, for example, the lack of participant regulations in the legislation concerning the procedure for passing central and local law such as the fiction of social consultations or even the withdrawal of several civic rights from legal acts (the land development plan act, the building and construction act etc.).

<sup>17</sup> This amendment took place in March 2010 yet the media hardly noticed, attesting once again to the truth of my thesis that the Polish elite are completely ignoring civic issues.

<sup>18</sup> As I said before, this amendment failed to elevate the political rank of the sector and its representation or of the institution of Civic Dialogue (and has therefore failed to realize the principle of cross-sector

The first central state fund for civic initiatives was not established until 2005. Until then (and this is still common practice), public funds for civic purposes were allocated according to the arbitrary decisions of administrative officers and politicians, not civilized, explicit, clear and transparent democratic procedures.<sup>19</sup>

I must also add that throughout the twenty years of transformation in Poland the state has still not developed a consistent and obligatory system of formal civic education in the schools (Gliński 2008) and the leading institution as far as this is concerned is the Centre for Civic Education, an NGO, not the Polish government or one of its ministries.

One of the symbols of the Polish political elite's ignorance and arrogance is their attitude toward scientific institutions which deal with problems of civic society in Poland (such centres began to sprout in Poland, especially after 2000). A similar situation to the one we see at the interface of power and science can also be seen in other areas of knowledge, particularly sociology or political science. The governing Polish elite are not interested in diagnoses of the condition of civic society in Poland, its developmental prospects and possible reforms. There is no permanent system ensuring flow of information or cooperation regarding these matters.

Finally—and this is particularly disturbing in light of Thesis VI below—the political elite in Poland have never been interested in any state program of development of civic society. None of the administrations so far have made any attempt to activate and utilize the Poles' enormous civic potential.

**Thesis V.** There are also other barriers to the development of civil society in Poland in addition to “betrayal by the elite.”

The reluctant attitude of the elite is not the only factor responsible for the weakness of civil society in Poland. Other blocking factors can also be detected. The nature of these blockages is varied and so are their origins but the following are most prominent: (1) the immaturity of Polish democracy and the weakness of the institutional and legislative contingencies for the development of participant democracy (I already mentioned this factor in the context of the negligence of the political elite); (2) the functioning of specific informal interest groups in Polish public life which are hostilely disposed toward the NGO sector and are blocking the sector's development and reform (the most powerful ones are the “post-communists,” the “clientists,” the “neoliberals,” the self-government,” the “bureaucrats,” the populists” and the “ignorants”);<sup>20</sup> the general “anticivic” state of consciousness and culture of Polish society (e.g. the very low level of social capital; the commercialization of social life and mass consumerism; *homo sovieticus* mentality; lack of organizational culture; some

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partnership). It has also failed to solve the problem of the sectors lack of material resources to ensure proper functioning (e.g. the problem of institutional grants).

<sup>19</sup> The most recent amendment of the public benefit and volunteerism act gives some hope that civilized procedures of access to public funds in the central administration, obligating ministries to develop plans of cooperation with the NGO sector, will be introduced.

<sup>20</sup> Because of their nature and the role they play in the destruction of Polish democracy, these groups remind us of the so-called anti-developmental interest groups (ADIG) which Andrzej Zybertowicz (2005) wrote about.

“post-gentry” faults of the Polish intelligentsia ethos; the crisis of culture and the educational system; the cult of cunning and “fare dodging;” compulsive hedonism; postmodernist relativism and value chaos etc.); (3) the aforementioned shortcomings and internal flaws of the NGO sector itself such as: inability to build a modern membership base; difficulty developing a common NGO representation; frequent violation of self-regulation and ethical standards within the sector; the sector’s relatively low organizational culture; “oligarchization” of the sector’s elite and the tendency to enter clientist relations with the sector’s institutional-political environment; and finally commercialization and governmentalization of the NGO sector (Rymsza 2006).<sup>21</sup>

**Thesis VI.** The civil sector in Poland continues to be a wasted opportunity and potential.

Contrary to popular lore and the developmental blockades discussed above, the civil sector in Poland is a vast, wasted opportunity to develop the country. At least four arguments can be waged to support this thesis.

First, there is a highly qualified, experienced, motivated and professional cadre of “new generation” community workers, a generation of NGO activists. There are leaders, managers and tested methods of working, solving social and local problems, rendering services, activating and mobilizing communities and social groups etc.

Second, there is a great number of unresolved “social issues” (developmental, welfare etc.) in Poland and individual and social needs which could (and should) be relatively easily solved, minimized or satisfied by means of nongovernmental instruments, activities and institutions. I am thinking, for example, of such problems and needs as: the poverty and cultural neglect of Polish children (26% of children in Poland live in socially neglected areas: street children, children from dysfunctional families, cultural blank spots, unemployment, blocks of flats, cultural peripheries etc.); the apathy and lack of cultural aspirations of many local communities in Poland; the civilizational collapse in ex-state-owned farm areas and structural unemployment; promotion of talents, activation of senior citizens, attitude modification, pressure on local and central politics etc. There is really not one social, welfare or developmental problem which could not be solved or alleviated with the help of civic activity and institutions. The civic approach combines liberal potential (liberation) and solidarity (social solidarity) potential and triggers both these types of social motivation.

Third, sociological research has found that although the Poles are rather sceptical of nongovernmental institutions (mainly because they lack reliable information), their declared willingness to self-organize considerably surpasses the present level of development of civil society. The Poles want nongovernmental organizations which will respond to their needs and they even declare willingness to participate in the work of such organizations.

Fourth, the resources which would have to be invested in order to create the necessary conditions for the liberation of civic potential are not exorbitant and would surely

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<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the blocks to development of the NGO sector and civic society see Gliński 2004, 2005.

not exceed the EU support which Poland is already getting. The cost-effectiveness of investment in civil society is just as high, or even higher, than the cost-effectiveness of investment in education, science or culture. The problem is that the time needed for invested resources to begin to make returns and profits is often much longer than the average term of political office in Poland and these profits, rather than being tangible and material, are intangible, cultural and public.

Poland needs to invest if she is to develop civilizationally. Most of these investments must be in public money but private investors could also be encouraged to invest in civil society. Such investment could liberate enormous frozen reserves in Polish citizens. This would really actualize the constitutional principle of supportiveness. The socio-cultural, multiplicative effect of this investment would surely be hard to overestimate.

**Thesis VII.** A pro-developmental, institutional change has been taking place in the civil society field since 2000 but so far this change has not led to identifiable, positive effects (but this is not to say that such effects will not be observed in the future).

Throughout the last decade, but particularly after 2001, a new institutional change took place with respect to the establishment of new civil society institutions and the place and role of the NGO sector in the state and in society. Several important phenomena and processes were involved in this change: (1) the local self-government reform in 1999; (2) the establishment of new, albeit still very imperfect, institutions of social dialogue and civil dialogue in 2000 (Rymsza 2008; Makowski & Schimanek 2008); (3) implementation of the pro public bono and volunteerism act in 2003 (and its amendment in 2010) and the active functioning of the Council for Public Benefit Activity established by that act; (4) development of legislation providing the foundation for “welfare economy” in Poland (the most important legislation being the welfare employment act and preparation of the welfare cooperative act) and the Regional Social Economy Funds, a program realized by the Ministry of Social Policy; (5) establishment of the Civic Initiative Fund in 2004; (6) better NGO access to European funds and programs; (7) realization of the Human Capital Operation Program—one of this program’s important elements is the financing of NGO activities.

There seem to be two main causes of this institutional change. First, the aforementioned grassroots self-development of the NGO sector and the closely related continual, bottom-up pressure exerted by representatives of nongovernmental communities coercing the political elite to pass legislations and bring about institutional changes which are beneficial for the third sector. At least since the mid 1990’s this pressure has taken the form of various integrative and institutional initiatives as well as formal and informal lobbying.

As of 1996, the NGO communities have organized National NGO Initiative Forums every three years. In addition to their integrating, mobilizing, educating and self-regulating functions, these forums have exerted great pressure on the authorities to introduce pro-civic changes in Poland. Many non-governmental agreements as

well as regional, local and sector networks have developed and forced the authorities to modify their policies (e.g. The Educational Initiatives Forum, EIF, which greatly helped to prevent the liquidation of many small village schools). The sector has formulated and disseminated its programmatic statements on significant public issues, particularly those relating to civic issues (one of the most important documents of this kind was the Memorandum which the Association for EIF published and which dealt with the legal regulation of the conditions of operation of the non-profit sector in Poland<sup>22</sup>.) Many very important non-governmental programs were launched to fill in the gaps in state policy. These were the first efforts to address important social issues and they attested to the professionalism of no-profit organizations (e.g. the sector's swift aid for flood victims in 1997, Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland program for the development of local funds, the Stefan Batory Foundation Program Against Corruption or program supporting Non-Profit Groups, numerous programs for the development of civic society conducted by various other NGO institutions: the SPLOT support network, Foundation for the Development of Local Democracy, Civil Society Foundation, BORIS foundation, the Polish American Freedom Foundation etc.).

Information and communications institutions have also been intensively developed. For example, the NGO website ([www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl)) managed by the Klon/Jawor Association was launched in 2000 and the Institute for Public Affairs began to publish the quarterly *Trzeci Sektor* [The third sector] in 2004. Researching the sector and monitoring public funds continued. In spite of the reluctance of the politicians and the administration, the sector proved its professionalism and great involvement. The authorities could no longer ignore these achievements and reduce the image of non-profit organizations to the role of philanthropist and social worker.

The second factor which contributed to institutional change was Poland's integration with the European Union, a specific element in the continuation of one of the two basic elements of development of civil society in Poland, i.e. foreign aid in the broad sense. Beginning more or less in 1997, the symbolic date of the beginning of withdrawal of pro-civic American funds from Poland (and there transfer East), EU financial and programmatic involvement in the development of civil society in Poland continued to increase. EU pre-accession and integration programs and EU standards concerning treatment of the NGO sector as a partner (Kožlicka 1999, 2000, 2002) increasingly forced the Polish elite to modify its mentality and to implement institutional change. They also strengthened the non-profit sector in Poland. This process was also intensively supported by the activity of the NGO community in Poland itself which established the Polish NGO Representation in Brussels (largely paid by American money!), lobbied frantically on behalf of its interests in both Brussels and Warsaw (e.g. it lobbied for inclusion of NGOs in the allocation of EU funds) and initiated several professional advocacy and educational campaigns addressed to both the NGO sector (the liaison for structural funds in the regions program, the Euro-NGO program) and society at large (pre-referendum campaigns).

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<sup>22</sup> Piotr Marciniak and Jan Jakub Wygnański were the authors of this Memorandum.

**Thesis VIII.** Since the EU accession, civil society in Poland has been partially “Europeanized” but the outcomes of this process for the condition of the non-profit sector have been equivocal, at least so far.

As I said before, the changes which civil society in Poland is undergoing are largely associated with Poland’s recent EU accession. The impact of “Europeanization,” for example via the “demonstration effect,” is much older than Poland’s integration with the European Union or even the pre-accession stage which lasted many years. However, the fact that Poland finally became a member of the European Union in 2004 intensified the effect of “Europeanization” on the development of the non-profit sector. Five basic dimensions of “Europeanization” can be identified: (1) absorption of European structural funds; (2) European support for “ideological” (“leftist” but also “participant”) civil society in Poland; (3) the functioning of the institutions of civic dialogue, previously unknown in Poland; (4) the import of the deficit of democracy from the EU vs. the effect of the new style of governance; and (5) “adaptive reproduction” of the institutional system in the face of “Europeanization.”

#### *Absorption of European funds.*

For several years now the NGO sector in Poland has been absorbing a huge stream of European funds. On closer inspection, however, we can see that this process is still relatively poorly reflected in the sector’s income structure. All in all, only 20% of NGOs in Poland applied for European funds in 2004–2008 (although as many as 70% had planned to do so in 2004) and 60% of those which did, that is about 12% of all NGOs, finally received European funding. One applying NGO in three applied for both pre-accession funds and funds from the European Union’s structural funds or programs; organizations which did try to obtain EU funds often submitted several applications. Sociologists interpret this as a sign of concentration of the competences and resources needed to apply for EU funds “in the hands of a small number of the largest and most professionalized organizations.” In 2008, the success rate nearly doubled compared with 2006 and 55% of applying organizations, i.e. 9% of all the organizations, were granted funds (Gumkowska & Herbst 2008: 20–21). This shows no doubt that the sector’s financial situation has improved. It also shows that leading organizations have become even stronger, within sector competition is sharper, and the patterns of European NGO culture are still being transmitted. But on the other hand it exposes the Europeanization and commercialization of the NGO sector and its probable increasing stratification.

Researchers have demonstrated that the greatest barriers to Polish NGO’s attempts to receive structural funds are: insufficient financial potential, lack of sufficient professional accounting support and the psychological barriers associated with the risk inherent in realization of projects funded by the European Union (Gumkowska & Herbst 2006a: 34). According to the organizations themselves, especially those which already have some experience with applying for European funds, the greatest problems are: lack of required own resources (about 80% of indications) and too complex procedures and excessive formalization and bureaucracy of the application process (75% of indications) (Gumkowska & Herbst 2006a: 35–36). Therefore it is

clear that the conditions of access to EU funds prefer strong and rich organizations and that bureaucracy is the main determinant of the specific “discrimination via Europeanization” of smaller and perhaps grass-roots organizations. Hence, as I said before, internal stratification of the non-profit sector is increasing and, according to the authors of the quoted research, “if the present trends in the development of the sector are maintained, we cannot expect any increase in number of organizations capable of applying for Structural Funds (Gumkowska & Herbst 2006a: 41).

*“Ideological” civil society.*

One of the significant aspects of the effect of “Europeanization” on the Polish non-profit sector is preference for the development of a particular kind of civic institutions and activities. In other words, due to EU policy, organizations and initiatives which meet the criteria of EU ideology in the broad sense are the ones which are likely to receive EU support. Without going any deeper into the content of the term “EU ideology,” I assume that this “ideology” prefers—directly, via formal procedures, or indirectly, via operation of “European political correctness”—two main types of values and related political goals: (1) leftist values and the associated promotion of minorities and a specific leftist morality or axiology and (2) values associated with the idea of betterment of contemporary democracy (i.e. steering it toward more participant and civic forms).

The first of these two types of “Europeanization” of the Polish civic sector is manifested, for example, in the financial support (mainly via EU and related funds) and political support (mainly via support for the activities of specific agents by the European Committee or European courts) for sexual minority organizations, feminist organizations, ecological organizations, consumer organizations etc.<sup>23</sup> For example, financial support is given by establishing funding criteria which are advantageous for these agents or through informal lobbying on behalf of ideological agents by representatives of the European donors during the proceedings of selection committees.<sup>24</sup> But ideological financial support is also granted indirectly through the activity of various European political foundations which operate in Poland (for example, due to its philosophy, the German Heinrich Boll Foundation mainly supports feminist and ecological organizations<sup>25</sup>). As I said before, political support involves supporting the activities of organizations which are ideologically acceptable for EU political bodies (such as the European Commission’s intervention in the case of the Rospuda valley ring road) but it also operates more indirectly by means of support for civic initiatives consistent with EU “ideology” given by various European political bodies which are not directly associated with the establishment or EU bureaucracy. For example, the ecological party “Greens 2004” was established in Poland. From the very start, this

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Witkowski 2007; Jasiocki 2008.

<sup>24</sup> The present author has observed such “ideological” lobbying on frequent occasions when working as a volunteer on the so-called Norwegian Fund Grants Committee.

<sup>25</sup> This foundation often undertakes joint initiatives with the European Parliament such as the panel discussion “European Shades of Green. Green Ideas and Political Forces in Europe” organized in Warsaw on 27 January 2009.

process had the political, organizational, propaganda and financial support of the European Federation of Green Parties.<sup>26</sup>

The foregoing discussion clearly demonstrates that “Europeanization” is in fact a broader phenomenon than its “classical” definition, which says that it means the impact of European institutions, suggests. In this context, “Europeanization” means the impact of all institutions directly or indirectly associated with the EU idea and EU institutions, including the institutions of old EU countries.

The second type of “ideological” influence is promotion of participant or deliberative democracy. Already in the pre-accession period, or even earlier, the EU directly, or more often indirectly, coerced aspiring member states to adopt certain standards and procedures of participant democracy (even if old EU countries or even Brussels itself do not always perfectly conform to these standards). In this sense, “Europeanization” means the promotion of civic participation, civic dialogue and—more generally—the NGO sector and civil society. One particular example is EU support for the idea of social economy, i.e. development of non-governmental institutions whose goals are economic-welfare, e.g. welfare cooperatives. In Poland, the EU “Equal” project which led to the recent development of about 100 welfare cooperatives served this purpose. Another example of the effect of EU ideology on the conditions of functioning of the civic sector in Poland is European support for the development and reform of the public benefits organizations and volunteerism act which implements new between-sector relations based on partnership.

#### *Supporting civic dialogue.*

A special case of promotion of participant European ideas is the EU support for the idea and development of the institution of civic dialogue in new member states. Civic dialogue is an institutional solution involving “socializing the processes of public decision making by enabling citizens (and particularly formalized structures which represent citizens, including NGOs) to have a systematic impact on the legislation process and the preparation of state documents which affect citizens directly. This is a form of complementation of the institution of representative democracy (democratic legitimization of public authority) with the mechanisms of participant democracy (direct citizen engagement in public affairs)” (Rymsza 2008: 7). To simplify the matter somewhat, civic dialogue means the development of institutions in which NGOs can consult, prepare and make public decisions together with representatives of the authorities and perhaps other sectors. Civic dialogue complements social dialogue, that is institutionalized negotiations between representatives of the state, employers and employees, with a fourth partner, NGOs.

I have already mentioned the attempts to develop the institutions of social dialogue in Poland in the years directly preceding the accession. The number of these institutions increased considerably at the time but their actual significance was relatively weak. In 2004 the development of civic dialogue continued with considerable

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. the present author’s participant observation in 2001–2003 of the process of establishment of the “Greens 2004” party in Poland.

EU support. According to Marek Rymza, the European model of civic dialogue “[...] gives social and nongovernmental partners the opportunity to participate in decisional processes, creates real opportunities to ‘socialize the state’ (this is its great asset), but at the same time it carries the risk of excessive corporatization of the civil sector. Long-term, systematic participation in bureaucratized negotiation and consultation procedures carries the risk of detachment of umbrella organizations from its social base by their excessive sectorization, technocratization and willingness to make compromises which are unacceptable or unintelligible for public opinion. In other words—co-option to the system in the form of yet another corporate structure” (2008: 10). So it is quite clear that the development of civic dialogue may—rather paradoxically—lead to the further development of a phenomenon which has been observed in Poland for many years, the “oligarchization” of the NGO sector (Gliński 2002a: 249).

The institutions of civic dialogue in Poland today include: the institution of social consultation (e.g. regarding legislation or programmatic documents relating to European funding, Regional Operational Programs, the Human Capital Operational Program, the Civic Initiative Fund or the Rural Development Program which are important for the civil sector) (Napiontek 2008; Krajeńska 2007; Schimanek 2007; Makowski & Schimanek 2008); the institution of public hearing; the Public Benefits Activities Council; Provincial Social Dialogue Commissions; the Trilateral Commission; the Regulation Consequences Appraisal mechanism; various “permanent advisory and consulting bodies of various status, appointed by the prime minister, government, ministers or central offices” (Schimanek 2007: 265); or finally ad hoc institutions (often informal) whose business is to resolve various social conflicts (Dudkiewicz 2008).<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately, despite several positive examples of proper functioning, the overall assessment of these institutions has not changed for several years (Gliński 2004: 234) and is very critical (Chodor 2005; Gąsior-Niemiec & Gliński 2007; Schimanek 2007; Rymza: 11). The main reason why the institution of social dialogue is so weak in Poland is the absence of the concept of civic dialogue among the Polish political elite and hence the political authorities, and the dominance of social dialogue over civic dialogue (the agents of the former are not at all willing to compete with a new partner to this dialogue). It is worth adding that the deficiency of civic dialogue in Poland is no exception among the new European countries. Comparative research has shown that the institutions of civic dialogue in Poland are situated more or less midway between analogous institutions in Slovakia and Hungary (Makowski & Schimanek 2008).

### *The import of democracy deficit vs. governance.*

As I said before, Europeanization may sometimes also mean, somewhat paradoxically, specific threats to the functioning of participant democracy. This can happen when certain types of formalized institutions of civic dialogue develop—institutions

<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the “Petition law” will be yet another institution of civic dialogue in Poland. Preparatory work on the legal regulation of this “law” is now going on in the Senate. A public hearing on this issue took place in September 2008.

which only grant access to the political process to umbrella or infrastructural structures. When this happens, there is a risk of bureaucratization of civil activity and increasing oligarchization of the NGO sector. But the negative effect of “Europeanization” can be even greater and involve multi-aspect import of nondemocratic institutions and legislative solutions from the EU to member states. Generally speaking, I am talking about institutions in which an official, “nonelected politician” (e.g. judge) or expert substitutes a representative of society, chosen by democratic election or by means of democratic procedures. In the civic sector milieu this can lead first and foremost to gross bureaucratization of the procedures of access to EU funds and to the decisive role of the administration in funding decisions as well as to the bureaucratization of the institution of civic dialogue. Excessive bureaucratization and dominance of the administration can be observed, for example, in institutions which implement structural funds (Kwiatkiewicz 2007). Andrzej Juros (2007) has written about the danger of excessive formalization of the legal-institutional NGO sector in Poland and Frane Adam (2007: 17–18) and Krzysztof Jasiński (2008: 374–375) have discussed the risk of development of negative side effects of the implementation of EU principles of democracy in new member states.

In light of the foregoing comments and the preceding discussion, it is very doubtful if—despite what Euro-enthusiastic journalists would like us to believe—European politics, European political culture and the new European participant style of governance (“new governance”) are having a major effect on socio-political transformation in Poland and particularly on modification of the conditions of functioning of the civic sector. First, it is hard to say for sure whether this new style really exists in Old Europe; second, it always takes a lot of time for institutional change (very imperfect as it is) to be filled with new cultural contents. In spite of several positive phenomena, for example the emerging impact of participant ideas on local elites and self-governments (Kurczewska 2008; Bartkowski 2008), it would still be difficult to observe any significant social change in the adaptation of cultural patterns of European democracy. Polish society is willing to accept structural funds and very willing to accept agricultural subsidies but very little has changed so far in the Poles’ mentality and democratic-civic culture. As I argue below, the “system” is defending itself against change, including pro-civic change, rather well.

*The system’s adaptive reproduction vis-à-vis “Europeanization.”*

According to the authors of an interesting systems analysis of the barriers to distribution of EU funds in Poland (including funds absorbed by the civic sector), one of the main barriers is “excessive bureaucratization, too complicated and unstable law, the human barrier expressed, for example, in shortage of staff, shortage of social capital and the political pressures and politicization of activities in the process of project selection” (Bukowski, Gadowska & Polak 2008: 5). Taking Niklas Luhmann’s autopoietic system concept as their point of departure, the authors demonstrate how certain characteristics of the system, especially its uneven internal differentiation and insufficient functional differentiation, manifested in lack of balance between the political-administrative system and the social-civic system, lead to

excessive bureaucratization, administrative overregulation and excessive centralization of the distribution process and hence to the system's incapacity to reform and to reproduction of the existing bureaucratic and over-politicized pattern of functioning "instead of the spreading of EU semantics" (Bukowski, Gadowska & Polak 2008: 7). This way, the weakness of the civil factor in Polish democracy, well-known from various analyses of civil society in this country, is confirmed in the language of Luhmann's theory. Also confirmed are the foregoing observations concerning the lack of balance between social partners in the institutions of civic dialogue (Gliński 2004; Rymśa 2008; Makowski & Schimanek 2008), the oligarchization of the civic sector in Poland (Gliński 2002a) or excessive bureaucratization of the distribution of EU funds (Gumkowska & Herbst 2006a, 2008).

To summarize, the system of Polish political and administrative institutions, including institutions directly relating to "Europeanization," is very successfully defending itself against real change and, instead of evolving according to European standards, it is largely adapting the effects of Europeanization to its own logic and existing methods of functioning. This is obviously detrimental to the facilitation and development of civil society in Poland.

**Thesis IX.** Development of civil structures is essential for the normal functioning of democracy (at least in Polish conditions). Civil society, based on the unique capacity to develop secondary groups, cannot be substituted in this role by quasi-civic, primary attachments and structures.

In the context of changing contemporary democracy, globalization, the crisis of contemporary culture etc., and considering some specific features of Polish society (such as the importance of informal ties in the shaping of basic dimensions of social life), the need to develop classic civic structures so that Polish democracy can function properly is sometimes questioned in the debate on civil society. A different idea has been forced, i.e. that civil society in Poland is assuming specific, non-classic, familial forms which are playing a unique "civic" role in the development of democracy in Poland. At least six "quasi-civic surrogates" of civil society are usually indicated by various writers and in various contexts—fields and phenomena which are allegedly replacing classical, "western" characteristics of civil society in Poland. These are: (1) informal ties which continue to be very strong in Poland—familial, neighbourly, friendship, community<sup>28</sup> ties and connections; (2) virtual structures and network realities leading to the creation of virtual Internet communities based on quasi-interactions (Rheingold 1996);<sup>29</sup> (3) economic ties leading to the development of informal interpersonal communities and relations (the type of ethos which these relations produce seems to be very important here)<sup>30</sup>; (4) communitarian ties which develop in the religious reality of Polish parishes;<sup>31</sup> (5) some fundamentalist social

<sup>28</sup> The role of "new communities" is emphasized particularly strongly here (Dmochowska 2010).

<sup>29</sup> These play a significant role in the supplementation and support of civic institutions nowadays but they cannot replace them due to the qualitatively different nature of website interactions.

<sup>30</sup> In other words, is this grey area, bazaar or business ethos, for example.

<sup>31</sup> But as I said earlier, only about 10% of the parishes develop quasi-civic communities.

movements (for example Radio Maria, leftist communities);<sup>32</sup> (6) the democracy of the media, the tabloids, the image which, according to some observers, are now replacing or ousting the need to build the civic dimension of democracy and are taking the form of mediocrity based on image creating techniques, PR propaganda, presentism, temporariness, axiological relativism and ubiquitous manipulation.<sup>33</sup>

It looks as if the phenomena listed above, supposed to “replace” civil society in Poland, will not be able to do so very successfully for a number of reasons. They may even be unable to do so at all. First and foremost, there is a fundamental, “ontological” difference between civic society and its “surrogates.” Civic structures usually have (and must have, for this is their nature) well developed secondary features. In fact secondary groups are what they are made of. Meanwhile, their various “surrogates” usually resemble primary groups. Yet it is the capacity to create secondary groups which is the quintessence of civil society. Only secondary group structures, based on reflective will, free and rational choice, group contracts or agreements, associative rationality rather than emotionality, labile moods or even circumstance, as is the case with primary groups,<sup>34</sup> are able to comprehend the meaning of their own actions in terms of common good, to intentionally realize public benefit as a matter of individual, private choice and hence combine the individual and private dimension with the public dimension, an ability which is one of the constitutive features of civil society, and our entire western civilization as classic as different as Florian Znaniecki and Norbert Elias argued. As early as in 1921, Znaniecki demonstrated that the ability to create secondary groups is the *differentia specifica* of our civilization that distinguishes it from Bolshevik civilization which, deprived as it is of this ability, is bound to be barbarian. He also cautioned, however, that secondary groups have a continual tendency to lose their secondary qualities and revert to primary forms, a feature which may be a sign of the inevitable “fall of western civilization.” In his later works, Znaniecki suggested that secondary group’s attitude toward altruistic values was the remedy. Interestingly, Norbert Elias, an excellent researcher of cultural change who represents a slightly younger generation, comes up with a basically similar diagnosis. According to Elias, if contemporary civilization is to survive, we must be capable of self-limitation (Kuzmics). In our modern world, civic structures and virtues guarantee that we shall indeed be capable of such self-limitation.

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<sup>32</sup> These groups have certain civic features (activity, mission, communitarianism etc.) but they are often hermetic, radical to the point of aggression, intolerant, and have a stereotyped view of social reality (Bobrowska 2008) and are therefore anything but civic.

<sup>33</sup> This is a slightly different phenomenon to the five previous ones. The first five have the pretense of being some new form of civic society whereas mediocrity in fact cancels a civic approach completely. I shall not discuss this problem here because it merits a separate broad analysis.

<sup>34</sup> I am referring of course to the classical findings of Charles Cooley and Ferdinand Toennis.

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*Biographical Note:* Piotr Gliński is Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences (Civil Society Dept.), and at the University of Białystok (Head of the Department of the Sociology of Social Structure). His interest cover civil society, third sector and cultural aspects of social structure. His books include *Civil Society in the Making* (2006)—ed. with Dariusz Gawin, *Style działań organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce. Grupy interesu czy pożytku publicznego?* [Modes of Activity of NGOs in Poland. Interest or Public Benefit Groups?] (2006), and with Jacek Wasilewski (ed) *Katastrofa smoleńska. Reakcje społeczne, polityczne i medialne* [Smoleńsk Crash. Social, Political and Media Reactions] (2011). President of the Polish Sociological Association in 2005–2011.

*Address:* pglinski@ifispan.waw.pl