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The development of a local government in Poland and the challenges of civilization transformations

In the face of developments and deep cultural and civilization transformations in Poland since 1989, increased dilemmas their further shape both in unification and diversification of social and political life have been observed. In particular, a critical view of the completion of the postmodern philosophy of life reveals. In its image, technique replaces a human being. It is seen even as a specific barrier in the development of civilization. Its role is limited to the design of new programs, structures. The postmodernism rejects the rationalism, the idea of the whole, universality, and, fist of all, the experience of past and tradition. It does not recognize the so far rules, and promotes moral relativism[1]. The Polish society reveals significant criticism to the processes, taking place since 25 years in the image of the cultural life[2].

The following images became supporting in the development of cultural and civilization life: 1. universal-market-achievements-modernisation-individualist-antiegalitary and 2. party-cultural-caring-claiming-traditional-community-egalitary.

In the first, the characteristic features were included in: creation of rules of the market economy, striving for economic growth and modernization of society, promotion of political pluralism, tolerance to different value systems, life styles.

The second one revealed a desire to protect the most vulnerable category of the Polish society, including claiming towards the state, expressed opposition to the impersonal market rights; priority decision on collective action against participativity of a unit,

1 E. Walewander, *Postmodernizm a pedagogika katolicka*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2011.

2 T. Sasińska-Klas, *Świadomość społeczeństwa polskiego w kontekście zmian systemowych: 1989–2014*, [in:] T. Astramowicz-Leyk, W. Tomaszewski (eds.), *Polska – 25 lat po wyborach czerwcowych. Konsekwencje dla sytuacji wewnętrznej i pozycji międzynarodowej*, Wydawnictwo INP UWM, Olsztyn 2014, p. 24–40.

before its individualism, social justice (including distribution) was raised. The reality was explained by the experience of living in the past governance (the development of specific institutional arrangements, the tradition of resolving questions of conflict and "learned" helplessness and claiming attitudes)[3]. The dichotomy of aspirations, attitudes, values is characteristics in disclosing the development trends. The visions that promote national values along with global, oriented to foreign designs, as well as institutions, standards, policy are included therein. In the exercise of political power, authoritarian options collided with challenges of democracy (including participatory democracy). This dichotomy is revealed with great force in the socio-economic life; on the one hand, the challenge has become the actualization of a liberal economy, on the other - the desire to maintain social policy. The liberal economic model reveals its tendency to unify a range of both global and regional formed corporations (minimizes market by investing, simultaneously in several countries, obtained the benefits of a diversified tax rate and lending in the individual countries); the uncontrolled inflow of capital by national borders occues[4]. At the same time, the formation of a global civil society is observed[5]. People connect across borders. This reality is often not accepted. The growth of excessive bureaucracy, increased distance between the rulers and the ruled are noted. According to opinion polls, approx. 30% of the population reveals the assessment of their risk of poverty, social exclusion; negative opinions are expressed on the national labour market.

Significant hopes to change the quality of life of cultural civilization are associated with the development of local government, which is seen as the opposite pole of the development of modern civilization[6]. The belief that the modern state functioning in reality of occurring processes of unification and diversification of cultural life is expressed. In the process of diversification, the important role is played by a local govermnent.

Since the 1990s of the 20th century, a lot of space is devoted to the problem of recognition of a local government. It is worth the mention here the resumed for the fifth time (since 1998) book *Samorządność w Polsce. Istota, formy, zadania*[7]. In its first chapter, *Local government as an expression of civic democracy* the following issues are presented: I Origin and essence of a local government, II Forms of a social local government, III Theories of a social government, IV Restoration of a local government in Poland (after 1989). This study, referring to the heritage of the past, reminds the cells of the state society fall, formation of civil society, decentralization and a local government, forms of a local, economy and professional government, theories: naturalistic of a local

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3 M. Ziółkowski, *Polacy wobec ładu postmodernistycznego. Społeczeństwo polskie i jego instytucje w 1992 r.*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1993, p. 12.

4 A. B. Ksiel-Łowczyc, *Współczesna gospodarka światowa*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 1994.

5 A. Chodubski, *Społeczeństwo obywatelskie i jego powołanie*, [in:] A. Chodubski, L. Kacprzak, H. Pająk (eds.), *Instytucje państwa a społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Wydawnictwo PWSZ, Piła 2009, p. 165–175.

6 A. Chodubski, *Idea i praktyka polskiego samorządu na tle wartości i wyzwań globalnych*, [in:] B. Nawrot, J. Pokładecki (eds.), *Wieloaspektowość samorządności gminnej w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe INPiD UAM, Poznań 2011, p. 7–15.

7 S. Wykrętowicz, *Samorząd w Polsce. Istota, formy, zadania*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej, Poznań 2012.

government, state and political, and characterized cells of functioning of a local and professional government in Poland after 1989.

A local governance is understood as a form of satisfaction of collective needs identified by the community itself or engendered by it. In terms of formal and legal, it is the entity, to which the state entrusts the performance of specific tasks of public administration. This is the entity of decentralization of power. The most common form is the spatial arrangement of a local government. However, a large loading capacity of cultural and civilization involves professional associations (e.g. attorney, medical, labour, academic, student).

Today, in the reality manifesting itself with powerfully unifying cultural life in Poland, the question arises - what is the place of a local government in it? Referring to the various defining in the European space, it is indicated that this is the administrative unit of municipality, self-management, a form of local government, the powers of municipalities[8]. A local government is a modern political institution and the entity holding the power, which is determined by law (in subsidiary cases) in relation to the state power. A local government in the institutional dimension is related to the ratio of membership, organizational formalization, assets area, finances.

A local government includes all citizens living in a unit of territorial and administrative division. It is also the right and the ability of local communities to manage their own issues. It is an institution established for the design and realization of civic awareness. The belief resulting from the heritage of the future reveals that the idea of a local governance in the historical served to build a sense of cohesion policy, and especially the state. It connected people as citizens to local integration.

A local governance is seen as a local community distinguished by their institutionalization, oriented towards the actualization of self-help and solidarity. It is a cultural phenomenon emerging from the bottom up. The characters constituting these communities are: 1. clearly defined administrative borders of space; distinctive with specificity of geographical and natural conditions, 2. population according to tradition connected from generation to generation to this space, including to taking the traditional forms of employment in it. Today, in fact, a large spatial mobility in local areas, immigrants settle in large measure, due to, inter alia, employment opportunities, gain residence, 3. the existing institutions of social infrastructure (school facilities, education, health, leisure and recreation), 4. church and religious institutions, and national and ethnic minorities, 5. units of a clear commitment to social activities (pastors, teachers, doctors, people of culture and art)[9].

In traditional communities, local cultural life important cells are embedded in the heritage of the past (the values passed down from generation to generation). Moral rules often prevail over the law. The relations „ours" - „strangers" are clear. "Ours" have priority in cultural life. An important role is played by religion, which governs cultural life and customs (weddings, funeral). Under the conditions of the formation of post-modern

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[8] S. Wójcik, *Samorząd i państwo. Przyszłość i odpowiedzialność*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2013, p. 17.

[9] A. Chodubski, *Lokalizm pod ciśnieniem unifikacji świata*, „Pieniądze i Więź. Kwartalnik Naukowy", No. 1, 2002, p. 18–29.

civilization, localism, however, continuously culturally weakens, which is associated especially with the strengthening of urban life, including the computerization of living culture and civilization. Currently, it is observed that a local government promotes the cohesion of the state; is an expression of the democratization of cultural life, the construction of citizenship, as it is articulated by the institution of local needs. In practice, their cultural actualization is determined by decision-making institutions of the state, including obtaining of funds. This reality also follows the tradition of the political system of the state. Monarchs granted privileges for the different entities of cultural life, in order to carry out certain tasks called a local government. In the 19th century, in the case of shaping the relations of capitalist, governments were entrusted various tasks to perform in a local administration. Then, it was assigned the role of defence against aggressive capitalism. In the 19th century, it became a cell in the political system and socio-economic development. In the international period, various forms of development of a local government revealed in Poland. Important legal solutions were developed[10]. After World War II, it operated in various forms of superficiality, including workers' government, local residents' government. Cultural life was subordinated to centralized management.

A new reality in the development of a local government reveals itself in the period of political transformation, begun in the 90's. of the 20th century. One of the first legal documents, initiating public administration reform was the act on a local government at the municipal level of 8 March 1990. According to it, the system of a single administration was liquidated. On 27 March 1990, there were elections to municipal councils. This caesura is considered the revival of a local government in the Republic of Poland[11]. This act coming from the doctrinal essence of civil society established that the highest authority in the municipality is the generally of its residents, i.e. a local community, which exercises power directly through elections and referendum or through selected in secret ballot and universal power of the municipality, which is the body forming and controlling the municipality. On the other hand, the executive body of the municipality is the board. In 2002, there was a change of the executive body, introducing the rule of direct election of vogt, mayor and city president. The legal regulations defined a local government as a community formed by the residents of villages, cities, municipalities, counties, regions and an organizational form of a local government established by the law and the will of the voters to exercise public administration in a decentralized way under the supervision of the state.

In the functioning of a local community, its basic cells are formed by the residents of the territorial community. They participate in exercising public authority; the orientation to meet the collective needs of the local community reveal. The residents of the community have a legal personality and perform public tasks on its own behalf and on their own responsibility. They subject to supervision according to the criteria of legality exercised by the competent authorities. Autonomy of local government units is protected

[10] S. Wójcik, *Samorząd terytorialny w Polsce w XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 1999.

[11] S. Wójcik, *Naród, samorząd terytorialny, demokracja w III Rzeczypospolitej*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 2007.

by the courts. Own revenue of municipalities is supplemented with grants. The residents of municipalities take decisions in a popular vote by election or referendum or through the municipal bodies, local government units are to appoint associations to promote the idea of a local management and defence of common interests.

It is noted that the effectiveness of a local government depends not only on the regulatory frames, but on the assumptions and methods of implementation of undertaken challenges and behaviours. The following is significant in this regard: 1) empowerment of psycho--social, political, territorial property of a municipality, 2) enhancing social relationships, 3) development of awareness of the common good and interest, 4) creating and verifying local authorities, 5) development of local initiatives[12].

In addition to a local government, there are approx. 20 types of professional local governments in Poland. Their system involves meetings, unions, frames, disciplinary courts, collegial courts; as economic local governments on the development of enterprise, trade, crafts, improvement of business environment. A local governance is seen also as an important factor of socialization of individual and social groups.

An important task of a local government after 1990 was aimed at the empowerment of a civil society. Division of power was assumed between rulers and a society. They were associated with the decentralization of power. The government institutions were to become real entities of a local government. They had to give expression to democratization of culture and civilization. Thus, the power of a local government was expressed in close proximity to a citizen. It was pointed out at the same time to build a new public awareness on the functioning of the public consciousness of the belief that a local government is the power generated by each member.

In the Polish practice of social and political foundation of a local government moves away from a cultural practice. Representatives activities, i.e. of councillors, is critically assessed by public opinion. It is noted that the focus usually on resolving particular private issues. Their public activity is seen as a cultural uselessness in a local space. The residents of a local community reveal a lack of interest in the public good, which is expressed, inter alia, in the field of election participation. The officials of a local government prevail bureaucratic tasks before implementation of local initiatives. The ideas of citizenship, building democratic order is read as space for superficiality, declarations, which does not oblige to implement the ideas of the development of culture and civilization.

Based on the political rules, a government is established to carry out the decisions taken by its members. Either directly or with the participation of members, they should resolve the challenges. The the Polish cultural practice this assumption is not respected. In the society awareness, a government functions as a power *imposed, a foreign entity* managing, consisting often of inept officials, who are seen as arrogant politicians. Their attitudes and behaviour makes a *government* a foreign policy tool. It is noted here that they are acting as councillors, the people who are in the sphere of public life by mistake, e.g. in the situation

[12] R. Kmieciak, *Samorząd gospodarczy w Polsce. Rozważania na temat modelu ustrojowego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe INPiD UAM, Poznań 2004; S. Wykrętowicz, *Funkcjonowanie samorządu gospodarczego w wybranych krajach europejskich*, Opinie i Ekspertyzy, OE-200, Kancelaria Senatu, Warszawa 2013.

of people in the locality reluctant to participate in political life, to perform representative tasks. This results in a depreciation among local communities. The changed situation is not easy, as it reveals a large-scale socio-political passivity of local communities and their lack of interest in public affairs. The educational entities deal with the problems without much interest. Higher education in the field of a local government is not carried out in a satisfactory degree, and therefore qualified local government officials are not prepared. Priority in the sphere of local government employment is gained by people of different policy options and their family members before units prepared educationally to meet the challenges of a local government.

Since 1990, law weaknesses, including in relations of municipalities - counties - regions, have been observed in the functioning of a local government in Poland. They are mainly the nature of competence (for what issues they are responsible, what entities of a local reality?). Financial issues are in a complex space. Partisanship in the system of a local government is visible with a large power. Parties exercising state power trying to subordinate a lower party of a cultural reality, i.e. seek to subordinate local governments to a party life, which is expressed with great power across the country. In this situation, the philosophy of the system of a local government called to realize the diversification of cultural civilization becomes unclear. Councillors are dependent not on the voters (society), but on groups and leaders of the party. This results in the sphere of decisions, resolutions both with a range of generally political, and particular. At the same time, one can see a picture that private interests of politicians gaining precedence over completion of a long-term strategy in the socio-political space, concerning, e.g. a sphere of social infrastructure. In this regard, displacement of local interests is observed by the network, corporate order, e.g. in the distribution and operation of retail outlets. Small business units are being replaced by international corporations, commercial reality. This state is politically approved by local government units within political correctness.

In the exercise of a local government in Poland, a number of inconsistencies between its tasks and political practice disclosing in the political position of mayors, presidents, are observed. A large discrepancy in the realization of imperious central and local policy is often seen. Critically assessment concerns a tenure of local governments - politicians, who are subjects of executive power in a local space. These authorities make politicization of a local government. They act as connectors between the central government, usually political, and localism. This reality is embedded in the legislation.

Within the governance generated by the European Union, an important place is determined to strengthen a local government, especially the territorial, establishment of which is in the implementation of regional policy. Local and regional governments are major beneficiaries, to which the financial assistance of the European Union is granted.

The functioning of a local government in Poland, financial-economic and legal issues are specific. On the one hand, it is noted that it should be based on own properties, and clearly defined distinction budget; on the other, however, state assistance is expected within the EU solutions. It is associated with tasks imposed by the state institutions, usually carried out by a local government. A wide expanse of tasks that are transferred from a government to the reality of a local government is observed in this regard. In addition,

the assigned and carried out tasks are involved with not always clear legal solutions. Their implementation is mainly due to acquisition of funds. Inconsistency in the adequacy of the used funds is often observed. Local governments try to obtain permission for the widest possible actualization of the local needs for the obtained funds to carry out specific tasks. Arrangements of local governments with factors of the state authorities are situated in the space of a strong bureaucracy, which in practice turns out to be a cultural obstacle in the development of a local government. This causes even its dysfunctions. In this space, the growth of distrust in the institutions of a local government reveals.

It is noted that vogts, mayors, presidents are *dreamers,* who do not disclose proper realism in addressing the challenges to implementation. In this situation, there are often disputes between the councils, which reveal the strategies, action plans embedded in the realities of the possibility of implementing the data of the territorial administrative division. Furthermore, in the fact that disputes usually gain acceptance of the incumbent government projects rather than advice, followed by deficit of engagement of local communities in shaping the image of public life.

Recognizing the so-called. strengths and weaknesses of local governments in Poland, they will notice that they are too strongly tied to the models of the past, especially the model of functioning in the Republic of Poland, and little attention is paid to them in the new challenges of cultural civilization, which should be realized in the 21st century[13]. In this situation, the crucial issue is that - whether self government is a political or civil community? In the past, it was a typical institution of political opposition to the state and its organs. Within the meaning of liberalism, it is also a political community, including remaining under the influence of a party life. It works for the realization of the common good of the state. Citizenship is now understood as a community of society, not a community of a civil state. It means a group of independent individual citizens, operating in a decentralized spatial arrangement.

State and local government entities are the correlation of culture and civilization life. The harmonization between them is made based on the findings of the law. Local governments may have different ranges of competence, although they must be legally defined in the political system of the state. During the last 25 years of political transformation in Poland, this is not unambiguous solution, should the Polish state be a strong political entity or minimized? It is assumed that the modernization processes of the state require a strong state institution[14]. In political practice, numerous weak cells of functioning political institutions, including central and local government, parliament, government courts are observed. It is even visible that they are in crisis in cultural and civilization life. It indicates here on their excessive dependence on political parties, models transferred uncritically from the states os the so-called high level of economic development, and is also a critical overview of culture and ethics of civil servants in a central and a local government.

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[13] H. Izdebski, *Polski model samorządu terytorialnego a wyzwania XXI wieku*, [in:] A. Lutrzykowski (ed.), *Samorząd terytorialny – ale jaki?*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2009, p. 27.

[14] A. Chodubski, *Systemowe ramy administracji rządowej i samorządowej*, [in:] D. Plecka (ed.), *Współczesne wyzwania administracji rządowej i samorządowej*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2013, p. 44–56.

Contemporary face of a local government reveals incompatibility of the operation with its tasks, inter alia, in the sphere of civil education of a local community, in actualization of the principles of social justice. Local governments try to move away from the idea of cultural paternalism in favour of a modern entity, generating signs of globalization in the area of scientific and technical progress, legal regulation, individualism if social life. The scope of freedom of an individual is determined by the policy of decentralization of the state, and is supported by the EU's subsidiary agreements. The centralist and bureaucratic order generates the ideas of a local governance, justice, loyalty. Localism and regionalism of the state is manifested with great power[15]. It is indicated that local communities do not have a social experience to establish a local government, they are based on the low level of moral authority-oriented chaotic struggle of interests, in its programs, they focus on the ideas of liberalism, and recentralisation becomes clear[16]. Local communities in their *lost* in a new social and political reality do not reveal the interest in settlement of local authorities on the implementation of the tasks of a local government.

The development of a local government in Poland in the context of the challenges of the future reveals the need for further changes to the political system, public administration and development of local communities, including awareness and citizenship skills. These directions are closely linked and mutually complement politically. It is noted that the specific tasks in this regard rests on the officials of both the government and a local government. Their tasks involve: compliance with the law, creative activities, reliability of execution of appointed, loyalty and kindness to a citizen. In practice, one observes increasing authoritarian behaviour of officials, who commit numerous errors in the investigation and decision-making process[17]. A low sense of responsibility of officials is seen, as well.

The image of a local government in Poland involves characteristic two faces of its perception, i.e. 1. legal, 2. civil (social and political). The first one is a corporation of a public law with compulsory membership and administrative governance. The second is the awareness of attitudes, behaviour relating to a local governance; it discloses the direct and indirect participation.

The development of a local governance, an important function concerns economic issues. As a result, scattered units become organized public and legal collectivity, equipped with administrative power, community established by the law to carry out public tasks in the economic sphere, acquired from the government administration similar to local communities of a local government[18].

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[15] A. Chodubski, *Regionalizm a globalizacja. Polska – Unia Europejska oraz inne zjawiska i procesy regionalne świata*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2007.

[16] J. Regulski, *Samorząd i demokracja lokalna. Osiągnięcia i zagrożenia, dylematy*, Fundacja Rozwoju Demokracji Lokalnej, Warszawa 2002, p. 14.

[17] A. Piekara, *Jakość administracji w Polsce. Zarys współczesnej problematyki*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2010, p. 47.

[18] S. Wykrętowicz, *Funkcjonowanie samorządu gospodarczego w wybranych krajach europejskich, Opinie i Ekspertyzy*, OE-200, Kancelaria Senatu, Warszawa 2013, p. 7.

International activity has become a new phenomenon in the functioning of a local government in Poland since 1990[19]. A local government administration system obtained the ability to run its own *foreign contacts policy* as an instrument of the social and economic development. The task is foreseen to be carried out under the supervision and with the approval of the state bodies based on the legislation and in line with nationwide foreign policy trends. An important factor in determining international cooperation is the geopolitical factor.

A local government in Poland, despite perception of its so-called weak cells, is recognized by the public as a kind of *panacea* for all ailments of social and political life. It is confirmed by political pragmatism, focused on building civil society, the idea of which is widely accepted[20].

In the general summary, it should be stated that: 1. A local government is as a decentralising reality, opposite of the globalisation processes, 2. In the realisation of a local government, an important role is played by the political and construction of citizenship processes, 3. In shaping the face of a local government in Poland, a force of tradition and post-modernisation value collide (including negating heritage of the past, the authority of the people of a cultural life), 4. The process of political and economic transition reveal trends to getting acquainted with foreign designs (Anglo-Saxon) of a cultural life; in this situation, localism becomes a particular value, 5. The level of development of a local government is a measure of the socio-political life, including its democracy.

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[19] B. Słobodzian, *Formy aktywności międzynarodowej społeczności lokalnych*, [in:] B. Nawrot, J. Pokładecki (eds.), *Polski samorząd terytorialny w procesie integracji z Unią Europejską*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe INPiD UAM, Poznań 2003, p. 159–165.

[20] B. Słobodzian, *Współczesny system samorządu terytorialnego w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2005, p. 170–173; A. Chodubski, *Granice demokracji: przeszłość i teraźniejszość*, [in:] M. Marczewska-Rytko, S. Michałowski (eds.), *Demokracja bezpośrednia w samorządzie terytorialnym*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2012, p. 28.

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