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CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC SPHERE – INFORMATION AS A IUS PUBLICUM FACTOR OF THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY

Abstract:

A significant social and the spatial difference is expressed within the most current perspective of contacts occurring in the global public sphere, where public sphere is defined with the usage of Jürgen Habermas terms of real influence and involvement. Habermas in correspondence with Hannah Arendt, sees the emergence of mass society, often described as society of anonymous consumers, as the contemporary shape of public sphere, which cannot be described without a proper understanding of the network reality - since both have been integrated together through new technological conditions. The difference between the old, conventional defining of the public sphere and the new approach lies in the fact that the current public space (participatory, discursive), due to the modernization processes (computerization, Internet, etc.), has transforming into the global and mass, interoperable and implemented sphere in real time (real time exchange). These phenomenon reflects interconnected,

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multidimensional, multifactorial scheme of extremely complex relations based on multidependency in the modern society. Democratization, globalization, informatization, transnational integration, mediatization and tabloidisation, is a crucial novelty is the multi-dimension, multi-subjectivity and multi-banding in decision-making processes in the public sphere. The classically understood decision-making is replaced often by co-decision processes. The processes of democratic discourse could no longer be defined as the gap between the rulers and the ruled. If the distance was too big, one have to find an answer to the question whether the regime meets democratic criteria or not. The shift to the model in which the state actively shares information can be described as the evolution from the formula when disclosure of information was made only at direct request and only within narrow legal limits (access request) to the formula of broadly-defined information activity (publication), designed to bring citizens closer to the public sphere. They provide citizens with instruments for quickly and unlimited contact with the authorities. Therefore they influence on the quality of these contacts and, by engaging citizens to participate in the co-creation of the final scenario of civilization, on increasing the number of actors in the network game.

Key words: Decision-makers, participation, democracy, influence, public sphere, information, citizens' involvement.

Technologization of socio-political life shaped in the era of information, expanded further in the network space on the basis of digital instruments has left civilizational impact on the forms of information flows. The most current perspective of contacts occurring in the global public sphere reflects interconnected, multidimensional, multifactorial scheme of extremely complex relations based on multidependency. Actors incorporated within the network space have a similar influence on the final civilization scenario as those portrayed by the public sphere researches in the pre-information era. However, a significant difference is expressed within the social and the spatial range. Jürgen Habermas defined the public sphere in terms of real influence and involvement.

According to the researcher, this sphere was formed by entities intellectually, culturally, politically and finally legally subjectified. In his book: "The structural transformation of the public sphere" Habermas described the three-phase model of the public sphere (*bürgerliche öffentlichkeit*).² This analysis corresponds with the characteristics of the different stages of the political history. The first phase referred to the pre-modern period, while the distance between the authorities (ex a king, an emperor), its immediate surroundings, a privileged class and the rest of society was so significant that it made unable the

² In some translations the public sphere (*bürgerliche öffentlichkeit*) is interpreted as the civic sphere what might be influential for interpretation of Hambermas' concepts.

emergence of a public sphere. The second phase is the golden age of public sphere. This is the time from the beginning of the eighteenth century in Europe, the time of creation of critical discussion sphere of free, educated and equal citizens. This is a moment of praising rationality with boundless trust in the human capabilities. This is a moment of great intellectual achievements and discoveries. Finally it is the time of capitalist era formation, in Marxist terms.³ According to Habermas, capitalism and the public sphere are two interdependent systems. Public sphere is constituted by free, educated, economically and socially enhanced citizens - the capitalists benefiting from advantages of democratic state (such as clubs, lodges, associations, foundations, federations, political parties, unions, etc.), and the freedom of speech (newspapers, magazines, periodicals). "In the political public sphere the issue for keenly interested in politics citizens were topics related to the activities of the state – specific political decisions or the more general question of the optimal form of governance and its principles - while institutional means were mainly press and political parties" (Czyżewski, 2007). The last phase in Habermas concept is the final decline of public sphere as a result of citizens' tearing apart from each other.

³ The first stage of Habermas corresponds to the stage of feudalism in Marx works. Cf. Kołakowski, L. (1988). Główne nurtury marksizmu. London: ZYSK i S-ka Publisher; Konstantinov, F.W. (ed.) (1955). Materiałizm historyczny. Warsaw: Ksiazka i Wiedza Publishing.

Habermas in correspondence with Hannah Arendt, the cause of the public sphere collapse sees in the emergence of mass society (Vide: *Ortega y Gasset*, 1997), often described as society of anonymous consumers. In the phase of dismantling discussion clubs were replaced by the mass media, which instead of becoming a resonance tube, usurped the public sphere, consequently separating it from more and more conformist citizens oriented towards their own comfort.

It should be noted that the above diagnosis occurred in the period of the first edition of "Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit", which took place in 1961. In the preface to the 1990 edition researcher clearly changed and updated his observations. "Diagnosis of linear development of the public: from politically active to privatized, from discussing about culture to culture consuming is oversimplified. (...) With the ambivalent phenomenon of opening the borders between high culture and trivial one and with the creation of a new, no less ambiguous, intimate bond between culture and politics, more complex than just the assimilation of information to entertainment, the rating scales also has changed." (Habermas 1990: 25) Habermas further continues: "this elimination of differences and structures' dismantling that take place in our lifeworld (ger. Lebenswelt) as a result of the globally and electronically produced ubiquity of events and synchronization of what is not simultaneous, certainly has a major implications for the socially determined self-

perceptions. However, the elimination of restrictions goes along with multiplication of undergoing specialization of roles, pluralization of forms of life and the individualization of life projects (...) powerlessness over opaque complexity of the system. (...) I would like to admit that if I set the study about the structural transformation of the public sphere once again today, I would not predict what results it would bring to the theory of democracy" (*Ibidem*: 49-50).

Habermas noted that the model of the new information reality cannot be described using the old definition tools. The world is clearly much more complicated and complex. The extent of interdependencies makes unable to formulate unequivocal judgments by social sciences. The contemporary public sphere cannot be described without a proper understanding of the network reality - since both have been integrated together⁴ through new technological conditions. The difference between the old, conventional defining of the public sphere and the new approach lies in the fact that the current public space (participatory, discursive), due to the modernization processes (computerization, Internet, etc.), has transforming into the global and mass, interoperable and implemented sphere in real time (real time exchange).

⁴ Good understanding of socio-network space cannot be done without consideration of parameters and rules guiding the information, including for example: theory of information by Claude Shannon, concept of information optimum, Moore's law, concept of information growth, concept of steering system by Mazur, numbers theory, chaos theory, network theory, cybernetic theory of autonomous system.

The most momentous consequence of this phenomenon is the fact that a new information standard has a direct impact on every sphere of human activity, redefining previous meanings. This syndrome has also reached traditionally defined power, including a relationship between institutions, agencies and society.

The estimation of the transformations' intensity should include a wide range of determinants, considering at least such criteria as: a change in a volume of information fluctuating in the public sphere and access to technology, a change in the speed and frequency of transfers, a transformation of a distance between the public and the private sphere, a change in the usage of existing technological tools, the shift in the signal from analog to digital, a change in the sharing and collecting of information (open and secret methods), legal changes in access to public information (freedom of information), the re-use of the public sector information, transparency of public activities (open state, open data, open government), legal changes for informatization of public entities as well as for implementing by them public services (e-goverment , e-voting , e-administration), a change in financial resources' allocations for information infrastructure (computerization and digitalization), a change in education, including information literacy, a change in social engagement, and finally the mental change.

Any significant transformation of the above parameters, relevant for social, economic and political relations, is a direct

indicator of changes in the sphere. Abovementioned index even though it is not a complete collection of all relevant factors allows to recognize the field of analysis (including a stage of evolution), considering an extent of the topic and spatial scope for that.

Contemporary power defined in institutional terms, is required to deal with the challenge of functioning in conditions of global networks. Traditional definitions of power (concepts of power in modern theories) emphasize the importance of the dichotomy between the entities commanding and those showing obedience under commands. Jan Baszkiewicz indicated three criteria of submission: physical force, authority and power. The first derives from the physical superiority, and is the easiest to illustrate. The second comes from respect simulating voluntary (but still not unconditional) obedience. The third category combines the features of the previous two (See: Baszkiewicz, 1999).

Recognizing components that constitutes the contemporary power (defined here as ability to influence on and steer real events) does not seem having been so obvious. Grzegorz Rydlewski argues that we have to deal with the erosion of existing for years, fixed patterns. He indicates that current models of power cannot be characterized by institutional approach but only on the basis of the interdisciplinary approach, not any more as element of ideology but as pragmatism of daily encounters (Cf. Dror, 2006). “In the classical model of governance there is clearly defined ruling entity (...). A

feature of contemporary times, however, is that within the processes of governance the increase of a number of non-power relations might be seen as well as imposing strict regulations on the extent and rules of using force by the government in relations with the ruled." (Rydlewski, 2009: 18-19). Power has been incorporated into the information network of civilization "game" and appears here alongside with other historically disadvantaged entities. On this canvas Rydlewska states that "as a result of ongoing democratization, globalization, informatization, transnational integration, mediatization and tabloidisation, as well as in connection with the threat of terrorism, a new model organizing this sphere and functioning of its components is creating. A crucial novelty is the multi-dimension, multi-subjectivity and multi-banding in decision-making processes in the public sphere. (...) The classically understood decision-making is replaced often by co-decision processes. (...) The situation of decision-making in the public sphere is changing dramatically as a result of the information revolution." (Rydlewski, 2011: 51-53) As Jadwiga Staniszskis also indicates: "the state as an entity with legal personality, formed in the seventeenth century in the Treaty of Westphalia, referring to distinct borders and unequivocal center of power and monopoly on lawmaking and full sovereignty, no longer exists" (Staniszskis, 2006: 167-168).

Therefore contemporary civilization model of the public sphere has to be perceived within the structure of the global information

transactions (Cf. Mayo and Steinberg, 2007). Previous still extremely strong connotations cannot make unable comprehensive and holistic analysis of the reality. The cluster of entities provided with the power to influence and shape the social, political and economic order has been revolutionary enlarged and dispersed. David Held described characteristics of globalizing politics' globalization process. According to the theorist, it is not only decisional multidimension. It refers also to reterritorialisation preceded by previous deterritorialization (the abolition of existing borders), together resulting in internationalization, transnationalization and institutionalization (See: Held and al., 1995; Held, 1989, Held, 1995). It is hard not to agree with this statement. For example, according to the Union of International Associations, in 1909 there were 37 government institutions with an international extent, and 176 non-governmental institutions. For comparison in 1996 it was 260 government and 5,472 non-governmental institutions respectively. In the same time, the number of countries had more than doubled and the number of intergovernmental/international treaties creating transnational or international agencies had increased from 623 to 2,303 (Cf. Lindblom, 2005; Puchala, Laatikainen and Coate, 2006, Symonides, 2006).⁵

⁵ Only within the United Nations there are many of so called organizations, and specialized agencies including: UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, UNEP, WFP, UNFPA, ITU, WMO, UPU, ILO, ICAO, IBRD, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, IMCO, WTO (GATT), IFC, IAEA, IDA, UNIDO. Cf. Lindblom, K.A. (2005). Non-governmental organizations in international law. New York:

Mostly static political context has been accelerated. However, the true dynamic of events can be seen only from the perspective of the technological revolution (See: Castells, 2009; Castells 2011). The amount of information each year has grown exponentially in the mathematical operation terms. This means that the whole volume of data transferred over the entire decade of the eighties, in the mid-nineties was already transmitted only during one-year period. In reference to shift into a digital signal (roughly after 2002) the abovementioned proportions have grown even more.

Information packages circulate in the socio-public network becoming a substrate of subsequent relational systems. Transferring bundles of data (action) stimulates the formation of the feedback (reaction) forming a sequential structure of information relations. The relational system shows characteristics of adjusting and sustainable process.

Computerization and widespread of communication tools enabled to overcome historic division that separated a citizen from the state. Information between these two spheres began to circulate quickly and interconnectively. Traditionally reserved attitude of the state sector had to surrender under the load of demands for

Cambridge University Press; Puchala D., Laatikainen K., Coate R. (2006). United Nations Politics: International Organization in Divided World. Prentice Hall; Roberts, A., Kingsbury, B. (ed.) (1993). United Nations, Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Symonides, J. (ed.) (2006). Organizacja Narodów Zjednoczonych. Bilans i perspektywy. Warsaw: Scholar Scientific Publisher.

transparency. It should be noted that some governments are still trying to defend themselves against a new model of policy. This type of behavior can be described as historical approach. In times of multidimensional, global information contacts any hidden action sooner or later will be revealed.

Dag Wiese Schartum⁶ claims that over few recent decades there has been a total reconstruction of informational relations in the public sphere. Considering the causes he concludes as follows: "An antagonistic relationship between government and citizens fits well with the mood of the 1950s and 1960s, when this legislation was prepared, and when legislation, to a large extent, came into existence to protect individuals from an ever stronger government. Forty years on, other aspects of government receive much more attention. Today, government is regarded more as being at the service of citizens. Citizens are not merely the subjects of power, but increasingly playing the role of customer and consumer of government services" (In: Aichholzer and Burkert (ed.), 2004: 76). The most important aspect of this evolution is that it refers not only to the technological aspect, but mainly the mental. The transformation involved the citizens themselves, who in relatively short time reached economic and intellectual level that prepared them to this role. The information

⁶ Dag Wiese Schartum is a professor at University of Oslo, the Dean of Section for Information Technology and Administrative Systems and coauthor of governmental projects of the public sphere informatization in Norway.

revolution has accelerated energy that has enabled to boost their self-esteem and made them provided with upgraded technological instruments of direct participation. Transformations of social consciousness have led to the situation when today we face with a new model of an individual – the information citizen who started to express his or her needs, expectations and positions not only by voting in general elections, that take place rarely and which is fairly abstract act, but above all every day in new information channels. Socio-political system has come a long way from representative democracy to information democracy. Competitive attitude was changed into the participatory one.

The relation citizen - government is the *clou* of a democratic state model. The quality of these relations determines the form of democracy and the condition of state itself. Democracy *ex definitio* leaves plenty of space for alternating and adjustment processes, giving citizens a lot of freedom to fill in its content with everyday relationships. Hans -Dieter Klingeman and Dieter Fuchs integrated traditionally defined democracy (the concept of representative democracy) with a relational context, underlying the distance between the government and the citizen. According to the researchers, in order to maintain normal democratic processes, it is important that this distance cannot annihilate public discourse, as emanation of democracy. "Each, even democratic government, automatically creates a distance between the rulers and the ruled, heading toward

the point where the distance is so big that it makes impossible to continue the processes of democratic discourse. In each cases the political processes not only should, but have to find an answer to the question whether they meet democratic criteria or not" (Kilngemen and Fuchs, 1995: 2).

A starting point for developing the concept of shift is the presumption that the public sphere should be the collective interest of all. Such a concept of utilitarian coexistence eliminates destructive competition, and promotes healthy competition for the common good. The shift to the model in which the state actively shares information can be described as the evolution from the formula when disclosure of information was made only at direct request and only within narrow legal limits (access request) to the formula of broadly-defined information activity (publication), designed to bring citizens closer to the public sphere. This process referred to both aspects – the proactive approach of enlightening citizens, as well as the control, while citizens became supervisors of the power.

The state sector recognized a positive correlation between the participation of citizens and general results achieved by the state, especially in the economic domain. Increased individuals' activity means higher GDP, which in consequences results in better opinion about the effectiveness of government. Engaging citizens in decision-making pays off everyone. The deeper and better incorporation of civic society determinants, the better rates of development of the

state, with remark that contemporary civil society is information society in that same time (See: Goban-Klas, 1999; Lubacz, 1999; Truszkowska-Wojtkowiak and Wojtkowiak, 2008; Zacher, 1999).

Therefore creating an enterprising citizen is not possible without access to the appropriate information resources. In other words, uninformed citizen will not contribute to enhance competitiveness and innovation of the state. The state has to respond effectively to information needs of citizens, who cannot feel uncomfortable in this regard. The state has to be able to assess the public needs in this respect (See: Beal, 1979). The point is among others: to raise the level of information literacy, to develop education (informational minimum), to eliminate technological and information exclusion, etc. In order to the state benefits to the maximum from opportunities and strengths of particular society, there has to exist the congruence, that is the greatest harmony between the deployed and shared tools (infrastructure), information resources and the needs of citizens. Any shortage can result in ineffective management of social potential. The more effectively government responds to the needs of the citizens, the more serious support it receives in return (feedback). "Congruence at the level of the political process exists only when the actors (parties, governments, politicians), who are creators of processes, are able to satisfy demands of citizens for democratic accountability" (Fuchs and Klingeman, 1995: 2).

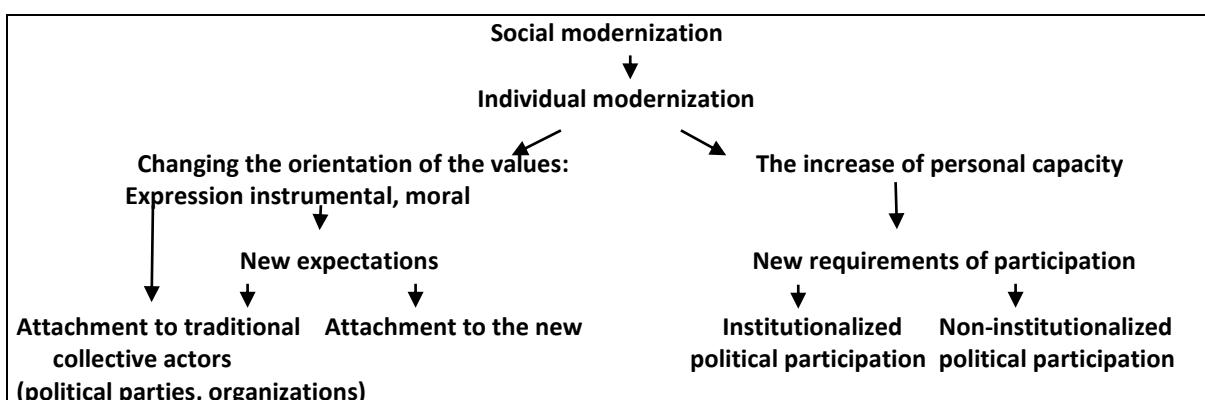
What is important is that in democratic regimes there is tendency to stigmatize and consequently remove dysfunctional elements from the system. Democracy does not accept a state of imbalance, automatically correcting not working modules. Therefore the inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process was not a gesture of goodwill of political power but a natural process of adaptation to the new conditions for democracy of information. "At the system level the congruence which is compliance, and in fact this lack of compliance between citizens and the state is higher when the state is no longer able to meet needs of citizens. Such turbulences lead to the crisis, in this case the crisis of representative democracy, which is not able to make the adjustment of existing institutional mechanisms" (*Ibidem*: 4).

In this sense, in reference to the concepts of shift, what can be emphasized is the importance of the process of socio-technological modernization, which embraced societal modernization as well as individual modernization. Development of various forms of institutionalized and non-institutionalized political participation was seen, being a result of new needs and requires of participation.

As previously mentioned, a real close-up of the civic and the public sector would not have been possible without tools of modern technology. Paradoxically, this close-up, along with all the consequences it causes, could not have been happened without activity of the state sector in reference to shaping the modernization

processes. Governments of various developed countries significantly affected the development of information infrastructure. New technologies were initially financed only within state projects (e.g. research programs). It should be noted that since the early nineties, process of investing huge public funds into the building and development of information infrastructure. Drive to technologization of relations' structure in the public sphere was officially introduced into all strategic policy documents. Development of countries and regions has begun to be perceived as depending on a degree of technological advance. Competition in the implementation of information technology in order to gain a political and economic advantage included major players of the world. The ability to use the potential deriving from electronic communication has become a new determining factor, treated in terms of *raison d'etat* (See: Burton, 2005).

Fig. 1. Social modernization and participation



Source: own schema on the basis of Fuchs D., Klingeman H.D. (1995), *Citizens and the state: A changing relationship?* (In:). Klingeman, H. D., Fuchs, D. (ed.), *Citizens and the state*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 10.

For example, the United States launched a program to build a national information superhighway system, introduced by High Performance Computing and Communication Act in 1991, that provided also funds for dedicated infrastructure (National Information Infrastructure - NII).⁷ The law was created by then Senator Al Gore, supported by a group of researchers (including the authors of the report – “Toward a National Research Network”) with Professor UCLA - Leonard Kleinrock, one of the creators of the ARPANET network – the ancestor of the Internet (See: Rothert, 2005). According to the assumptions, through achieving the objectives set out in the Act, there would be rapid growth of the ICT market, mass spread of telecommunication tools, switching to electronic information system, and finally the formation of new civilization. Obviously, the Act provided necessary financial resources for funding program. To illustrate ambitious extent of the project it is worth to quote the exact financial resources until 1996 that triggered civilization revolution. Agencies subordinated to the US President were involved into the financing of the project, being imposed with following obligations in

⁷ The creators of the Act assumed that its entry into force will help to maintain the U.S. leadership in the area of ICT, including: (a) an increase in the number of research and development sphere, (b) the development of technology and Internet infrastructure, (c) the stimulation of research on the development of technology, (d) the distribution of tools and applications, (e) the acceleration of the work on the systems; (f) the raise of the challenges; (g) the investment in education; (h) the greater collaboration between government, industry, laboratories and universities; (l) the improvement of inter-institutional planning and coordination; (j) the growth of construction on the network, (k) the implementation of open standards. See: Sec. 3 The High-Performance Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-194).

this regard: Department of Commerce - had to allocate 25,000,000 USD for the National Institute of Standards and Technology till 1996 and 17,500,000 USD for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Education - had resources in the amount of 9,500,000 USD, Department of Energy - \$ 667,000,000, Environmental Protection Agency - 24,000,000 USD, National Aeronautics and Space Administration - 609,000,000 USD, National Science Foundation) - 1,547,000,000 USD (*Sec. 3 The High-Performance Computing Act of 1991* (Public Law 102-194)).

In total, this constituted an enormous amount of over 2.905 billion USD of U.S. public funds. It should be pointed out that, according to the intentions of the authors of the Act, the basic infrastructure built under public funds was supposed to provide only a basis for further development of information services and infrastructure. The function of the NII was *de facto* an injection with capital U.S. ICT business sphere - which in fact turned out to be a success. It is estimated that, jointly with private funds, the value of investment in this sector exceeded more than 100 billion USD by the year 2000. It could be amount of resources that enables to finance the civilization revolution.

The U.S. National Information Infrastructure project was the impetus for other parts of the world. In Europe, already in the Maastricht Treaty, a legal framework for development of the Common Information Area was provided. Article 3 (n) and 29 (b, c, d) set the

emergence of Trans-European Networks composed of Trans-European Transportation, Energy and Telecommunication Networks. Common Information Area included information sphere, hardware and software spheres for processing information, sphere of telecommunication systems and applications, and the users themselves (well-prepared for living in information reality) (Dai, 2000: 26).

The European Commission, having a legitimate mandate for the implementation of the program, already in 1993 published Delors Report (*Delors White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment*), which highlighted the importance of the economic potential of ICT instruments. Roadmap for informational Europe, however, was set only with Bangemann Report (Europe and the Global Information Society) presented at Corfu in June 1994 and the Master Plan of the European Commission (The Action Plan: Europe 's Way to the Information Society).

The outcome of above activities was a strategic European action plan called eEurope, aiming at transformation of the Europeans into the modern information society (See: Goodwin and Spittle, 2002). The basic assumption referred to introducing every citizen to online digital era, increasing level of innovation of the continent and ensuring social inclusiveness of the entire process (Dai, 2000: 25). The primary goal was to increase rates of development of European economy based on ICT.

Here, also, the idea of financing the project was based on the principle of stimulation and recapitalization of the market. "The European Commission presented similar to the U.S. approach, meaning creating of common information space, mainly based on private funds, stimulated by domestic and the EU support, which were supposed to work encouragingly. Resources planned for the whole investment period amounted 5 billion euro" (*Ibidem*: 28).

Another plan for development of the European Union, set out by the European Council in 2000, known as the Lisbon Strategy, predicted that Europe would become the most dynamic and competitive area in the world. Although the implementation of these optimistic assumptions have exceeded the capabilities of the continent, one cannot ignore the fact that its planned achievement was also based on the use of factors such as innovation, research and development, modernization and digitalization up to maximum. Resources for only research and development (R & D) were supposed to increase to 3 % of GDP in all EU zone.

It shall be mentioned that in the period of 2002 - 2005 the next stage of creating a European information society called eEurope 2005 was carried out, focusing on the use of broadband technologies. As stated in official documents "the development of broadband infrastructure and services is closely related"(eEurope Action Plan). Under the eEurope 2005 project, the continent was supposed to overcome the implementation of a comprehensive system of

electronic public services, including such initiatives as: e-government, e-learning, e-health, and e-business. Continuation of the program after 2005 was iEurope project implemented in 2005-2009. Currently, since 2010, the implemented and applicable initiative is called Digital Europe, known widely as the European Digital Agenda. Future priorities were also set in the new agenda for EU – Europe 2020. The document emphasizes that growth strategy of Europe will be based on smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive growth.

It should be emphasized that public projects such as the National Information Infrastructure, eEurope, and many others implemented at regional, national and international levels in many parts of the world (including Poland) was a pillar of civilization progress and directly contributed to the spread of the Internet as well as to formation of global socio-economic network conditions, with all its consequences. Information factors have been strengthened to the extent that made them become a key component for forming civilizational order. For proper understanding of the social, political and economic phenomena it became necessary to know the rules that rule the information itself.

The process of digitalization of the relationship between citizens and government occurred generally in public sphere. One of the most important attributes was a set of tools commonly equated with the concept of e-government with the subcategory of e-administration. In practice, the process of implementation of e-

government in Europe began with Bangemann's report (Europe and the Global Information Society. Recommendations to the European Council, 1994). Since that time, the implementation of e-government has become an integral part of all major policies and strategies in Europe.

In Poland, the official start of activities in this area took place in 2000 through the publication of the document by the Research Committee of Poland called: "Global Information Society in the context of Poland's accession to the European Union", later included in the agenda of then the Ministry of Communications. In the same year, the Parliament passed a resolution on building the information society.

With the implementation of e-government's tools, the role of the state sector has shifted from the position of animator of electronic communication development to the position of its controller. The challenge is no longer to provide an electronic signal transmission to the citizens' level but to prepare a wide range of electronic services that they could benefit from. E-government is widely understood set of all state activities, implemented based on ICT instruments. E-government is focused on public services prepared for personal use of individuals as well as for business purposes. It is enough to mention, that giving example, the e-government includes among others: access to public information, e-procurement, e-court (for example, land and

mortgage e-register), e-taxes, or e-consultations (Dimitrova and Chen, 2006; Kampen, Snijkers and Bouckaert, 2005).

The primary aim of the e-government is an improvement of state structures' efficiency through the use of on-line services. The nature of the office-citizen contact in the e-government model, depending on the type of case can be purely informational, transactional, or mixed.

Among the most important benefits of e-government there are indicated such facilitations, as acceleration of the information exchange, simplification of procedures, access to data resources and their integration, coordination activities between public entities, increase in the functionality of offered services, increase in the transparency of procedures , elimination of errors , availability 24/7, time- and cost-saving.

Electronic instruments have become more common for the citizens-state relations (See: Seifert, 2009). American research within *the Pew Internet & American Life Project* in 2004 showed that even then Internet was the second most used tool for communication. In the same year, more than one third of U.S. citizens used federal websites. The analysis of the use of e-government instruments in state of Georgia carried out by John C. Thomas and Gregory Streib (2003) showed that predominantly citizens use this mean of communication with the authorities in order to obtain information (64 %). Subsequently, they indicated other reasons, such as: obtaining

detailed contacts (47%), sending inquiries (36%), pledging the complaint (30 %) and expressing an opinion (14 %).

With the growing number of people with access to modern means of communication responsibilities of government's agencies in relation to electronic public services become more serious and more specified (See: Mider, 2008). Expectations have also been rising. Architecture of e-governments' systems has to not only take into consideration the instrumental administrative services and support but also anticipates a model of the democratic system's evolution. New channels of communication have a direct impact on the form of the democratic socio-political processes (Cf. Adamowski, 2004; Porębski, 2004, Wnuk-Lipiński, 2004).

William Ross Ashby, one of the pioneers of the cybernetics, emphasized that what connects all living species in the world is the drive for survival. Nevertheless it is possible only for those which have developed the ability to adapt to the environment, what then allows them to regulate it. Anthony Giddens described it as "the structure of domination" (Cf. Giddens, 1990; Giddens 1995, Brocklehurst, 2001). Ashby's idea can be applied to the public sector. If public administration loses ability to process the necessary amount of information, consequently it loses also the ability to adapt and will not be able to regulate the environment simultaneously (Cf. Ashby, 1963). As a result of the information revolution government found itself in an ambiguous situation. The multiplication of factors, both subjective and

objective, existing in public sphere deepens the complexity of the structure and implies greater chaos by itself. An information tool, which undoubtedly e-government is, contributes to intensify this tendency. At the same time e-government is designed and implemented in order to improve the functioning of this sphere and its organizing. It is a paradox that inherently accompanies this phenomenon. Power, in the electronic relation, loses its attribute of primacy, superior's value, and becomes a virtual but also an equal partner. Blur occurs in the place where earlier clearly visible, institutional hierarchy existed. The citizen does not feel the importance of the act of communication with the authorities. Another, already abstractly considered agencies have to jointly provide him or her the best possible service. What is necessary is greater flexibility, coordination and interoperability. The atmosphere of mystery, the empire of buildings plays no role. In this sense, a citizen somehow supports himself/herself. The vertical and horizontal spaces overlap. We are dealing with a new dimension of transparency. "The information citizen" becomes a reviewer of public sector activities. A fast service for him, which e-government is supposed to provide, causes acceleration of information flows and increases the degree of the system's complexity. The entirety of the various information transfers eludes the surveillance of the state sector and creates a whirl of sequentially occurring events. One bundle of data can trigger an avalanche of unpredictable (without possibility to anticipate)

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consequences. In this way, similarly to the self-controlled system driven by information, civilizational circle closes. The extent of implementation of electronic instruments, the extent of its prevalence, the range of its functionality is crucial for the final form and condition of the political regime.

Matthew Symonds, a British economist, is the author of the concept of the four phases of the development of e-government. He notes that each of these phases implies native political system. According to the theory, the initial stage is one-way transfers of information offered by the public sector (one-way information provision via a web page). The second step means giving citizens the simplest forms of interactive activities, such as application, queries, expressing opinions, update data (allowing citizens to update information). The third phase in Symonds' theory is associated with the possibility for making more sophisticated transactions, such as filling in and submitting tax returns (allowing actual transactions). The final fourth stage is the full interoperability of public sphere. There is the possibility of multidirectional and full exchange of information, the integrity of public services is provided and access to them is unobstructed and provided 24 hours a day (Brewer, Neubauer and Geiselhart, 2006: 484-491). Joint transition through each of these stages, upgrading its information infrastructure by the public sector, is not without consequences for the environment in which it takes place. Position on the path of technological development directly affects the

public image and model of democracy. Therefore, the concept of Symonds should be considered only in conjunction with the hallmark of the development of democratic processes and values. A set of evaluative criteria for level of democratic processes' development by Robert A. Dahl occurs to be representative here. On the basis of this concept we can confront the social consequences resulting from the implementation of electronic administration tools with the level of development of democracy and civic participation. R. A. Dahl articulated four criteria (Brewer, Neubauer and Geiselhart, 2006: 484):

1. effective participation,
2. voting equality at the decisive stage,
3. enlightened understanding,
4. control of the policy agenda.

Each of these criteria applied respectively to the development phases of e-Government provides insight into the advancement of the phenomenon of civic participation in a particular country. The interdependencies (relations) between the concept of Symonds, the criteria of democracy of Dahl and the level of civic participation are presented in the table below.

Figure 2. The right to public services and civic participation

Public Service Rights		Policy Participation Rights	
Access to information:	Accessability of transactions	Association and expression:	Participation in politics:
Stage 1 for M.Symonds	Stage 2 for M.Symonds Stage 3 for M.Symonds Stage 4 for M.Symonds	Stage 4 for M.Symonds effective participation for R.A. Dahl	Voting equality for R.A. Dahl enlightened understanding of R.A. Dahl Control of politics for R.A. Dahl

Source: own figure on the basis of G.A. Brewer, B.J. Neubauer, K. Geiselhart, (2006). "Designing and Implementing E-Government Systems: Critical Implications for Public Administration and Democracy, *Administration & Society*. 38 (472), ss. 486.

Therefore, according to the authors of the study , G.A. Brewer, B.J. Neubauer, K. Geiselhart (2006: 485), until Symonds' fourth stage of the development of e-government meaning a fully integrated platform of services (integrated service portal) with a variety of diverse back-end and legacy systems elegantly integrated into unified and user-friendly front-end, affects the level of political participation. In other words, the functioning of e-government in the phase of the first three steps of progress is not sufficient to justifiably speak of activating the real socio-political engagement through this form of communication. The impact that is related to the functioning of e-government in pre-interoperability phase is not such strong and influential. What is more, implementing even the last, the most functionally sophisticated form of communication, does not guarantee the realization of the advanced participatory democracy, defined according to the criteria of Dahl. "Technology is a huge facilitation,

however does not guarantee that citizens aware of the political process, will rationally get involved in the process of decision-making. Nevertheless, the public sector has to make efforts to develop further channels of communication, counting on benefits from the ideas' exchange. All in the name of the wider common good and public interest" (Brewer, Neubauer and Geiselhart, 2006: 487).

The question whether the particular political regime will deal with the real votes' equality of entities participating in the public sphere, aware of understanding political processes and their control does not depend directly on the processes of modernization of e-government. Certainly, these processes will have an impact in this respect but they are not crucial and determining.

Coming to conclusion, it should be noted that in reference to changes in the informational quantitative and qualitative determinants existing social phenomena occurring in public spaces require revision. Analyzing the nature of relation between the government and the citizen the broader context should be taken into account. What shall be considered are such factors: as information multidimensionality, interoperability, digitalism, finally network. E-government instruments are one of the many elements that affect the transformation of the structure of public sphere. They provide citizens with instruments for quickly and unlimited contact with the authorities. Therefore they influence on the quality of these contacts and, by engaging citizens to participate in the co-creation of the final

scenario of civilization, on increasing the number of actors in the network game.

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