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## STATE VERSUS MARKET – PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE: THE CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP AMONG DUTCH STUDENTS

ABSTRACT. Hildebrandt-Wypych Dobrochna, *State versus Market – Public versus Private: the Concept of Citizenship Among Dutch Students* [Państwo kontra rynek – sfera publiczna kontra sfera prywatna: pojęcie obywatelstwa wśród studentów holenderskich]. Studia Edukacyjne nr 29, 2013, Poznań 2013, pp. 131-152. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2738-0. ISSN 1233-6688

The aim of the article is to present – using both theoretical analyses and empirical data – new forms of “privatised” citizenship, based on individual competence and the development of post-national forms of affiliation. These new constructions of citizenship are marked by ambiguity. There is a definitely positive impact of individualism and self-fulfilment on the development of the idea of active citizenship. At the same time a negative influence of the privatisation of the social sphere becomes visible. It is the emergence of a new category of citizenship, i.e. post-democratic citizenship, which reduces political citizenship participation to being a television and internet consumer of opinions and a spectator of a political show. The above considerations are conducted with reference to a constructive and imperative paradigm, based on the conviction that citizenship is a social construction – contested and reconstructed both geographically and historically. The article uses excerpts from the in-depth interviews (IDI) conducted with Dutch students in May 2011 within a broader research project focusing on the comparison of the social construction of citizenship among Dutch and German students.

**Key words:** post-democratic citizenship, post-national citizenship, neo-liberalism, civic participation of youth, political activism, civic education

### Introduction

The scope of this article comprises the transformations of citizenship since the 1980s as a result of changes in state and market relations (the growing tension between neo-liberalism and the welfare state) and the growing contradictions between democracy (democratic citizenship) and capitalism.

When the public sphere is marketalised, new “privatised” forms of citizenship emerge. The aim of the article is to show – using both theoretical analyses and empirical data – that these new forms of “privatised” citizenship, based on individual competence and the development of post-national forms of affiliation, are ambivalent. There is the definitely positive impact of individualism and self-fulfilment on the development of an active citizenship idea. At the same time the negative influence of the privatisation of the social sphere becomes visible. It is the emerging of a new category of citizenship, namely post-democratic citizenship, which reduces political citizenship participation to being a television and internet consumer of opinions and a spectator of the political show. The fading of the “political citizen” encourages to rethink civic education as well. Several questions could be addressed, including: how should civic education respond to the neo-liberal pressure of promoting “commodified” citizenship in the more politically controlling, but less socially engaged state? What changes does citizenship education need to go beyond the strictly socialising project and start to support democratic subjectivity and political agency?

The above-mentioned considerations are conducted with reference to a constructive and imperative paradigm, based on the conviction that social institutions (including citizenship) are constructed in the interaction process, and that social reality is, above all, “the world of meanings”, understood only by symbolic experiences and reflections of acting individuals<sup>1</sup>. In the analysis of citizenship transformation, a critical attitude was adapted. It assumes openness, in the research process, to searching for sources of social inequality, asymmetry in social relations, as well as the hidden and open influence of power and ideology on creating and functioning of social institutions.

The article uses excerpts from the in-depth interviews (IDI) conducted with Dutch students in May 2011 within a broader research project focusing on the comparison of the social construction of citizenship among Dutch and German students. The students’ statements about good citizenship and civic participation are treated in the text as

mental representations which people share with others within the defined social group, (...) representations of situations, whole societies, and social concepts: norms, values, ideologies, as well as preferences or prejudice<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Konecki, *Studia z metodologii badań jakościowych. Teoria ugruntowana* [Studies on the qualitative research methodology. The grounded theory], Warszawa 2000, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> A. Duszak, *Tekst, dyskurs, komunikacja międzykulturowa* [Text, discourse, intercultural communications], Warszawa 1998, p. 249.

The attempt to understand the students' notions of good citizenship and civic participation was based on a phenomenological conviction that "there is no absolute perspective in explaining or interpretation - no privileged place which guarantees e.g. impartial observations"<sup>3</sup>. The reflections presented below are proposed with the awareness that each and every member of a different culture, including the researcher, who starts interpreting a text "does not proclaim the truth but rather suggests interpretations and solutions to problems"<sup>4</sup>.

Access to University education in the Netherlands is characterized by the – diminishing but still present – inequality of educational opportunity, especially marked by differences in access to both secondary and tertiary education for children of higher and lower educated parents. Influence of the social background (parental education and occupation) on access to higher education is already determined at the secondary education level – within compulsory schooling. 87% of all transitions to university in the Netherlands starts in a selective, academic compulsory school – VWO<sup>5</sup>. At the tertiary level, as shown in the qualitative analysis of higher education paths in the Netherlands, "children from the highest parental educational categories have much greater opportunities for entering university than children from the lower educational categories"<sup>6</sup>. Similarly to the influence of vocational education of one of the parents on the child's opportunity to enter vocationally-oriented HBO<sup>7</sup>, academic education of one of the parents significantly enhances child's chances on university education (WO), even in the face of the decreasing selection at the tertiary level of education in the Netherlands over the last decades of the twentieth century<sup>8</sup>.

Taking the above-mentioned remark into account and including data on socioeconomic status of Dutch students participating in the qualitative study, my informants almost exclusively came from middle- or upper-

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<sup>3</sup> D. Dobrzański, *Interpretacja jako proces nadawania znaczeń. Studium z etnometodologii* [Interpretation as a process of giving the meaning. Etnomethodology study], Poznań 1999, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> R. Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis at the End of the 20th Century*, Research on Language and Social Interactions, Special Issue: *Language and Social Interaction at the Century's Turn*, 1999, 32, 1 - 2, p. 186.

<sup>5</sup> S. Rijken, I. Maas, H.B.G. Ganzeboom, *The Netherlands: Access to Higher Education – Institutional Arrangements and Inequality of Opportunity*, [in:] *Stratification in Higher Education. A Comparative Study*, eds Y. Shavit, R. Arum, A. Gamoran, Stanford 2007, p. 279.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 284.

<sup>7</sup> Within the binary system of tertiary education in the Netherlands the university sector is complemented with HBO's – higher vocational institutions, that compete and even rival university sector institutions (P. Scott, *The Meanings of Mass Higher Education*, Bristol 1995, p. 35-36).

<sup>8</sup> S. Rijken, I. Maas, H.B.G. Ganzeboom, *The Netherlands*, p. 292.

middle-class families. The impact of family socialization of political behavior of youth is well described in the scientific literature<sup>9</sup>. Even when deliberate political education was not part of the school curriculum (as noted in the context of English independent schools), the very “expectations of upper-middle-class families for political participation provided stimulus for participatory attitudes”<sup>10</sup>. Scholars also diagnose the phenomenon of so called “civic empowerment gap”, based on the recognition that “civic and political knowledge, skill, efficacy, sense of membership, and participation are distributed in vastly unequal ways”<sup>11</sup> among citizens of different socioeconomic background. Educational attainment influences the patterns of civic participation. Research data show the greater engagement in voluntary actions, membership in organizations, as well as the readiness to work on a community problem or to attend a community meeting among those with higher education experience<sup>12</sup>. The civic empowerment gap is also strengthened by the *de facto* school segregation, especially when considering the social-educational situation of non-Dutch students from low-income, labor-migrant families. Symptomatically, almost all my informants – University of Amsterdam students – came from middle class, wealthy families.

### Capitalism *versus* Democracy – post-democratic citizenship

The 2008 Global Financial Crisis, as well as the Eurozone crisis, which started two years later, sparked the debate over growing differences between democracy and capitalism. The thoughts on the consequences of this systemic conflict permeate through the level of academic debates into the public opinion. In social awareness, it is more commonly noted that “an unmitigated capitalism would undermine the root values of democracy, even if it might leave the surface institutions intact”<sup>13</sup>. The conflict between

<sup>9</sup> Por. A. van den Broek, *Does differential cohort socialization matter? The impact of cohort replacement and the presence of intergenerational differences in the Netherlands*, *Political Psychology*, 1999, 20; R. Ventura, *Family political socialization in multiparty systems*, *Comparative Political Studies*, 2001, 34.

<sup>10</sup> C.L. Hahn, *Becoming political. Comparative Perspectives on Citizenship Education*, New York 1998, p. 102.

<sup>11</sup> M. Levinson, *No citizen left behind*, Harvard University Press, Harvard 2012, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> M. Levinson, *The Civic Empowerment Gap: Defining the Problem and Locating Solutions*, [in:] *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth*, eds L.R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, C.A. Flanagan, New Jersey 2010, p. 339.

<sup>13</sup> D. Cropp, *Capitalism versus Democracy: The Marketing of Votes and the Marketing of Political Power*, [in:] *Ethics and capitalism*, ed. J.D. Bishop, University of Toronto Press Incorporated, Toronto 2000, p. 81.

the rule of democratic equality and the priority of capitalist competition has become more visible. The Milton Friedman's thesis that the capitalist system is beneficial for the separation of economic and political power, is being replaced by an opposing theory. "Capitalism spawns inequalities in economic power, and inequalities in political power produce inequalities in political power of a kind that is undemocratic"<sup>14</sup>.

David Cropp defines this fundamental conflict between democracy and capitalism by referring to their opposing values. While the priority of equalising political power among members of society lies at the core of democracy, the acceptance of economic inequality is a feature of the capitalist system.

The effect of marrying democracy with capitalism is a system in which the distribution of political power reflects to a large extent people's varying economic success rather than their equal stake in the society<sup>15</sup>.

School is also an arena of conflict between democracy (equality of rights) and capitalism (market competition). In the face of "social discrepancy between the citizenly ideal of freedom, equality, brotherhood and the rules on which the middle class-capitalistic social order is based", it is impossible to solve the dilemma between the role of the school, as an institution which passes to individuals "the civil and normative vision of such values as justice and solidarity, maturity and universality of education" and the fact that the school is socially obligated to serve the function related to providing qualifications, selecting and also legitimising and integrating within the existing socio-political and cultural system<sup>16</sup>. Uncritical orientation towards middle-class capitalistic principles such as exchange, achievement, competi-

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 98.

<sup>16</sup> Ch. Leser, *Politische Bildung in und durch Schule*, Wiesbaden 2011, p. 78-79. Leser (2011, 78-79) gives an example of evaluating student's achievements, that cannot be based on a grading system which is individually designed and corresponds to a potential of a given student. An evaluation of the achievement, to be socially functional and fair, has to be based on the same grading system for all. Such understanding of equal treatment, transforms the idea of equal opportunities into a formal, unrealistic postulate. A similar conflict can be observed between the democratic rule of universality of education and the effectiveness requirements under which school has to undertake actions which differentiate students' achievements. In achieving this effectiveness, it is far more important to evaluate students' success and failure rather than guarantee educational success to all students. School creates winners and losers, and the competition in a classroom – despite the call for solidarity between stronger and weaker students – results in a situation when "one takes advantage of the other one's weakness" (ibidem, p. 80).

tion and vested interest may indicate the systematic and daily depreciation of the democratic ideals of school.

Colin Crouch is sceptical about the possibility of solving the conflict between democracy and capitalism. He describes the modern Western political systems as post-democratic. According to Crouch, the post-democratic transition has its basis in such phenomena as the growing influence of market deregulation and the domination of supra-national corporations, as well as public discontent and citizenship atrophy, which accompany them and can be seen in the decreasing trust toward governments, parliaments, politicians and in expanding sphere of radical activism. Crouch compares contemporary politicians to shopkeepers (and not rulers), "anxiously seeking to discover what their 'costumers' want in order to stay in business"<sup>17</sup>. The devaluation of formal authority and respect gives way to more and more advanced techniques of political manipulation. The paradoxical situation of contemporary politics results from the fact that

the techniques for manipulating public opinion (...) become ever more sophisticated, while the content of party programmes and the character of party rivalry become ever more bland and vapid. One cannot call this kind of politics non- or anti-democratic, because so much of it results from politicians' anxieties about their relations with citizens. At the same time it is difficult to dignify it as democracy itself, because so many citizens have been reduced to the role of manipulated, passive, rare participants<sup>18</sup>.

The consequence of these complex processes is – in his opinion – the weakening of democratic governments resulting from globalisation pressure and market deregulation, as well as decreasing citizen involvement. Power, so far held by democratically elected state politicians

slips into the hands of transnational business elites, global corporate elites, or a global plutocratic "superclass"<sup>19</sup>. Citizens become compliant consumers, voters are manipulated or ignored, and democratic procedures are reduced to ritual electoral act<sup>20</sup>.

C. Crouch criticises the current form of liberal democracy for abandoning its egalitarian, participatory ideals and for displaying procedural and institutional forms of representation. This is what Crouch says about post-democracy:

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<sup>17</sup> C. Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Por. D. Rothkopf, *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making*, New York 2008.

<sup>20</sup> J. Pakulski, A. Körösenyi, *Toward Leader Democracy*, New York 2011, p. 109.

while elections certainly exist and can change governments, public electoral debate is a tightly controlled spectacle, managed by rival teams of professionals expert in the techniques of persuasion, and considering a small range of issues selected by those teams. The mass of citizens plays a passive, quiescent, even a pathetic part, responding only to the signals given them. Behind this spectacle of the electoral game politics is really shaped in private by interaction between elected governments and elites which overwhelmingly represent business interests<sup>21</sup>.

It appears to be biased to claim that a sovereign (nation) has degraded completely into the role of an observer, who reacts only to the external initiatives created by the mass media and the business entities (supranational), which influence them. The decay of national states in relation to neo-liberal economic logic is, in fact, contradicted not by the fall but, by the growing importance of national identity and pride, as well as the political involvement of citizens, especially in times of economic crises<sup>22</sup>. At the same time, the neo-liberal rationale favours the process of replacing active citizens' participation with the passive consumption of opinions and with being a television and internet viewer of political spectacle.

As early as in the 1950s, Thomas H. Marshall described the attempt to reconcile democracy (democratic citizenship) with capitalism. The key to limit all-market power was to extend social rights as part of a prosperous capitalist state structure. Marshall advocated the idea of *the hyphenated society*, in which capitalism, democracy and welfare would function as three equal – but based on different rules – orders, which strengthen social cohesion and lead to a *status quo*. As he wrote in one of his essays, the differences between these orders “strengthen the structure, because they are complementary, not discrepant”<sup>23</sup>. Social pathologies, which result from the collision of contradictory ideas of democracy and capitalism, can be only avoided with the assumption that neither of them will disrupt the existing *equilibrium*. In other words, democratic majority rules, social security claims and especially market imperatives should not be the dominant power which would disturb the balance and on which the functioning of society would be based<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> C. Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Pippa Norris, referring to the results of dynamic research on public opinion versus democracy, claims: “It was assumed that globalisation may weaken those feelings [of national pride and national identity – D.H.-W.], but the data shows that nationalism is still strong and relatively stable, even in the Western European societies, which have been the members of the European Union for many years” (P. Norris, *Democratic Deficit, Critical Citizens Revisited*, New York 2011, s. 241).

<sup>23</sup> T.H. Marshall, *The right to welfare and other essays*, London 1981, p. 125.

<sup>24</sup> G. Lewis, 'Do not go gently...' *Terrains of Citizenship and Landscapes of the Personal*, [in:] *Citizenship. Personal Lives and Social Policy*, ed. G. Lewis, Bristol 2004, p. 15.



Historical analysis of the development of citizenship rights in modern societies, allowed Marshall to formulate the fundamental thesis about three types of rights which are the constituents of modern citizenship: civil, political and social. The earliest formulated civil rights (in the 18th century), are crucial to secure the freedom of an individual, which consists of personal rights such as personal freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of beliefs and religion. Establishing political rights in the 19th century, secured for the members of community, access to participation in political life through electoral rights and freedom of association. Social rights were the latest component of citizenship to be developed; defined by Marshall as citizens' access to various rights:

the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society<sup>25</sup>.

According to Marshall, the institutionalisation of social rights is a part of the function of the educational system and social service.

In Marshall's opinion citizenship has a nationwide character and is "a uniform set of rights and obligations", given to all members of a given community. This traditional concept of citizenship, understood as a status, which provides the individual with the right to be supported by public institutions and have access to social security, is still considered to be "the dominant paradigm" of citizenship's theory and "the touchstone in the discussion about citizenship"<sup>26</sup>. Based on the social liberal consensus of the post-war period and – at least nominal – the access to social rights independent from the social status, this traditional concept of citizenship lasted until the 1970s. Since the beginning of the 1980s, it has been weakening under the pressure of more individual attitudes towards defining citizenship.

### **Neo-liberal citizenship model – moral citizenship**

For at least three decades, the role of citizenship has undergone transformation as a result of "the tension between neo-liberalism and the welfare

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<sup>25</sup> T.H. Marshall, *Obywatelstwo i klasa społeczna* [Citizenship and social class], Zoon Politikon, 2010, 1, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup> G.J.J. Biesta, *Learning Democracy in School and Society. Education, Lifelong Learning and the Politics of Citizenship*, Rotterdam 2011, p. 7.



state”<sup>27</sup> and the changes in the relations between state and market. In the times when the post-war political economy flourished (identified with the Keynes' school of thought) it was indisputable to construct citizenship as a status independent from the influence of market power, and given to all members of society, regardless of their economic and social status. The welfare state was to reduce social inequality, caused by the capitalist system. Social security systems were defined as “buffers”, protecting from attempts to transform modern societies according to the rules of market economy and to “commodify their social relations”<sup>28</sup>.

The debate over social rights in the face of the welfare state crisis, which began in the 1980s in the Western countries, forced governments to rethink the ways of a more rational and effective division of social goods. The gradual expansion of a group of people who are survival-oriented, deprived of social initiative and unable to exercise their citizenship rights (access to education and social participation at local level among others), paradoxically stirred a wave of criticism of welfare state social policy. According to opponents, the developed social security system caused the gradual dependence of its users on social care, the weakening of traditional family ties, the disintegration of relations in local environment, and the strengthening of the inter-generationally transmitted culture of poverty. The theses about the institutionalisation of poverty in the welfare state sound unduly critical. They also question the role of interventions (undertaken by public aid institutions), as tools for including lower classes of civil society<sup>29</sup>. An attention is paid not only to the increasing number of excluded people, who refuse to participate in civil society, but also to – related to the phenomenon of *underclass* – the growth of socio-spatial segregations, considered as one of the main barriers to citizenship participation.

The decentralisation of various public services (including education and health care), earlier organised at a central level, as well as the expansion of consumers freedom of choice, cause the gradual privatisation of social policy and state security system. Free market priorities such as: the protection of businesses of enterprising individuals, market effectiveness and adaptability, competitiveness, pressure on innovations and new technologies (the basis of the participation of the local market in the global economy, free from

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<sup>27</sup> J. Mackert, H.-P. Müller, *Die Staatsbürgerschaft vor postnationalen Herausforderungen*, [in:] *Moderne (Staats)Bürgerschaft. Nationale Staatsbürgerschaft und die Debatten der Citizenship Studies*, ed. J. Mackert, H.-P. Müller, Wiesbaden 2007, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 14-15.

<sup>29</sup> J. Grey, *O rządzie ograniczonym* [About the limited government], Warszawa 1995, p. 77-78, after: T. Cukiernik, *Prawicowa koncepcja państwa*, Wydawnictwo Wektory, 2004, p. 43.

state regulations and involvement), influence the way in which citizenship is perceived.

Moralized citizenship emerges when – as Andrea Muehlebach point out in reference to the Italian context – “social services are cut and privatized”<sup>30</sup>. The result of the pressure on individual responsibility and choice was “to redefine the relations between individual and state, followed by the redefinition of the idea of citizenship”<sup>31</sup>. As Jurgen Mackert and Hans-Peter Müller emphasise, the neo-liberal model assumes re-commodifying (*Rekomodifizierung*) citizenship in a minimal state (Robert Nozick, 1974), which is obligated only to secure the property, health and life of its citizens. The minimal state creates the frame conditions, which guarantee the efficient functioning of the market. It has the right to impose duties on citizens only under certain circumstances – when there is a need to secure the safety of citizens, so they can autonomously decide about themselves and their freedom. To secure a citizen from risks, which occur in market society, is no longer the obligation of the state but it is delegated to the individual<sup>32</sup>.

The ethos of the welfare state has gradually eroded. It is no longer predicated on building relations between different social groups based on the organisation of collective life, where the long-term system of “redistributional reciprocity” plays a central role. It has been replaced by a new ethos – the charity ethos, deprived of the mutuality of obligations. The new ethos can be described “as magnanimous, selfless, unrequited acts of voluntary generosity performed by what appear as disembedded individuals”<sup>33</sup>. Andrea Muehlebach the new charity ethos as

a new kind of ethical pact (rather than contract) between society's groups, a pact based not on social rights, but on moral duty, not on state-mediated and intergenerational reciprocity, but on a spirit of “free gifting”<sup>34</sup>.

The unrequited charity, which replaced the collective and mutual actions at the political level, is designed as “the moral obligation” of an individual in the era of social policy neoliberalisation. At the institutional level, the “moral obligation” of gifting responds to the needs of the government by supporting the pluralism in the national welfare system, including the legitimization of private investment in social sphere. It also allows to control

<sup>30</sup> A. Muehlebach, *The Moral Neoliberal. Welfare and Citizenship in Italy*, Chicago - London 2012, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> G.J.J. Biesta, *Learning Democracy in School and Society*, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> J. Mackert, H.-P. Müller, *Die Staatsbürgerschaft vor postnationalen Herausforderungen*, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> A. Muehlebach, *The Moral Neoliberal*, p. VIII.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 163.

expenses better, due to implementing market mechanism into social services. When considering the changes of the welfare state paradigm in Great Britain at the turn of the 1970s and the 1980s, it turns out that the voluntary organisations became most valuable partners of the conservative government. Known for their economic effectiveness, flexibility of actions, innovation, pluralism and specialisation, voluntary organization became “an imposed partner” for local governments as well.

Their activity in the social sphere was functional towards the neoliberal policy not only because voluntary organization became institutional alternatives for public institutions in the domain of providing services, but also because of the role they served in the popularisation of such assumptions of conservative doctrine as free competition, individualism, voluntarism, greater possibility of choice for consumers and the possibility of participating in social life<sup>35</sup>.

In fact, in the statements of the Dutch students, we may find the confirmation of the researchers’ observation, that in social awareness, the model of moral citizenship which responds to the assumption of non-conservative doctrine, is established. The ideal of “good citizenship” presented in their narration is clearly set in positive traits of character and “being moral”:

*I wouldn't say: know your neighbors and look out for them, but...to be moral... Oh, I'm not sure I could answer that. Good citizen... Like, eh, be a good person in the street, sort of watch out for each other, don't make a lot of noise... That sort of...That you appreciate that the other is there and don't just just do whatever you like? (H2).*

*A good citizen in the Netherlands is somebody who follows the rules, somebody who's not selfish, who helps people in need, like for example old people in the streets... I think that's basically it: follow the rules and be helpful (H9).*

*A good citizen? Is it something different than a good human being? I don't think there is a great difference between those two. I think being a good citizen means that you're nice and you contribute to the society you live in. In this case, the Netherlands (...). And that you try to be as nice to other people as you can be. Helping other people out, that's what it means (H10).*

One of the students explains the essence of good citizenship referring once again to its moral aspect of “making other people happy”:

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<sup>35</sup> R.M. Kramer, *Change and Continuity in British Voluntary Organizations*, International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, “Voluntas”, 1990, 2, p. 34, after: E. Leś, *Działalność dobroczynna w Europie i Ameryce. Tradycje i współczesność* [Charity in Europe and America. Traditions and modernity], Warszawa 1999, s. 9.

*Good citizen... To give other people and not only to take. There must be a balance, yeah. To make other people happy, it is a big thing for me. That's why I'm doing this as well (interview – D.H.-W.). I'm making you happy and making you happy makes me happy. So that's the main thing for me in this 'being a good citizen' (...) You have to be open towards other people, I think, willing to help. It's hard to... Let me think... You have to contribute something to the society..., maybe your work... You have to do some activities socially, in welfare or something... To organize some things for friends and family, or people in your neighborhood. I think those are good things (H4).*

The process of “the moralization of citizenship” can be explained as being functional towards the neo-liberal economic, social and political conditions, where the state attempts to equal work without payment with charity. Charity and voluntary service are placed outside the area of market exchange and, paradoxically, its animator is not a profit-oriented *homo oeconomicus*, but a compassionate *homo relationalis*<sup>36</sup>. The neo-liberal state, wishing to ease the results of its own withdrawal, places “the fantasy of giving” in the centre of the neo-liberal reform and transforms the lack of payment into “sacrifice fetish”. The struggle of the neo-liberal state to support the creation of the areas of non-paying work, may be critically evaluated as the attempt to extend control and “ordering” citizens, especially the one who are “passive” and “dependent”, such as pensioners and the unemployed youth 25. As Muehlebach indicates, this struggle is also “a promise that translated the crisis of work into a sacralization of »activity«”<sup>37</sup>.

### **Civic participation – privatised domain**

The new vision of citizenship, constructed under the dominance of the neoliberal ideology, ceased to be an institution which protects citizens from introducing a “market society”, and became the institution that idealises this society. The priority given to the freedom of choice validated the new model of citizenship: “an active citizen”, characterised by Geert Biesta as

a dynamic citizen who is self-reliant and takes responsibility for his or her own actions, rather than depending upon government intervention and support, and yet possesses “a sense of civic virtue and pride in both country and local community”<sup>38</sup>.

The civic activism of individuals who – independently and consciously – act within civil society institutions, is meant to “civilise” the competition and

<sup>36</sup> A. Muehlebach, *The Moral Neoliberal*, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> G.J.J. Biesta, *Learning Democracy in School and Society*, p. 10.

other rigours of the market. There appears, however, a negative effect of a good citizenship model, based on activism and individual predispositions to act, which has dominated the public sphere and education recently. Citizenship is being depoliticised and privatised, and starts functioning only in the personal (individual) and social dimension. Social problems are presented as a consequence of a lack of responsibility, skills, values or attitudes on the part of the acting individuals. In this civic participation pattern, thinking about social change means changing the current ways of doing things within existing structures and not changing the structures.

The integral part of the above-mentioned concept of “moral” citizenship is a political project for replacing public welfare systems with voluntary forms of collective care. At the same time, the focus on the personal dimension of “good citizenship” will gradually neutralize the political anchoring of the acting individual. It is as though the core value of being a good citizen was helping “as a labour of love” and not fathoming the problems of social inequality. Here are examples of students’ statements, which indicate the de-politicisation of civic participation, locating it far from politics, in the sphere of self-realisation and consumption:

*I personally participate in discussions, lectures... I don't know... But participation can be a lot of things, it can be... visiting supermarket, just going out to a bar and drink, and meet people... Maybe friendships... I don't know, it is also what I think is citizenship. To go outside and meet people, yeah, to interact (H7).*

Civic activity is located in the domain of private interests and hobbies and is – according to another student – practiced in “personal groups”. The only example concerning civic engagement outside the private domain relates to student's activity within the ethnic minority institution. However, helping non-Dutch inhabitants “who need support” is not rooted in student's concerns about their difficult political, economic or social situation. Civic act of helping is subordinated to the student's personalized agenda. The motivation is again placed in de-politicized sphere of “making other people happy”. Soccer lessons for the migrants is meant to “give them hope and pleasure in their lives”:

*In my personal life it is more about my interests, my things, how I choose me friends, actually, and, and my hobbies. And I always... I only meet my friends when I'm doing things, or if it has something to do with my sport, or something to do with my interests, or something to do with my school. So my three main points are study interests, fashion, soccer or some other sports. So for me these are my personal groups (...) Do I do something for my community? Not that much. I do donate*

*some... ok., let's say I gave some education, soccer education for people, for poor people in Dronten, where I played soccer. I played soccer on a quite high level and there I did some voluntary work, for Dronten. We have a sort of foreigner's institution, for foreigners who need support and I gave them hope and pleasure in their lives by giving them some football practice (...) Yeah, so that was my only contribution... And I'm also paying some money for... some aid funds (H18).*

The self-fulfilling dimension of active citizenship is clearly visible in the dialogue with a student, for whom the civic participation is mainly:

*When you participate in social groups, for instance... football club? I don't know it more like an automatic pilot, you just, you just do that sort of things and eventually you think about it, but not that much (...) Going to a bar with friends, going to a museum, going to an exhibition. And then you talk about it, you talk about a lot of things, topics, of course and... What I think..., me.. my social life...*

*I work two days a week...*

When asked the further question: *Is this (the part-time job) your contribution to society?* The student replies with noticeable amusement in his voice:

*No, it is the contribution to myself! No, it's also in a bar, so, it is all in your spare time and we go there with friends and talk about things... That's also a thing: contribution to the society, I don't know...maybe finishing my studies at the end will be my contribution... (H8).*

The use of the concept of civic participation in terms of consumers and self-fulfilling individuals demonstrates the dominance of "privatized dimension" of public (collective) sphere in the students' opinions about their civic participation. The central meaning of consumption in creating civic behaviours is emphasised by Zizi Papacharissi, who claims that consumption enables "individuals to claim citizenship through the possession of commodities and thus blurring democratic and capitalist narratives". The emergence of citizen-consumer is described by the Author as follows:

*As individuals become civically emancipated through acts of consumption, cultural forms of citizenship are claimed to fulfill a sense of civic belonging, and these further fragment civil society into multiple, culturally oriented, and consumerism-driven citizen spheres<sup>39</sup>.*

Sunaina Maira describes a concept of "consumer citizenship" as a fusion of neoliberal nationalism and a culture of consumption. On the individual

<sup>39</sup> Z.A. Papacharissi, *Private Sphere. Democracy in a Digital Age*, Cambridge 2010, p. 19.



level, “consumption practices are central to defining the 'self' in relation to a collective identity, as well as to national culture, and to class, racial, and ethnic hierarchies”. On the social level, “theorists of citizenship point to the emergence of the model of the citizen as consumer with the increasing privatization of services previously offered by the welfare state”<sup>40</sup>.

### Avoiding political civic participation

The individualized concept of citizenship, based on personal responsibility, avoids the questions of the collective responsibility, collective actions, governmental politics and support of public institutions. The state domain is not recognised as the civic domain anymore. Constructing good citizenship as a mixture of individual character and behaviour “obscures the need for collective and public sector initiatives; this emphasis distracts attention from analysis of the causes of social problems and from systematic solutions”<sup>41</sup>. “Moralising” the ethos of citizenship and recognising charity and voluntarism as both “essential act of citizenship” and “expression of citizenship power”, may cause the drifting away of citizens from everything political. To quote the radical thesis of Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne: “voluntarism and kindness are put forward as ways of avoiding politics and policy”<sup>42</sup>. To support their point, Westheimer and Kahne report on research that found that fewer than 32% of eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 24 voted in the 1996 presidential election, (in contrast to 50% in 1970) but that a whopping 94% of those aged 15–24 believed that “the most important thing I can do as a citizen is to help others”. The researchers reached the conclusion that “youth seems to be ‘learning’ that citizenship does not require democratic governments, politics, and even collective endeavours”<sup>43</sup>.

The de-politization of the students' notion of citizenship is linked with the students' retreat from political activities. Their resignation of everything “political” appears often together with the subjective feeling of political inefficacy. They cannot influence political processes, even at the level of university politics and student affairs:

*Students protest only when the public financing of studies is in danger, or something. But even then the protest lasts a day or two, or something, and then every-*

<sup>40</sup> S.M. Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11*, Durham NC 2009, p. 156.

<sup>41</sup> J. Westheimer, J. Kahne, *What kind of Citizenship? The Politics of Educating for Democracy*, *American Educational Research Journal*, 2004, 41, 2, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.



*thing calms down, because we know that we don't have a big influence on all that. Or at least it seems so (H4).*

The informants' belief that all political actions and decisions are run by influential political elites at the governmental level and that their voice doesn't count in the big political arena, is visible in the following statements:

*I don't like to engage in these groups, unless for some reason I have to...or I should have. I'm not quite sure, if my voice would actually change anything. I'm not sure, if it would help, so I don't do it (H11).*

*I vote, but I don't go to Dam Square<sup>44</sup>. I don't think it's stupid, but anyway... nobody wants to really listen to you there. If a group of 15 people gathers, even a thousand, you still have millions on the other side! It doesn't encourage me to participate in that (...). I think that some serious political issues have a bigger impact on our lives, all that is created by high ranking people (H6).*

De-politicisation of civic participation in the majority of students' statements is accompanied by the banalization of social change through the self-content "we are quite happy" language. There is also the "objectivisation" of the existing social order in the students' statements and the conviction of the majority of the informants that maintaining the *status quo* is a purposeful and "normal" social behaviour. They rationalize their political disengagement and withdrawal from any protest activities with the constantly repeated image of a privileged life in a welfare society:

*Political? Not much, nothing is really happening right now. People are not interested in politics. I think it's a bad thing, although I'm doing it myself. (...) I believe it's a good thing to do to be a good citizen and to actively participate, but...Why people don't do that? I think why students don't really engage, I think they are just a little bit lazy and they prefer to go to the parties and festival. And everything is fine at the moment. Not that we really have to do something to make an important change, like.. The situation is quite good in the Netherlands and it's only getting a little bit less lately, but...I can imagine the students in China for example, they really, I can imagine them fighting for things they want to achieve. What we already have achieved, most of the things we wanted to. And now we are only getting a little bit less, I think. But maybe not enough less to come into action (...). Maybe if something really bad would happen, then it would, we would all do something (H10).*

*I think we are pretty happy with how it goes at the moment. I think a lot of my friends have traveled and they understand now that Holland isn't that bad. So I think we are most of the time pretty happy and I also think we don't have a lot of*

<sup>44</sup> A central place in Amsterdam, where most of protest activities take place [D.H.-W.].

*time: we have to do, we have to work, we have to study, we have to do sport, we have to make art, we have to do a lot of things. Demonstrating – it takes a lot of time! (H13).*

*All the students. My generation, we are a little bit passive (...) I think many of us think that we are really lucky and satisfied, but maybe we don't think enough about some complex questions and situations, so... I think we don't make opinions for ourselves. We don't have it, but we also don't try to have it. It's a pity (...). Why it is so? I think most of the students have had a really good life. It was OK., it wasn't bad, we are just fine and satisfied (H15).*

Referring to the McLaughlin's concept of minimal and maximal citizenship, we can note the presence of the minimalist model of citizenship in the majority of students' statements. One of the dimensions of democratic citizenship, mentioned by McLaughlin, is the political involvement, suspended between two poles – passivity and activity. The majority of the interviewed students declare being a citizen-minimalist: apolitical and focused on privacy, whose only action is to participate in elections. The next important dimension of the democratic citizenship concerns personal beliefs about existing social conditions, which are – as revealed by the majority of my informants – also minimal. The existing social relations are accepted uncritically, and the existing social inequalities are ignored or justified by the diversity in the skills and abilities of individuals. We can suspect that my informants, Dutch students from UvA<sup>45</sup> – as representatives of at least middle class families – feel to a great extent protected from the effects of inequality and they do not “need” politics to assert their rights in public life.

It is far less common to find in the students' statements the maximization of civic society, which demands a critical view of social structure and the situation of the disfavoured groups and which assumes undertaking actions to increase their participation in economic, social and political life. Undoubtedly, there are occasions of critical debate and protest movements among students and several of my Dutch informants mentioned their knowledge of the “protest movements”, but only one of the twenty interviewees revealed his active engagement in politics and social movement. Far from being a “spectator” of social life and clearly left-wing-oriented, the student presented the model of citizenship set in the new critical theory. His answer to the question about the reason for the lack of involvement and responsibility for politics among Dutch students, was as follows:

<sup>45</sup> The abbreviation for the University of Amsterdam (*Universiteit van Amsterdam*).

*Because of the liberal standard of living, I think.. It's only making your money and use the money to live. And it's all you do: you work, you earn your money and you give it away again. And all the other social problems or social phenomena are far from people. They think it's not, it's not...yeah. People are not counting themselves anymore within a society. They see it as a factory where they work and eat and live and... You know, it's a... heading to a global village run by multinationals (...)*

The specific context of this interview is connected with the ethnic background and inter-generational relations within a family of the student. As a son of a political refugee from Turkey (*my father is a political refugee and not a typical economic migrant* – as he explains), the student was socialized in the atmosphere of political activism. His orientation toward politics was influenced not only by his father's strong socialist values and beliefs, but also by his education and profession (social worker with the university diploma). His critical attitude toward the existing lack of political engagement among people, linked with the individual focus on consumption and self-fulfillment (*being happy*), is expressed as follows:

*I can see it in my... you now, in front of me, it's a game and people are playing, and earning money and giving away, and having fun, feeling comfortable, and having nice, luxury products. They don't care about managing for a better world! And just look at the ecological crisis we had, with the BP, you know. The leak of, I don't know, thousands of barrels of oil in the sea. And people just forgotten it, just keep of living, and don't mention it again anymore. It was a news headline for maybe a couple of days or weeks and then it just disappeared as Madonna has disappeared nowadays. So yeah...it comes and goes. It is does not really change the world...People see themselves as...ehhh... useless objects, I think. They don't see it that way, but deep inside they think: "I can't... I can't do anything good for the world, so why should I? Let me just earn my money and just be happy". And it's really closed-minded actually (H18).*

In various moments of the interview the student expresses his orientation towards the model of citizenship, described by Westheimer and Korte as justice-oriented citizenship. Its core meaning is the critical view of social, political and economic structures, the focus on recognising any acts of injustice and an imperative in dealing with them actively. The basic assumption of justice-oriented citizenship is solving social problems in a deliberative way, questioning and changing the existing structures<sup>46</sup>. Moreover, setting limits to the ability "to colonise everyday life through the economic logic" seems to be one of the crucial goal of critical citizenship reflection<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> J. Westheimer, J. Kahne, *What kind of Citizenship?*, p. 27.

<sup>47</sup> N. Stevenson, *European Cosmopolitan Solidarity. Questions of Citizenship, Difference and Post-Materialism*, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2006, 9 (4), p. 493.

### What kind of citizenship education?

From the students' statements emerges the democratic citizenship model, set predominantly in personal responsibility and distancing itself from the political dimension of citizenship. In the present socio-political conditions, it is more difficult to formulate explicit evaluation. As a result of the all-embracing "privatisation of responsibility" for being socially unadjusted, the individual has to cope with the excessive control of the state, on the one hand, and with the excessive deregulated influence of the market, on the other. The need for self-realization and autonomy clashes with the expectation of increasing productivity and competitiveness. How would citizenship education react to this?

While looking for a concept of citizenship education, that would be adequate to the need of modern society and possible to implement, Biesta draws a distinction between citizenship education based on the theory of socialisation, on one hand, and on the theory of subjectivity, on the other. As he points out,

Whereas the first focuses on the role of learning and education in the reproduction of the existing socio-political order and thus on the adjustment of individuals to the existing order, the second has an orientation towards the promotion of political agency and democratic subjectivity, highlighting that democratic citizenship is not simply an existing identity that individuals just need to adopt, but is an ongoing process that is fundamentally open towards the future<sup>48</sup>.

According to Biesta, citizenship education should go beyond the strictly socialising remit and promote an attitude which paves the way for democratic subjectivity and is able to support the role of political agency.

Democratic citizenship should not be understood as an attribute of the individual, but invariably has to do with individuals – in-context and individuals-in-relationship." The shift from teaching citizenship to learning democracy – in research, as well as politics and education practice – is supposed to result in young people's true experience and practice of citizen participation in in everyday life: in compulsory education, higher education institutions and other social institutions. The idea behind that shift is to overcome the individualistic concept of citizenship that underpins much recent thinking in the area of citizenship education.

Since the 1980, as part of the reforms in education system in Western countries, citizenship has to face more responsible tasks, related to maintaining political participation at the satisfactory level, and understanding the

<sup>48</sup> G.J.J. Biesta, *Learning Democracy in School and Society*, p. 2.

political processes at the level which allows to strengthen social unity, guarantee the continuity of democratic systems and support of social integration in times of growing multiculturalism<sup>49</sup>. At the same time, the economisation of thinking about constant learning proceeds. It is no longer treated as public obligation, demanding structural changes and governmental actions which include whole community. It is rather a challenge that an individual has to face. An individual who wants to raise his qualifications and skills, to maintain the employment. It results in reducing the structural issues, concerning global job market, to the individual and its potential to learn. Geer Biesta reminds about the growing tendency in contemporary politics to reformulate collective policy issues into individual learning problems. He warns against "the tendency to reduce the learning society to a »learning economy«"<sup>50</sup> in a situation, when education in modern societies is predominantly driven by the economic imperatives.

Going beyond the functional concept of citizenship education, based of the theory of socialisation, requires promoting its ethical formula. This ethical formula is based on solidarity between cosmopolitan and local/national point of view, even at the cost of limiting the individual freedom of action and choice. The aim is to create citizenship, understood as normative orientation, which assumes the acceptance to commitment to act (at least to some extent) for common good, at the moment of making choices concerning contradictory interests and ideals<sup>51</sup>. Promoting in the process of citizenship educations, the idea of social dialogue, sense of community and openness to experience the Otherness, give participants (both teachers and students) a chance to realise that being a good citizen is more than "being a good man" or "good neighbour". To be a good citizen one has to be actively involved in the life of the community which is (and always will be) socially, culturally, politically and economically diversified.

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<sup>49</sup> "For example, in England citizenship education was incorporated into the National Curriculum in 1988 as one of the five cross-curricular themes and became a compulsory National Curriculum subject at secondary level in 2002" (ibidem, p. 6).

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ibidem.

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