

## POST-COMMUNIST CENTRAL-EAST EUROPEAN POLITICAL CULTURE IN THE ERA OF NEOLIBERALISM

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### **P**URPOSE

*THE paper looks into both aspects of contemporary political culture of Central-East European countries in the period after the breakdown of communist dictatorship and some theoretical assumptions. The author tries to demonstrate historical and today's influences that determine attitudes of people toward political system.*

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** *The analysis is based on the classical Almond and Verba's behavioural concept. Subsequently, the usefulness of this theory and the need to its reformulation have been discussed.*

**Findings:** *Firstly, the author examines the question of how the legacy of non-democratic regimes before 1989 influenced today's attitude of citizens toward politics. We can, preliminarily, utter a generally accepted surmise according to which a quasi-participation or non-effective participation and relatively closed input-side of the political systems (structural variables) significantly have affected citizens' behavior in the sphere of public affairs, in the post-communist era (cultural variables). For that matter, some basic facets of political cultures of selected cases in the region (Poland, Hungary, former East-Germany and the Czech Republic) has been demonstrated. Secondly, the effect of today's dominant neo-liberal discourse on the political cultures has been investigated. In this respect, several questions arise. Not only should we ask about the impact of neo-liberalism on citizens and on their role in political process, but also ponder over the continuity or discontinuity with the previous (pre-revolutionary) discourse.*

**Research Limitations/Implications:** *The research is generally limited by the lack of sociological data from the pre-revolutionary period.*

**Practical Implications:** *The findings could problematize the thesis on the so called "cultural lag", which is the leitmotif of the discussed classic concept.*

**Originality/Value:** *Considering the "neoliberal turn" in the studied region (a primacy of the "economical" over the "political"), the author tries to contribute to the debate about the mutual relation of the cultural and structural variables.*

**Key Words:** *Political Culture; Post-Communism; Neo-Liberalism; Democracy.*

### Introduction

The idea for the paper dealing with the development of the political culture in the region of the Central-East Europe grows out not only from relatively low engagement in the issue among social scientists,

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but also from the current political events and civic-society transformation in the region. In the first place, the goal of this writing has been clarified. It is almost impossible to analyse this comprehensive phenomenon/phenomena in the framework of a short journal article. In this respect it needs to be clarified that this paper does not provide a deep analysis of political cultures in Poland, Hungary, former East-Germany, Slovakia or the Czech Republic. The main aim of the paper is, rather, a general discussion on the way of how political cultures can be studied in changed (or still changing) conditions of transforming, consolidating or generally emerging democracies. The studied region serves as an applicable empirical basis for demonstrating the dynamics of the change.

The first part of the paper deals with the question of how the communist past of the sample of the cases have influenced political cultures and whether we can consider some similarities, in terms of structural impact, which could have affected current development of politics. That is to say, theoretically and terminologically this article (and foremost its second part) is based on the Almond and Verba's classic behavioural concept which is, still, considered as mainstream in the field of political culture research and has a great explanatory value. This concept serves as a framework for the assessment, typologisation and comparison of the selected political cultures both before 1989 and after breakdown of the Soviet bloc. However, Gabriel A. Almond himself contemplated about applicability of his concept, on communist states in the 1980s. Even though, there is no need, taking into consideration the general awareness, to introduce this concept in depth, let me remind some basic tenets. Almond and Verba's basic typology of political culture (Parochial, Subject, and Participant) is based on orientations of people towards set objects (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Types of Political Culture**

	<b>System as General object</b>	<b>Input Objects</b>	<b>Output Objects</b>	<b>Self as Active Participant</b>
Parochial	0	0	0	0
Subject	1	0	1	0
Participant	1	1	1	1

**Source: Almond, Gabriel A. & Verba, Sidney (1989), *The Civic Culture, Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Newbury Park, Sage Publications, p.16.**

The typology is not by any means purposeless. The principal aim of the authors was to demonstrate the congruence between *culture* and *structure*. They assert that “a parochial, subject, or participant culture would be most congruent with, respectively, a traditional political structure, a centralized authoritarian structure, and a democratic political structure” (Almond and Verba, 1989: 20). This could be useful in the context of our contemplation. Let us try to formulate the first research question, ‘*What type of political culture is there in the selected countries?*’ Considering the limited extent of this text, I will focus on only some aspects of *system culture* and *process culture*. The typologisation itself can tell us much both about the character of politics and can serve as a suitable tool for general comparison.

The third part of the paper discusses the influence of neoliberalism on formation of post-communist political cultures. This is to say, it could be helpful not only for analysing the Central-East European region. However, it is needed at this moment to deliberate about the role of this dominant discourse on democracy and its development generally. In this context, the question of reformulation and reinvention of political culture concept will be discussed in the fourth part. We ought to keep in mind the fact that Almond and Verba's classic concept had its origin at the turn of 1950s and 1960s. Namely, as the main aim of the author was not to classify particular cultures, but to demonstrate cultural conditions for democracy. For this purpose, they used some kind of “minimal” or procedural concept of democracy that has, doubtless, its analytic usefulness, but some kind of normative notion as well. The author has

worked on the assumption that studying of (theories of) democracy has changed significantly in the past half-century, as well as the empirical reality of democratic regimes itself. To take this concept a step further, we should ponder over some kind of contemplation about new possibilities in the field of political cultures research. While Almond put stress on cultural variables in a cultural-structural causal relation, the author ask the second broader question: *'Is there really a clear primacy of cultural variables in the cultural-structural causal relation? Or could we think of some kind of 'reverse' relation?'* With regard to the preceding, the neoliberal discourse will be considered both as a some kind of structural influence, a pressure of ruling class on the shape and role of institutions and the political process actors, and as a cultural variable, elite's effort for acquiring cultural hegemony.

### **Political Culture and Non-democratic Past in the Central-East Europe Before 1989**

As *political culture* is a realm of interest difficult to define, due to the complexity of the approaches in practice, for our purpose, we can generally define it, in the present context, as a set of attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of politics. Political culture is shaped by national history and by continual process of social, economic, and political activity. Patterns of attitudes formed by previous experience have essential effect on political behaviour in future (Almond and Powell, 1978: 25). Even though the modern approach to the study of the topic is closely connected with so called behavioural revolution in political science, "the notion of political culture change is one of the most powerful themes of classical literature" (Almond and Verba, 1980: 2). Several classic authors from Plato, Aristotele, Machiavelli, to Rousseau, or Tocqueville derived structural characteristics of government from psychological qualities of people. But the modern concept occurred in the 1950s in connection with the formation of *behavioral* political science. It has its origin in Almond's seminal article *Comparative Political Systems* (1956). The main aim of the author was, in accordance with tenets of *behavioralism*, to construct some universal framework for an analysis of all existing political systems, not only those in the West. The classic article deals with political culture, as well. It is conceptualised as the 'orientation to political action'. According to Almond, "every political system is embedded in a particular pattern of orientations to political action. The author found it useful to refer to this as the *political culture*" (Almond, 1956: 396). In the context of our topic, Almond laid grounds for political culture research of non-democratic countries, despite the fact that the primal aim of Almond (and Verba) was to conceptualize conditions for democracy. Yet, their theory is applicable for non-democratic states as well.

This is to say, the research of political cultures in non-democracies (notably in the Soviet bloc) was not a naturally stipulated issue. It was because of predominance of the theories of totalitarianism in 1950s and, partly, in 1960s and because of the fact that politics in soviet-type regimes were studied predominantly in the field of *area studies* or, specifically, so called *Soviet studies* where the operational model of totalitarianism determined the way of how scholars looked into the politics in communist countries or other type of non-democracies. Considering the limited extent of this text, I do not intend to deal with deep criticism of the totalitarian model. Let me mention only some objectives, which are closely connected with our title. First essential condition for initiating a study of political culture in the Soviet bloc was to engage *Soviet studies* into comparative politics. It was initiated at the turn of 1950s and 1960s namely by famous Canadian political scientist H. Gordon Skilling (Skilling, 1960) who is generally regarded as a founder of sub-discipline of *Comparative Communism* (i. e., an application of the comparative approach to the Soviet area). However, coping with the totalitarian model was essential precondition for this revolutionary process. Skilling managed this task clearly: He and his fellow researcher Alfred Meyer emphasised that the main problem with the totalitarian model was not so much what it said, but what it did not say. When we hold on to the idea that politics can be visualised in system terms (approach of David Easton), we can see that totalitarian model focused almost exclusively on the *output side* of politics (Hough, 1987: 398). When we use the totalitarian model as a tool which predestines realms of interest, it may not help us to better understanding of political process as such and of the *input side* of system. It is needless to say that without an analysis of the *input side* of the system it is almost impossible to study attitudes of people toward system (political culture). Due to this revolution in the Soviet studies, many scholars recognised the importance of broadening of methodological

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tools and studied issues. Thus, influential writings on interest groups, participation, or elite-recruitment emerged. In keeping with this, some scholars began to concentrate on political culture research in communist countries.

It is necessary to mention that Gabriel A. Almond dealt with this task back in 1956 and conceptualized “totalitarian political culture” asserting that “the totalitarian political culture gives the appearance of being homogeneous, but the homogeneity is synthetic” (Almond, 1956: 403). Twenty-seven years after he returned to his (and Verba’s) concept and contemplated about its applicability on communist states. In the article *Communism and Political Culture Theory* (1983) he expressed his conviction that “[t]he success or failure of communist regimes in transforming the attitudes and behaviour of populations may constitute a test of the explanatory power of political culture theory” (Almond, 1983: 127). Gabriel Almond demonstrated the fact that despite the imposition of non-democratic and coercive structure, particular regimes were not able to transform patterns of behaviour completely. According to Almond, “however monopolistic and persuasive the media, however tempting the incentive system, political culture would impose significant constraints on effective behavioural and structural change as the underlying attitudes would tend to persist to a significant degree and for a significant period of time” (Almond, 1983: 128). That is to say, Almond not only casted doubt upon one of the assumption of theories of totalitarianism, but also pointed out differentiation among particular communist countries in the Central-East European region. The author mainly mentioned the existence of so called ‘false consciousness’ (nationalism, religion, liberal-pluralistic views) which is inherited from pre-existing structure.

Despite the existence of the same structural influence on the part of USSR after 1945 (imposition of the Soviet model of economy and political system), there existed obvious diversity among individual communist states in terms of functioning of the regimes, as well as the attitude of citizens toward politics. After all, we can point out diverse pre-war experiences of particular countries (Czechoslovak experience with parliamentary democracy contrasts with situation in Hungary, Poland or Nazi-dictatorship in Germany) that, no doubt, affected post-war development of particular societies. On the other hand, it is inappropriate to derive operational political culture of the countries from pre-existing structure, cultural heritage, or previous experience, only. Perhaps, the most striking example is the comparison between Polish and Czechoslovak dictatorship. While political culture in Czechoslovakia at that time could be typologised as a clear *subject* culture, in the Polish case we observe an unparalleled rise in participation of masses despite existence of coercive authoritarian structure and no previous positive experience with democracy or effective participation. Yet, there is a question of whether we can see clear tendency toward participatory culture in the current Polish case. However, people’s engagement in politics in Poland after 1989 is almost lowest in the region (see the second part of the paper).

This brief contemplation about political culture in communist states or, rather, about the question of how to grasp it, is to serve as grounds for our subsequent study. Firstly, the evidence of diversification among former Central-East European non-democracies could problematise supposed primacy of cultural variables in the cultural-structural relationship. Additionally, the ‘reverse’ causal relation will be investigated in the latter parts of this text. Secondly, here arise following questions about functional continuity or discontinuity of the studied societies and, foremost, of political cultures. Could we consider the year 1989 as a sort of a ‘turning point’ or have the breakdowns of communism, and transition to formal democracies, and market economy not shifted people’s relation to political systems and politics significantly? And, how should we deal with cultural heritage of non-democratic past; and, what are, in fact, structural influences in the present time? The second part looks into some basic (but not exhaustive) data that can help us to tentatively compare and ‘label’ particular political cultures. This part lays some grounds for subsequent argumentation.

### **Political Culture in Central-East Europe after 1989**

The states of former Soviet bloc (and some former Soviet republics) have been undergoing significant changes since 1985; the breakdown of communist dictatorship and the transition from communist authoritarian rule, yet, not all transitions in the region resulted in consolidated democracies. The

paper focusses on questions connected with democratic transformation, i. e., how transitions to democracy, regardless finished or still ongoing, have affected citizens' attitudes toward politics. Referring to the previous discussion, it is appropriate to typologise the political cultures of communist states, in terms of Almond and Verba's concept, as *subject*. It means that authoritarian political structure was, simply said, congruent with political culture. Despite this fact, we can see in the case of the studied countries, still, diversities, rather than similarities among particular states. This diversity reflects persuasive Linz and Stepan's (1996) typology that sees a link between the character of the old regime and the type of transition. Indeed, almost every single state underwent specific path to democracy although it was caused, primarily, by the same international influence, that is, by liberalization in the USSR. In this context, we can observe various reactions of ruling elites on the changes in Soviet politics. While the then elites in Poland and Hungary initiated a sort of liberalization after 1987 (as a specific phase of the transitional process), in the case of Czechoslovakia and East Germany the phase of liberalisation and democratization were launched together at the end of 1989. This is in keeping with the unsettled role of people in the transitional process. Yet, it is not clear if we can see a direct link or causal relation between type of the old regime, type of transition and post-transitional process of democratization.

The indicated diversity among the states and societies has persisted. Analytically, there exists a variety of theories having some tools for reflecting it. The primal aim of the social scientist since 1989 to the present time has been demonstrating whether the transitional process has resulted in 'consolidated democracy', i. e., whether democratic political regime complies with a set of criteria that allow marking particular regime as consolidated. Needless to say, the subdiscipline *considology* has prevailed in the past two decades in the field of comparative research of politics in the region. There have been many attempts to demonstrate the degree of regimes consolidation in the past few years. Even though, there is a plurality of concepts, probably all of them have at least two common features: Firstly, they work with some kind of 'final stage' of development (*consolidated democracy* is a desired state). Secondly, they use certain 'minimal' definition of democracy, which is analytically very useful, but it has, in my opinion, some kind of normative notion. Either way, regardless of the particular outputs of *considologists*, we can notice that development of civic society, as an important criterion of particular concepts of consolidation, is questioned on the part of many scholars, due to the 'desired' development of the civic society has not been accomplished. However, the question of how people are engaged in politics is, in my opinion, the crucial one. According to Larry Diamond "A vibrant civil society is probably more essential for consolidating and maintaining democracy than for initiating it" (cited by Kelly, 2003: 15). Beyond this viewpoint, we can have doubts about usefulness of the concepts of consolidation as such. As Czech leading political scientist Vladimíra Dvořáková asserts, the term 'consolidated democracy' is an oxymoron, because democracy is the only system with inherent potential for change. (Dvořáková, 2006: 24). This 'potential change' could be both structural and behavioural. When we look into the contemporary history of Central-East European politics, we can see the uneven development of institutions and development of the civic society. Yet, this fact could not be surprising. During the period of the breakdown of the communist dictatorships in the Central-East European countries, sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf uttered a well-known thesis according to which, loosely reported, a political or legal transformation takes only six months, an economic transformation six years, but a change of people's attitude may take up to sixty years even (cited by Linek, 2010: 13). According to Dahrendorf's view, some Central-East European societies have covered at least one third of the journey toward the 'desired destination' of catching up with the model for transformation. One of the tasks of this article is to critically investigate this thesis, which is, nevertheless, empirically correct.

Here arises one crucial question, which is going to be addressed thoroughly later: How the significant structural changes - breakdown of dictatorship, transition to formal democracy, and market economy, have affected people's attitudes? However, when we consider the original meaning of the word "democracy" (rule of people), this question is crucial. For demonstrating the development of political culture after the transition we will employ, as noted above, Almond and Verba's (1963) framework. Even though, the concept is analytically very useful and well arranged, this theory (notably their *civic culture* type) is

based on certain concept of democracy. According to the author, the ‘civic culture’, the mixed type of political culture, is desired type for functioning democracy. It is defined as participatory political culture ‘plus something else’ (Almond and Verba, 1989: 29). The civic culture type stresses people’s participation in the input side of the system. The notion ‘plus something else’ that is added to participatory cultures of presence of parochial and subject orientations. This ‘mixed’ culture results, according to the authors, in a balanced political culture that is congruent with political structure (Almond and Verba, 1989: 30). This type of political culture is considered as necessary for maintaining the stable democracy. In the following paragraphs we will look into the way of how the *subject* political culture (inherited from the authoritarian era) has developed and whether its tendency is toward the desired ‘civic’ type. We will demonstrate selected data that have been published in detailed studies, showing some aspects of *system culture* (diffuse support) and *process culture* (internal and external efficacy) after 1989.

**Table 2: Diffuse Support**

1991				1997			
CZ	SK	HUN	PL	CZ	SK	HUN	PL
Democracy is preferable to dictatorship under any circumstances.							
77	67	69	60	66	68	65	65
In some cases, dictatorship may be preferable to democracy.							
7	10	9	14	13	18	17	18
For people like me, it makes no difference whether we live in a democracy or a dictatorship.							
15	22	18	23	21	12	14	13

**Source: Plasser, Fritz et al. (1998), *Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, p.97 (Selected Data).**

The Figures in Table 2 demonstrate the decline of the diffuse support during the 1990s. Although the attitudes of people in various countries vary slightly, the short-term experience with formal democracy has not affected the behaviour positively as it is demonstrated in our figures. This tendency is in parallel with growth of the positive reminiscences of the foregoing non-democratic regime. For example, in the Czech Republic, which is considered as the most democratic state in the region, there is a continual decline of functional assessment of contemporary democracy on the part of citizens (Linek 2010).

**Table 3: Internal Political Efficacy (percentage)**

Rejection of the statement: “People like me have no influence on what the government does”.					
	CZ	SK	HUN	PL	D-East
1991	22	20	19	11	23
1995	20	14	12	14	20

**Source: Plasser, Fritz et al. (1998), *Democratic consolidation in East-Central Europe*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, p.136 (Selected Data).**

**Table 4: External Political Efficacy**

Percentage of those who agree with the statement: "Politicians don't really care what people like me think."				
	CZ	SK	HUN	PL
1991	68	83	67	82
1995/96	68	84	83	89

**Source: Plasser, Fritz et al. (1998), *Democratic consolidation in East-Central Europe*, New York, St. Martin's Press, p.140, (Selected Data).**

The *process culture* constitutes, simply said, the set of orientation toward the political process, and foremost, toward the 'input side' of the system. Primarily, it comprises citizens' consciousness of their influence on the process (political competence). This could be further divided into *external* (belief in the openness and accountability of elites) and *internal* (the self-image of people as relevant participants in the process) *political efficacy*. The selected data listed in Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate either undeveloped 'input structure' of the particular political systems or peoples' persuasion of elites' low responsibility. We can, therefore, assert a statement that Central-East European political culture (or political cultures in the single countries?) has not been affected by the transition immediately. We can, still, say that the studied countries have tendency toward *subject* type of culture, rather than (expected and desired) the 'participant' one or toward 'civic type'. The other table pictures the rate of participation in the wider comparison to obtain a fuller picture. The data demonstrate lower level of participation in Central-East European region in contrast with France and Britain in 2004, the reasons of which will be looked into later on.

**Table 5: The Degree of Participation in Post-communist States (percentage)**

	D-E	SK	LV	SL	CZ	RU	BG	HU	PL	FR	GB
Electing	73	70	72	61	58	56	67	71	46	60	59
Petition Signing	61	58	18	33	33	14	10	16	13	76	74
Taking Part in Demonstration	45	23	33	17	21	25	14	5	5	55	14
Taking Part in Manifestation	43	38	28	20	21	19	27	10	6	38	16
Money Donation	65	29	35	23	22	16	22	9	22	48	31
Boycott of a Product	38	14	9	14	14	7	3	5	5	49	40
Contacting a Politician	17	17	17	13	10	11	8	6	6	23	24
Contacting Media	13	10	8	9	5	6	4	4	3	14	10
Taking Part in an Internet Forum	4	4	7	5	4	2	2	2	5	6	3
Membership in a Party	5	7	2	5	8	3	6	1	1	5	11
Order	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.		

**Source: ISSP 2004. Quoted: *Political Participation and Its Determinants in Post-Communist Countries*, Sociological Review, Vol. 45, No. 5, p.879.**

Generally, we can, tentatively assert that more than two decades of democratic development have not lead to *appropriate* progress of citizen's qualities. The only exception is the former East-Germany (see later). This study has no ambition to demonstrate exhaustive data or to provide wide basis for deep quantitative analysis. Despite the fact that the figures in the tables 2 to 5 are only illustrative, we can see a clear tendency of the unsatisfactory development. Although the state of the political cultures is dissatisfactory, the democracy as the form of government is not, in my opinion, endangered. In this context, I formulate a hypothesis according to which the rather subject type of culture (or tendency toward subject type) is not in contradiction with current prevalent empirical model of democracy. The main aim of following parts of this text is to deliberate about the roots of current state of political culture in the region and about possible perspectives. Following contemplation goes closely together with the way of how to analytically grasp this task.

### **Political Culture and the Neoliberalism**

Let us consider the statement that, as noted in the previous part, political culture(s) in the Central-East European Region (1) inherited some attributes from the previous non-democratic era; (2) does not (do not) have tendencies toward democratic or civic culture type or more precisely, democratic structural transformation has not affected the behavioural sphere considerably. In this respect, Dahrendorf's thesis is empirically correct. Yet, it deserves a thorough contemplation.

Firstly, Ralf Dahrendorf surmises that a deep institutional change (a transition to formal democratic regime and market economy) does not affect citizens' attitudes toward the system, immediately, in the desired way. In fact, it is the thesis of so called *Cultural Lag*, that is, an idea according to which structural change proceeds much faster than the adaption of individuals' attitudes. Some data demonstrated in the previous part empirically demonstrates this, albeit the author will try to offer an alternative explanation, which challenges and complements it. Secondly, Dahrendorf's thesis presupposes some kind of cessation of the concept of historical time or, as Pavel Barša argues, a certain idea that western societies, as an empirical model for transformation, "have reached the final state of the standstill" (cited by Barša, 2011). There arises a question of why new emerging democracies should try to catch up with current state of a desired model while western democracies are still developing, regardless of the particular way. Finally, it is rather evident that Dahrendorf's argument is based on certain normative theory of democracy similar to some other concepts of western political science.

Before we look into the relation between *culture* and *structure*, we should stress the fact that we should keep in mind the diversity among the countries, albeit there were very similar influences in the period of post-communist transformation. Let me mention three cases that are, according to me, fully consolidated democracies: Former East Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic. In the case of the former GDR, we can see probably the most successful democratic transformation, both structural and behavioural. Yet, East Germany was engaged into the West German state with the well-functioned political institutions. This advantage has not had any other post-communist state. The then subject political culture of East-German citizens was gradually transformed into the type that tends toward the participatory one. As Russell J. Dalton and Steven Weldon demonstrate, East Germans are even more prone to participate than West Germans (sic) (Dalton and Weldon, 2010: 9-23). The case of Poland, on the other hand, contrasts significantly. While Polish citizens had the most developed participatory ethos (but not culture) among other societies in the region before 1989, current people's participation in Poland is the lowest in the region (see Table 5). The case of the Czech Republic is interesting, as well. It is the only country with pre-war democratic experience; the typical example of subject culture during the communist dictatorship with observable continuity of cultural attributes to the present days. Although, Czech democracy (and the democratic transformation) is regarded as very successful in the region, there is not positive prospect for development of political culture toward the participatory type.

For a subsequent analysis it is crucial to investigate mutual *cultural-structural* relation. Although, the mainstream political science works with priority of cultural variables in the causal relation analysis, we will focus, in essence, on the 'structural side'. So, what happened in the Central East Europe after

1989? No doubts, particular political systems underwent revolutionary changes in the structure. After all, bureaucratic authoritarianisms do not function in a similar way like democracies. Although, we can see some continuity of legal institutions in the pre- and post- revolutionary period, the logic of the actual functioning changed significantly. Following this, the dual structure of communist dictatorship (party/state resemblance) disappeared very quickly (the case of GDR and CSSR is the most striking, Polish and Hungarian development was more gradual and was initiated by the then communist rulers) and the existing legal institutions, foremost parliaments, were filled with qualitatively new content. Indeed, institutional change took maximally, fully in consonance with Dahrendorf's thesis, a few months. The role of the legal political process has transformed fundamentally compared to the role of civic societies that have not called for their broader political rights, since the revolutionary upheaval where masses played crucial role. The author argues that the idea of the *Cultural lag* is more likely complementary, but not fully sufficient for the explanation of the current activity of the civil society and the people's participation. In this place, a hypothesis is demonstrated according to which a particular model for the transformation (content of the structural change) can directly influence cultural variables. That is to say, the model which prevailed after 1989 (procedural democracy plus market economy) was not unavoidable and that there existed other variants that have not been fully followed. Naturally, the author investigates the *quality* of structural change, that is, deep structural changes, which occurred after 1989 have not affected people's attitudes fundamentally because proponents of the prevailed model might have not expected (or accepted) the broader engagement of people in public affairs. Author's argument is based on the idea according to which some alternative version of the model for transformation could have influenced cultural sphere in another way. This rather disputable statement primarily refuses the conviction of some scholars who built their theories on the argument of priority of cultural variables over the structural one in a mutual causal relation. The idea does not deny the broadly accepted hypothesis asserting that roots of contemporary political culture originate in citizens' experience with dictatorship and the quasi-participation or non-effective participation in the period after 1989 (subject culture). On the other hand, here arises a necessary question of how some important psychological qualities have been formed since 1989 and what impact has the era of the neoliberalism had, as an important structural influence.

As noted above, Dahrendorf's idea that certainly formulates the thesis of *Cultural lag* could be considered as empirically correct and measurable. Yet, this fact should not discourage us from some further questioning. After all, the state of political culture after more than 20 years of the post-communist development is not satisfactory, at least for those who believe in a prospect of democracy. Should we take some attributes of pre-transitional political culture in the present time for granted or can we deliberate about some possible alternatives? Generally and simply said, Dahrendorf-style explanation would assert that immediate institutional change does not lead to cultural or behavioural change. But, what kind of institutional change did the Central-East European societies encounter? Did some alternatives exist?

No doubt, the transition to electoral democracy meant fundamental change in the political system functioning. But the existence of relatively open *input side* of the political system itself ensured neither increasing participation nor transformation of political culture. There is something additional that should be taken into consideration, the political socialization in a broader sense. We are talking about post-communist socialization that took place in the conditions of political freedom and political pluralism in the past two decades. While the logic of functioning of the political process underwent revolutionary change, especially in the period of 1989-1990, there arises a question of what changes underwent (and have undergone) other spheres, which could belong to so-called political 'superstructure'. While the pre-transitional political discussion was, predominantly, limited (but not determined) by official ideology formulated by ruling communist parties, the post-communist one should be, supposedly, pluralistic. In the sphere of the legal political institutions, there happened a qualitatively major shift, whereas in the ideological sphere we can cast doubts whether the year 1989 in the region can be understood as a turning point, or if we can see some kind of continuity from the pre- to the post-transitional period.

On the one hand, the direction and quality of the institutional change really matters, as we will look into. We can clearly assert that there existed more than one relevant alternative of how to rebuild the authoritarian political system. On the other hand, the dominant societal discourse, which prevailed during 1990s, should be investigated as well. As for the first point, there was a broader consensus about the need to build the 'standard' political settlement, it means, western-style parliamentary democracy. Despite this fact, foremost the debate in former Czechoslovakia demonstrates the existence of at least two ideal types or models for transformation, which were discussed. The first (unsuccessful) variant was embodied by the thinking of the first post-communist Czechoslovak president Václav Havel. For him, as Jan Bureš argues, "the struggle for power, electoral competing, and political plots meant only passive acceptance of the principals of classic parliamentary democracy, party politics which he (...) considered as insufficient" (Bureš, 2012: 61). The debate was namely about the role of people in political process. Havel's image of participatory democracy was based on his older articles where he expressed mistrust to political parties, promoting the plurality of interest groups as the relevant partaker of the political process. On the other side of the notional scale there was the position of Václav Klaus, whose idea delineated the role of people only as regular attendants of regular elections (Císař, 2008: 124). These two positions, present in all countries with various influences, could be considered as a dispute about the concept of liberalism. Michal Kopeček demonstrates two types of liberalism in the Czech Republic after 1989. The first could be labelled as 'liberalism of the civil society', having significant communitarian attributes, understanding of the politics as a service to public good, stressing an inherent plurality of the civic society. The second type is neo-liberalism or the liberalism of the market. This type stresses individualism and a separation of the private and public sphere (Kopeček, 2011: 72). Notably, it is the dominant political discourse the second type has the strong tendency toward.

This is to say, the debates, which have been going on in particular states, could have affected attributes of national cultures. Simultaneously, we should keep in mind the existence of generally international influence of so called neoliberalism that has affected almost whole post-communist region and its influence is still affecting the societies, especially on the background of current economic crisis in Europe and on the background of promoted solutions. At the same time, the researcher admits that particular national institutional arrangement can, to an extent, direct this influence in a specific style. Yet, the existence of relatively open system and formal conditions of political freedom is one thing. The second thing is how people are encouraged or discouraged to make use of possibilities that are given by legal structure. Thus, it is essential to investigate the dominant political discourse that can be seen as a kind of structural expression. Let us accept, now, a thesis according to which we are living in the era of neoliberalism. This assertion is not (and could not be) supported by 'hard' scientific argument and that it is very often refused by right-wing scholars, and politicians as a lefty's fiction.

Whilst democratic (or civic) political culture has not taken the roots in post-communist states, the neoliberal discourse was established very quickly and successfully. After all, this theme is very common in current academia. Recently, for instance Michal Pullmann has considered liberalism as an adequate substitution of the old (communist) ideological concepts (Pullmann, 2011). Therefore, we can ponder over the kind of continuity from the pre- to the post-revolutionary period as neoliberal discourse has very similar function to the previous one. Is there any link between neoliberalism and the state of political culture? In the present context, the researcher would like to understand the neoliberal discourse as an antidemocratic political project. According to John L. Campbell and Ove K. Pedersen, "neoliberalism has been a political project concerned with institutional changes on a scale not seen since the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and a project that has attempted to transform some of the most basic political and economic settlement of the post-war era, including labour market" (cited by Campbell and Pedersen, 2001: 1). To emphasize, David Harvey in his definition sees 'neoliberal turn' or 'neoliberalization' as "a utopian project to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism or as a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites" (Harvey, 2005: 19).

To date the historical logic, 'neo-liberal turn' occurred at the end of 1970s / beginning of 1980s in the context of government alternations in the Britain and the USA. Yet, neoliberalism is not typical only for the West. It was successfully established, for instance, in (non-democratic) Argentina and Chile. Since that time, it has become, more or less, a global phenomenon. May be, the basic tenet of neoliberal thinking is a primacy of the 'economical' over the 'political'. This thinking has its practical consequences. As Harvey argues, "[n]eoliberal theorists are, however, profoundly suspicious of democracy. Governance by majority rule is seen as a potential threat to individual rights and constitutional liberties. Democracy is viewed as a luxury, only possible under conditions of relative affluence coupled with a strong middle-class presence..." (Harvey, 2005: 66). The neoliberal turn was not only on adopting monetarism, "but on the unfolding of government policies in many other areas" (Harvey, 2005: 24). The main consequence of the neoliberal economical thinking and promoting of low taxes has been reduction of (social) state as a mere democratic institution. Especially, in the post-communist region the effect of neoliberal policy is clearly observable. The dominant neo-liberal discourse is, in my opinion, the main moving substance of post-communist political culture. Its structural expression could be demonstrated by the pressure of certain economic and political elites on lessening of public sphere, de-politicisation of some spheres, like economy, etc. The pressure of neoliberals on cutting expenditures on culture, education and social services means lessening of realms where potentially vibrant civic society can have their say.

One can say that neoliberalism, whose principals are presently inherent in almost all fields of public life, is incompatible with democratic ideals (but not necessarily with the democratic form of government). Thus, I would like to formulate two statements. First, the current political culture is congruent with the political structure. And second, this state of culture is fully in accordance with tenets of neoliberalism, which could mean, there are no prospects to shift the post-communist political culture toward the participant ideal type. On the background of these ideas the author, in the final part of the paper, provides focus on the way of how political cultures can be studied in the present conditions.

### **Some Concluding Remarks**

To sum up, the content of the previous parts deal both with the state of the political cultures in the post-communist region and with some conceptual problems we face these days, applying classical, but outdated behavioural concept. One could say that the ambition of the democrats in the post-communist societies is to reach the *civic culture*. Doubtless, the rather lower rate of both the internal and the external efficacy and no positive prospects for the shifting of the culture toward the 'desired type' do not support the democratic consolidation. Simultaneously, we should consider the fact that the congruence between the *civic culture* and the democratic structure does not entail the same meaning today, compared to the post-war era.

Moreover, we ought to mention the criticisms of the *civic culture* model that has been stated over the past years. One of the most profound criticisms was delineated by a political philosopher and a theoretician of the participatory democracy, Carol Pateman. This author, interpreting the data published in the Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture*, clearly demonstrated both the character of the civic culture type and the interconnection of their concept with a particular theory of democracy. Notably, Pateman came to findings and documented the fact that the *civic culture* is systematically split across the class and sex divisions (Pateman, 1989: 149). Secondly, according to Pateman, presentation of the civic culture is as much a logical inference from a conception of democracy as it is a result of empirical investigation" (Pateman, 1989: 149). Latter, Pateman's perspective (participatory democracy) necessarily proposes the reverse of cultural-structural relation, that is, the primacy of the structural variables over the cultural one. Notably, the first and the second point are important for the subsequent contemplation.

According to Pateman, "it would be strange if a stable system did not exhibit a congruence between its political culture and political structure..." (Pateman, 1989: 149). To state, the countries like Poland, Hungary, Slovakia or the Czech Republic are currently stable, in the terms of political consolidation, and one can see the congruence between the democratic political structure and the current state of

political culture. In this context, here arises a question of what has changed, holding onto the classic theory? This is to say, the basic model for democratic transformation in the discussed region was directly derived from the idea of procedural democracy. Yet, the political structure, unlike its theoretical model, has changed. For example, the privatisation of the public sphere (in the conditions of neo-liberalism) could be considered a significant structural shift. This would mean, the classic behavioural model does not take the above into consideration because it was built in other conditions, i.e., five decades ago.

Even though, the author restates that Almond and Verba's theory provides very useful conceptual framework, it deserves a reformulation. The three conceptual levels, that are, *the system culture*, *the process culture*, and *the policy culture* could be used as a well-functioning and time-tested framework for 'typologisation' of political cultures. So, what is out-dated about the actual theory? Firstly, it does not grasp the question of ideology or dominant discourse. Secondly, and more importantly, the content of the three-level framework should be questioned. As for the *system culture*, the authors usually take into consideration these variables: the pride in nation, the national identity, and the legitimacy of government. At the system level, there is, in my opinion, no doubt about the need for the investigation of the government-legitimacy, assessment of the support of the democratic form of government. Contrary to the above, here arises a question of why to measure, in the 21st century, the national identity, in connection with democracy. This follows, if we consider, for example, the current European integration, we can cast doubt about the exclusivity of democracy in the borders of any national-state. After all, the attitude of citizens toward the nation does not have to signify anything about peoples' attitude toward politics. Naturally, this criticism is connected with my assertion about a normative motion of this theory, which I mentioned in the introduction. All in all, the measuring of the national pride is associated with the idea of democracy proposed by conservative thinkers.

Contrary to the previous point, the *process culture* level could be considered the crucial one for studying of how people behave politically. The investigating and the measuring of the external and internal efficacy are much more useful tools for the understanding of the peoples' role in politics, opposed to the disputable, above mentioned, variables such as national pride or in cases of ill-defined democracy.

More importantly, the author would like to propose to concentrate more, in future, on so far rather omitted (in this article as well) the *policy culture* level. This level deals with the 'ought to be' questions, that are, with people's opinions toward policy implementations. This is to say, particular expectations could be in conflict with each other, while we employ, for the purposes of the analysis, predominantly the 'procedural model'. In democracy, it is crucial to investigate and analyse peoples' will. This is to include the layout of the left-right spectrum and ideological inclination of particular classes. In this area, the new horizons and questions emerge for the investigation of the congruence between the culture and the structure. We should ask, for instance, *How is the will of people expressed by the representation?* or *What are peoples' expectation of democracy?*

Regarding the first question, we should keep in mind that the Schumpeterian 'another theory of democracy' (or realistic theory), supposedly ideal-free, is based on the idea of primacy of the electing of representatives over the direct participation of people. The theory of 'procedural democracy' is based primarily on this principal. As noted above, establishing of the liberal democracy in Central-East Europe after 1989 followed the tenets of this 'minimal', 'procedural', or 'realistic' democratic form. This is to say, the procedural model was elaborated in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and practically set up in the post-war era. Establishing of this model in the conditions of neo-liberalism does not cause the same output. In fact, representative democracy in the post-war period (in the West) functioned in the conditions of the social state with relatively large public sphere, where the civil society could politically perform. Today's democracy in the studied region follows the above-described principals, but the emerging civic society faces reduction of the democratic state, at the expense of the private sector, i.e., the non-democratic one. The realms, where the societal plurality could be manifested, are becoming smaller due to the privatisation of the public sphere. Thus, the emerging civic societies have no chance to

develop. Therefore, in the opinion of the researcher, it is inevitable to state that the present structural variables and the present experiences of the civil society significantly influence the state of the political culture. Following this, scholars should not overestimate the cultural legacy in the studied regions.

After all, the author of several classic publications on the procedural model, Robert Dahl, has come up with criticism of the present state of democracy, lately. In his *On Political Equality* he discusses and stresses the necessity of political equality. He argues that “inequalities extend not merely to incomes and wealth but, directly and indirectly, to information, status, education, access to political elites, and many others” (Dahl, 2006: 66). This assertion is clearly connected with the previous paragraph. Still weaker middle class, the main supporter of the liberal democracy, faces the de-politicisation of the state and imposition of the non-democratic market principals to the originally democratic areas. Privatisation of the ‘political’ creates access barriers to the political process for the still counting lower classes.

This article does not formulate the proposals of how to face neoliberalism. It suggests, rather, the scholars to come up with either a ‘new realistic concept’ of democracy or bind their studies to normative theories of democracy. Thus, minimal proposal of the author is, to restate, stressing the *policy culture* level, in the existing classic behavioural framework. This claim presupposes, as such, a closer relation between political theory and empirical political science.

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