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PATHS IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONTEMPORARY THEORY OF THE STATE

ABSTRACT

The theory of the state today has developed from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and is subject to a myriad of theoretical approaches. The state has changed with time and in this article the author indicates how the concept of the state in political science has reflected it. The article focuses on the contemporary state theories. The author claims that a “new wave” of theories of the state is changing our understanding of the state and results in the fundamental re-evaluation of politics, power and the state. The author puts particular emphasis on the cultural turn in the theory of the state and tries to examine how the globalization debate and the emergence of the globalization perspective in social sciences have affected the theory of the state.

Keywords: state, cultural turn, post-modernism, global turn, complexity turn

POLITICAL SCIENCE IS especially concerned with the macro-social political order, viewed as an institutionalized and formalized system, with the help of which some individuals and groups gain, maintain and exercise authority over others. The state is at the heart of this order, and thus it has always played a significant role in political science research. The state is considered to be an important subject of politics, which to a large degree shapes a specific social-political reality, transforming it in accordance with its own interest and needs. Political phenomena are so strictly connected with the functioning of the state that in many previous works on politics its research was identified with the study of the state and its bodies of authority. Most contem-

porary researchers also have no doubts about the central position of the state in political relations, and the state is viewed as the basic form of the organization of political life. That is why political science is often defined as the study of the state or the knowledge of its bodies and institutions as well as of relations between countries. The state is the subject of research of many disciplines and this term has a wide range of meanings. They include: a set of institutions, a territorial unit, a philosophical idea, and an instrument of coercion or oppression.

The deliberations on the state – its origin, transformations, the source and scope of state power, the legitimacy of different political systems – have always been part of the discussion on the social life of the man. Issues of the state have been subject to numerous studies, the purpose of which is to try to answer the question what the state is and what role it plays in human communities. It stems from the fact that the state has emerged as a result of processes occurring in the structure of human societies. This institution is under constant change triggered by transformations in the organization of social life. Its dynamics has been always connected with the dynamics of the society. The current developments in the field of political science have brought the revival of the debate on the nature of the organization of the state. It is a consequence of great civilization changes (the information revolution, globalization, the emergence of the so-called information society), which are believed to affect the function and organization of state authority, or to generally influence the sphere of politics. Therefore, some scholars indicate that the definition of the state used in contemporary political science was developed in the industrial era and refers to a specific kind of the organization of the state, i.e. the modern national state. Civilization changes cause that previous definitions are unable to adequately reflect the real essence of the contemporary organization of the state. Therefore, it is proposed that old concepts should be abandoned and some new ideas, which would help to explain the role and meaning of the state in social life – should be pursued. The theory of the state evolves and tries to keep up with sudden civilization changes. The changing social reality requires new conceptualization, thus it will be useful to study the direction in which the contemporary theories of the state are developing.

In the classical formulas, the state is viewed as a large and complex social group with a common purpose. It is assumed that it is a separate state of institutions, which has a power to establish the rules governing the society. In the subjective aspect, i.e. from the perspective of the group which forms it, it is a political organization of the sovereign territorial community.¹ The way in which the state

¹ G. Skąpska, *Państwo*, [in:] *Encyklopedia socjologii*, vol. 3, Warszawa 2000, p. 56.

is understood and defined in contemporary political science has been particularly influenced by the tradition of Georg Jellinek and Max Weber. In his main work, *The General Theory of the State*, Georg Jellinek (1851–1911) proposed a brief definition of the state, which took into account three main elements: population, territory and supreme authority. He believed that the state is a group of people, inhabiting a limited part of land, and equipped with ruling authority, which all makes it a unity.² Hence, the literature on the subject often presents a view of the state as the political organization of a society, which occurs at a specified stage of the development of the mankind, when the state-specific constitutive factors – population, territory and supreme authority – emerge. Jellinek's concepts significantly influenced later scholars who defined the state broadly as a community of people inhabiting a specific area, which is subject to supreme authority.³ Max Weber was another scholar whose ideas had a huge impact on the academic debate on the state. According to Weber, the state is a rational organization, which functions thanks to the existence of the professional administration apparatus (government), which implements public tasks and has a monopoly for the application of coercive measures towards the inhabitants of a given territory. The present thinking about the state still perceives the organization element as the constitutive feature of the state, because the state requires the political apparatus of authority (institutions, such as parliament and civil service), which governs a given territory, and the power of which is based on the system of law and on the possibility of using institutionalized coercion in order to accomplish specific political goals.

The contemporary definitions of the state, which are also present in the Polish literature on the subject, emphasize that the state is a political association, which establishes the sovereign law and exercises power through the system of permanent institutions. These institutions have a public character as they bear responsibility for the collective organization of public life and are financed with public funds. It is assumed that, as the political organization of a territorial community, the state is an “organization which controls the community which inhabits a specific territory,” and is: different from other organizations operating in the same area;

1) autonomous;

2) centralized;

and

3) the activities of their constituent elements are coordinated;

² G. Jellinek, *The General Theory of the State*, part 2, 1900, p. 77.

³ See: M. Chmaj, M. Żmigrodzki, *Wprowadzenie do teorii polityki*, Lublin 1998, p. 162.

the state

- 4) has the exclusive right to use force;
- 5) integrates the society and secures its survival.⁴

The concepts of Jellinek and Weber represent the “classical” thinking about the state, which often prevails in the theory of politics. In the contemporary literature, there is a dominant view that the state is the political organization of a community inhabiting a specific territory. As the term is popularly understood, the state is a legal-political institution equipped with legal means of force, and at the same time it is a national community, the intrinsic good of all its members. The notion of the state is commonly associated with everything which is public, including officials and offices, functionaries of different bodies of public authority, courts, police and military service.

The works of Jellinek and Weber were devoted to the analysis of the phenomenon which was contemporary to those scholars – the centralized national state being the product of the modern era. However, their classical concepts have been criticized in social science of recent years and some new approaches in the thinking about the state have appeared. More and more attention is being paid to the fact that at the present stage of the development of the mankind, civilization changes, such as, for example, the emergence of the information society and globalization, lead to the fundamental transformation of the organization of the state. Although the state remains an important centre of the concentration of political power, its character is considerably changing.

The debate on the contemporary state puts emphasis on the fact that globalization and the information revolution have contributed to the reduction of the state’s control over the sphere in which it has exercised authority so far. All three kinds of the state’s sovereignty – political, economic, and cultural – have become limited. Moreover, globalization processes have significantly modified the relations between the three constituents of the state and its international environment: borders, population and power. The authority of contemporary national states is being constantly undermined both from the “top” and from the “bottom;” both by external pressure (from the international environment) and the internal one (from the inhabitants of a given state territory). It is more and more frequently assumed that the centralized national state, equipped with the same prerogatives as before,

⁴ See: A. Heywood, *Politics*, New York 1997; P. Dunleavy, *The State*, [in:] *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, R.E. Goodin and Ph. Pettit (eds.), Oxford 1993, p. 777; G. Skąpska, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

is too big to effectively solve regional or local problems (thus, smaller territorial units and communities strive for more autonomy and want to delegate some of their competence regarding the development of the socio-economic order), and at the same time too small to tackle global challenges. That is why the organization of social and political life is undergoing gradual changes: the state is being decentralized, delegating some of its competence to local communities and authorities. The international subjectivity of the state is also being reduced. As states accept the obligations resulting from the norms of the international law and acknowledge the existence of international and transnational institutions, they transfer part of their sovereignty of their own free will. Therefore, the development of the structures and mechanisms of controlling social life on a global scale has become a vital element of the process of the transformation of the national state. Interactions among different actors participating in international politics are becoming increasingly frequent and intense, ranging from customary *ad hoc* cooperation and formal collaboration within an organization to cooperation within the network of non-government actors, or even “virtual” interactions between communities via the Internet.

Civilization transformations are accompanied by deep changes in the way the world is understood and depicted. Changes occurring in social reality have evoked the need for seeking new research paradigms, which will correspond to modern challenges, such as: the growing mobility of people, objects, pictures, information as well as complex interdependency.⁵ Therefore, in the development of modern humanities we observe a departure from static system models and the growing emphasis on the dynamic process character of social life. As a response to the challenges mentioned above, the metaphor of the “field” of social fabric models – viewed as a liquid and constantly moving mosaic, changing matrix of human actions and interactions – has become more commonly used. We are also less interested in the “hard” issues of institutions, social organization or structure, and have become more concerned with the “soft” issues of culture, including systems of value, meanings, norms and rules, forms of discourse and group mentality. The analyses of social reality have emphasized “soft” intangibles, such as meanings, symbols, rules, values, norms, principles, framework and forms of discourse.⁶

⁵ See: J. Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies. Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, London 2000, pp. 11–14.

⁶ See: P. Sztompka, *Zaufanie*, Kraków 2007, p. 28.

In the past decades, political science, trying to cope with the challenges of the social reality analysis, has gone through a few characteristic “turns.” One of them is the *cultural turn*, which to a large extent influenced the way in which political scientists analyse such traditional subject areas as: authority, state, violence, civil society, social movements. It was connected with the increased interest in the cultural aspects of social life and the recognition that they are the key to explaining the principles of the political and economic development of individual societies. Culture is now thought to determine almost everything.⁷ The cultural, or post-modernist breakthrough in political science had a particularly significant influence on the sudden revival of this discipline at the turn of the 1980s, opening up new research perspectives and inspiring new, innovative studies.

Another significant turning point was the *global turn*, associated with the process of globalization. The global turn in political science was part of the growing interest of humanities in the causes, effects and future of globalization processes. Transformations in the modern world are of a global character. These changes have considerable influence on science, as a social activity of the man, used for gathering and synthesizing knowledge about the world and for identifying laws governing them. Hence, as the contemporary world is subject to globalization processes and has become a “unity,” humanities should be characterized by a global insight into the natural environment, economy, society, culture, and politics, too.

The third important breakthrough in contemporary political sociology was the so-called *complexity turn*, associated with common departure from static system models in humanities and focusing on the process character of social life, which is constantly developing. The complexity turn was strictly connected with the global turn: it became evident that the pace of change in the social world surrounding us is so fast that social science is unable to keep up with it, and the global dimension of the world is characterized by high complexity, i.e. the globalized world constitutes a complex system – a dynamic system, in which it is difficult to establish clear borders and the existing dependencies (relations) are non-linear. The complexity turn was meant to be a response to the difficulties in explaining the global social and political reality. It is a scientific analysis based on dynamics, lack of balance, emphasizing the multiplicity of factors, the existence of various

⁷ See: D. Landes, *Culture Makes Almost All the Difference*, [in:] *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, L.E. Harrison and S.P. Huntington (eds.), New York 2000, p. 42.

sections of development paths, historically rooted dependencies and intrinsic uncertainty.⁸

Civilization changes and new research perspectives in humanities have strongly influenced the contemporary theories of the state and the revision of former methods of analysis. What played a particularly important role in the evolution of the modern theory of the state was the cultural turn, which questioned many of the key concepts and research approaches of the past. The culturalist approach to the analysis of political phenomena led to the revival of interest in the works of Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, as well as in the issues of the ideological hegemony and ideological apparatuses of the state. In the deliberations on the sphere of politics, it was emphasized that violence, which is inextricably linked with the field of politics and state authority, does not need to have a “physical,” or “visible” character, and the focus shifted to its metaphorical or symbolic forms. One of the biggest contributions to this new approach to violence came from Michel Foucault, who believed that forms of violence may be seen in everyday social discourses and practices, and from Pierre Bourdieu, who developed the notion of symbolic violence, which referred to all forms of instilling norms and patterns of social behaviour.

The cultural turn in the theory of the state questioned the perception of the state as a centralised, hierarchically constructed and sovereign organism in favour of the analysis of the state as a certain cultural form and the analysis of relations between culture and the state. What played an important role was the fact that Emil Durkheim’s classical works were once again appreciated as well the meaning of signs, symbols and rituals in human life and the perception of the state as a place of rituals and symbols. The problem of the importance of the state and public authority was also discussed by Clifford Geertz. His works on Bali and the so-called politics of meaning are an interesting example of the “cultural turn” in the theory of the state and of viewing the state as a specific cultural phenomenon. While analysing the Balinese society, Geertz put emphasis on the fact that the country’s political institutions are built on the cultural basis. He made an effort to discuss the cultural foundations of Bali, i. e. its beliefs and values, mostly of a religious character, which revived and guided it, gave it a meaning and shape, and then he analysed social structure arrangements and the political tools by means of which the state main-

⁸ See: J. Urry, *Spółeczeństwa i wymiar globalny*, [in:] *Socjologia. Lektury*, P. Sztompka, M. Kuciam (eds.), Kraków 2005, p. 705.

tained the direction of development and achieved the desired shape.⁹ In his analysis, Geertz emphasized the symbolic expression of power through rituals and symbols, and he indicated that authority exists in and through rituals and symbols. For Geertz, ceremony and ritual determined the essence of the state and justified its existence. State bureaucracy in Bali bore the main responsibility for organizing mass rituals representing the essence of politics.

The cultural turn led to the abandonment of thinking about the state as a set of institutions in favour of the view that the state is a set of activities and cultural practices – a dynamic reality. What shaped the new approach to the phenomenon of the state was the works of a French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He noted that the main problem related to the issue of the state is the fact that most research papers on this subject area, especially at the historical stage of forming and developing the national state, participate, more or less effectively, in the process of building it, thus in its existence.¹⁰ In order to change a method of analysing the state, Bourdieu used the concept of field. It mainly indicated the dynamic and fluent character of the state and the political processes occurring in it. Bourdieu wrote that in terms of analysis, the field may be defined as a network or configuration of objective relations among positions. The positions, in turn, are objectively defined on account of their existence and of the conditions they impose on the people or institutions that hold them, specifying their current and potential situation in the structure of distribution of various kinds of power or capital. Having such power (capital) determines access to specific benefits, for which the game in a given field is played. In highly diverse societies, the social macrocosm consists of a number of such relatively autonomous microcosms, the spheres of objective relations, which are the field of operation of the specific logic and coercion, which cannot be reduced to the ones that govern other fields. Using the concept of field, Bourdieu criticised previous theories of the state.¹¹ He indicated that, when developing the theory of the state, the state is treated as if it was a real entity, which is well-defined, clearly separated and internally coherent, which interacts with external, also well-defined powers. In reality, however, there is a set of bureaucratic and administrative fields, in which people or groups of people, connected or not connected with the government, fight, personally or *per procura*, for this special form of authority – the possibility of shaping a specific sphere of practice through

⁹ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation Of Cultures*, New York 1973, p. 375.

¹⁰ P. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, Palo Alto 1998, p. 78.

¹¹ P. Bourdieu, L.J.D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago 1992, p. 78

laws, regulations and administrative measures (permits, subsidies, etc.), i.e. with the use of something which is usually defined as politics. Thus, for Bourdieu the state is a set of power fields, in which battles are fought for obtaining the possibility of establishing and imposing a collection of obligatory norms within a nation, i.e. within the borders of a country, which will be universal and commonly used.¹²

Bourdieu wrote that the construction of the modern state was the process of the concentration of different kinds of authority or capital (economic, military, legal or cultural), which ends, at the early stages, with the monopolization of public power by the king. This power was both external and superior to all private powers (e.g. feudal lords). The concentration of all these kinds of capital led to the emergence of specific, purely state capital. Such accumulated capital allowed the state to exercise authority over different fields and different types of individual capital. This kind of metacapital, which is able to control other types of capital, determines state authority. The construction of the state is connected with building the field of authority understood as the game field, on which owners of capital (of all kinds) fight for power in the country, i.e. for the control of state capital, which in turn gives control over different types of capital and their reproduction.¹³ In his theory of the development of the state being the result of the process of the accumulation of capital, Bourdieu paid a lot of attention to symbolic capital, which he believed to be the condition or context of all other forms of concentration, if they were to last for some time. Symbolic capital is the power to use symbols in order to legitimize possession of other types of capital on different levels and in different social configurations. The French sociologist emphasized that the state, acting as a bank with symbolic capital, is a guarantor of all acts by law. Appointment or a certificate belong to a class of official acts or discourses, which are symbolically effective because they are authorized by entitled, “official” people, who act formally, being endowed with an official/public function or rank.¹⁴

In his analysis of the state, Pierre Bourdieu also dealt with the issue of culture, especially the symbolic efficiency of the state, i.e. its power to create social reality. He largely contributed to the “cultural turn” in the analysis of the sphere of politics and political institutions, such as the state. Bourdieu noted that in our communities the state significantly influenced the production and reproduction of the tools

¹² Ibidem, p. 95.

¹³ Ibidem, pp. 98–99; P. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason...*, pp. 80–82.

¹⁴ P. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason...*, p. 93.

for creating social reality. As an organizational structure and regulatory authority, it constantly acts towards shaping permanent predispositions, through all constraints and physical and intellectual disciplines. Moreover, it imposes and instils all basic principles of categorization, according to the criteria of gender, age, competence, etc. By providing a form to practices, it establishes and instils common patterns and categories of perception and thinking, social framework of perception, understanding or memory, mental structures, and state forms of classification.¹⁵ Bourdieu believed that in modern societies the state is the main subject responsible for the construction of official categories, according to which both populations and minds are structured. Thanks to the codification, combined with actual economic and social activities (such as child benefits), it gives privilege to a certain form of family organization, reinforces those who are unable to adapt to it, and uses all possible tangible and symbolic measures to encourage “logical conformism” and “moral conformism” as the approval of a certain system of forms of understanding and creating the world, the unifying force of which is this specific type of organization, or this category.¹⁶

The works of Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu drew attention to cultural, or in other words, symbolic aspects of the organization and logic of the functioning of the state. They aroused interest in cultural process, which help to understand the functioning of modern states. The cultural perspective in the research on the state is far from being uniform. Generally speaking, it focuses either on the role of ideology and ideas, or on the issues of rituals and symbols. The last of the above elements is especially characteristic of contemporary studies, which are departing from previous orthodoxy in thinking about the state and represent the alternative approach to the analysis of the state. It is particularly reflected in abandoning the long-dominant method of research inspired by Weber and Marxism.¹⁷

One of the fundamental problems involved in the contemporary theory of the state is the fact that processes of globalization and deterritorialization cause the erosion of today’s world, which has been structured by the existence of clear borders delineating the area of the sovereign supremacy of the modern national state. The change in the circumstances of the external environment necessitates the transformation of the state. Growing interdependency on a global scale, mutual condition-

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 95.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

¹⁷ M. Marinetto, *Social Theory, the State and Modern Society: the State in Contemporary Social Thought*, Buckingham 2006, p. 117.

ing of what is global (external) and what is local (internal), high mobility of people, capital and ideas flowing freely across countries, have all contributed to the increasing “permeability” of borders, which fail to fulfil their present functions. The issue of civilization changes, which affect the gradual evolution of the state, has been part of political science research, resulting in the development of such concepts as the “global turn” and the “complexity turn.” Thanks to them, new notions – globality, complexity and liquidity – have entered the scientific discourse, becoming metaphors often used for describing the condition of the contemporary world. The debate on the global turn brought a conclusion that globalization decreases the importance of basic social institutions as the societies we belong to are changing. The global analysis of the dependency between ecological, economic, social and political processes occurring in the contemporary world necessitated redefining all previous research categories. The new global context of political science studies not only opened up new research areas, but it also led to the emergence of new opportunities for the interpretations of classical theories in the field of political sociology. The discussion on the complexity turn drew attention to the fact that the global world is a complex system, i.e. a dynamic system in which it is difficult to establish clear borders, and the existing dependencies (relations) have a non-linear character. John Urry, one of the scholars doing research on the issue of the complexity of the contemporary world, indicated that globalization cannot be analysed within the framework of the previous research categories as the socio-political system established at the national level is not simply transferrable to the global level. There is no linear dependence between what is global and what is local in this model. Global complexity is a complex system of mobile links between various phenomena occurring on different levels. It is a system of networks and circulating relations. According Urry, this system manifests itself in various global networks and global flows.¹⁸

The debate on the theory of the state has focused on the question how the contemporary state evolves in the face of the fact that its sovereignty and territoriality are losing importance because of global flows of capital, goods, services, technology, communication and information. Contemporary researchers emphasize that the fact that “the god of the national state is mortal does not mean that the state is dying,”¹⁹ and try to answer the question how the strategy of the state is

¹⁸ J. Urry, *Global complexity*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 245–249.

¹⁹ U. Beck, *Power in the Global Age*, New York 2006, p. 325.

changing and what new forms of state organization have appeared in response to the civilization challenges of modern times.

The concepts of the global turn and the complexity turn were developed in order to tackle difficulties in analysing changes in the organization of the political and state life in accordance with the categories formed in the period of the national state's dominance. It is indicated that the previous theories of the state had to face the challenge of the unequal development of the European Community. The European Union is no longer an "ordinary" confederation of states (efforts to establish a social, legal and economic commonwealth), but it is not a state by traditional definitions, either. Decision-making procedures in the EU are clearly coalition-based and inconsistent, and central bodies of authority exercise no control over the use of force on the territory of any member state. The development of the European Union has also caused that the status of its member states is quite unclear.²⁰

In an attempt to cope with the difficulties involved in the analysis of the EU, scholars concluded that it is the example of the new organization of the state, which responds to globalization processes and growing interdependencies on a global scale. At the heart of the study of the state, unlike in the "classical period," there is the ability of public authorities to act in the new, global circumstances rather than the issue of their sovereignty and autonomy. The contemporary theories of the state put particular emphasis on the problem of the growing disparity between the sphere of the state and the transnationally and non-territorially defined sphere of global flows (of capital, people, information, pictures, etc.) and mobility. Ulrich Beck argued that, in order to tackle this problem, states need to extend their activities beyond their current territorial borders.²¹ To this end, their form will have to be changed. Ulrich Beck pointed out that the cosmopolitan state – which emerged as a result of the increased scope of cooperation among national states – may become such new form of the organization of public authority.

Such state would regain its operational ability by extending its capabilities of external and internal intervention owing to the fact that it participates in transnational networks, which encompass not only countries, but also non-government organizations, international institutions and multinational corporations. Such country, having no concern about the issue of sovereignty, takes advantage of the cooperation with other governments, non-government organizations and global

²⁰ P. Dunleavy, *op.cit.*, p. 788.

²¹ U. Beck, *op.cit.*, p. 230.

concerns in solving “national” problems or those transnational ones which have priority in the national sphere.²²

Manuel Castells developed a similar idea in his theory of the network society as a new form of the organization of political life. The Spanish sociologist pointed out that the network state is characterized by the division of power (it ultimately means the possibility of using authorized violence) in accordance with a network.²³ This specific network structure is first of all the reaction to on-going civilization changes and the attempt to defend the sovereignty of the state in the new, global order. As the society was getting more liquid and complex, it became necessary to invent new mechanisms and methods of governance, which would be less based on hierarchized state institutions, thus reducing the disparity between the state and the society as well as between the global and the local. The network state is characterized by a multitude of the structures of authority. Such country pursues the model of multilevel governance, which encompasses subnational, national and supranational bodies as well as government and non-government actors. Castells believes that there is a new polyarchic system of power in the world today. This system has multiple sources of authority, and the national state is just one of them. States are becoming components of the international “political society” rather than “sovereign” entities. The new structure of the network society is more flexible as it is the result of a complex pattern of social alliances and compromises, which may often involve conflicting interests and values. These interests and values are not dominant in the society, but they play a subordinate role in this alliance in return for promoting some of the elements of their specific programme.²⁴ Castells indicates that the European Union is a prime example of such new form of the state.

John Urry was another scholar who dealt with the issue of the evolution of the state. He pointed out that contemporary countries have to cope with the growing interdependency and liquidity of social life, which necessitates the departure from social relations based on territories and states. Global mobility and flows make it difficult for centralized state institutions to control them, i.e. to make and enforce law. Thus, the biggest challenge that contemporary countries face is to regulate mobility, and the regulation of flows and networks of the civil society has become central to their formation. When analysing the transformation of the contemporary

²² Ibidem, p. 280.

²³ M. Castells, *End of Millennium, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, vol. III, Oxford 1998, p. 331.

²⁴ M. Castells, *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, vol. II, Oxford 1997, p. 326.

world, Urry refers to the metaphor of the “gardening” state and the “gamekeeping” state, first used by Zygmunt Bauman in his work *Legislators and Interpreters* (New York, 1987). The state as a “gamekeeper” did not bother about the general shape of its society and its details. In turn, the “gardening” state was greatly concerned about its condition, regularity and order, about its growth and “weeding.” Urry wrote that “the new global order involves a return to the gamekeeper state and away from that of the gardener. The gamekeeper was concerned with regulating mobilities, with ensuring that there was sufficient stock for hunting in a particular site but not with the detailed cultivation of each animal in each particular place. Animals roamed around and beyond the estate, like the roaming hybrids that currently roam in and across national borders. States are increasingly unable or unwilling to garden their society, only to regulate the conditions of their stock so that on the day of the hunt there is appropriate stock available for the hunter. (...) States turn into gamekeepers rather than gardeners, as they regulate the herds moving in and across their land.”²⁵

For Urry, like for Castells, the European Union is a paradigm example of the evolution of the state’s form. They both claim the EU is a modern “regulatory state,” which is mainly concerned with monitoring and regulating its member states’ policy and activity. Urry indicates that countries of the future, like the EU, will be less concerned with the imposition of taxes and financing forms of economic and social security, but will act – following the EU’s example – as legal, economic and social regulators – thus playing “gamekeepers” – of all kinds of activity and mobility, which are carried out mostly in the private sector, through voluntary organizations, or in the so-called third sector.²⁶

Because of the character of contemporary civilization changes, it is a difficult task to describe the functioning of the state. In the present political reality, the features of the national state, analysed by scholars such as Karl Marx or Georg Jellinek, coexist with some new organizational solutions, which have been developed in response to change. Therefore, a lot of competitive definitions and theories of the state have emerged and researchers are trying to cope with a laborious task of developing the adequate theory of the state. The cultural turn, the global turn and the complexity turn have all led to the development of completely new research approaches, the departure from thinking about the state as a set of institutions or

²⁵ J. Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies. Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, London 2000, p. 258.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 273.

as an isolated, “sovereign” reality in favour of perceiving it as a certain cultural practice, “field,” “game,” or a flexible reality, all being the components of the network of dependencies between the global and the local.

The state is one of those inventions of human civilization which, in different historical eras and different cultures, has adopted different forms, corresponding to the conditions of a given historical period. Therefore, the issues of the state cannot be presented in the form of established formulas and principles. Contemporary civilization changes have also triggered the evolution of the shape of the state, which makes it necessary to seek new research concepts in order to better understand the characteristics of the political organization of the society. It is indicated that the dominant civilization trends seem to imply that we may expect the form of the state to change significantly, which will affect relatively stable and wealthy liberal democracies.²⁷ The present revival of the state as the main subject of political studies and as the central issue of political analysis stems from the fact that contemporary civilization changes are making scholars look for new research paradigms, which would make it possible to formulate a political theory providing an explanation of what the contemporary state has become and in which direction its evolution progresses. The works of such researchers as Pierre Bourdieu, Ulrich Beck, Manuel Castells, or John Urry, are quite far from the “orthodox” ways of defining and understanding the essence of the state, and they constitute the framework of the debate on the contemporary evolution of one of the most important subjects of politics, i.e. the state. The state as an organization has not disappeared, but it is being constantly modified. It is still an important element of the social and political life, although it is functioning in a different way. The contemporary theories of the state help us to understand the dynamics of the transformations of the modern organization of the state and to link it with the civilization changes occurring in the world.

²⁷ P. Dunleavy, *The State*, [in:] *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, R.E. Goodin and Ph. Pettit (eds.), Oxford 1993, p. 788.