

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

The research programme *Democracy and development* is focused on research of developmental dynamics of contemporary societies. The concept of development encompasses all key areas of society (economy, science, and politics). The very concept of development has a relatively neutral meaning, i.e. it denotes a process indicating a change of the state in society (social development) or its parts (economic and political development). However, it commonly includes a qualitative dimension that can be understood as an improvement of the situation, melioration of its quality according to certain criteria. In this sense, the developmental performance can be defined as an ability of a system to reach goals on the basis of these criteria.

The development of a particular societal system always occurs within a specific institutional setting. This means that it is predominantly defined by the political parameters that constitute this setting. This brings us to the question of the relation between development and democracy as a type of political system that is widely accepted at least in the countries of the Western cultural circle where it represents 'the only game in town' (Przeworski). Though examples of other countries indicate that a developmental breakthrough can be achieved also within an authoritarian system (examples of Taiwan, Singapore or South Korea), the fact is that the highest positions in different surveys that 'measure' the level of human development and the economic competitiveness scales are occupied by the countries with long democratic traditions. We can therefore conclude that democracy not only means a higher societal quality *per se* or fulfilment of ideals of freedom and equality but also contributes to a successful functioning of other social areas, thus heightening competitiveness of a system and consequently its developmental performance.

This research programme is therefore concerned with development in the context of democracy, i.e. within parameters of the system of parliamentary democracy. Development is understood as a factor that strengthens societal democratic potentials. Namely, democracy necessitates its own social requisites (Lipset) encompassing economic (material welfare) social (extensive and autonomous middle class) and cultural (individualistic values) factors, which enable its prevalence. Thus, the development of democracy can be seen as an integral part of the entire societal development.

However, democracy is not a univocal concept although it is commonly understood as a government 'of the people, by the people, for the people' (Lincoln), i.e. as a regime in which the state authority derives from the majority of society's members. The term 'democracy' could be related either to the type of a political system or to the way of managing of relations within society. Therefore it could be referred either to an ideal state of society characterised by 'complete' freedom and equality and where the real power is located in the hands of people or to real-existing forms of political order that is characteristic of modern western societies. The latter Robert Dahl named 'polyarchy' as 'real-existing democracy', representing a Western political setting that is the closest to

the ideal of democracy; i.e. the people's government where freedom and (political) equality are higher than in other political systems.

But even if we speak of democracy as an existing system, there are different definitions of its scope (in the sense of what its constitutive elements are). Some theorists advocate minimalist approach (Schumpeter, Przeworski, Huntington) in terms of democracy as a system in which citizens choose among different political actors/elites that compete for their support. However, there is another, more 'qualitative' notion of democracy which takes into account the conditions necessary for its full functioning. Robert Dahl's concept of 'polyarchy' contains the following institutional factors necessary for the persistence of democracy: elected officials; free, fair and relatively frequent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; the autonomy of associations and inclusive citizenship. Participatory democracy theorists (Held, Pateman) emphasise the importance of the highest possible scope of citizens to be included in the political decisions on different levels. They also criticise elitism of contemporary democracy (in which, despite its democratic form, the majority of the strategic resources is concentrated in the hands of few). The adherents of the theory of deliberate democracy (Rawls, Elster, Habermas) stress the importance of an open discussion about political questions; here decisions are made on the basis of well reasoned and civilised confrontations between actors of political processes. Further, some theorists emphasise the importance of institutional factors in the absence of which democracy system would not be possible. These are: developed civic society, effective legal system, competent and autonomous public administration etc. Often other factors such as material well-being and economic state of citizens are taken into account.

Despite its multiple definitions and practices, democracy is a political system possessing several basic elements. Therefore one can speak about some basic components of democracy. The first component is *inclusiveness* which means involvement of the highest possible number of citizens in the political decision-making processes, taking into account their individuality. An expression of this is representativeness of political system. This does not automatically depict the real social structure in the institutions of governance (like parliament) but enables a majority of interests to be represented in the decision making process related to most important public issues. The second component is *effectiveness* which refers to the ability of the state or political system to attain consensually reached social goals. Although effectiveness is not an immanent property of democracy (non-democratic systems can be in some regards more 'effective'), in complex and unstable environment only an opened and inclusive system can be successful. The third component is *transparency* that denotes the 'visibility' of a relationship between different institutional actors and affirmation of social behaviour (these are mostly in domain of institutions of the legal system).

Democracy is a complex system that includes several tensions and contradictions. As Larry Diamond states, the contemporary democracy is facing three kinds of paradoxes, i.e. tensions between certain characteristics: conflict vs. consensus, governability vs. representativeness, and efficacy vs. consent. All three must reach a balance for optimal functioning of the system. Finally, the fundamental result of democratic politics is

accountability of those with political power. To obtain such accountability, the system needs 'internal' control, i.e. proper functioning of the legal system and other autonomous state institutions. It necessitates also 'external' control i.e. dispersed political power, the existence of counter-elites and societal pluralism.

Democracy can be therefore understood as a system of governance. The concept of democratic governance is defined by neoinstitutional theory (March and Olsen) as encompassing politics in the broadest sense from the level of expressing and coordinating various interests and relations between various political actors (politics level) to the level of the creations of policies at different social areas (policy level). In terms of system theory, this refers to the 'input' (impulses from the environment) and 'output' dimension (the products of political systems such as legislations, social treaties, state budget etc.).

The nature of political life and its democratic dynamics depends on the institutional frame and the political actors' values and modes of functioning. The structure of political processes influences the functioning of individuals and groups as political actors and therefore the results of such functioning. The main elements of formalised structure (sub-system) of a political system are systems of political articulation, of political representation, of territorial arrangements, of managing relations between different branches of authority and of political control. However, the political decisions always depend on actors that pass them or influence their admission. This brings us to the role of social elites, in particular the political one. Democracy predominantly depends on the nature of social elite, i.e. its configuration in terms of its heterogeneity and integration. This affects the relations between fractions of the elite. Though there are theorists who claim elites restrict or reduce democracy (neomarxism, class theory of the ruling class, ruling elite theory), others – adherents of democratic elites theory (Etzioni-Halevy, Sartori, Higley) – believe not only that the mere existence of elites is not in opposition to democracy but that elites can significantly contribute to a stability and development of democracy. Of course, this necessitates a specific configuration of elites that is based on the principles of openness, equality of its factions and appropriate political culture of its members, the one that cherishes individuality, tolerance, competitiveness, ethical responsibility, respect of legal principals and rules etc.

Contemporary political life takes place on several system levels. Therefore we can speak of multi-level governance that encompasses local or regional, national and global (also European) level. Political life exists on all levels simultaneously and it is interrelated and interdependent though each level has its own specifics. This became apparent with the dilemma of participation of citizens on the level of the European Union where the absence of 'European constitutional demos' (Weiler) made this attempt impossible, though such participation is common for national level. Interdependency becomes apparent also in the formation of developmental policies. These can optimally function only when they are shaped and implemented by actors from various levels of political process. Here are not only political actors but all relevant actors from various areas that, together with political actors, cooperate in the process of planning and implementation of developmental strategies. This refers to the network type of social regulation in a sense of Willke's concept of contextual regulation. In this context, the government should not

determine the processes and decisions. Furthermore, it should not impose its own solutions. The role of the government in this context is to act as a mediator between different ideas and interests, and as a coordinator of activities directed toward a developmental consensus.

The formation of appropriate developmental policies is particularly important in societies that seek to overcome their developmental lag and join societies at the 'developmental core'. Slovenia and other former communist countries belong to this group. In this context, political system and its agents have two tasks: first, to establish conditions for its own democratic functioning, i.e. developing the above mentioned democratic components; and second, to establish systemic conditions for autonomous functioning of other social areas. These tasks are very much related and determine the possibilities for developmental breakthrough.

The programme group will cover the following topics:

- key aspects of democratic government and governance
- socio-cultural and economic conditions for the development of democracy
- key actors in the democratic governance
- the state of democracy in the old and new member states of the EU with the emphasis on Slovenia
- the role of the state as a developmental actor and evaluation of its effectiveness
- the possibilities of former communist countries to reach the developmental breakthrough

This research discusses developmental performances and challenges of Slovenia and other contemporary societies. Primary aims and objectives are:

- to investigate democratic processes on national, European and global level
- to investigate the relations between socio-economic performances and democratic stability of society
- to analyse the indicators for 'measuring' different aspects of quality of governance and to develop models for evaluations of government institutions
- to investigate strategies for creating development policies and their implementations on national, regional and European level

Our thesis is that developmental success and democracy are interrelated: on the one hand, the development of stabilised democracy as a framework for high quality of governance necessitates specific socio-economic and cultural conditions; on the other hand, successful development needs a 'qualitatively deepened democracy', i.e. democracy that encompasses not only the minimal formal criteria, but also actual instruments for protection of individual and institutional autonomy as well as for civil engagement of the citizenry. In this context, political actors, principally political elites play an integral part. In this respect, we argue that the democratic state's role is mainly the 'contextual steering' that is conducted in an indirect and non-hierarchical way and serves for creations of conditions for autonomous development of various social potentials.