

Lecture notes for
WEEK 9

**Other Political
“Actors”**

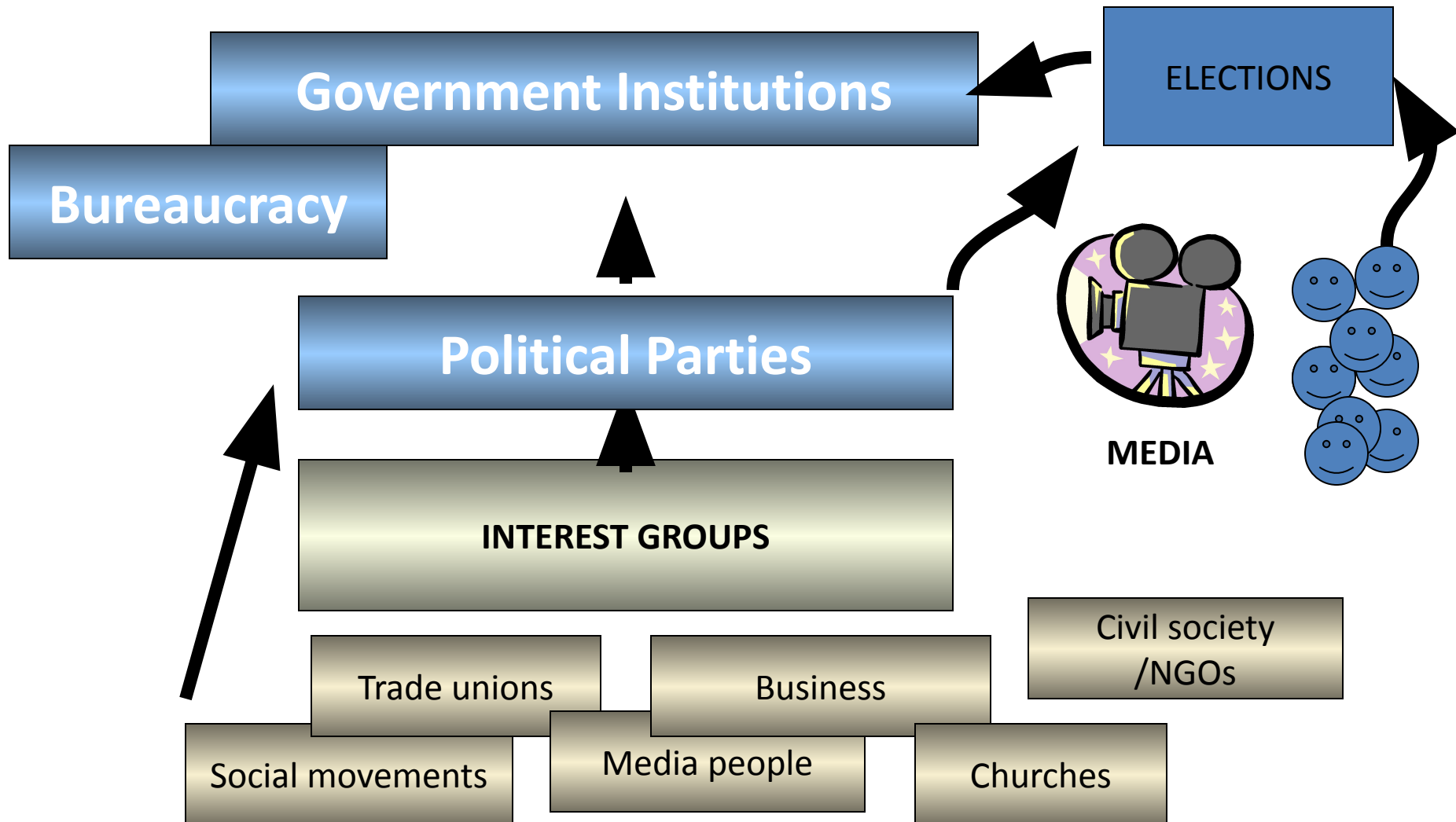
- **Interest groups**
- **Civil society**
- **Civil service**
- **The Media**

Other actors:

- *In politics and in the political system, not only official political institutions are important “actors”, there are also some **other actors**...*
- *This week, we’ll mention some both official and less official actors we have not discussed yet...*

Some other actors (simplified):

Recall also the Easton's Political System model....



Other actors:

- **interest (or “pressure”) groups (IGs) =**
- organizations acting to influence public policy in order to promote their common interest
 - are separate from government and political parties; but often in close partnership with them; *examples:*
- trade unions [= *профсоюз*]
- business organizations
- environmentalist groups
- bankers, etc.

Other actors:

- **social movements** – in Western countries esp. since 1970s – they are part of “civil society” (see later)
- much less formally organized than political parties; using methods of petitions, demonstrations, “action protests”, etc.
- concern about both local & global issues
- peace movements (culminated in the 1970s-80s, declined since then esp. after the end of the Cold War); environmentalist movement
- anti-globalization movements – since 1990s
- example in KZ: social movement (ecological, anti-nuclear) *Nevada-Semey* of the late 1980s

Other actors:

- **women movement /feminism** - historically important
- in Western countries 'feminism' has evolved as both an ideology and important social movement (stronger in the U.S. than in Europe)
- affected by demographics: i.e. trends toward increased # of women in the workplace
- women suffrage introduced in Western countries by WW2 (last in Switzerland); increasingly more women accepted in leadership positions & in politics; this differ from one country to another...

Other actors:

- **churches** as IGs – their role in politics
- separation of church & state has a relatively long tradition in Western countries (unlike in the Muslim world*); their influence rather indirect
- ‘state churches’ in some countries play unifying “ideological” role & receive support from the state; may have political influence (Orthodox Church in Serbia)
- church’s influence on society differs from country to country but has generally been declining

Other actors:



- **the army** (as one of the “siloviki”)
- *What is the role of the army in politics?*
- in a democratic country, the army is under the civilian control (i.e. the Minister of Defense is not a professional soldier!) and cannot act on its own...
- in many politically less developed countries, the army has much power and plays important role in power struggles...

Other actors – the army:

- the army is traditionally influential in some countries (Turkey, Egypt, Thailand...)
-
- still governing in Myanmar /Burma (military “junta”)

Other political actors:



- **the (mass) media**

- the role of the media – significant and increasing but often also controversial
- the mass media are often seen as fulfilling the vitally important role of the fourth estate [or power], the guardians of democracy, defenders of public interest...
- in the West – a long tradition of the **free (=no censorship) & independent media** (*but what about Berlusconi's media empire in Italy?*)

Other actors:

- **public opinion**
- plays the important role in the political sphere; sometimes as an “actor”
- **public opinion polls**
 - = surveys of public opinion from a particular sample of people – what they think, i.e. about various issues
 - use questionnaires, interviews to inquire about people’s opinion o various issues
 - usually done by independent agencies; but sometimes by “pollsters” associated with political parties *

Other actors civil service:

- **Civil service** – also: **state / public administration** or **bureaucracy***) =
- the “hands of the executive”; government employees working in many administration offices /services run by the state
- & implementing government policies
- they mostly are not “politicians”, but career civil servants

Other actors - civil service / bureaucracy:

- **civil service** /bureaucracy consists of various governmental offices & agencies through which government exercise its functions & implements & administer policies [*“государственный служащий”* = “civil servant”]
 - **professionalization**: individuals are hired on the basis of merit which is proven by the use of competitive examinations

Other actors - civil service / bureaucracy (optional):

- ***Functions of the bureaucracy - summary:***
- to administer and carry out the policies of the government
- to provide professional advice to the political executive by evaluating and initiating new policy proposals
- to act as the direct link between the government and the people of the state by informing the public of government policies and also by receiving input from the public, interest groups, etc.

Civil service / bureaucracy:

- **some characteristics of “bureaucracy”:**
- neutrality (should be “non-partizan”)
- professionalism
- hierarchy
- *but often also negative ones:*
- patronage
- nepotism
- corruption

Other actors – civil society:

- **civil society** [гражданское общество]
= *a bit controversial concept*
- = **the citizens who are - politically, socially or culturally - playing an active part in society, but who are not necessarily involved in the political and economic decision-making**
- consists of various voluntary organizations not controlled by the state, e.g. “non-governmental organizations” (NGOs)
- *another possible definition:* an organized (self-organized) public space between official political & private spheres

Political participation:

- ***What is political participation?***

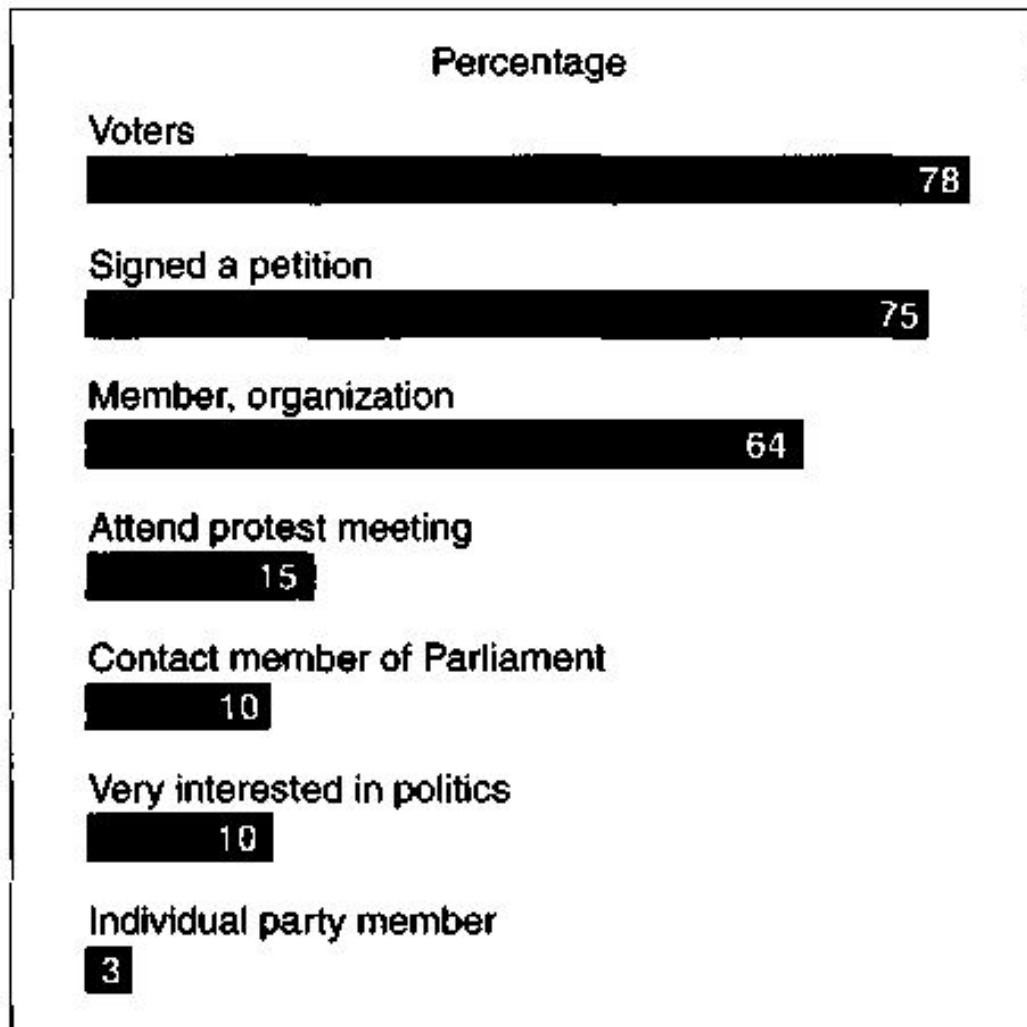
(= how much people participate in the political process; see in the note below)

What do you think:

– How important it is for quality of democracy...?

FIGURE 8.5

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS



Example:
**Political participation
in the U.K.**

Source: Official statistics and Geraint Parry, George Moyser, and Neil Day, Political Participation and Democracy in Britain (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), counting any involvement in the past five years as participation.