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Is Arend Lijphart's Pattern Still Valid? Political Parties, Interest Groups, Pluralism and Corporatism

Abstract: In Arend Lijphart's influential typology pluralism and corporatism are shown both: as two leading patterns of interest group politics and two main dimensions of the differences between the majoritarian and consensual variants of institutionalized democratic systems. The patterns of pluralism and corporatism show differences not only in the institutional setting of the activities and strategies undertaken by organized interest groups, but also display the differences in the processes of intermediation of interests, in which interest groups cooperate with political parties and party governments in various extents and in various forms. The leading thesis of the article is to indicate the need to adjust of this bipolar model. The hypothesis focuses on the indication that the pattern associated with the concept of policy networks is currently gaining advantage and it is much more labile than pluralism and corporatism. In this newly growing postmodern pattern the connections between political parties and interest groups, as well as the processes of intermediation of group interests becoming more liquid. The text aims to conclude on the need to revise the classic Lijphart's model by pointing to the network hybridization of interactions between political parties and interest groups. This may not completely undermine one of the important features that distinguish majoritarian and consensual patterns of democracy, but it should certainly encourage updating their analyses, assessments and predictions of further development trajectories.

Keywords: patterns of democracy, political parties, interest groups, pluralism, corporatism

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Arend Lijphart's widely known, and frequently cited typology of democratic systems pluralism and corporatism are presented as the reverse of two basic patterns of democracy: the majoritarian and consensual (appearing also as a consociational democracy). Both model concepts, i.e., pluralism/majoritarian and corporatist/consensual are widespread in the literature dedicated to the processes of intermediation of group interests and the institutionalized activity of organized interest groups.

What makes Lijphart's proposal exploratively useful (and distinguishes it from studies focused primarily on the analysis of interest groups themselves and institutions operating only on the arena of industrial relations) is:

- locating pluralism and corporatism in a broader, holistic concept of systemic-democratic political patterns, the hallmarks of which are (i) the competitive (i.e., more binary) majority system with centrifugal rivalisation and (ii) the consensual (consociational) system with more clearly marked centripetal cooperation;
- emphasizing the leading role in the sphere of *politics* played by political parties that focus on electoral support and strive to control the institutions of political power, which in an optimal form allows them to form party cabinets that have stable parliamentary support and can implement their programs, the components of which are reflected in the implementations undertaken by administrative forces of executive as part of governmental public policies.

However, what makes Lijphart's proposal too simplistic for the contemporary times is that it pays insufficient attention to the fundamental differences between political actions based on more or less superficial compromise ("politics of compromise") and political actions more deeply rooted because anchored in consensus ("politics of consensus").

Compromise and consensus are concepts that have some common meaning, but they are by no means identical, the consequences of which become visible when we consider more closely the relations connecting the dominant pattern of political competition. It becomes most visible when we consider the two dimensions of competition together as part of the complex process of intermediation of interests that the dimensions together take a distinct form in variants: pluralistic, i.e. more competitive, and corporatist, i.e., more consensual.

The article considers three arguments that may violate the Lijphart's pattern:

1. the first argument is of a practical nature and refers to the similarities of para-coalition systemic practices, which mainly come down to the alliance of the leftist parties with the trade unions. Due to the extensiveness of available data, this argument is presented only in a generalized form, because its purpose is not to examine further given cases of UK and Sweden in details, but to open the next argument below;

2. the second argument refers to a conceptual gap in Lijphart's model that was not as obvious before as it is now. This gap results from an insufficient consideration of the differences between more competitive pluralism and more consensual corporatism that determine the advantage of pluralist compromise or corporatist consensus. A contemporary analysis of this problem should go deeper and go beyond institutional features alone. It should consider the more complex relations between the conditions that determine the ultimate systemic advantage of a more inherently competitive compromise or a more explicitly cooperative consensus in political action. Meanwhile, Lijphart does not deal particularly with the complexity of the processes leading to the systemic advantage of consensualism or competition. He focuses mainly on the most visible "institutional states of affairs", which in his interpretation are supposed to determine whether in a given case we are dealing with a pluralistic (competitive) or corporatist (consensual) nature of the systemic mechanism of the interest intermediation and elaborating public decisions;
3. the third argument relates to the growing crisis of consensus itself, and consequently, the crisis of institutionalized corporatism. As a result, the fragmentation of variants of corporatism is deepening, together with the increasingly ambiguous links between corporatist social dialogue and the features of party systems. This raises questions that are addressed in the conclusion of this article.

The article was written with the intention of publishing it in a professional journal of theoretical and political science. The text is therefore theoretical in nature and refers the arguments to the components of the past and present discussion on the possibilities of analyzing interest group politics in relation to party systems and two classic systemic patterns – pluralism and corporatism. The suggestions contained in it are related to the search for new paradigms of the methodology of research on the title problem and refer to the possibilities of theoretical modeling and empirical research of the processes referred to in the text. The references cited in the text are also based on the author's experience in analyzing the theory and empirically studying deliberation, social dialogue, interest groups politics, industrial relations and public governance (see e.g., Sroka, 2000; 2004; 2008; 2009a; 2009b; 2018; Sroka et al., 2004; Sroka, Błaszczyk, 2006; Sroka, Pawlica, Ufel, 2022; Sroka, Pawlica, Ufel, 2023; Sroka, Pawlica, Ufel, 2024). In these studies, various qualitative and quantitative methods and research techniques were used, which the author did not refer here separately. It would take up too much space and make this text more like a scholastic treatise for the uninitiated ones than an article dedicated to specialists as a voice in expert discussion.

First argument (para-coalitions of the left party and trade unions in Lijphart's "impressions")

The first proposed argument is of a practical nature and refers to the similarities between the "polar" (and therefore model-separable) cases of pluralism and corporatism, which in systemic practices often turn out to be inseparable, as evidenced by para-coalitions connecting the leftist parties with federations of trade unions. This argument is exemplified in historical examples, which will be cited here, highlighting two selected cases: the UK and Sweden.

According to Lijphart,

> the relationships between interest group systems […] and cabinet types and party systems *indicate that* [J.S.] democracies with more cases of at least minimally winning single-party cabinets also tend to have more pluralistic interest group systems; in turn, political systems whose features include multi-partism are usually less pluralistic. There is a stronger correlation between the party profile of cabinets and interest groups, but a weaker correlation between parties themselves and interest groups. […] Taking this into account, we can point to the three most corporatist systems – Austria, Norway and Sweden – which are much more consensus-oriented. (Lijphart, 1999, p. 170)

The above-mentioned oversimplification of Lijphart's model observations is expressed in the fact that, according to him, in systems in which it is possible to create one-party cabinets, there is stronger political competition and greater differentiation (pluralization) of interest groups. Interest groups are to be more loosely connected both among themselves (including in the organizational form of a federation of trade unions and a business federation) and with political parties. In turn, in multi-party systems, a pattern prevails in which it is not possible to form single-party cabinets, and at the same time, consensual competition is emphasized, and interest groups are more organizationally compact and centralized (Lijphart, 1999, pp. 170–172). "The pluralistic or corporatist arrangement of interest groups is also related to the electoral system and, although to a lesser extent, to the domination of the executive" (Lijphart, 1999, p. 173).

However, this analytical scheme does not take into account very important and by no means secondary details. Lijphart's argumentation seems to be undermined by facts taken from the political history of diametrically opposed cases that are at the same time "showcase" for pluralism and corporatism, i.e., the more clearly pluralistic and competitive-majoritarian Great Britain and the corporatist and essentially consensual Sweden.

Lijphart apparently failed to notice that in both political systems, until the early 21st century, there was close cooperation between the party left[2] and the

[2] Labor Party in the UK, and Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet in Sweden.

unions[3], which in both Britain and Sweden were in fact closely federalized with the political parties. As a result, in both countries there were left-wing para-coalition arrangements linking the unions and the party left in both politics and public policy.

At the same time, in both cases it was possible and practiced to create one-party cabinets – In the UK, one-party cabinets of (rather pro-market) Tories or (more pro-social) Whigs, and in Sweden, one-party social democratic cabinets. Single-party governments were natural in the UK, where they were the result of the relative majority formula in the electoral system. But in Sweden, single-party cabinets were not the result of the electoral system, which in Sweden did not adopt the majority formula but proportional one (on Sainte-Laguë method). The Swedish single-party cabinets were one of the results of the left-wing cartel of the social democratic party and leftist trade union elites. Therefore, what paradoxically makes these "polar" cases similar is the existence – both in the UK and Sweden – the visible the para-coalitions between partisan leftists, their cabinets and the trade unions. Another similarity is that both these countries are territorially organized according to the compilation of the patterns of considerable territorial autonomy but generally an unitarist one. Sweden also was modeled on some British solutions for the incorporation of third sector organizations into public-administrative activities and public management (see e.g.:, Lijphart, 1999, pp. 178, 307; Peters, 1999, pp. 218–220; Sroka, 2002, pp. 59–64; Vamstad, 2012, p. 472; Peters, 2018, pp. 242–243).

Lijphart's recent publications (see e.g., 2012), summarizing his long-term analyses, capture the essence of his persuasion to show the connections between interest group pluralism and competitive party systems on the one hand – and interest group corporatism and consensual party systems on the other. However, this is an appeal – not only, and sometimes not even primarily – to evidence, but rather to suggestions stemming more from the inner conviction of this Dutch origin researcher, who seemed to be under the spell of the post-war corporate-consensual cartel of elites, known in post-war Holland (cf. Taagepera, 2003, pp. 5, 14).

This tendency to succumb to kind of (self-)suggestion was so strong that, while living and working in the USA, Lijphart basically did not notice the fact that not only in Great Britain, but also in the pluralistic and majoritarian United States some corporate solutions have been and are still being developed (see e.g., Young, pp. 121–124, 188–195). It is true that in Great Britain and the USA they operated on a different scale than in continental Europe, but in these two countries they were not and are not without significance.

The above-mentioned practice of some scientists of appealing to suggestive intuitions – instead of absent (or not easily available) "hard" evidence – was

[3] Trade Union Congress in the UK and Landsorganisasjonen i Sverige in Sweden.

accurately diagnosed in 1970 in an essay by Imre Lakatos (Lakatos, 1970). Lakatos, pointing to the criteria of "good science", criticized the spread of methodologically unstable "grant entrepreneurship" among some scientists. In turn, a few years later, Paul Feyerabend argued in a suggestive way for the instability of methods in science (Feyerabend, 1975).

In Feyerabend's opinion relativism in research is not useless, on the contrary, it can lead to interesting conclusions, but it is worth remembering that despite promising results, this type of analysis remains relative:

> Scientists […] are sculptors of reality-but sculptors in a special sense. They not merely act causally upon the world (though they do that, too, and they have to if they want to "discover" new entities); they also create semantic conditions engendering strong inferences from known effects to novel projections and, conversely, from the projections to testable effects. (Feyerabend, 1989, pp. 404–405)

Feyerabend's "anarcho-methodological" claims, as well as Lijphart's scientific work, could be seemed as a fruit of the influential rebellion of the 1960s and 1970s. This revolution contributed a lot to art, science, social and political life, but also (like every revolution) it introduced a number of inconsistencies and unfinished concepts into reality. We are now also reaping its harvest in the political sphere, in our liquid reality of the post-truth era. Part of this is some analytical inconsistencies that may bring to mind an approach often used in impressionist art. Lijphart himself admitted this directly in one of his publications, stating that:

> the degrees of pluralism are still not exactly measurable, and a judgment of the extent to which a given society satisfies each of the criteria is necessarily "impressionistic" but unfortunately no better method is available in the current stage of development of the social sciences. (Lijphart, 1985, p. 87)[4]

[4] Referring to the quoted here text by Lijphart, devoted to the analysis of the situation in South Africa in the 1980s, it is also worth noting something not marginal. Namely, the fact that Lijphart argued for the gradual emergence of premises for establishing the foundations of consensualism in South Africa – which, according to his model, would be accompanied by corporatism. However, looking back over the years, it is clear that this did not happen, and South African corporatism is currently experiencing difficult times, if it has not already collapsed (see e.g., Kim, van der Westhuizen, 2015). Although the African specificity is quite distant from the Central European one, certain analogies of the democratic transformation were and partly still are visible in comparison with Poland, but also with other post-communist countries of Central Europe (cf. Wnuk-Lipiński, 1998). Moreover, in South Africa, as in so called real-socialist Central Europe, there was experience of implementing authoritarian forms of corporatism. In South Africa, which did not "break with the market", authoritarian corporatism had a segregationist but basically market basis (see e.g., Lipton, 1986), and in Central Europe, including Poland, where, in the spirit of communism, attempts were made to negate the market, the basis of authoritarian corporatism was bureaucratic and strictly statist – controlled not by the market but by the hegemonistic communist party (see e.g., Gilejko, 1972). Nowadays, the

He also made similar comments in his other publications, including *Patterns of Democracy* (Lijphart, 2012, pp. 169, 183). In this implicitly impressionistic mode he writes in this book that:

> Rein Taagepera (2003, p. 7) writes that *it feels odd that two-party systems would go with profusion of interest groups, while multi-party systems require a two-group interest pattern*. John Gerring and Strom C. Thacker (2008, p. 190) ask: *It would seem that the multiplication of groups in civil society should be classified in much the same way as the multiplication of groups in government: if multiparty systems are a feature of consensus, why not multi-interest group systems?* And Liam Anderson (2001, pp. 444–445) also suggests that one can make at least as good a case for expecting a connection between consensus democracy and pluralism as for expecting a consensus corporatism link. There is an undeniable logic to these arguments, but I still believe that the latter connection, most clearly and explicitly articulated by Katzenstein, cited in the beginning of this chapter, is far more plausible theoretically. (Lijphart, 2012, p. 173).

For Lijphart, pluralism and corporatism are "polar" cases (i.e., theoretically divergent). Meanwhile, in practice their distinction is no longer so clear-cut and undermines Lijphart's model. This inconsistency of Lijphart's proposal is aptly summarized by one of many remarks made by Ian Lustick in relation to the above-mentioned methodological impressionism:

> Lijphart ignores his own definitional use of the concept of *elite cartel*. He focuses instead on the element of secrecy in consociational politics, observing that secrecy figures in the political activity of elites in all societies. He thereby shifts attention to a minor, but related point and away from the more fundamental problem. The effect is to preserve consociationalism's attractive democratic reputation without revisiting the problem of defining it. Lijphart is content to conclude summarily that consociational democracy *has been amply defined and nothing needs to be added to it*. He thereby avoids the need to square his declaration that *there is nothing in consociationalism that true democrats have to be ashamed of it is fully democratic just as democratic as majoritarianism*. (Lustick, 1997, p. 100; cf. Lijphart, 1985, pp. 110–111)

To conclude this fragment of the text, it remains to be said that referring to suggestive impressions is in fact not a bad thing and this approach enables the discovery of new associations. At the same time, however, although impression may serve well to break existing patterns in the ossified world of dogmas, but in our modern and "liquid" world of (not only political) post-truth it may

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analogies between South Africa and Poland are related to the crisis of corporatism, growth of polarized (not consensual) cartels of elites and the spread of the pattern of centrifugal competition – despite (apparent) institutional features formally consistent with consensualism. The premature erosion of only embryonic consensualism, and with it corporatism, is also not new in Poland, and this devolution became visible very early (cf. Sroka, Antoszewski, Herbut, 2003, pp. 115–161).

contribute to excessive relativization of meanings. Today, many political elites are taking advantage of this relativization – both party ones and those associated with interest groups or presenting themselves as new, grass-roots elites of social and political movements.

Second argument (limited effects of the electoral system, consensus, compromise)

One of the Lijphart's recurring arguments (which he referred to, among others, Dutch consociationalism) is to point to the consensus-creating power of a consistently proportional electoral system (see, e.g., Lijphart, 1968). Lijphart suggest that the results of the electoral system are in some sense intended to facilitate, if not enforce, the cartel of elites, which is the *spiritus movens* of consensualism. However, this generally outlined, and rather mechanistic vision seems to differ from reality. The first reason is that a more detailed representation of the electorate's preferences is known e.g. from Poland (according to the electoral formula Sainte-Laguë, and now and then D'Hondt) – and this procedure did not lead to an increase in consensual tendencies. This corresponds to the apt comment of the well-known electoral systems analyst Dieter Nohlen that:

> there is no scientifically proven claim or authoritative source of knowledge about the effects of electoral systems that can abstract from specific social and political contexts. […] The social, ethnic, religious homogeneity or heterogeneity of society is a factor so significant for the party system that one cannot think ahistorically *when analyzing the impact of electoral systems* [J.S.]. […] Fragmented societies usually decide on proportional elections, not majority elections, *but it is worth noting that this tendency does not establish any general rule* [J.S.] because in each such situation it is impossible to separate causes from effects. […] The effects of electoral systems depend to a great extent on the context in which they operate. […] A specific electoral system in institutionalized party systems may have a concentrating effect. In non-institutionalized party systems, which we often encounter in young democracies, a similar electoral system may have a fragmenting or atomizing effect. […] Contextual variables, unlike variables that a researcher can more freely treat as dependent or independent, describe factors that have a stronger or weaker influence on the variables being analyzed. (Nohlen, 2004, pp. 412–415).

Following Nohlen's apt suggestion, attention is drawn here to what Lijphart himself is aware of, that contextual variables, e.g., those related to the degree of social pluralization/fragmentation, are very often so fleeting that scientific findings about them must necessarily also be quite "impressionistic" (cf. Lijphart, 1985, p. 87). It is worth adding here once again that the mentioned here several times impressionism does not exclude the value of these kind of findings, but at

the same time it suggests that impressions operate in a wide spectrum of colours and what has been seemed "impressionistically interesting yesterday" today or tomorrow may turn out to be shallow, and sometimes even not very safe, because it does not take into account new and sometimes disturbing "shades of gray".

Lijphart's approach however seems a bit too impressionistic, not only in terms of the division into systemic simplified variants: majoritarian-pluralistic and consensual- corporatist. According to the author of this article, excessive impressionism has also crept into these basic elements of this field of issues which are related to the differences and similarities between consensus and compromise itself. And it is this problem that we will focus on, starting with a deliberately "perverse" question inspired by the remarks of two researchers exploring the nature of the phenomena of consensus and compromise: Anton Ford and Friderike Spang (see Ford, 2018, p. 72; Spang, 2023, p. 601). Namely: if we consider that compromise is a symptomatic treatment of a specific "bipolar disorder", for which the main "medicine" is negotiation, as a result of which the parties can: unilaterally gain less, unilaterally gain more or gain approximately half (50/50), then what kind of "treatment" could the consensus be considered and what would be the most important remedy in it?

In the content of this deliberately perverse question (assuming that the intentional perversity has a cognitive value) there is a certain perceptual error deliberately "sewn in", which is not easy to notice at first because the cause of this error coincides with our everyday feelings and learned – "path depended" (i.e., depending on the most trodden path of development) reflexes and associations. – In a word: this error coincides with our perceptual tracings relating to the developmental past and possible visions of a common future.

The above-mentioned misperception is quite paradoxical, because – apart from politics itself – each of us has various practical, life experiences of "getting along" with other people. And from these experiences, we generally know that, for example, in the family or among friends, neighbours, or in a group of colleagues at work, we make various compromises that do not eliminate the *basic consensus* in family, between friends or neighbours. To put it on the other hand – in the family, among friends, in the circle of colleagues, there may be a consensus which, however, does not exclude conflict situations, and then a compromise is needed – because consensual consent does not cover all circumstances, interests, points of view, etc., and it is in such situations that it is time for compromise arrangements relating to variously measured preferences, expenditures, benefits or losses.

Therefore, consensus does not exclude compromise – and *vice versa*. However: **(1)** even in primary groups (e.g., family groups), consensus is not given once and for all and in order to maintain must be "conserved" on an ongoing basis with contextual compromises; **(2)** in turn, the compromise "rots" when turning into the so-called a rotten compromise when it lacks a frame of reference for

even a rudimentary *basic consensus*, the essence of which is agreement on the basic values that give the compromise its causative power. Going further – only on this consent can the compromise be expanded, and two further spans of consensus be built, including *the political* and *public consensus*, followed by *the formal* and *procedural consensus* (cf. Sartori, 1994, pp. 119–123). This is how the three-pronged consensual trinity of a successful institutionalization process emerges – a process that does not shy away from compromises but is united by fundamental values and is therefore successive. Mature consensus, i.e., having the power to establish, consolidate and reproduce (i.e. institutionalize) specific orders and having the power to expand the scope for "healthy" compromises, manifests itself in three ways, i.e.: **(i)** in the form of a fundamental consensus on values, **(ii)** the following political and public consensus and the third, no less important **(iii)** the formal and procedural part of the consensus.

Taking this argument, we will grasp the essence of the above-mentioned "sewn in" error, and once we understand it, we can see a promising trail (which is rarely taken up, at least in Polish public life, but is also rarely discussed in the social sciences).

The essence of meaning does not lie in the alternative between compromise and consensus – because one conditions the other, and their ideal types exist only in the world of theoretical entities and are never achievable in real practices available to people. Therefore, the essence of the "problem with consensus and compromise" lies itself not in *the states of affairs*, which are essentially compromise and consensus, but in a fundamental way it lies in *the processes*, and this is more precisely visible when we compare the differences in the political-systemic centrifugal-competitive processes (the so-called majority) and centripetal-competitive (so-called consensual). Putting this matter briefly, it can be said that it is the difference between (exclusive) *policy of compromise* and (extensive) *policy of consensus*.

Numerous references to consensual and majoritarian democratic political systems appear in all Lijphart's publications. However, apart from the already mentioned impressionism in estimating the degree of pluralization/fragmentation of societies, Lijphart pays more attention to systemic *results* – and for this reason he focuses on structural comparisons of political systems, and less attention to the study of the complexity of the *processes* themselves.

Generalizing and slightly changing Lijphart's original terminology, it can be said that in the overall dimension, his formula for comparing systemic modes of democracy leads to pointing to two structural variants in the form of: **(1)** systems of centrifugal-competitive democracy, in which majority advantage is valued; and **(2)** systems of democracy in which competition is centripetal and consensus is valued.

What makes this proposal too simplistic today is the above-mentioned insufficient attention (in the author's opinion) to the important differences between

the processes themselves – understood as social, political and public ways of dealing with complex situations and achieving satisfactory results using "politics of compromise" and "politics of consensus".

The indicated weakness lies at the very basis of the currently visible explanatory shortcomings of the Lijphart's model, which made pluralism and corporatism in social dialogue the keystones combining the complex issues of two leading variants of the systemic structuring of interest intermediation with the participation of organized communities and interest groups (including social partners) and political parties. Therefore, it is argued here that the error of Lijphart's concept lies not in the conceptualization itself, which attributes pluralism to the majority variant and corporatism to the consensual variant – because such an institutional tendency is indeed visible in the practices of political systems. However, in practice, this division has been blurred for several decades and at the same time, the third variant is gaining strength in the form of labile network systems (so-called policy networks), which, as an important but too broad topic and in itself, will not be analyzed separately in this article (see e.g., Sroka, 2004, pp. 115–173).

Apart from the only mentioned problems with assessing the nature of relations within *policy networks*, there are a number of other doubts about the contemporary usefulness of Lijphart's classic analysis.

Let look at two of the doubts. The first one refers to the contemporary, progressive complication in the interpretation of the majoritarian (centrifugally competitive) variant of democracy. The second one is a continuation of the previously mentioned remarks regarding compromise and consensus and refers to their insufficiently clear consideration by Lijphart in his model types of democracy: majoritarian (with more binary patterns of party competition and pluralism in industrial relations) and consensual democracy (leaning towards corporatism in industrial relations and centripetal party competition).

(1) First doubt. A consistent, i.e., formal and institutional, majoritarian pattern is clearly less common in global systemic and political practices. At the same time, nowadays (including in Poland, but also in Hungary and Slovakia) there is an increase in the popularity of a specific "inconsistent majority variant", i.e., a variant that can no longer be associated with the operation of the "mechanics" of the majority electoral system, but a variant resulting from a specific centrifugal-competitive "majoritarian practice of retaliation". However, both the formal and institutionalized (such as in the UK or the USA) and the practical and non-institutionalized (such as in Poland) variant of majority politics are easier to implement in periods of relative prosperity, but it becomes much riskier in times of crisis in conditions of strong affective polarization – i.e., extreme division of society. This is because the majority model, according to the slogan "winner takes all", sets the bar high both for the entire political system and for the "winner" (i.e., a political party, a governmental coalition and/or a specific leader). If the

winner (the government, political party or influential decision-maker) is aware enough, then it will not be willing to push for "total" competition in the zero-to-one formula. Unless the "winner" intends to lose power in the near future or pursues undemocratic solutions that will make him independent of the electoral consequences of implementing a zero-sum strategy. Almost every democratic government, political party or political leader (although there are exceptions) will have to take into account that in case of bad weather – also in a majority system – there are no solutions better than those provided by negotiation strategies. Confrontational strategies, in addition to the more or less lasting profits that they can usually bring in a relatively short time, raise the expectations of supporters, harden opponents' resistance, disturb the status quo in the distribution of goods and privileges, thereby deepening social dissatisfaction and undermining the legitimacy of the government, as well as – last but not least not least – they are a practical illustration of ignoring moral dilemmas, which may directly threaten the cohesion of the entire community (cf. Reif, 2009). Unless – as already mentioned – the government is intended to be "legitimized" by violence, i.e. in an undemocratic manner and/or on a massive scale, manipulative measures are used - either in the form of more sophisticated PR methods and techniques or directly by unrefined – even brutal populism, but overwhelming in its scale;

(2) Second doubt. Lijphart's comparative-model analysis lacks a clearer distinction between compromise and consensus, and as a result, both concepts (which have complex and different processes behind them) merge and become almost synonymous. Meanwhile, with reference to the question posed in the earlier part of this point: if we conventionally assume that compromise is a symptomatic treatment of a specific "bipolar disorder" (which may debilitate an exaggerated form of the majority system), then negotiations leading to compromise should be considered the main "medicine". However, in order for this compromise not to be a rotten – and therefore unsustainable – compromise, there is a need for regular and thorough "X-ray screening" of the current state of consensus in its deepest, basic core, which is the agreement on the leading values constituting the systemic order in its dimensions: social, economic, political and public.

The general question related to this remains relevant in contemporary Poland – and that is the question of whether, and if so, to what extent, leaders and influential actors in the community (as well as rank-and-file actors, party members and "ordinary" citizens) agree with each other on issues concerning the fundamental values that constitute the basis for both: political and procedural consent. In other words, it is a question of how much we: citizens, social partners, or political interlocutors *really* share basic points of view regarding our identity, cohesion, justice, security, protection of interests, and development prospects. Passing the problem presented in this way through Lijphart's model proposals

does not bring a clear result, and since this issue becomes urgent, it is necessary to look for opportunities to recapitulate Lijphart's conclusions and paths leading to new, more up-to-date and less impressionistic generalizations.

Third argument (crisis of corporatism)

Corporatism is currently at an impasse – if not in retreat. Therefore, it is worth asking whether corporatism will return once the malaise is overcome, or whether it will be replaced by more fluid arrangements, such as policy networks, within which patron-client relationships (between interest groups and the government's bureaucratic executive apparatus) become more pronounced. Nowadays the classic para-coalition arrangements between social partner organizations and political parties, typical of the old stable consensual- corporatist political systems, are disappearing (see, e.g., Sroka, 2000, pp. 59–78). The retreat of corporatism is more and more noticeable, and it does not seem trivial – as one might think if we interpret some of the "certainties" of Lijphart's proposals not very carefully.

Perhaps future corporatism will strengthen what is not enough to kill it today, and over time a vital new wave of its pattern, renewed and adapted to postmodernity, will return. Analysts of corporatism (though not all to the same extent) are inclined to consider this "ebb" and the network hybridization of corporatist social dialogue as a phenomenon accompanying the cyclical appearance of ebbs and flows in economic life and the economic situation, which have been diagnosed since the end of the 19th century, initially by Klement Juglar, and then by Nikolai Kondratieff and Simon Kuznets (Juglar, 1889; Kodratieff, 1935; Kuznets, 1955), and closer to the present day they have been referred to by researchers of corporatism, including John Kelly, Anton Pelinka, and Gerhard Lehmbruch and Frans van Waarden (Kelly, 1998; Pelinka, 1989; van Waarden, Lehmbruch, 2003).

In the era of intensifying processes and contemporary phenomena characteristic of post-Fordism, industrial relations and social dialogue are falling into regression, which, however (if we believe the above-mentioned concept of the ebb and flow of corporatism) will end with another installment of new corporatism transformed by the spirit of the times, in which institutional tradition will meet networked modernity. The key question about the approximate shape of this possible future form of corporatist dialogue is whether – and if so, to what extent – it will be possible to overcome the dominance of the model of neoliberal political economy, which transforms political systems not into participatory agoras, but into increasingly authoritarian machines that suppress the grassroots and using citizen participation mainly to legitimize a political economy

promoting a (more or less modified) neoliberal model of social change. Another important issue is whether the possible return of corporatism will also mean the return of alliances between political parties and organized interest groups in the form of unions as lasting as before, connecting primarily party Social Democrats and Christian Democrats with trade unions, but also alliances between party liberals and business organizations. The indicated problematic issues will be verified in the future. Nowadays we can see mainly a regression of corporatist social dialogue. This is accompanied by a loss of importance and number of trade unions, whose connections with the Social Democratic and Christian Democratic parties have become much looser.

What remains hopeful for the future of corporatism is that these traditional allies have not completely forgotten about themselves, at least at the declarative level of the European Union. This is evidenced by EU acts, e.g., one of the recently adopted resolutions of the European Parliament and the EU Council, the announcement of which (in addition to the influence of European social partners, primarily trade unions), European party groups also contributed to. This document states, among other things, that:

> in-work poverty must be prevented and that all wages are set in a transparent and predictable way, in accordance with national practice and with respect for the autonomy of the social partners. Pillar Principle 8[5] states that the social partners should be consulted on the development and implementation of economic, social and employment policies in accordance with national practices and that the social partners should be encouraged to negotiate and conclude collective agreements on matters that concern them, respecting their autonomy and right to take collective action.[6]

The EU level seems to be still a relatively stable island of corporatist cooperation between social partners and their traditional para-coalitional partners. However, this does not change the fact that today it is visible that both trade unions, employers' organizations and their traditionally para-coalitional political parties have clearly loosened their previously very strong ties, and pluralized lobbying is becoming more and more active on an increasingly larger scale. As

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5 See: The European Pillar of Social Rights was solemnly jointly proclaimed in Gothenburg on 17/11/2017 by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission following the resolution of the European Parliament of 19/01/2017 on the European Pillar of Social Rights (2018/C 242/05). The document, in addition to the cited principle 8, lists 19 other principles that make up the European Pillar of Social Rights. Moreover, the preamble to this document also refers to "Article 152 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which states that the Union recognizes and supports the role of social partners at its level, taking into account the diversity of national systems. It is intended to facilitate dialogue between them, respecting their autonomy." See: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2017-12/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_pl.pdf (accessed: 17.06.2024).

6 See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017C1213(01) (accessed: 17.06.2024).

already mentioned, currently we are observing a deepening crisis of corporatism, which (at least at this stage) does not yet mean the "victory" of the pluralistic variant of intermediation of interests. However, the level of entropy of dialogic forms of negotiating interests is undoubtedly increasing, and an element of this entropy is the dispersion of policy networks in which lobbying strategies are gaining the upper hand.

Appeals calling for the restoration of the dialogue *status quo* – primarily from trade unionists, but also from some party leaders – seem to be in vain. What prevails are those narratives that (although often expressed from alternative or "new" left-wing, but also libertarians) are in fact consistent with the "genetic code" of pluralized and extremely competitive policy networks. In a deeper sense, this alternative ideologization and alternative practical actions are only seemingly innovative. Paradoxically, in the fully real "world of life" promoted by the theorist Jürgen Habermas[7], these alternative and radical innovations are much less intertwined with actually well-functioning ideas and practices in the spirit of "deliberative renewal of democracy" (see, e.g., Habermas, 1999). At the same time, these alternative novelties correspond much more closely to the messages of neoliberal political economy, which has been consistently triumphing for many decades. Thus, both reformed and so called new left-wing, or libertarian etc. parties, as well as social activists of different ages and with various ideological and practical attitudes become hostages of the formula of neoliberal political economy.

Summary: The collapse of the corporatist consensus or its great reshuffle? (party systems, dynamics of European industrial relations and possible future scenarios)

"Consensus democracy does not lead to a kinder, gentler and better democracy. Rather consociational democracy is a form of government for segmented societies and is not inferior to Westminster democracies with regards to economic efficiency or the kindness and quality of democracy. It has, however, certain advantages in the integration of large minorities. Corporatism triggers welfare state expansion and creates conditions favourable to high employment and stable prices. Counter-majoritarian institutions confine the expansion of the welfare state and work for stable prices, as does corporatism. There is one obvious and important conclusion, which is based on the pathbreaking working by

[7] By the way, it is worth noting that Lijphart and Habermas, although both dealt with the political dimensions of consensus, did not enter into any contact, neither in scientific discourse nor in the "world of life".

Lijphart, and supported by further empirical evidence: in no way is the majoritarian or Anglo-Saxon democracy superior to democracies which evolved in other parts of the world, particularly in Europe. Convergence to the Westminster model of democracy, aimed at by some politicians in negotiation democracies, is probably neither feasible nor advantageous" (Armingeon, 2002, p. 99).

In the cited article Armingeon seems to be closer to the past, both mentally and analytically. Because it refers, in fact, to the very beginnings of Lijphart's work, which began in the 1960s with the "defense" of European (including the Dutch, close to Lijphart) forms of non-rivalry democracy in the style of the "elite cartel", which variant was then often considered to be "worse" than the Anglo-Saxon competitive variant.

Consensualism is certainly not "worse" than competition. At the same time however, as notes Frane Adam, a sociologist from Slovenia[8]:

> If politicians have to carry out certain measures and reforms that would have a positive effect in the medium or long term, with no effect evident in the short term, or which would face opposition during the four-year mandate, then politics tends to avoid such measures and reforms. Therefore, a sufficient consensual critical mass of strategic thinking simply does not exist. (2008, p. 316)

The matter becomes even more complicated, especially in these post-transformation systems, e.g. in Poland, where, apart from inconsistencies in politics and policies, visible is the general anti-development syndrome of the so-called patchwork capitalism (see, e.g., Rapacki, 2019; Gardawski, Rapacki, 2021; Sroka, 2023). The impact of this syndrome on labour relations, the state of party rivalry and corporatism is too extensive to be considered here. Instead, as a summary, a tabular summary is proposed, which presents key information on the dominant types of industrial relations, party systems profiles and forecasted directions of corporatism/pluralism in selected EU countries and at the level of the EU itself.

The content of Table 1 illustrates the problematic nature of the continued use of Lijphart's model, which is still habitually adopted by many analysts, and which highlights two leading systemic modes: (i) majoritarian party competition and pluralism, and (ii) consensual party cooperation and corporatism. Different types of industrial relations regimes evolve in different ways, and the convergence with types of party systems and patterns of political competition is not clear.

[8] So far Slovenia and Estonia are the only one post-communist countries that in relatively successful way implement both: consensualism in politics (and in public policies) with the corporatism in industrial relations (see Table 1).

Table 1. Key features of party systems and the dynamics of transformation of industrial relations regimes in selected European Union countries

The dominant type of industrial relations and its features	Party system profile	Forecasted direction of evolution of industrial relations
Corporatism of social partnership / consensual cartel of elites. High level of institutionalization of cooperation between governments and social partner organizations in shaping and implementing public policy, as well as in public management. Wide use of dialogic and deliberative practices while maintaining parity of representation in social dialogue, as well as strategic features of administrative centralism with elements of state capitalism.	**Austria** – two-and-a-half party system until the early 1990s. Later and currently moderately multi-party system. **Belgium** – two-and-a-half party system until the early 1960s. Later and currently highly multi-party system. **Netherlands** – advantage highly multi-party system. **Luxembourg** – advantage of moderately multi-party system. **Germany** – two-and-a-half party system until the early 1990s. Later and currently moderately-multi-party system with two dominant parties. **Slovenia** – post-communistic, highly-multi-party system.	The centralism of social dialogue, maintained not only for pragmatic and coordination reasons, but also for historical and image reasons. The predominance of industry-specific tenders of interests, especially where automation is still limited in scope and trade unions have traditions and opportunities to operate (e.g., construction, mining industry). Development of cooperation networks of social partners with new social movements. Development of civil dialogue and related co-determination. The role of dialogue is established in the public space and justified by social support, but there is a noticeable appropriation of dialogue institutions by the strongest corporate players, who use increasingly sophisticated tools to shape ideas, opinions and tastes.

The Nordic type of corporatism in a consolidated and unconsolidated variant. **Consolidated:** Denmark, Finland, Sweden. **Unconsolidated:** Estonia High level of institutionalization of the role of social partners. At the same time, there is a clearer institutional loosening of the principles of centralism and distancing the state from industrial relations, which (more often than in other variants from this Table) is willing – not so much "alone", or possibly together with social partners – to set development paths, but rather "prefers" to accept and implement bottom-up solutions projects, whether in individual sectors or even in the entire public policy. One of the icons of this type of solutions is the Saltsjöbaden Pact, concluded in 1938, which established the basis of the Swedish welfare state model and in a dialogically adapted form is still valid today. Estonia seems to be moving in a similar direction, although pluralistic trends are also visible there, reminiscent of the situation in Cyprus and Malta (see further).	**Denmark** – until the early 1970s, moderately-multi-party system. Later and currently a highly-multi-party system. **Finland** – halfway years two thousand highly multi-party, with a relative balance of the top three parties. Later and currently highly multi-party, with a relative balance of the top four parties. **Sweden** – until the end 1980s moderately multi-party, with a dominant party. Later and currently highly multi-party advantage. **Estonia** – post-communistic, highly-multi-party system prevalence until the early 2000s. Later and currently moderately-multi-party.	Decentralization and deconcentration of social dialogue and industrial relations with culturally rooted practices of participation and co-decision – this all have a chance to create in this group of countries relatively the best adaptation conditions for social dialogue in new conditions. There, social dialogue has a chance to intertwine with various forms of civic dialogue and local activism. The threat will be the development of bastion-like enclaves dominated by non-bridging ties, strong affective polarization towards "outsiders", and strengthening bastion bonds, which may illustrate the emergence and development of the so-called *no-go* zones in Sweden.

Competitive corporatism (politics of contractual social pacts). This is a unique case: the Irish variant of competitive corporatism is rooted in a long post-war history of failed industrial relations in a crisis-ridden economy and a fractured society. In the 2000s, this country managed to overcome animosities and established ways of competition by implementing the formula of contractual social pacts. Their content each time focused on the implementation of different, more strategic or more sectoral economic and social changes. The pacts were implemented consistently, using project management methods seriously. The Irish policy of social pacts is presented here as a competitive variant of corporatism due to the local cultural and political patterns, similar to the British ones, which constitute a more appropriate basis for competitive and market behaviour than the classic continental patterns.	**Ireland** – until the early 1980s, the two-and-a-half-party advantage prevailed. Later and currently advantage moderately-multi-party with a dominant party.	The contractual formula of pro-development social pacts may introduce more and more threads into social agreements that are of interest to economic corporations. In order to build a social base for their activities, corporations will strive to create complex support networks, which will include more and more non-governmental organizations established to build social trust in the corporation's projects. This will be accompanied by targeted corporate investments in the social sphere and public space constructed in accordance with the logic of something-for-something, with addictive, subordinating and expansive mechanisms embedded in them.

Polarized corporatism. This type occurs in relatively the most "seismically" active areas of European industrial relations. There is a restless and conflictual corporatism that is more politically and ideologically polarized. The role of social partners is variable, and they are involved in polarized political coalitions. In addition to the cultural and systemic features of the South, it is characteristic that in all these countries there were authoritarian corporatist solutions in the past, and the rhetoric of class conflict is still alive and retains a clear mobilization potential.	**France** – from the mid-1950s, highly multi-party. **Greece** – until the end of the first decade of the 21st century two-and-a-half-party system with a single-party majority. Later and currently the advantage of highly-multi-party system with a dominant party. **Spain** – by the end of the first decade of the 21st century two-and-a-half-party predominance with a single-party majority. Later and currently the advantage of moderately-multi-party. **Portugal** – until the end of the 1980s, moderately-multi-party predominance. Then and currently the two-and-a-half-party system. **Italy** – until the middle of the first decade of the 21st century the advantage of highly-multi-party system. Later and currently moderately-multi-party.	An inflammatory arena of industrial relations, which is additionally antagonized by migration, structural and religious problems, as well as still vivid class struggle interpretations. Numerous conflicts, confrontations and "social wars" will continue to contribute to the construction of the apparatus of the "state of emergency". Classic coalitions of interests between political parties and interest group organizations will collapse. Their place is taken by a fluid amalgam of mutually escalating various forms of direct action, including attacks, sabotage, and retaliation, in the context of which unstable, often "street" alliances will appear. The public apparatus of the "state of emergency" will merge with the agendas of business interests, which will provide a reciprocal justification for the deepening polarization – and the deepening polarization will justify the tightening of control. This reveals the mechanism of systemic autopoietism in its increasingly authoritarian version.

Island liberal pluralism in a cooperative and polarized variant. **Cooperative:** UK **Polarized:** Cyprus, Malta The British cooperative variant is united by a centuries-old tradition of shaping institutions for the competition of interests, which provide at least a minimum of opportunities to submit comments on the operation of the system at its various levels. It is not only about the "big" institutions there, such as parliamentarism, precedent or petition, but also about administratively supported opportunities to access public decision-making processes on a micro scale or at the sectoral level. Brexit may introduce some complications, but it will not affect centuries-old British practices of access and participation. The polarized variant of liberal pluralism characteristic of Cyprus and Malta is a hybrid; it bears traces of the southern polarized corporatism (see above) from which it grows, and it is very possible that it will return to it.	**Great Britain** – two-party system until the end of the 1950s. Later and currently the two-and-a-half party prevails with the Whigs or Tories predominating. **Cyprus** – until the end of the first decade of the 21st century moderately-multi-party with two main parties. Later and currently highly-multi-party system. **Malta** – two-party system.	Diversity of forms of industrial relations. The tone will be set by the relationships shaped in the strongest corporations and central agglomerations. In Great Britain, a certain chance in the struggle with the conditions of the so-called 4.0, post-Fordist economy is driven by centuries-old traditions of shaping institutions serving the competition of interests, which provide at least a minimum opportunity to submit comments on the operation of the system at its various levels. In Cyprus and Malta there are not the same opportunities as in the UK and much more likely is continuation of the path dependent development.

Statism/shaky corporatism. The statist component of this type of industrial relations is constantly being rebuilt by various party and political influences, but it generally persists - either in a more oligarchic form or in a form closer to state capitalism, in its more formal and technocratic variant. In unstable statist corporatism, the state occupies a strong central position in the tripartite dialogue, only the formal props and public narratives change. The interests of large social groups are more often played out by parties than cooperatively agreed.	**Bulgaria** – post-communistic, until the end of the 1990s, predominance two-and-a-half-party system with a single-party majority. Later and currently the advantage is moderately-multi-party, with dominant parties. **Lithuania** – post-communistic, until the end of the 20th century moderately dominant multi-party system with a predominant party or with the balance of three main parties. **Poland** – post-communistic, in the early 1990s, highly-multi-party with a relative balance. Until the middle of the first decade of the 21st century: moderately-multi-party with dominant parties. Then the advantage of the moderately-multi-party with two main parties and now evolution towards the two-and-half party system. **Romania** – post-communistic, advantage of the moderately multi-party system with a predominant partyies. **Slovakia** – post-communistic, since 1990 alternately: highly-multi-party / moderately-multi-party. Since the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the advantage has been moderately-multi-party, with a dominant party.	Centralization of industrial relations, maintaining the dominant role of the state in shaping them. Promoting the interests of traditional, often politically controlled industries whose support is important for electoral gain. Continuation of the unpublicized, pro-corporate neoliberal course, supplemented with elements of state capitalism and solutions testing the possibilities of introducing social guaranties in limited forms (as, for example, in the case of the Polish childcare 800+ program). Limited role of civic activism – participation and co-decision are by the officials vocally supported although with some reluctance.

Weak statism / weak corporatism The weakness of both institutional parameters, i.e., statism and corporatism, indicated in the name of this type of industrial relations, is not a disadvantage in this case, but an advantage. In this type of framework, both statism and corporatism are – in spite of all -more clearly subordinated to parliamentary politics. This turns out to be an advantage also because post-communist systems are still unable to cope with the challenges associated with pursuing an effective and at the same time democratic line of development closer to statism, as well as with the challenges that arise with the corporatist variant of coalition relations. Therefore, it is a more efficient variant of the generally less efficient patterns of industrial relations that (apart from mentioned earlier Slovenia and Estonia) are developing in the post-communist part of the EU. Hungary sometimes seems to deviate from this variant, where arithmetic and parliamentary practice can destroy attempts at debate. On the other hand, compared to other post-communist countries, the Hungarian third sector is stronger and has richer traditions (but it is also very diverse and, in some cases, highly polarized).	**Czech Republic** – post-communistic, advantage of moderately multi-party with a relative balance of the top parties. **Latvia** – post-communistic, halfway first decade of the 21st century highly-multi-party, with a relative balance of the top parties. Later and currently highly-multi-party, with a relative balance of the top parties. **Hungary** – post-communistic, moderately until the end of the 20th century multi-party, with two main parties . Then, by the mid-2000s, two-and-a-half-party. Later and currently moderately-multi-party, with a predominant party.	Situationally determined decentralization of industrial relations with a limited importance of corporatism and moderate influence of the state. A socially corrected neoliberal course to varying degrees. The difficult role of civic activism losing to the growing influence of corporations and the increasingly stronger intertwining of business and political interests. Characteristic of Hungary will be the sometimes violent, yet complex and intertwined with political and business interests, games within the third sector and towards the third sector.

European Union: The European social model as a postulate subjected to practical tests. The European social model assumes the inseparability of economic efficiency and innovation from social solidarity, consensualism in politics and co-decision in the public sphere. – Since 1994, when it was officially introduced, this demand has turned out to be too excessive. In fact, decentralization and erosion of corporatist institutions are progressing in the EU, as is the lack of their coordination in member states. This results in an undeclared course of a kind of "third way", between pluralism and various forms of dialogic practices. The essence of this course is the further deconcentration and decentralization of corporatist institutions. It is intended to help the institutions of social dialogue adapt to more dynamic business conditions and shorter business cycles on global markets. In practice this course strengthens tender strength corporation economic.	**The "party system" of the European Parliament** – highly until the end of the first decade of the 21st century multi-party. Later and currently highly-multi-party, with two main party groups.	Hybridity, the development of an asymmetric network of various comitological "centres", "foundations", "agencies" and "offices", established using the formula of creating chains of the so-called next steps agencies. The growing role of increasingly disintegrating comitology – with the impossibility of creating integrating comitology platforms. The growing role of lobbying strengthened by technological possibilities – the game of diversified and strong entities with weakening opportunities to seek corporatist consensus. Balancing the strategy of organizing interest groups between the "logic of membership" and the "logic of influence". It can be said that the new commercial of both logics will bring strategic effects that are far removed from the previously typical activities of corporatist social partners, civic stakeholders, or social alarmists (watchdogs), and increasingly closer to activities known from the pluralistic institutional context – access guardians, shareholders, or the so-called veto players and gate-keepers.

Source: prepared by own based on: Traxler, 2003; Sroka, 2007; 2019; Kurczewska, 2011; Laugesen, Demetriades, Tassinari, 2014; Witkowska, 2015; Siaroff, 2020.

According to the author, no conclusions can be drawn from the content of Table 1 confirming the unshakable position of Lijphart's classic formula of reasoning. Consensual and majoritarian patterns intertwine with various types of party systems, creating an increasingly complex mosaic of more or less corporatist and pluralistic solutions.

In this dynamic and complex puzzle of intermediation of interests, political networks that are much more unstable than traditional pluralism/corporatism

are currently gaining the upper hand. In this newly growing post-modern pattern, both the connections between political parties and interest groups, as well as the processes of intermediation of group interests, become more fluid, which argues for the validity of a further revision of the classical Lijphart model, which was only initiated in this article and the conclusion to it is scenarios presented below: the first one is optimistic but uncertain, the next two are rather pessimistic and the last one is the least realistic (cf. Sroka, 2019, pp. 24–26).

Generalizing the content of Table 1, it can be said that are visible the four scenarios of further development:

1. In the best possible scenario, the current model of industrial relations will be replaced by a variant that reduces social dialogue, and thus significantly reduces corporatism, but compared to other possible scenarios, this is still a relatively moderate scenario. In this variant, which is better for social dialogue, impoverished forms of interest bargaining will be maintained for political reasons, especially in the most sensitive and "flammable" industries. The role of decentralized and deconcentrated network co-decision practices associated with civil dialogue and the so-called new social movements. In this "better" scenario, if it were to come true, it would involve, among others, with a general increase in the level of civic awareness, especially in cities. Various elements of such a possible evolution can be seen in the Nordic deliberative model of industrial relations as well as in the corporatism of social partnership spread in the German language zone, but also, although to a lesser extent, present in Belgium, and more clearly visible in the Netherlands. Elements of this scenario are also discernible in Ireland's social compact policy and in British interest group pluralism. However, new social movements and civil dialogue practices are most weak in Central and Eastern European countries, which poses a serious problem.

2. In an intermediate scenario a labile and in itself poorly coordinated or completely uncoordinated model of interest bargaining will spread – which in Table 1 is most clearly visible within the types of: polarized corporatism, statism/shaky corporatism and weak statism/weak corporatism. This mixture of patterns from the European south and post-communist countries will fall into more and more inconsistencies, paradoxes and contradictions. Enclaves of better-developed social dialogue in sensitive industries will be adjacent to the almost complete absence of dialogue relations in industries that have no political "potential for ignition" and where employees do not have the resources appropriate to plan and implement effective strategies for representing interests. The maintenance or decline of social dialogue will depend not only on the bargaining power of social partners, but also on the importance of the qualifications of employees. They will also indirectly depend on the feasibility, possibilities and costs of replacing their work with machines, bots, robots or artificial intelligence algorithms. Due to the persistent, hybrid and at the same time specifically "southern" profile of the economies of post-communist countries, the dominant

role will continue to be played by "family" type relationships, which have a clear oligarchy potential. For this reason, patronage arrangements will continue to appear here – around influential economic, political and administrative "families" and in the environments of daughter companies of transnational concerns as well as in corporate circles of "brothers and sisters". France will either take an autonomous position in this group – relatively "better", but still imperfect: – or (less likely) in escaping from this group of countries it will adopt more features of the corporatism of social partnership; – or it will sink even deeper into the Mediterranean variant, both in economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions.

3. In the third possible scenario, industrial relations and social dialogue as we know them today will either become completely pluralized and, as a result, disappear into corporatist forms, and lobbying will remain one of the few tools of influence for group interests (which is necessarily always weak towards corporations) – or they will be maintained in bastion, authoritarian forms , constituting elements of the policies of nation states fighting for the remnants of their, let's say, unshakable power and using for this purpose elements of state capitalism and new, e.g., technological interventionism. The first of these negative sub-variants can be imagined by looking at Britain's increasingly pluralizing and marketized industrial relations. It is more acceptable the more prosperous the economy is – it is easier to bear it when it is relatively easy to find (any) job and (relatively) decent earnings. However, if the economy is not prosperous, then it is good when the inconvenience of living and working in the pluralistic realities of industrial relations is compensated, at least as in Cyprus and Malta, by the weather. The worse sub-variant, with elements of cognitive state capitalism and new interventionism in large fragments, is currently emerging outside Europe – in China. Living in its reality, it is better to remain in a stereotypically Far Eastern state of mind, which – like *Zen* – helps you "get over" the growing problems related to work and employment and come to terms with equalizing lifestyles within social enclaves placed in gradations towards each other, with all-encompassing surveillance and more or less overt cultural and state violence and social pressure. Without a similar, "withdrawn" mental orientation, functioning in similar conditions appears to be very difficult, not only for Europeans. Contrary to the voices of some trade unionists and smaller party politicians, **it is difficult to consider the next possible scenario as realistic today, i.e.:**

4. A kind of return to the corporatist past, which assumes the possibility of the so-called revitalization of trade unions in new conditions. However, such revitalization seems to be less likely because still much too much trade unions are too attached to the outdated class orientation and its characteristic methods – this is visible even when they vigorously distance themselves from it. And if this will maintain trade unions will be doomed to failure and their place in mobilization, contestation and attempts to repair the existing situation will be probably taken by policy networks.

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The issues mentioned in the article certainly do not exhaust the topic, but only constitute an attempt to contribute not only to the discussion on the validity of Lijphart's proposals, but also to the discussion on the future of polyarchy. The "cancerous" stage of capitalist development certainly threatens not only consensualism and corporatism with its partisan, interest groups and industrial varieties of consociational democracy, but it threatens also democracy as such (cf. McMurtry, 1999; Sroka, 2017; Levitsky, Ziblatt, 2018). However, there is still a chance for it to evolve and ultimately survive, but this would require conscious action, and dialogic deliberation remains the best, if not the only, way to avoid further erosion of the representation of interests in Europe – erosion with consequences similar to the catastrophe of Fordism in labour relations.

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