

Book review

Juliusz Gardawski, Barbara Surdykowska (eds.). Authors: Sławomir Adamczyk, Jan Czarzasty, Juliusz Gardawski, Piotr Grzebyk, Barbara Surdykowska, Mateusz Szymański, *Ku kulturze dialogu. Geneza i dzień dzisiejszy dialogu społecznego w Polsce*, Warszawa: Biuro Rady Dialogu Społecznego, Instytut Filozofii, Socjologii i Socjologii Ekonomicznej KES SGH: 2019; ISBN 978-83-948081-3-6

Social Dialogue in the Shadow of Polish Culture. Notes to the First Part of the Monograph Entitled Towards the Culture of Dialogue. The Origins and the Present of Social Dialogue in Poland

The community that studies social dialogue has received a thorough monograph that covers this topic. The volume came about thanks to the efforts of renowned scholars, Juliusz Gardawski and Barbara Surdykowska (editors of the volume). The monograph offers an introduction to the institutional aspect of the social dialogue, as well as its cultural or psychological and social dimensions.

The book consists of three parts. The first two ('Theoretical and historical context of the social dialogue institutions' and 'Social dialogue in Poland') were written by Juliusz Gardawski. They cover the theoretical and methodological questions as well as the history of the institutions of central dialogue in Poland from 1994 to 2008. The third part is a collection of articles, edited by Barbara Surdykowska, devoted to a selected issues relevant to social dialogue since 2008/2009. This part opens with Jan

Czarzasty's chapter entitled 'Autonomous counter-cyclical package of 2009 and its implications'. The author discusses the initial agreement concluded by Polish social partners in 2009, which came about as a result of negotiations carried out against the backdrop of the impending profound economic crisis. In the second chapter from this part, entitled 'The origins and functioning of the Social Dialogue Council. The legal aspects', Barbara Surdykowska traces the rise of a new tripartite dialogue institution, the Social Dialogue Council (SDC, Polish acronym – RDS). She also makes an attempt at an initial assessment of the functioning of this institution, pointing to the fact that numerous legal instruments contained in the regulation covering the workings of RDS have not yet been used by the social partners. In the next chapter: 'A bumpy road. A few remarks on the involvement of Polish social partners in the implementation of the results of European social dialogue' Sławomir Adamczyk analyses the process of implementing the results of European social dialogue in Poland. As the author points out, the efforts on the part of Polish organisations to implement European framework agreements have led to the emergence of bipartite (i.e. without the participation of the state authorities) negotiations of a cross sectoral nature. Mateusz Szymański, the author of the fourth chapter ('Tripartite taskforces for specific sectors in Poland - evolution and prospects for development'), argues that the actors of the dialogue at sectoral level, rather than waiting for the actions of the government, should more often present common positions. It is necessary to strengthen the autonomous dialogue. This would reduce the pressure for regulatory actions of the state. In chapter five, Piotr Grzebyk addresses the subject of the strike: 'Social dialogue and the development of the laws regulating strikes in Poland. From institutionalisation to the polycentricity of the law on strikes'. The author analyses regulations concerning strikes in the Polish legal system and the practice of their application. He concludes that the Polish law regulating strikes is subject to critical evaluation by both social partners and experts. It is particularly striking that the provisions of Polish law are in clear contradiction with the standards of international law, including, above all, those developed at the ILO. The authors of different chapters point to a number of challenges in conducting social dialogue, among which political constraints play a pivotal role. According to Juliusz Gardawski, the problem with social dialogue at the central level is that it does not merely cross with politics, but is sometimes appropriated by it: '[in] such situations, political rationality, which is different from rationality which characterises non-political social relations, enters the arena with its primordial task of the defence of one's entrenched position (which in and of itself does not imply the inability to compromise)' (p. 45).

As I have already explained, the first part of the monograph is devoted to the discussion of theoretical approaches. Gardawski discusses various research perspectives, including institutionalism and varieties of capitalism (VoC). He summarises the analyses of the Fordist period in management and subsequent changes in economic tendencies and phenomena. He discusses the concept of social capital and social trust. He reviews the research carried out by James Coleman, Mark Granovetter, Richard Swedberg and Amitai Etzioni. He does not gloss over Polish researchers, including Janusz Hryniewicz, whose research is of great importance for understanding the cultural background of social dialogue. He also evokes the studies of organisational culture carried out by researchers from the Warsaw School of Economics, including the results of the research by Jan Czarzasty who has re-affirmed the points made by Hryniewicz, although, as J. Gardawski points out, ‘with some reservations’ (p. 14). Below, I will discuss in more detail some issues, mainly of a theoretical nature, related to social dialogue, which can be found mainly in the chapters written by Juliusz Gardawski.

The Culture of Dialogue

The part of the volume dedicated to the culture of dialogue is extremely valuable. Culture is the Achilles heel in the practice of dialogue in Poland. Gardawski questions the durable institutionalisation of dialogue due to the low degree of social internalisation and identification with the values of dialogue, as well as the tendency to perceive it in instrumental rather than autotelic categories. He ponders whether the existing level of trust within the Polish society and attachment to values associated with what he calls a ‘culture of dialogue and compromise’ provide an opportunity for a mature practice of dialogue.

The answer to the question regarding the above-quoted dimension of culture can be found in subsection I.4 entitled ‘A culture of dialogue and compromise and a culture of defending entrenched positions’ (pp. 38–46). Gardawski evokes the broad definition of culture coined by Jan Szczepański: ‘culture consists of all the products of human activity, ... values, ways of doing things ...’. (Szczepański 1966: 42). Taking this definition as a starting point, he raises the issue of evolution, flexibility and durability of cultural paradigms. In this context, he refers to the views of Ronald Inglehart (Zdziech 2010), who points out that cultural paradigms rarely change and when they do so, they do it by leaps (the theory of punctualism). The shift is brought

about by 'the influence of profound shocks that engulf the entire substance of a given socio-economic order, rather than through gradual changes'. However, the punctual change is usually preceded by a gradual build-up of barely noticeable changes on a micro scale. Yet, from this theoretical standpoint, changes such as those that ensued in Central and Eastern Europe after 1990 do not necessarily have to be durable, they do not have to alter the deep layer of values.

The author reminds us that dialogue between actors requires the adoption of a consensual attitude, which can only occur when there is willingness to retreat, to a certain extent, from one's positions. It means accepting the reasons of the other party and being prepared to conduct an arduous dialogue with the view of reaching a compromise. 'Realistically speaking, such a consensual attitude does not entail giving up arguing one's case and the struggle for the fundamentals, it rather means that not reaching a compromise will cause discomfort. The parties have their fundamentals, which they cannot abandon, but they are trying to expand the space for negotiation, for reaching a compromise' (p. 40). In this context, Gardawski points out that during the times of the First Polish Republic, in the 16th century parliament in particular, there existed a tradition which could be roughly translated into English as 'roughing the edges of the opinions' (*'ucieranie głosów'*).

Gardawski cites an intriguing view born from the Dutch experience of practising dialogue and expressed by Jelle Visser: 'Social pacts, or rather the action of reaching pacts by the society, is institutionalised if the relevant actors treat »social partnership«, consultation, joint decision making, harmonisation, ... as a priority behaviour, more important than the alternative offered by unilateral decision making, haggling, bargaining and winning' (on p. 41 of the reviewed monograph Gardawski quotes his 2009 book). Visser also argued for the need for all parties to the dialogue to develop an attitude of great patience, or a readiness to engage in the quest for compromise solutions, which take, or sometimes may take, a long time to reach. The partners should, moreover, aspire to abandon the desire to fight against or eliminate the other party involved in the dialogue.

A culture of dialogue therefore presupposes the mastery of a number of skills: the ability to compromise, to show respect, to strive for partnership with the other party, and the ability to see the other party as viable. Dialogue requires the existence of a common axiological plane, a consensus on the existence of common values and the common good, regardless of conflicts between the parties.

A culture of dialogue also requires the parties to be able to honour their commitments: 'If a compromise has been reached, its terms must be respected,

opportunistic behaviours should not be pursued and agreements must not be broken when this is convenient to a given party at a particular moment. In the community guided by the values of a culture of compromise, a group or person breaking an agreement opportunistically would be exposed to more or less severe negative social, formal and informal sanctions' (p. 41).

Conditions for Building the Foundations of Dialogue and its Development

Juliusz Gardawski believes that the above-quoted culture was represented by Minister Andrzej Bączkowski in the years 1994-1996. He was able to create the atmosphere of 'roughing the edges' of the interests of the parties to the dialogue in the initial period of the Tripartite Commission. From his position in the government, he practiced 'a policy of compromise and putting emphasis on the common good, understood as economic development, both for the Capital and the Labour'.

Later, however, this feat was rarely achieved by his successors at the post of chairpersons of the Tripartite Commission and its successor, the Council of Social Dialogue. Gardawski claims that Jerzy Hausner also played a positive role in this respect. 'The efforts of Bączkowski, Hausner and the other chairpersons (since not only they sought to generate a culture of dialogue and compromise) did not, however, lead to the durable entrenchment of this culture, the latter would require the presence of a much broader social environment. The fact that this culture did not sink deep roots cannot, however, be treated as evidence of its absence in Polish social life. As I have already explained, and will demonstrate it in the second part of this monograph, the seeds of a culture of dialogue and compromise were present and came into prominence from time to time within the institutional framework of the Tripartite Commission' (p. 42).

The concept of the culture of dialogue becomes clear when set against its opposite. Gardawski calls the latter a 'culture of defending the entrenched positions'. This revolves around 'dedication to one's positions and consistent defence of them'. The priority here is to protect the collective security of the in-group, or 'tribe', against the liberal autonomy for the individual and out-groups (Norris, Inglehart 2019: 7). Gardawski argues that this type of culture can be described as a 'culture of strength', despite the fact that it presupposes a struggle for one's position, the central value is

loyalty to one's own values, hence the suggestion to change the term. In academic literature there are many terms for this type of values.

In this view, the task is to eliminate the other party. The parties do not have or do not see the values that unite them and could become the basis for agreement. 'If, as a result of the balance of power, a compromise is reached, its terms are respected as long as either party has not gained an upper hand. At that moment it can freely break the agreement without feeling any moral discomfort. On the contrary, only then will it fit with the norm of a culture of defending the entrenched positions. From this point of view, a compromise can be seen as a provisional, negative state of affairs' (p. 42).

Gardawski's view is that in Poland there are difficulties in meeting the conditions for laying deep foundations and developing dialogue. The point is that in Poland, more than in the West, the concept of power as a winner-takes-it-all game has become widespread. It is also an expression of 'culture of serfdom', a category popularised by Janusz Hryniewicz, referring to the imprint of tradition going back to the 16th century. However, we do not have to look into such a distant past to see the roots of today's patterns of values. These were inherited from the period of the Partitions (1795–1918): 'Having power was perceived as having agency, hence the dissonance provoked by the category of participation in power, i.e. having a stake, wielding power together with other stakeholders' (p. 76).

The author acknowledges the above features in the practice of employee self-government from 1981–1989. At the beginning, the workers expected that they would gain the exclusive decision-making competences (the author analyses this phenomenon in greater detail in the subsequent parts of the book). The reasoning of the workers can be interpreted according to the model of winner-takes-it-all social relations (either you wield power or you do not wield it).

Attitudes characteristic for the values of 'illiberal democracy' models are relatively widespread, as evidenced by the results of economic and socio-political consciousness surveys carried out by the research team from the Warsaw School of Economics. These manifest themselves in the unwillingness to think in terms of participation and compromise. He quotes a typical statement of the respondent who took part in the study carried out in the first year of the Law and Justice (PiS) party rule (2016) by the research team led by Gardawski: 'power should belong to one and only one party, which takes all the responsibility for governing the country, everybody knows what it is responsible for, and society should pass its judgement every four years or so' (p. 43). This opinion was expressed by an engineer who is an expert in his field.

The Dialogue Based on the ‘Defence of Entrenched Positions’

Juliusz Gardawski enumerates the features of the culture of dialogue. He points out that the culture of dialogue in Poland during the years of the socio-economic transformation led social partners to act more in accordance with the model of ‘defending the entrenched positions’. For this reason, on the losing side were ‘the values associated with European culture, especially its German and Scandinavian varieties, with the corporate system of industrial relations (high-level collective bargaining agreements), in a word – dialogue and compromise’. However, the dominance of liberalism was relative: ‘Polish capitalism had a patchwork nature, allowing for adding institutional components with a different logic than the liberal one’ (p. 45).

In Poland, social dialogue has been destroyed. This was aptly described by Jerzy Hausner, Mirosław Marody and their research collaborators. Social dialogue in Poland was conducted within the framework of a culture of defending the entrenched positions. ‘Each party tries to prove that it is the sole representative of the social interest, so the interest of the other party is considered as partisan, incompatible with the interest of the society at large. As a result, each party tries to gain public acceptance only for its vision of the interest of the society. A »dialogue« is »made public« which leads to endeavours to utterly »exclude the other party«. The clash of interests of this sort is insoluble and is then transformed into a dispute between moral rights and wrongs. Thus, a conflict of interests turns into an insoluble conflict of values’ (Hausner, Morocco 2001: 117 ff.).

Gardawski poses the following question: ‘are we condemned to the dominance of a culture of defending entrenched positions, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop a culture of dialogue and compromise?’ Many commentators answer in the affirmative. The author, however, believes that things are not so simple. He notes that Polish workers, as polls, at least those carried out before 2015, have shown, expressed their support for dialogue and compromise. In addition, despite resistance, the central institutions of dialogue are carrying on and the social partners remain at the table, what is more, there have emerged new partners representing employers.

The author also points to the practical role of dialogue that is based on values shared by the partners participating in social dialogue. He proves his case that reaching a compromise may constitute a real barrier against undesirable actions/

events which may potentially happen in economic policy or labour relations. This was evident in Germany where a large chain of US hypermarkets was not able to enter the market. It came to this 'precisely because of the institutionalisation and the resistance brought about, in the final analysis, by cultural patterns that were sufficiently internalised, the investor failed to introduce the US liberal model of labour relations and would have to agree to European standards, the concessions proved too expensive for him and, thus, he did not enter the market' (p. 45). It seems that social partners in Poland would not be able to create such a barrier to actions/events that are inappropriate from the point of view of e.g. the interests of society.

Researching the Culture of Dialogue

Gardawski is also looking into the question of researching the culture of dialogue and compromise. He points out that this research can adopt many theoretical perspectives. He mentions two of them: the 'new' institutionalism (the theory of rational choice), which emphasizes utilitarian, rational choice and working out of formalised measures, and the 'old' institutionalism (the cultural perspective), which emphasized values and the cultural system, the latter arising through a complex combination of many factors, including tradition, religion and so forth.

As for 'new' institutionalism, 'Mancur Olson pointed out that acting on behalf of the common good by members of large groups requires selective incentives, directly satisfying individual interests. He considers the motive of serving the common good to be ineffective. The second approach, exemplified by Amitai Etzioni, emphasises moral obligations.

On the subsequent pages of the book, the reader can follow the analysis of assumptions that are usually made in this research. It is assumed that mature cultures of dialogue and compromise presuppose the existence of mature partners who have 'sufficient resources of knowledge (human capital), the ability to influence the social groups they represent, and thus enjoy sufficient credibility and loyalty from the community they represent'.

Moreover, Gardawski points out that the culture of dialogue and compromise is also influenced, in its highest level of generalisation, by the variety of system, or the variety of capitalism. In his opinion, the 'schematic model of Anglo-Saxon pluralism'

which is ingrained in our country is more conducive to the spread of the model of social dialogue based on the defence of entrenched positions, rather than a model of compromise based on the paradigm of European continental coordination in labour relations.

When researching dialogue, the profiles of national cultures with their historical heritage should also be taken into account. As for Poland, two main factors are relevant: ‘culture of serfdom’ with a low level of social trust and at the opposing pole, the heritage of ‘Solidarność’.

On Economic Culture

The part of the book devoted to the economic culture of Polish society is extremely interesting (p. 51 ff.). The author argues that it is a fallout from post-war economic policy, which he considers inconsistent, both in the period 1945–1989 and after 1989 (Gardawski 2018: 145–163). In this long period, Gardawski identifies a 7-year period of totalitarian system (1947–1954), which showed relatively efficient coordination, institutional complementarity and repressive control of society. The period following the anti-Stalinist breakthrough was that of a Polish ‘authoritarian socialism’, with poor internal coordination.

Of vital importance are the studies on the restoration of market economy after 1989. The economic culture heritage of Polish society was revealed. This came about as a result of:

- demoralisation, in terms of standards of economic system, during the time of the occupation;
- low level of legitimacy of the Communist authorities;
- low level of ideological identification of the state administration with the system and its low level of professional ethics;
- a relatively low level of repression of the Polish system, excluding the brutal repression of political opposition activism;
- relative acquiescence to violations of standards governing economic life;
- individualistic adaptation strategies (the Russian principle of ‘the quieter you go, the further you reach’ was widespread).

Gardawski reminds us that in the subject literature we encounter the term ‘legal anti-culture’ or ‘legal-axiological nihilism’. This expressed itself through the

phenomenon of 'commercial tourism' which emerged as early as during the times of Gomułka (1956–1970) and later exploded during Gierek's years (1970–1981). The phenomenon in question went hand in hand with widespread evasion of customs and fiscal law.

The author is on the lookout for the causes of these phenomena. He draws on the explanatory model proposed by Stefan Nowak which emphasises the institutional 'sociological vacuum' and the Polish variant of 'amoral familism'. It assumes that society is above all a 'federation' of families and social groups with very weak institutional ties. The basis for this model is the strong bonding social capital. However, heterogeneous group-making ties are very weak, and there is a deficit of bridging and linking capital. Therefore, there are no foundations for mutual responsibility, e.g. for observing the norms and rules of market economy.

A number of characteristics of economic culture have more or less distant social origins. Of these, a significant proportion is linked to the rural origin of a large proportion of today's urban population. They have brought the resourcefulness and industriousness typical of peasants. However, these characteristics are limited to individual thrift, expressed by the 'a spot of their own' principle. A tendency to 'privatise' (stealing) state resources was evident. These, however, were not wasted but used effectively in households, in the 'gig economics' sector. Regardless of the moral judgement, these forms of activities, in general, gave society the strength to survive.

The state, in turn, monopolised those forms of communal life that were collective in nature. Most Poles did not accept these actions and delegitimised them to a greater or lesser degree. 'The community was built by the Roman Catholic Church, it was the only 'homely', universally accepted institution, yet the Pre-Conciliar Church did not build a civic community, it was unequivocally hierarchical' (p. 53)

I will conclude the review of Gardawski's ideas by quoting an excerpt from his discussion about the nation and democracy in the institutional context: 'Paraphrasing the above-quoted notion of Nowak regarding the sense of bond with the nation as a moral rather than an institutional category, Poles rebelled as members of the Nation, while to a lesser extent they rebelled as employees of specific companies and against specific conditions in the workplace, although a direct impulse for rebellion was provided by worsening wage conditions. As a result, the Nation became the focal point of rebellion. In Poland, the slogan of democracy has always resonated, but democracy was conceived in non-institutional terms, as freedom, especially the abolition of dictatorial power and universal prosperity. However, it was not clear within the society as to how this democratic freedom was to be exercised,

hence the disillusionment caused by the first two years of the market economy and parliamentary democracy and the relatively rapid return to power of the post-Communist party' (p. 53).

Concluding Remarks

To conclude: we have received a valuable and important book. It provides us with an opportunity for further reflection and analysis. In the long term, it will result in a growing potential for practising a more mature dialogue in a number of areas that are important to the state and the society.

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