

Marking the Field of Industrial Relations in Poland: Theoretical Inspirations and Research Traditions

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Abstract

The article aims at describing the theoretical inspirations and research traditions behind the evolution of industrial relations in Poland. The account of global theoretical debate since the emerging of the field in the first half of the 20th century is delivered, followed by the overview of academic debates and research concerning the field since the times of state socialism (1945–1989) until the present day in Poland. In the conclusion, it is stated that in theoretical terms the field of industrial relations has remained underdeveloped.

Keywords: industrial relations, Poland

JEL Classification: J50, J53

Introduction

The paper aims to provide an overview of the field of industrial relations (IR) in Polish academic research. While the field in general (i.e. in the global context) has always been known to have blurred boundaries, being a source of both its strengths and weaknesses, the picture in Poland is even more complicated, as the rise of interest in industrial relations as an area of academic inquiry in Poland, following the collapse

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of authoritarian state socialism coincided with crisis of industrial relations in the Western academia stemming from decomposition of its subject of research. The paper looks at research and theoretical contributions to development of industrial relations in Poland made by scholars assigned to variety of academic disciplines including, in particular, sociology, economics, political science and labour law, with minor, yet often significant inputs made also by researchers belonging to other areas of social science and humanities, i.a. social psychology, cultural anthropology and history.

What is Industrial Relations?

To put it bluntly, as of 2021 no one can provide a sound and non-controversial definition of industrial relations anymore. Ongoing disorganisation of industrial relations [Hyman 2007] as a social, political and economic phenomenon is reflected with a growing propensity in using alternative, seemingly more descriptive and better fitting terms such as 'work and employment' or simply 'employment' relations.

In the table 1 there is a comparison of leading contemporary theoretical approaches to employment relations.

Table 1. Theoretical approaches to employment relations

Systems theory	Marxist approaches	Frames of reference
Web of rules	Asymmetry of power between labour and capital	<i>Unitarist</i> Workers and managers united by common interests and values: enterprise is harmonious
Employment relations actors (employers/employees/state)	Fundamental and irreversible conflict of class and economic interests shapes the nature and conduct of employment relations	<i>Pluralist</i> Recognising differing interests in the employment relationship: conflict channelled through institutions
Environment and context Ideology	An increasing power struggle is an essential feature of employment relations	<i>Radical</i> Gross disparity of power between the employer and the individual employee (property-less)

Source: Bennett et al. 2020.

Systems theory stems from the original concept by Dunlop [1958] embedded in functionalist paradigm in the social science, thus is sceptical about conflict (while not denying its existence) but instead emphasizes consensus to be reached via

collective bargaining. As Bennett et al [2020: 30] sum up the Dunlop's model: 'the dependent variable is the bundle of rules that governs industrial relations behaviour at various levels (international, national sector, etc), whereas the interaction between the actors, contexts and ideology is the independent variable'. On the contrary, Marxist and radical approaches criticize systems theory claiming it underplays the role of conflict, an inherent feature of employer-employee relationships. Marxist tradition in industrial relations studies comprises two major streams, of which one is traced back to Hyman [1975] and his 'political economy' of industrial relations, while the other is centred on the labour process debate launched by Braverman [1974/1998]. The former stresses out class perspective and maintains that industrial relations is in fact 'the study of processes of control over work relations' and not the job regulation, as pictured by a acolytes of systemic approach. The latter accentuates the key role of technology used by management to systematically deprive workers of their control over the job. With the current rise of the so-called 4th Industrial Revolution manifested by such trends as digitalization, automation or robotization of employment and the growing scale of AI (artificial intelligence), labour process theory seems to have been receiving a boost recently.

Heery [2016] delivers an important analysis of the 'frames of reference'. Drawing on Fox [1974], he discusses three perspectives through which industrial relations can be looked at. Those are: unitary, pluralist and radical approaches. Unitarist perspective tends to see the enterprise as a harmonious whole, with workers and managers united by common interests and values. Unitarists advocate the view that management is the only legitimate source of authority, control and leadership. The enterprise is seen as a united team working together for the common good. Pluralists acknowledge presence of conflict, which is seen as inevitable as organisation is a coalition of interest groups but still can be managed and resolved through and by the institutions such as trade unions, collective or bargaining and dispute resolution procedures with the state standing in a neutral position in the background. Proponents of the radical view also recognise conflict as unavoidable but doubt that power of institutions can effectively serve in resolving conflicts.

What follows (Table 2) is an attempt to bring together all relevant and meaningful definitions of industrial relations identified in course of literature review. The table relies in a major part on the work done by Welz [2013] updated by the author's own research.

Table 2. Definitions of industrial relations

Definition	Source
'The focal point of the field ... is the employee-employer relationship'	Social Science Research Council 1928, cited by Sisson 2007
'In the broadest sense, the term "industrial relations" comprises every incident that grows out of the fact on employment'	National Industrial Relations Conference Board 1931, cited by Kaufman 2008: 316
'An analytical subsystem of an industrial society on the same logical plane as an economic system, regarded as another analytical subsystem ...'	Dunlop 1958: 45
'The rules and practices of the work place are developed by the interaction of managers, workers and their organisations, and government agencies in an environment of technology, labour, and product markets, and government regulations'	Dunlop 1958: 8
'The actors in given contexts establish rules for the work place and the work community, including those governing the contacts among the actors in an industrial relations system. This network or web of rules consists of procedures for establishing rules, the substantive rules, and the procedures for deciding their application to particular situations. The establishment of these procedures and rules – the procedures are themselves rules – is the center of attention in an industrial relations system'	Dunlop 1958: 51
'... all aspects of labor'	Chamberlain 1960: 103
'Every industrial relations system, regardless of its form, fulfills at least three major functions in industrializing societies: (1) It defines the relative duties and responsibilities of workers, managers, and the state; it defines and sets up power and authority relationships. (2) It controls and keeps within tolerable limits the responses of industrial workers and managers to the dislocations, frustrations, and insecurities inherent in the industrializing process. (3) It establishes the complex rules, practices, and regulations, both substantive and procedural, which is requisite to the work place and the community. These are three interdependent functions'	Kerr, Dunlop et al. 1962
'... is a system of rules. These rules appear in different guises: in legislation and in statutory orders; in trade union regulations; in collective agreements and in arbitration awards; in social conventions; in managerial decisions; and in accepted' custom and practice'. ... In other words, the subject deals with certain regulated and institutionalized relationships in industry. Personal, or in the language of sociology "unstructured", relationships have their importance for management and workers, but lie outside the scope of a system of industrial relations'	Flanders 1965: 10

'... the consecrated euphemism for the permanent conflict, now acute, now subdued, between capital and labour'	Miliband 1969: 80
'The purpose of industrial relations theory is: what causes dependent variables (in employment behavior) to change?'	Heneman 1969: 4
'Industrial relations is concerned with employment relationships in an industrial economy. It is perhaps an unfortunate name for our discipline because it might appear to connote relationships between and among industries. But its central characteristic or focus is employment, in all aspects (micro and macro, individual and group): labour marketing, labour relations, personnel management and the like'	Heneman 1969: 4
'The heart of industrial relations is in the worker and his interaction with other workers and management at the workplace. All the forces of society, community, human motivation, and the labor market propel the worker there. All the forces of the product market and personnel recruitment pull him there'	Somers 1969: 44
'Industrial relations – the interplay among owners, managers, employees, unions and employer association officials, government, personnel, and others concerned with the functioning of productive labor for pay – may be studied in numerous ways	Derber 1969: 177
'... is functionally defined rather than institutionally. It is used to mean social relations in production. Industrial relations is concerned with how work rules are made and applied, and how decisions are taken to distribute amongst the producers their shares in the rewards of the production. These things are done through structures and processes which can be called industrial relations system'	Cox 1971: 141
'... they deal with the rules that govern employment. Sometimes these are described as the rules which regulate jobs, so that industrial relations could be briefly defined as the study of job regulation'	Clegg 1972: 1
'La négociation collective est au coeur de ce qu'on appelle un system des relations professionnelles, c'est donc un tel système dans son ensemble qu'on doit imaginer au niveau de la communauté économique européenne (emphasis in the original)'	Lyon-Caen 1972: 11
'... the subject of industrial relations may be defined as the study of all aspects of job regulation – the making and administering of the rules which regulate employment relationships – regardless of whether these are being seen as formal or informal, structures of unstructured'.	Bain, Clegg 1974: 95
'... is concerned with the bargaining explicit and implicit between and among employers and employees over the making of the rules of work and with the factors that affect this bargaining'.	Laffer 1974: 72

<p>'... process of control over work relations; and among these processes, those involving collective worker organization and action are of particular concern'. In footnote 1 Hymans adds: "This definition includes 'job regulation' within its scope. Regulation – 'control by rule' according to the Oxford dictionary – is merely one of many forms of control"</p>	Hyman 1975: 12
<p>'... it is the study of the rules governing employment, together with the ways in which the rules are made and changed, interpreted and administered. Put more briefly, it is the study of job regulation. This definition is not universally accepted, but the reader may find it easier to make his own judgments about the matter at end of the book rather than at the beginning'</p>	Clegg 1979: 1
<p>'During the course of the critique I discover that industrial relations it not the study of industrial relations; it is the study of objectified ideologies ore rules. ... Everyone, instinctively it seems, knows what industrial relations is about, even those who have never studied the subject. It is "about' trade unions, managers, and collective bargaining, etc.'</p>	Marsden 1982: 232–233
<p>'... the processes of control over the employment relationship'</p>	Palmer 1983: 2
<p>'... the management of labor problems in an industrial society or, more operationally, as the theories, techniques, and institutions for the resolution of contending money and power claims in the employment relationship'</p>	Barbash 1984: 3
<p>'... a more realistic model of industrial relations should recognize the role played by management in shaping industrial relations as opposed to the traditional view, which sees management as reactive, responding to union pressures. The new model should also recognize the different levels of decision making that occur within business, labor, and government organizations and their independent effects on industrial relations outcomes. This is why we believe that the concept of strategy, or strategic choice, will add a more dynamic component to systems theory ...'</p>	Kochan, McKersie, Capelli 2011: 147
<p>'... as a separate and specialist field of study, which through time has come to be centrally concerned with the institutional determination and regulation of the terms and conditions of employment ...'</p>	Beaumont 1990: 1
<p>'... is the multi-disciplinary study of the employment relationship, with particular emphasis on the relations between employers and workers. It seeks to understand the forces of an economic, social political, psychological, and organizational nature that effect the employment relationship; the goals, behaviors, practices, and organizations of employers and workers; the causes and consequences of imperfections and malfunctions in the employment relationship that adversely affect the economic efficiency, workplace equity, and individual well-being; and the practices and policies that can resolve these problems'</p>	Kaufman 1993: 18

'... the resolution of tension and conflict among the contending interests of an employment relationship'	Barbash 1993: 67
'... the study of negotiations between the firm and the groups of individuals (or their agents) about control over the employment relationship'	Hills 1993: 191
'... the creation of an economic surplus, the co-existence of conflict and cooperation, the indeterminate nature of the exchange relationship, and the asymmetry of power'	Blyton and Turnbull 1994: 31
'Industrial relations as the study of collective bargaining'	Beaumont 1995
'... the social regulation of market forces'	Hyman, 1995: 10
'... emerged as a distinctive field of study and a locus of public policy in the aftermath of the Great Depression and the Second World War. Its focus was upon the organization of workers through trade unions and the way in which those organized workers operated to structure the economy, and through the economy, the society in which they lived. It tried how that process could be channelled and controlled through public policy'	Locke, Kochan, Piore 1995, XIII
'... the central problems of industrial relations: first, how do individuals acquire a sense of collective, as opposed to individual grievance? Second, how, and under what conditions, do individuals organize collectively to pursue their grievances (or interests, more broadly defined)? Third, how, and under what conditions, will such individuals take collective action, that is "corporative action taken by a number of individuals acting in concert with common goals" '	Kelly 1998: 24
'From the vantage point of mobilization theory it is the perception of, and response to, injustice that should form the core intellectual agenda for industrial relations'	Kelly 1998: 126
'... functional subsystem of society on the same plane as the legal, the economic or the science system. The industrial relations system has constituted itself as a fully-fledged functional social system'	Rogowski 2000: 102
'... encompasses a set of phenomena, both inside and outside the workplace, concerned with determining and regulation the employment relationship'	Salamon 2000: 3
'the study of the employment relationship and all behaviors, outcomes, practices, and institutions that emanate from or impinge upon the employment relationship'	Kaufman 2004: 4
'... une entité sociale aux dimensions variables se définissant par la production de règles et impliquant ainsi une attention tout à la fois aux conditions de formulation de la règle dans -des "scènes politiques" et aux conditions de sa mobilisation dans le cours des activités sociales et dans le cadre de process'	Didry, Bethoux, Mias 2004: 29

<p>'... the IR field in the twentieth century has had not one but two paradigms. The first or original industrial relations (OIR) paradigm was centered on the employment relationship and included both union and non-union sectors and personnel/human resource management and labor-management. ... The second proposition is that the modern paradigm, by taking an overly narrow and union-centric perspective on the employment relationship, has been a significant factor behind the oft-noted threatened status of the IR field worldwide and its marked decline in a number of countries.</p>	<p>Kaufman 2008: 314/315</p>
<p>'The strategy promoted here is to return to the broad OIR paradigm – albeit in a contemporary form with stronger horizontal linkages across all the social science fields and greater cultural, national and gender inclusiveness – and make the employment relationship and all forms of labor problems again the core subject and organizing concept for teaching and research in the field'</p>	<p>Kaufman 2008: 334/335</p>
<p>'... the field of study of the old academic IR was always a highly partial theorization of the real world subject to the employment relationship and its regulation'</p>	<p>Ackers, Wilkinson 2008: 59</p>
<p>'... broadly defined as the study of work and employment'</p>	<p>Frege 2008: 35</p>
<p>'The central concern of IR is the collective regulation (governance) of work and employment'</p>	<p>Sisson 2010</p>
<p>'... a conceptual construct that shows the factors external and internal to firms and other organizations in an industry, region or nation that shape the characteristics and tenor of their employer/employee relationship'</p>	<p>Kaufman 2011: 13</p>
<p>'... the study of social institutions involved in the normative regulation of the employment relationship and business's interaction with other stakeholders of society'</p>	<p>Ackers 2011</p>
<p>The term Industrial Relations (IR) is used broadly in what follows to denote employment studies, the study of the employment relationship (cf. Frege 2007; Kaufman 2014). The term is not restricted to the analysis of trade unions or collective relationships at work, although these have often been the primary focus of IR scholars. In what follows a catholic approach to source material is adopted and the argument draws heavily on Human Resource Management (HRM), the sociology of work, employment law, economics, and critical management studies as well as the work of self-confessed 'industrial relationists'</p>	<p>Heery 2016: 12</p>

Source: based on Welz (2013), with the author's own input.

Industrial Relations in Poland as Social Phenomenon

Industrial relations in Poland present the case of institutional hybrid, mirroring the nature of Polish political economy, which is well described by the notion of 'patchwork' proposed by Rapacki et al. [2019]. The metaphor of various pieces of fabric being sewed into a larger design denotes the mosaic-type of institutional environment where features originated in different historical contexts are more or less loosely knitted together. In particular, three traditions left their deep mark on the face of Poland's capitalism: 1) institutions (mostly informal) inherited from proto-capitalist past, 2) the socialist legacy (predominantly informal institutions), 3) institutions (mostly formal) transposed from 1990 onwards from the co-existing models of contemporary Western-type capitalism (especially from the Mediterranean and the Continental models).

While there is a general consensus about the hybrid nature of Poland's capitalism, the literature on the subject hardly speaks in unison. For that reason, it seems reasonable to deliver a concise overview of attempts to provide relevant definitions.

In the 1990s Eyal et al [1998] made an observation of the supposed process of constructing 'capitalism without capitalists' taking place in the post-socialist world. Their intention was to highlight a fact that with domestic bourgeoisie missing, internal capital reserves lacking, and the state struggling to redefine its economic responsibilities following the collapse of the 'central command economy', foreign direct investment (FDI) was going to assume the role of the major engine for economic development. The thesis attracted only a moderate attention until Nölke and Vliegthart [2009] stepped forward with the 'dependent market economy' (DME) term, describing a specific model of capitalism emerging in the Visegrád countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). 'Dependence' of a given national economy is explained in terms of foreign capital's (represented mostly by transnational enterprises) dominance [Nölke, Vliegthart 2009: 680]. Jasiński [2013] criticizes the thesis, claiming that Poland with its substantial industrial output and domestic consumption is less reliant on influx of FDI or exports than other countries in the region. The view that Visegrad (or VR4) nations form a separate type of economy, different than in the rest of the former Eastern Bloc is shared by Myant and Drahekoupil [2011] (who extend the cluster to Slovenia), branding it an 'FDI based (second-rank) market economy', because '[t]hese economies have developed complex export structures, but they have only a second-rank position in international

production networks'. In what is arguably the most advanced form on comparative analysis of CEE capitalism up to date, Bohle and Greskovits [2012] also include Poland as a part of the Visegrad cluster, and refer to Polish model of market economy as 'embedded neoliberalism', whose boundaries are defined by a continuous struggle between marketization and social protection [Bohle and Greskovits 2012: 138–181]. Lane [2013], by a reference to Wallerstein's world-system terminology, depicts the CEE countries as 'semi-peripheries'.

Following the rise to prominence of the dichotomous model (Liberal vs. Coordinated Market Economy) drawn by Hall and Soskice (2001), which has become a foundation for the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) school, a string of publications using VoC as the main frame of reference appeared. In the background, there is also the Diversity of Capitalism (DoC) school present [e.g. Streeck and Thelen 2005; Streeck 2014]. Notable contributions to be found in those streams include: Feldmann [2006], Knell and Srholec [2007], Mykhnenko [2007], Buchen [2007], Hanson [2007] and Baboš [2010]. However they tend to apply the frameworks in rather a straightforward manner, which (while definitely helpful in such endeavours as systematic literature review) results in ignoring some important contextual factors. There is a bloc of publications that attempt to balance between those standard theoretical frameworks and original observations, such as Farkas [2011]; Ahlborn et al. [2016], Rapacki et al. [2019].

Polish industrial relations can also be portrayed in terms of a patchwork with elements of post-feudalism (epitomized by the 'manorial organisational culture' thesis by Hryniewicz 2007), post-socialist residuals, especially in the public and post-state-owned sector and 'imported' institutional arrangements brought to Poland by private (mainly multinational corporations) and public (EU regulations instilled in Poland as a part of *aquis*). The realisation of co-existence of parallel institutional orders rather than a single model [Gardawski et al. 1999; Jasiocki 2013; Kozek 2003; Morawski 1997] is reflected in a plethora of definitions to be found in not only in domestic but international literature. What needs to be stressed out is that impact of each of the three institutional traditions/waves changing over time (with 1989 taken as the point of departure). Decreasing influence of the former has been accompanied by a growing role of the latter.

As a consequence, the liberal variant of pluralistic IR imitating the Anglo-Saxon models would be incrustated with neo-corporatist solutions from the mid-1990s, combining the socialist legacy and attempts to maintain social peace in times of rapid economic restructuring [Morawski 1997]. The result was the development of a hybrid system labelled 'corporatism without integration' [Kulpińska 1998], 'imperfect

pluralism' [Kozek 2003] or 'etatism/unstable corporatism' Sroka [2007]. Instability and shallow institutionalization of neo-corporatist arrangements transposed to Poland as a part of the *aquis* [Vaughan-Whitehead 2000] prompted criticism, most famously expressed by Ost [2000] using the 'illusory corporatism' phrase. There are more nuanced views of tripartism in Poland provided by Iankova [2003], Gardawski [2009] or Gardawski and Meardi [2010]. Nevertheless, sceptical tone used in discussing the Polish variation of neo-corporatism would not vanish following the 2008+ series of crises and its aftermath. Quite the contrary, it has even become stronger with voices by Ost [2011] or Czarzasty and Mrozowicki [2018] stressing out the resilient façade character of the local 'neo-corporatism'.

In the 2020s there seems to be a tendency in the Polish system of industrial relations to become increasingly state-dependent. In other words, the weak and shaky domestic 'neo-corporatism' appears to be evolving into 'neo-etatism' [Czarzasty and Mrozowicki 2018], whose leading characteristic is apparently the government's intention – and actual political moves on its part that follows – to hijack trade unions' agenda by advancing conventional union postulates (that is, 'labour friendly') via legislation, in particular by raising national minimum wage. This can be largely explained by diminishing power resources of trade unions, especially associational, institutional and structural power resources evaporating, with only some societal power remaining, in terms applied by Schmalz et al. [2018]. Even re-establishment of tripartite social dialogue bodies in 2015 (following a spell between 2013 and 2015) proves not to have been an impulse for tripartite social dialogue gaining a new momentum.

Industrial Relations in Poland Within Academia: Interdisciplinary Encounters With no Conclusive Results

Industrial relations studies in Poland has always been interdisciplinary, with contributions from representatives of various social and economic sciences disciplines combined with rather low level of institutionalisation. That rather loose cross-disciplinary cooperation is manifested by the absence of any academic association which would congregate industrial relations scholars in the country [see: Czarzasty, Mrozowicki 2018; Mrozowicki 2018]. In the post-war Poland industrial relations research took off only after 1956, as the anathema on number of social science disciplines, first and foremost, sociology ended. As a result the studies on the plant

level and workers' councils in state-owned enterprises emerged [Bohdziewicz 2014]. The most notable contributions made in the early period of development of industrial relations research included works by Jarosz [1967] on the social role and opinions of employee representatives in workers' self-government, Morawski [1973] on workers' expectations of their representatives, Gilejko (1969) on trade unionism or Matejko on enterprise as a social milieu [1969]. From the late 1950s onwards there was also a research stream focussed on workers' self-government and strongly interested in the Yugoslavian experience [Balcerek and Gilejko 1967]. Furthermore, there was a relatively strong movement of 'plant sociologists' [Jędrzycki 1971] employed in large state-owned socialist enterprises. In the 1970s industrial relations research not only co-existed but was also interlinked with studies done in the field of sociology of organisation [e.g. Staniszkis 1972].

The emergence of 'Solidarity' was a milestone in the industrial relations debates in Poland, generating huge interest of both Polish and international scholars [e.g. Staniszkis 1994/1983; Touraine et al. 1984]. Late 1980s brought some very interesting empirical findings – albeit often being only a by-product of a wide-ranging research primarily focused on other fields – delivered mainly by sociologists but also by interdisciplinary teams (involving economists, political scientists or labour law scholars) implicitly pertaining to industrial relations [e.g. Czarzasty et al. 1987; Cichomski, Morawski 1988; Morawski, Kozek 1989/2005].

Yet the real turning point in the analysis and attempts on conceptualisation of IR as a field of academic research and theoretical reflection thereof occurred after 1989. 1990s and 2000s was a period of a very intensive – considering relatively small size of academic community dealing with the issues of work and employment relations – research. It is certainly understandable, given the fact that fully developed labour market (with unemployment being a real-life phenomenon present) had not existed prior to 1989 [Góra 1991]. Once it appeared, the empirical research aiming at grasping and framing the area took off. In the 1990s the impact of commercialization and privatisation of the Polish economy remained the main focus, involving in a parallel way survey studies [Gardawski 1997] and case study method, with specific enterprises/workplaces being examined (e.g. Gardawski et al. 1994; Federowicz et al. 1995; Kozek, Kulpińska 1998). In parallel research conducted by international scholars was also developing, albeit not covering only Poland but very often spreading into other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region [e.g. Ost 2000; Meardi 2002].

As a consequence, theoretical attempts to define IR at domestic level finally emerged but quite interestingly as late as 2000s. Morawski [2001: 198] claims that industrial relations should be seen as 'patterns of mutual relations between employers, employees (and their organized representation i.e. trade unions and employer organisations) and state (government)'. Towalski [2001] would describe industrial relations in Dunlopian terms, referring to the original, functionalist concept of industrial relations as a system. Gilejko [2002] not only comes forward with a definition of IR but also suggests that the issue should be looked at from two different angles. One, industrial relations (or collective labour relations) cover all social relations between employees and business. Two, it covers relations among organized representations of employees, employers and state. It is striking that in the more recent years not much, if any attempts at theoretical structuration of industrial relations in Poland have been undertaken. Some traces can be found in Kozek [2013] but, nevertheless, there is almost nothing relevant enough to be bought into the debate.

Conclusions

As Hyman [2002] points out, industrial relations has always been a field mostly empirically oriented, with serious shortcomings in the area of theory. In Poland, just like in the vast part of the CEE region, the post-1989 socio-economic transformation disrupted industrial relations in practical terms but also produced surprisingly little literature on the subject providing the analysis with theoretical ambitions in a straightforward manner, that is, concentrating on industrial relations (without overlapping with other areas of academic interest such as social dialogue) only. Instead, there are numerous positions which can be deemed merely empirical, reporting the results of field research. While they all – mentioned in the article – should be seen as valuable contributions to the debate, and, thus, help us understand what actually have happened to industrial relations in Poland over last 30 years, they do not constitute any firm theoretical framework that could be relied on in a continuous quest for an answer what really Polish industrial relations are.

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