

Making a difference: an interview with Arend Lijphart

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Matthijs Bogaards (MB)—Let's start with your latest book, *A Different Democracy*, which has just been published (Taylor et al. 2014). This book has been in the pipeline for many years and from the preface one gets the impression that it was quite complicated to write.

Arend Lijphart (AL)—Yes, it was. When I was working on *Democracies* and later on *Patterns of Democracies*, I was struck by how difficult it often was to classify the United States. It did not fit the categories very well, so that took a lot of thinking and squeezing. Bernie Grofman came up with the idea to do a graduate seminar together on the question of the US as a different democracy. This was in the late 1990s. We offered the course twice. Then neither one of us really got much done, so we got Matt Shugart into the project. I remember at one point, I had already retired and had written drafts of the four chapters that I was supposed to deliver, that I had the feeling that the book was not going anywhere. So I said, you can have my chapters, do with them what you want, I am out. But then I got back into it and Steven Taylor joined. He did a wonderful job in putting all the bits and pieces together.

Our aim was to make clear to American students that the US is a democracy, but a very different one from other democracies. The chapters that I drafted originally looked point by point at these differences. What bothered me while I was working on it was the question of how to explain it. There were partial explanations, as for the pretty strict two-party system we have in the US, which can be explained with the presidential form of government and the system of primaries. But I would have liked

The interview with Arend Lijphart took place on November 18 and 21, 2014, at his home in San Francisco. The author thanks Raluca Bătănoiu for transcribing the interview.

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for the book to come up with one overall explanation and it still does not really do that. In the last phase of preparing the book Matt and Steven brought in the idea of looking very closely at the constitutional convention. I think that was a very important contribution. Almost every chapter starts with some of this background. It ties the book together and it answers at least some of the questions.

MB—I thought, while reading it, that if there ever was a book that demonstrated the concept of path-dependence, it is this one, because everything is being traced to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. What does that mean for the prospects of change?

AL—Things are very difficult to change in the US. Obviously a number of things have changed, as the federal government has expanded a great deal since the early days. I would certainly not say that everything is predetermined. For instance, some of the unusual features of the party system, I am thinking of the primaries, were not part of the constitution. There has always been a lot of experimentation in American politics, think also of all the referendums in California. It is funny, though, that while states can experiment a great deal, the basic structure of government of each state is very similar to the federal government.

MB—The book is strong in description, there is a bit of explanation, mostly going back to the founding moment, but what I missed is a strong conclusion.

AL—That was deliberate. We never meant to have clear policy recommendations, leaving it up to the instructor and the students to talk about that. In that sense the book is different from much of the work that I have done, because I tend to end with a prescription. The main message is that the US is different from other democracies and that it does not work as well as many other democracies. Hopefully this will stimulate discussion about reform, because the book is brimming with implicit recommendations, or at least implicit invitations to think about what could be done.

MB—But then you gave me this other piece on polarization and democratization and there you have pretty clear positions (Lijphart 2015).

AL (laughing)—Oh, yeah. Well, that was written for a conference by the Hewlett Foundation. They organized a workshop on the question of polarization and what we can do about it. That was very much like a policy exercise. If the conference had not been there, I would not have not started thinking about this. While I was writing the paper, certain things became clear to me. If you want to do something about polarization, you have to change the American system and make it more democratic.

MB—You actually say you want to make the US more democratic, implying that it is not as democratic as it could be, or even should be?

AL—Exactly! I have chosen to live in this country, but I do not consider the US the most outstanding beacon of democracy. There are too many problems, inequality, inequities in the system, and obviously it is not a wonderful example of efficient government. I completely changed my mind about the American system. Fortunately, I did not write much about it when I was still more favorably inclined, which means that I do not have to take too many of my words back. I am very surprised that it was not more of a concern in the US that the Republicans won the 2012 elections for the House of Representatives with a minority of the vote.¹ And if that result had been dif-

¹Despite receiving 1.4 Mio. votes less than the Democrats, the Republicans won 33 seats more.

ferent, then much more work could have been done in the past 2 years, for example with the bipartisan bill on immigration passed by the Senate that was simply bottled up by the Republicans in the House. So I think a lot of the current problems in the end have to do with a lack of full democracy in the US.

MB—And that is why you have these 15 recommendations?

AL—Many of which are almost impossible to accomplish. In his book *How Democratic is the American Constitution*, Dahl also despairs of the possibility of change (Dahl 2003). In the short term, realistically, only things that do not require a constitutional amendment can be changed, and that means mainly the electoral system, which is not specified in the constitution. When I mention that to people who are politically interested, they are surprised to hear that. Congress could allow the states to decide what kind of electoral system they want to use or mandate proportional representation.

Then there is this plan, the National Popular Vote Plan, that is championed by Fair Vote. The idea is to circumvent the constitution and the electoral college, so that a president would simply be elected by whoever wins the majority of the total national popular vote. This is a very clever plan. When I first heard about it, I thought, why did I not think of that? The constitution allows states to make compacts with each other, so that they can decide to do certain things together. The idea is to have enough states to agree that they will award their electoral college votes to the winner of the national popular vote. The states would have to pass a law binding themselves to this, but binding only if enough other states go along. So you might have a Democrat candidate win in California, but if a Republican candidate has the majority of the national vote, then California would give its electoral votes to the Republican candidate.

MB—How far are they?

AL—Look under Fair Vote.² There is a lot of information. The nice thing is that you do not need to get the agreement of all of the states. You just need the states that together have a majority in the electoral college. That is the key. I think we are one-half or two-thirds on the way to getting that majority. One curious thing again about the US is that there is not much general discussion about this initiative. How many people are aware of it? I would say very few. When California adopted it, there was hardly any press coverage.

MB—How controversial is your diagnosis of the problems facing American politics, and how controversial are your recommendations?

AL—At the Hewlett Foundation you find an audience ready to agree that there is a problem of polarization and ready to look at alternatives. The typical American government expert would immediately say: “Nice idea, but it is not going to happen” (laughing). I always reply, if you say it is never going to happen, then well... you make even more sure that it is not going to happen. So you have to keep trying and keep the conversation going. When you talk about the Arab Spring, for instance, I mean, why wasn't there something like an American Spring in the year 2000, when the Supreme Court just gave the presidency to George W. Bush? Why weren't there demonstrations in the streets? If I had been a member of the Supreme Court, I would have obviously voted no in the decision Bush vs. Gore and I would have handed in

² See: <http://www.fairvote.org>.

my resignation to the president. Whether that would have been useful... But I am asking: Why wasn't there more of a protest? And why didn't Gore protest more?

MB—Wasn't he applauded for playing by the rules of the game? Isn't this the mark of a true democrat?

AL—I think so. But the rules of the game had been abused, I would say.

MB—These are pretty strong accusations. Have you made them in writing?

AL—I think, perhaps in this paper, don't I say some harsh things about the Supreme Court?

MB—Yes, towards the end you talk about Supreme Court reform. Oh! And will this be published?

AL—It will be a chapter in a forthcoming edited volume.

MB—Is my understanding correct that this was too radical to get into the *Different Democracy* book? Was it too radical for your co-authors?

AL—No, this came up later. I think the meeting was in 2013. You are raising an interesting question. What if I could add something? The book was supposed to be a textbook, but has become more of a scholarly contribution. I am obviously very pleased with how it worked in the end. It was favorably received when we submitted it to the Yale University Press. This is actually my sixth book with Yale Press, which makes for a nice, kind of a crown on the whole series of books. But if I had single-authored the book it would have, very likely, been different. The title, a *Different Democracy*, was the original title that I wanted and I managed to save it. There was a lot of discussion, but Yale Press liked my title. It was interesting that the Yale press thought of a connection between my *Patterns of Democracy* and this book, because they gave it a very similar cover.

MB—So there is a family resemblance with *Patterns of Democracy*.

AL (laughing)—Right, right!

MB—The second edition of *Patterns of Democracy* came out a couple of years ago (Lijphart 2012).

AL—For a long time I was planning not to write any second edition. The first edition was so much work. By the time Yale Press tried to get me to write a second edition, because the book had done well for them, I was already 70 years old, and I was thinking that I deserved some peace and quiet, and a restful retirement. So for a long time I just said no, I was not going to do it. Then I did, because I strongly believe in the book's message and wanted to keep it alive.

I actually had not expected that the conclusions of the second edition would be even stronger than in the first edition. It was such a nice surprise to see things fall into place. I attributed this mainly to the fact that intrinsically the conclusions are right, but also that they come out better, because the evidence is better. There is much more data available, and better data.

MB—If you had the time, the inclination, what would you do differently?

AL—It was even more work than I had thought. But I finished it, now it is public, and I am glad that it is done. I also know that I am not doing a third edition. The one thing that is obvious at this stage is that quite a few more democracies could be included, because of the increasing number of democracies since 1990. I stuck to this 20-year period. If I had changed the time frame a little bit, I think there might have been additional countries that I could have used. I admit frankly that I shuddered hav-

ing to add another six countries, because it is quite a bit of work. For Eastern Europe, I think the early years were not typical and I did not know how best to deal with that, as there was so much change in later years. You need time to classify countries as consensus or majoritarian democracies. If you look at a longer time span, probably the early years would be overwhelmed by whatever the evidence is of the later years.

If I were to think of a third edition, I guess I would pretty much stick to what I have done before and only make some adjustments. But it is fine if younger generations of political scientists do whatever radical re-organization and re-thinking they would like to do. I guess it is also too recent, so I have not really thought about what to do, what the next step is, although I do know it is not *my* next step.

MB—I used the second edition of *Patterns of Democracy* as the textbook in an introduction to Comparative Politics. That course always had a writing assignment and I thought, what better way for students to reflect on a book, on what they have learnt, than to write a book review? The best book review, written by Francisco Diaz, was published in the same journal that is publishing the interview (Diaz 2014). Maybe we can go through the book review?

AL—I think it is a very nicely written review, and also, I guess, appropriate in finding some fault. I have highlighted a few things. It is true that relatively little has changed between the 1999 and 2012 version. In the first edition there was also multivariate analysis, but the tables were bi-variate. So in the second edition it is just a matter of presentation.

MB—Francisco raises the question whether consensus democracy contributes to democratic consolidation. That could be answered by looking at new, recent democracies, the institutional choices they make, and how that plays out over time.

AL—Most of the 36 countries did continue as democratic systems and that is true for both majoritarian and consensus. So there is not really much more to say. The explanation for why Papua New Guinea, Venezuela, and Colombia failed and are not included in the last edition becomes more of a case-by-case explanation. With Venezuela and Colombia, the presidential system was at fault. It is interesting to note that out of 36 established democracies 29 have parliamentary systems of government. Switzerland is a hybrid system, leaving only six presidential systems in spite of the fact that worldwide presidential systems are very common. This is not the strongest evidence, but it does make you think.

In Latin America you have always had one problem after another: the president either being too weak, or too powerful, or wanting to continue in power forever. Then you have term limits, big fights about removing the term limits, and so on. Latin American countries inherited these constitutional problems by imitating the US as a model. I used to say that the presidential system is a bad system with one exception, the US. Now we do not have that exception anymore, because it is obvious that the presidential system is no longer working well in the US either.

MB—So there is really no defense for presidentialism anymore?

AL—American government experts tend to be very provincial. They know a lot about American Government, they tend not to know that much about other countries. And for this reason the question of presidentialism hasn't been big on the agenda. I am pretty convinced that the basic argument that Juan Linz makes is correct (Linz 1990).

I still think that it would have been better if Clinton had resigned after the impeachment. I am actually a big supporter of Clinton. He was a good president, but he did kind of break his word, because he promised to behave. And if Clinton had resigned, Gore would have been president. George W. Bush would never have been president. I think Gore would have won the election in 2000, which he did anyway (laughing), but he was denied victory.

The most recent elections for Congress show another defect of the presidential system: in the popular perception, the president is considered to be the key, all powerful. So when things go wrong, the president gets the blame, even though it is obvious in this particular case that things went wrong because of the obstructionism of the Republican Party. But they in fact got rewarded. So there is a premium for the opposition party to be unreasonable, a situation that is hard to imagine in a parliamentary system of government.

MB—Papua New Guinea is also interesting, because it has featured in the debate about the choice of electoral system for divided societies, and Papua New Guinea is the only divided society where the Alternative Vote has been a success. So you could have blamed it on the Alternative Vote, but you don't.

AL—No, no. I think that would be doing too much. I don't really believe in the Alternative Vote being the magical formula, like Horowitz, who recommends it for South Africa (Horowitz 1991). That is one of the dumbest ideas I have ever heard. In an article in the *Journal of Democracy*, I claim that there is really quite a bit of an agreement on power sharing (Lijphart 2004). So where is the movement behind Donald Horowitz? In my original manuscript, I said Horowitz is just a one-man-show but the journal did not want to publish that term (laughing). I think there have only been a couple of people, like Benjamin Reilly, that go along with him, but he really does not have that many followers. There is very little empirical evidence for what he claims. And I also think the logic is just not there. That people become more moderate when....

MB (interrupts)—But isn't that what you claim in your defense of ranked-choice voting in the *San Francisco Chronicle*? (DeLeon and Lijphart 2013) Reading the article I was thinking: this is what Horowitz claims about preferential voting systems and now it comes from Arend Lijphart!

AL—I would say that for the US, plurality is not working well, so I prefer ranked-choice voting. I think that is an improvement. Oakland has also used the instant run-off so it has become pretty common here. I just do not think that it is a good prescription for divided societies.

MB—From what you write, it seems that the preferential voting system here in San Francisco worked as intended. It made candidates more moderate. It gave them an incentive to reach out beyond their core constituency.

AL—This is always what advocates of plurality say: that it draws candidates towards the center. Probably ranked choice does that a little bit better, but the logic is not all that different from plurality. My preference for a city like San Francisco would be a city-wide proportional electoral system, as in Amsterdam. Instant run-off voting is clearly better than plurality, but not ideal either. Remember also that the piece in the *Chronicle* was co-authored, so there were certain things that my co-author felt strongly about.

MB—Are you retracting now parts of the article?

AL—No, I have signed on to it. So that is fine.

MB—You recently co-authored an article which links domestic terrorism to majoritarian democracy. I see many problems with both the logic and the empirical evidence (Qvortrup and Lijphart 2013).

AL—I have not done that much co-authored work. Whenever I did, as the first author, I basically wrote most of it. When I am the second author that usually means that I am the minor author. But if you have that kind of critique, you should write a response, actually re-do the analysis. I have often just made all the data available, and when people say, you should have done this, you should have done that, I can say, do it yourself and see what happens.

MB—In 2009 you received an honorary doctorate from the University of Ghent. I read the interview, in which you say that for Belgium to reform, it needs a big crisis (Devos 2009).

AL—They really pressed me to say something on Belgian politics. If you count the number of parties in the Belgian parliament, there are about nine effective parties, which is more than in Switzerland and the Netherlands. And the way I count: the more parties, the more consensual the party system. But is more always better? That is how I measure it, but in terms of policy recommendations, I think there may have to be some kind of limit. Also, the more difficult it is to amend the constitution, the more rigid the constitution, the more consensual this feature. How far should that go? I think the American constitution is already too difficult to amend. That is something that I do not address in *Patterns of Democracy*, but perhaps I should. When you talk about policy recommendations, when you say consensus is better than majoritarian, be a little careful about overdoing these features.

MB—Rudy Andeweg, from Leiden University, where you once worked, has observed how extreme-right parties tend to do well in consensus democracies. You had an exchange with him in the Dutch political science journal *Acta Politica* in 2001, but this is not included in the 2012 edition of *Patterns of Democracy* (Andeweg 2001; Lijphart 2001a).

AL—Not just in consensus democracies: you see it in France and Britain as well. There may be a general malady in democracies at the moment. I think it is a problem if in a consensus democracy there is no credible opposition, which perhaps is true for the grand coalitions in Germany. I think it would be better if the FDP were still in Parliament. Countries in general are better off with a threshold of 2 or 3% instead of 5%, as in Germany.

MB—I see a theme emerging: consensus democracy is good, but there should not be too much consensus.

AL—Yeah. Maybe there are some advantages in not going too far. Still, when people in the US ask me what country I would give as a model to follow, I often say Germany.

MB—The readers of the ZfVP will be delighted with this answer, although some may be skeptical.

AL—I think Germany on the whole is a pretty well run country. It's also big. It also has a federal system. These are two features that make it a reasonable model for a big, federal country like the US. That does not mean that Germany is my ideal

democracy. I am sure that in German federalism there are things that need to be changed. But I think Germany has a better political system than the US.

MB—When in my course we talk about consensus democracies performing better, doing better economically, being kinder and gentler, and having a higher quality of democracy, my students often ask me: this is very nice, but I come from Romania, or from Zambia. And they say, okay, I want consensus democracy, I am convinced by the arguments, but does that mean that if my country—Romania or Zambia—adopts consensus institutions, does that mean that within five or ten years, we will become like Sweden? Now I have the chance to pass that question on to you.

AL—For Romania I would think the chances are better, because it is in Europe and, of course it is now also a member of the EU.

MB—That does not help my Zambian student very much. If Zambia switches from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government and changes its electoral system from plurality elections to proportional representation, how long will it take for Zambia to become like Sweden?

AL (laughing)—Impossible to say. But in my mind there is no doubt that if I were a constitutional advisor, I would say go for a kind of consensual system.

MB—The *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* published a special issue in your honor. In your own contribution, you say that you do not understand why political scientists are so reluctant to offer advice (Lijphart 2013). But still, this can get you into trouble. A former colleague at Leiden University, Koen Koch, criticized you heavily in a Dutch weekly for your efforts in promoting consociationalism in South Africa during apartheid. You defended yourself in a short reply published in the same weekly (Koch 1982; Lijphart 1982).

AL—I do not really remember this. I always argued that it is important to engage people, rather than isolate them. In fact the whites in South Africa had a tendency to isolate themselves too much and they needed some fresh ideas. But the left in Holland did not want anything to do with South Africa and I think I was even, in print, called a racist (laughing), which I just shrugged off. On the more progressive side of the National Party there were some people that were very much interested in listening to me. How much influence that had is debatable. But more important, I think, I did get the discussion about power sharing going in South Africa. In all my the lectures, I just talked about power sharing in general, about the examples of the Netherlands and Switzerland, and Malaysia and so on and so forth, letting my audience bring up the question of what about South Africa. That worked pretty well, because then we started talking. That did possibly have some influence in the National Party and people in the Progressive Federal Party, like Van Zyl Slabbert, embraced the idea.

I thought at that time that what Buthelezi was doing was credible: to work within the system in order to try to get improvements. I am not apologetic at all about my involvement in what became known as the Buthelezi Commission. I might have said that already, probably in the autobiography (Lijphart 1997). I certainly feel good about what was accomplished. What people often forget is how pessimistic people in South Africa and outside were about where South Africa was heading in the 1980s. There was this idea about the inevitability of large-scale bloodshed. And the fact that that was averted is something of a miracle. So in that sense I guess I was more right

than a lot of people and I do believe that I made at least a small contribution to the transition to multiracial democracy.

MB—Did you ever meet Mandela?

AL—No, I did not. Most of the time that I spent in South Africa, for conferences, or interviews and so on, was when he was in prison. So I could not meet him. And the last time that I was there, in 1991, he was such a big and important person that I did not even try. Also, I could not meet any ANC people because the ANC was proscribed during my earlier visits, but I did meet with ANC representatives in other countries and again in South Africa in 1991.

When Mandela just came out of prison, I was amazed at the moderation shown by the ANC. I think it has a lot to do with Mandela, that he was so much the leader that everybody looked up to and that he personally was this kind of moderate person who could embrace the idea of letting bygones be bygones. There were some voices within the ANC that thought he was being too moderate. I think you see that in his autobiography, he writes about that. And also you can see it in the movie. I saw the movie first and then I decided I really should read the book. And the book is fascinating.

MB—Do you regret writing about “voluntary apartheid”? This was in connection with the favorable factors for consociational democracy.

AL—Yeah, that was not diplomatic. I should have avoided that word, because apartheid did not only mean segregation, of course, but had all kinds of other meanings too. In the literal Dutch meaning of the word, it only means apartness. But in South Africa the term really became poisonous. No, I think it was not wise to use that term.

MB—South Africa is still a deeply divided society, but it was only consociational between 1994 and 1999. What is your explanation for South Africa’s democracy and social peace despite the absence of consociationalism in the political system?

AL—The African National Congress (ANC) has some similarities to the Indian National Congress (INC), which is kind of a consociational party. Certainly the leadership of the ANC is much more multi-ethnic and multi-racial than the voters.

MB—You obviously have not read the chapter on South Africa in my book, because I argue that the ANC does not fit the criteria of a consociational party at all (both laughing) (Bogaards 2014).

MB—My new book project is on consociationalism after civil war. If you look around, where are the new consociational regimes?—Bosnia, Burundi, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and others. They all came out of a civil war. This leads me to suspect they have something in common and that they are different from countries with a peaceful history of consociationalism such as the Netherlands and Belgium. For one thing, consociationalism after civil war tends to be codified in peace agreements. What is your initial reaction to that?

AL—Informal rules and institutions work better, but, of course, the deeper the conflict is, the more the parties will insist on formal rules and institutions and this takes away some of the flexibility. You saw that in Lebanon. I was in Lebanon for a conference in 1984. The civil war was still going on and it was not really safe to be there. Foreigners, especially Americans, were kidnapped for ransom. So I said to the organizers that in any publicity about the conference, if you mention my name, do

not say I am an American political scientist, say I am a Dutch political scientist, that will keep me a little safer! The atmosphere was very interesting. Some of it really reminded me of spy movies, of *The Spy Coming In from The Cold* (laughing). I met quite a few Lebanese and we talked about how the system could be improved and about the Taif Accord; there were some improvements, but to my mind not sufficient.

MB—What more do you think needs to be done in Lebanon?

AL—Instead of compromising on making the prime minister just about as strong as the president, I would say scrap the whole thing, have a parliamentary system and proportional representation. And if you want, write at the end of the constitution something like what the South Africans did in 1994, namely that the government has to be a power-sharing government, that kind of thing. But everywhere there is institutional conservatism and they did not adopt the kind of wholesale change I favor.

MB—Brendan O’Leary and John McGarry distinguish between liberal consociationalism, found in Northern Ireland, and corporate consociationalism, as for example in Lebanon. This is basically what you called self-determination versus pre-determination. Do you find it helpful to use terms like liberal and corporate consociationalism?

AL—If they mean basically the same kind of thing that I do, then I have no objection. I do think that the distinction is very important, also in terms of policy recommendations. And I strongly feel that self-determination is preferable.

MB—Stefan Wolff writes about “consociational power sharing”. Do you see consociationalism as a subset of a broader range of power-sharing options?

AL—I have tended to use them as synonyms, but certainly power sharing has a less precise definition than consociationalism. I started out with the term “the politics of accommodation”. Right away, I got the criticism that accommodation happens everywhere, it is compromise, even though, of course, in the book I defined what I mean by politics of accommodation (Lijphart 1968). So then I thought, what I need is a term that people are not familiar with, because then they have to read my definition.

MB—I read your article about constructivism and consociational theory. You say “I started out as being influenced by primordial thinking, because that was the state of the literature at the time, but then I became a constructivist” (Lijphart 2001b). However, it is still quite common to read accusations that consociationalism and consociationalists, including you, are primordial. Personally, I think that consociational theory is neither constructivist nor primordialist, I think it doesn’t have *any* theory of ethnic conflict. Consociational theory is pragmatic and consequentialist, it is not interested in the origins of the conflict, just in its resolution.

AL—I think you are right. You take what you have without passing any judgment. That became especially clear to me when I was dealing with the case of South Africa.

MB—So you would say political science does not need a theory of ethnic conflict to make recommendations on how to solve ethnic conflicts?

AL—Right. In a way I am more like an “irrelevantist”: we do not try to figure out what the causes of the ethnic conflict are, we just look at the ethnic conflict and see how it can be solved.

MB—But isn’t that the standard critique of the way that the UN operates? By now, whenever there is a conflict anywhere in the world, the UN will be called in and they always have the same recipe: organize early elections, have some kind of power shar-

ing, put some peace keepers on the ground, and get out as fast as possible, no matter who is fighting who, no matter what they are fighting about.

AL—If that is what the UN does, I would say the basic approach of the UN is correct: organize elections by proportional representation and then try to get power sharing going and, perhaps to some extent, get some autonomy for different groups, if they so desire. Obviously, there are many different characteristics that need to be taken into consideration. Do we have an all-encompassing theory for that? I do not think so. And we do not need one. If you are confronted with a particular conflict situation, you have to “roeien met de riemen die je hebt”.³

MB—Coming to the Netherlands, in an interview with Monika Sie Dhian Ho and Bart Tromp, you expressed a preference for the “corrective referendum” (Sie Dhian Ho and Bart Tromp 2000). I do not know if you are still following Dutch politics, but the constitution is being changed to allow for this kind of referendum.

AL—In general, I think the corrective referendum offers an opportunity to test the complaint that in Western democracies the elites have become too distant and the ties with the voters are too weak. If people are opposed to a law that is on the books they can organize and prove that it is wrong. So in that basic democratic sense, I think it is a good thing. I may not have said that in the first edition of *Patterns of Democracy*, but I certainly did in the second edition. On the whole I am not very much in favor of referendums, so this is not a change that I applaud. But that may be partly because I have lived in California for so long and I have seen that referendums can get really, really ridiculous.

MB—This week two Turkish members for the PvdA in the Dutch parliament left their party but kept their seats. They were unhappy with the party’s line on issues of integration and there is talk now of forming a Muslim party. This goes back to a debate from the early 1990s that you may remember—you played an active role in it—about integration policy. You came out as saying that a Muslim pillar would not be such a bad idea, provided it is what Muslims in the Netherlands want. That this is not something that should be organized for them, but that if they want to get organized, like the Catholics and Protestants did before, then probably the results would be similar as well. Nothing much happened in the meantime, but how do you see this issue now?

AL—I think in principle that if it worked for other minorities in the Netherlands, why not? Dutch education policy allows for special schools to be on a Catholic, Protestant, Hindu or neutral basis, to be Montessori, and so on. I think this kind of flexibility has been one of the strengths of the Dutch system. And it is another example of self-determination. I would certainly be in favor of allowing the same privileges that Catholics and Protestants have had, for other religious groups.

MB—Do you think that the outcomes would also be the same? The fear is, of course, that a Muslim party would not lead, at least in the short term, to integration, but to more segregation.

AL—That is basically the same thing that happened after the “Pacifictie” of 1917, which marked the beginning of consociationalism in Holland. I think that led for a while to segregation, but in the long run it has worked to unify the country.

³Dutch saying, which translates as “you have to make do with what you have”.

Why do you expect something different in the long run for Muslims or Hindus? If the Muslims would have their own party, how is that different from the ARP and the CHU in the past?

MB—In the current climate of polarization, with a politician like Geert Wilders, don't you fear it will further polarize the country?

AL—About Geert Wilders: it is good to have proportional representation so that this gets an outlet too. He can say his nonsense if people believe it. Would he be even more upset if Muslims, citizens of the Netherlands, had their own party? I think it could hardly get worse.

MB—Have you followed the discussion about the “zwarte Pieten” in Holland?

AL—That was even in *The New York Times* (Mackey 2014). Funny thing! Last year I found an old photo taken around 1955 in Heerde where I grew up, of my older brother, myself, and my younger brother—we were playing the role of *zwarte Pieten* [Black Petes]. So I have a picture of myself with the black face, and my two brothers, and with *Sinterklaas* [St. Nicholas].

MB—We're getting to the final questions. Would you know what your most frequently cited article is?

AL—No idea.

MB—It is your article on *Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method* (Lijphart 1971).

AL—In a way I am not surprised. Methodologists get quoted a lot, because people use methods. But that was very early in my career and I certainly would not consider that to be my most important contribution (laughing). I think it was probably useful, also to clarify my own thinking. Many of my publications actually have been prompted by invitations to attend conferences, to write about a particular subject, that I might not have written about had I not gotten that invitation, and sometimes those things have been very helpful to me and got me to think about things that might not have come up in my own mind. Sometimes there have been distractions too, but not that I am sorry about having done them. Some are just pretty light pieces, small commentaries, reactions to others—like my response to your piece—but even those have been useful (Bogaards 2000; Lijphart 2000). One thing I found out is that writing helps clarify your thinking.

MB—Two of your most cited publications are on methodology. But when I read your work, there is almost no explicit mention of methods.

AL—Political science has become much more methodologically conscious than it was when I was a graduate student. Things have become more and more methodologically sophisticated, to the extent that, when I read articles now, and I do not read much political science anymore, I just do not really understand what is going on. My feeling is that the methods are running far ahead of the accuracy of the data.

MB—Yes, you have mentioned this before (Munck 2007).

AL—So I think we should worry more about getting more and better data. Perhaps because I am now an old-timer, I am unduly leery of the newest developments like rational choice theory and the use of extremely intricate statistical techniques. Rational choice too often focuses on problems that are too small and not that interesting in themselves. I also often wonder whether we really need a great deal more than the well-established methods of correlation and regression. Those, plus factor analysis,

are the only methods that I used in both editions of *Patterns of Democracy* and I don't believe anything more sophisticated was needed.

During my lifetime important progress was made in data analysis. It is hard to believe now that until the 1950s political science, and I am thinking in particular of comparative politics, often dealt with single cases and was not really comparative at all, that it relied a great deal on demonstration by example and anecdotal evidence, and that it rarely used any statistical methods. That is not to say that this earlier work, like Carl Friedrich's and Herman Finer's writings, was not remarkably insightful. But the behavioral revolution of the late 1950s was also a methodological revolution in the sense that it introduced systematic approaches and, in the field of comparative politics, systematic comparisons. The second major development after that was the renewed emphasis on institutional factors, the so-called new institutionalism. Those signified real progress, and I should probably not be too pessimistic and instead trust that progress in our discipline will continue.

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