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"Democratic Thought in the Age of Globalization", red. Maria Marczewska-Rytko, Lublin 2012 : [recenzja]

2012

Reviews. Reports

Recenzje. Sprawozdania

Jakub Nowak, [*Democratic Thought in the Age of Globalization*, ed. Maria Marczewska-Rytko, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2012, pp. 214]

The book is a collection of articles that focus on various aspects of theoretical thought concerning the idea and praxis of democracy. Yet the category in the title of the book (the age of globalization) is used not in literally chronological sense, it guides the reader to this interesting, complex and therefore analytically demanding period in which highly complicated interconnected set of conditions of different kinds make the modern (or post-modern) concept of democracy such a difficult field of theoretical elaboration.

As the analyzed concept is extremely broad and multifaceted, it is difficult to set the study in a coherent theoretical framework when trying to provide the reader with a big picture. The collection entitled *Democratic Thought in the Age of Globalization* reflects the complexity and diversity of the subject – also in terms of recalled approaches and notions of the globalization and democracy. As the editor Maria Marczewska-Rytko puts it, there are two main different positions in the studies of the subject: the first referring to social and political practice and leading to definitions referring to institutions and processes and the second one that refers directly to democratic ideals and their practical implications.[1] And so is the book, the studies of which represent various methodological and theoretical points of view. At the same time, as it is revealed in some of the articles, these two positions are sometimes (in theoretical and empirical contexts) deeply interwoven.

The editor succeeded in gathering articles that correspond with each other in particular ways (approaches, fields of analyses) and here the lowest common theoretical denominator is of course the contextual framework of the concept of globalization. Marczewska-Rytko emphasizes in the *Introduction* pessimistic diagnoses on modern democracies when recalling Manuel Castells' seminal concept of politics of identity perceived as the outcome of multi-dimensional processes labeled as the globalization: "The crisis of democracy is a fact, (…) globalization processes reveal and at the same time heighten the contradictions, which liberal

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[1] M. Marczewska-Rytko, *Introduction* [in:] *Democratic Thought in the Age of Globalization*, (ed.) M. Marczewska-Rytko, Lublin 2012, p. 8.

democracy necessarily carries with it".[2] The book – as the collection of different approaches and viewpoints – does not consist of only pessimistic evaluations and interpretations, though.

The book, as the editor states in the *Introduction*, was inspired by her workshop *Democratic Thought in the Age of Globalization* during the 12th International Conference of International Society for the Study of European Ideas (ISSEI) in the University of Ankara (Turkey 2010). The collection is divided into three parts concerning different fields of studies: "Conditions", "Participation", "Examples".

The volume opens with a paper by Andrei Marga (*Democracy as a Form of Life*) who argues that there is an important need for a change of modern, liberal and strongly proceduralist democracies. Such transition, as Marga argues, should lie in theoretical and practical shift from understanding the concept of democracy as a technique of periodical choice of leaders to the democracy as a form of life. To defend his thesis the author uses the case of Romanian democracy but he also makes wider perspective when formulating diagnoses concerning democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. And yet the Romanian contextualization provided by Marga is very brief and general, the next part consists of more theoretical considerations: the author brings up the thought of Max Weber, and, on the other hand, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in order to describe conditions of modern societies. Later he focuses on the issue of the obsolete nature of modern proceduralist concepts and practices of democracies. Marga concludes with the call for important shifts on several dimensions of Central and Eastern Europe societies, including more honest news distribution and more reasonable public debate, a shift from private and group to public interest, and, last but not least, structural transformation of democracy towards democracy understood and realized as a form of life.

Nathan van Camp (*Bios or psychē? Thinking Power after Foucault*) explores the concept of technologies of domination from the Michel Foucault's theoretical perspective, concentrating especially on the Foucaultian concept of bio-power: "the numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations[3]" and its theoretical heir, elaborated after Foucault's death (especially Bernard Stiegler's philosophy of technology). Van Camp interestingly and convincingly shows the shift concerning contemporary power technologies that no longer aim mainly at disciplining bodies or regulating life-processes, but at controlling and modulating consciousness instead. The process is strongly connected to the structural transformations occurring on the economic level: the substitution of consumer capitalism for production capitalism. As the nature of the power has changed (contemporary power mechanisms do not longer aim at disciplining the body or regulating life, but at stimulating consumption), Van Camp (after Stiegler) underlines the need to shift analytical focus "from the disciplinary and regulating technologies deployed by the programming institutions of the nation-state to the mnemotechnologies that are currently being put into service by the globalized programming industries".[4] Although the author hardly recalls book's two main themes directly (democracy, globalization), his paper remains one of the most interesting contributions in the collection.

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[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

[3] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1, *The Will to Knowledge*, London 1978, p. 140; cited by: N. van Camp, *Bios or psychē? Thinking power after Foucalt*, [in:] *Democratic Thought...*, *ibid.*, pp. 39–40.

[4] N. van Camp, *Bios…*, *ibid.*, pp. 50.

Dobrinka Peicheva in *Mediatization and Globalization under the Conditions of Democracy* examines the process of globalization in democratic societies on both social structural and interpersonal levels. She combines these considerations with remarks on various aspects of the modern mediatization process on several social levels and contexts (from *home* to *state*) and concludes by underlining the meaning of the *mediatization of society* which is, according to her, not only a process accompanying globalization or an argumentation concept, but its identifier, presenter and controller.

The last article in the first part of the book is Nikos Koutras' *Education in the Age of Globalization* in which the author seeks to examine the effects of globalization for both international and regional educational policies. He focuses on the impact of international organizations elaborating directives for educational policies on both: national and transnational levels. Koutras understands globalization in a peculiar way as the process leading to the ideal, globalized society (yet he admits globalization is "both necessary and painful"[5]) and the reader can assume that this is the reason why the author does not focus on more negative or ambivalent interpretations of analyzed processes (like the concept of cultural imperialism).

The second part of the book ("Participation") starts with the paper *What Democracy Do We Need? Electronic Democracy in Contemporary Discourse* by Maria Marczewska-Rytko. The author gives a wide perspective on the notion of electronic democracy in contemporary discourse (understood as "set of statements functioning in the public space and concerning a specific problem or its scope")[6]. Marczewska-Rytko raises the issue of terminological confusion connected to labels used to describe democracy mediated by new technologies which sometimes can be a serious normative problem therefore not only the question of simple choice of particular labels (for example, as she argues, the term virtual democracy may connote the break-up with traditional democracy[7]). The author also discusses several determinants of electronic democracy (including a historical point of view), providing the reader with the concepts of Lawrence K. Grossman, Benjamin Barber, John Naisbitt, Alvin Toffler and others. When discussing the internet as an instrument of electronic democracy, Marczewska-Rytko gives also a brief yet accurate review of internet's potential as a tool and resource in political process and citizen engagement.

The next article, Christ'l De Landtsheer's *Participation Friendliness of Political Websites*, can be perceived as a natural continuation of issues discussed in the former paper. The author analyzes the concept of e-politics (similar, of course, to the *electronic democracy* presented by Marczewska-Rytko) and introduces a method for assessing the quality of political websites (and, more generally, "websites in the public sphere"[8]) and this part of De Landtsheer's paper can be interesting especially for a researcher interested in studying online citizen/political participation. The author labels her method as "the participation-friendliness index for political websites[9]" and shows how it can be used as a analytical tool for making research evaluation of websites that are based upon political participation theory. The paper consists of a com-

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[5] N. Koutras, *Education in the Age of Globalization* [in:] *Democratic Thought…, ibid.*, p. 71.

[6] M. Marczewska-Rytko, *What Democracy Do We Need? Electronic Democracy in Contemporary Discourse* [in:] *Democratic Thought…, ibid.*, p. 85.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[8] C. de Landtsheer, *Participation Friendliness of Political Websites* [in:] *Democratic Thought…, ibid.*, p. 100.

[9] *Ibid.*

prehensive description of the tool that measures *participation friendliness* – the extent to which a particular website can motivate citizens to become active participants in the political communication processes online and offline. The index seems to be an effective research tool, especially when combined with evaluation of people's actual engagement in politics.

Arkadiusz Żukowski (*Contemporary Trends in Changing Democracy: Increasing Participation of Women in Elections*) analyzes women's electoral participation as a form of political activity from a broad perspective, including also the actual implementation of passive voting rights. The author gives the exhaustive review of the issue (underlining the problem of women's actual usage of the right to be elected) as well as the discussion on parity and electoral gender quotas. Last article in the second part of the book, Aydin Topaloğlu's *Islam and Democracy in the Age of Globalization*, is a short contribution in the discussion on mutual relations between democracy, globalization and Islam. According to the author, the concepts of democracy and globalization as well as Islam are neither alternatives nor contrary in their essence. Topaloğlu understands Islam as the main sources of religion itself, and while he sets all the ideological, traditional and historical interpretations of the religion beside this definition, all the three key categories considered are "not in a conflicting position on the condition that, all of their theories or practices are categorically ethical, humanitarian, egalitarian justly and healthy".[10]

The third part of the collection ("Examples") consists of three studies concerning several aspects of particular democratic systems. First article is *Democracy and the Crisis of Confidence* by Max J. Skidmore in which the author examines the problems with democratic reasoning in the public debate in the United States since the 1950s. Skidmore provides the reader with a pessimist diagnosis that logic and reason have no longer been main modalities of the US political discourse and public debate, therefore people's participation in democratic process is flawed and even harmful (as citizens vote "routinely against their own interests, even when full information is available to them".[11])

Valentina Marinescu (*Ways of Understanding Democracy in Romania. A Necessary Dialogue between Sociology and Journalism*) gives an interesting study of interrelations between the professional fields of journalism and sociology in relation to the two political campaigns in Romania (European elections in 2007 and parliamentary elections in 2008). The author uses diachronic approach in order to highlight the evolution of the opinions about social reality and the relationships with other external professional fields of journalists and sociologists, and seeks to specify mutual relationships between these two professional groups mediated by the influence in the political field. The study, based mainly on the discourse analysis of sociologists' blogs and interviews with journalists, has shown a large degree of mutual distrust, a high level of the others' opinions and a general low degree of confidence in public products of each other's work.

The last article in the collection, Bogdan Ştefanachi's and Roxana Alexandra Costinescu's *Lisbon Agenda – the European Union and the Challenges of the New Economy*, consists of the analysis of the guidelines of the *Lisbon Strategy* EU reform on which the authors underscore the need for implementing new EU's economic policy perspective based on the modernization of social system and the investment in human capital.

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[10] A. Topaloğlu, *Islam and Democracy in the Age of Globalization* [in:] *Democratic Thought...*, *ibid.*, p. 147.

[11] M. J. Skidmore, *Democracy and the Crisis of Confidence* [in:] *Democratic Thought...*, *ibid.*, p. 158.

As presented above, the collection hardly analyzes the concept of democracy from strictly normative point of view. Actually, Andrei Marga is the only author that recalls a normative perspective when formulating the thesis consisting of the list of goals to be achieved in order to improve the analyzed system. Much more attention is given to the praxis and the notion of democracy as a system of widely understood participation (which is revealed also by the collection's structure – the second part of the book focuses directly on the issue). Interestingly, both theoretical explorations and practical contexts provided by the authors suggest that democratic participation today is more and more strongly connected to technology perceived as one of the most important factors that shape conditions of late modern democracies. War technologies, ICT (information and communication technologies) or, on more general level, van Camp's (Foucaultian) power technologies – they all determine praxis of democracies in globalized world's environments.

Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the key categories in the book is *media* – perceived in many ways, e.g. subject of politics, resource, agent of power, sphere of public debate. Marga recalls the issue of (also mediated) public debate, van Camp focuses on *mnemotechnologies* of cinema and television, Peicheva seeks to give a wide picture and explores the subject of media as a constituent resource and the key ingredient of contemporary globalization process. Both Marczewska-Rytko and de Landtsheer strongly focus on new (digital) media technologies as a tool and resource for political and citizen participation (and also as a communication sphere in which political and citizen agents can meet to address their claims and communicate their decisions). Last but not least, media are central category in Marinescu's study – also because of empirical perspective set by the researcher: her analysis of mutual relations between sociologists and journalists focuses on their opinions and attitudes towards mediated results of their work available in the public sphere of traditional (mainstream) media and new media (mainly blogosphere).

The concept of globalization is inseparably connected to the sphere of economy, thus it is present in a few articles in the volume. Some remarks are made by Marga but they are not the primary focus of his paper. Economy (as the key factor of modern and postmodern systemic state transformations) is essential to van Camp's considerations: the author makes his point based on the diagnosis of the shift from nation-state to globalized (programming) industries. Most of attention to the issue is given in the Ştefanachi's and Costinescu's article. They focus on the economical aspects of globalization within the context of the European Union policies' reform and claim that the correlation between dimensions of economy perceived as the core of the globalization process and the politics (therefore also democracies today) is essential: "globalization and liberalism (neo-liberalism) are at least interdependent if not entirely congruent, or as Andrew Gamble argues »one of the most important tendencies of the last 30 years take the shape of revitalizing the economical liberalism both as political economy and political ideology«".[12]

Democratic Thought in the Age of Globalization, taken as a whole, is an interesting collection of articles recalling the notions of democracy, globalization, and also in many contexts – after all not surprisingly – media (and technology in general). The collection is diverse in several levels (proportions between theory and praxis, theoretical contexts taken

[12] A. Gamble, *Neo-liberalism*, "Capital and Class", 2001, no. 75, p. 127, cited by: Ştefanachi and Costinescu, *Lisbon Agenda – the European Union and the Challenges of the New Economy* [in:] *Democratic Thought…, ibid.*, p. 194.

from various disciplines, evaluations of the globalization process, methodological approaches, and even national contexts sometimes brought up by the authors) and this diversity, even if making the book slightly incoherent in terms of how its subject matter is elaborated, provides the reader with a valuable insight to the scholarly thought on the notion of democracy in the 21st century. From this point of view, different approaches, questions raised and conclusions made by the volume's authors sum up into a valuable contribution to the thought on the issue that remains a crucial challenge for humanities and social sciences of today.

IPSA's Research Committee 21 on Political Socialization and Education

The International Political Science Association (IPSA) has recognized over 50 Research Committees (RCs). Between World Congresses, the research committees – largely as a result of the rapid growth in both their numbers and in the size of individual memberships – contribute more than any other body to the activity and achievements of IPSA. This move may be regarded as a timely recognition of the need but also the opportunity for political scientists working in particular sub-fields of the discipline to associate with colleagues from their own and from other continents in the pursuit of their research.

One of the most active RCs is RC21 on Political Socialization and Education. RC21 started already in 1976 as a study group in 1976, but granted the research committee status in 1979. The RC's topics of interest are located within the broad area of socialization and education in or regarding politics. Processes of political socialization and education deal with topics such as the development of political attitudes and behavior, participation, knowledge, decision-making and (democratic) citizenship among both young and adult citizens. Studies in these issues are mainly addressed to the research domains of the political psychology, culture, communication and leadership.

The broadness of the topics of interest and the direct link with the domain of the political psychology made it possible and very welcome that RC21 started up the cooperation with RC29, that deals with the field of Psycho-Politics. We are very proud of this long-lasting mutual friendship between these two RCs.

AIMS AND PRACTICES

The main goal of RC21 is to create a professional network which brings together political scientists (and political psychologists or political educationalists) from all over the world. It aims to advance the study of political socialization and education by encouraging research, especially cross national studies; to disseminate relevant information at international meetings, workshops and conferences; to publish scholarly research; and to provide a framework for co-operation between individuals and organizations concerned with teaching and research on political socialization and political education and citizenship rights and responsibilities.