

sire. Feminist research on gender and sexuality, in which the notion of 'performativity' and the critical reflections of it have played significant role, can help us carry this uneasy but important feminist work forward.

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Anna Gwiazda: *Democracy in Poland: Representation, Participation, Competition and Accountability since 1989*

New York and London 2016: Routledge, 161 pp.

In this book, Anna Gwiazda offers a detailed evaluation of the quality of Polish democracy and an overview of its development between 1989 and 2011. The political crisis which broke out following the 2015 Polish parliamentary election renders thorough examination of Gwiazda's contribution particularly worthwhile. The theory chapter, 'Evaluating Quality of Democracy', contains an extensive review of the literature on democracy. Gwiazda explicates differences between the procedural and the substantive definitions of democracy (p. 14). Her analysis relies on the former approach, identified primarily with the works of Schumpeter and Dahl, although she prefers the more modern and more liberal 'thick procedural approach' proposed by Dahl. His concept of polyarchy offers a theoretical framework for Gwiazda's evaluation of the quality of Polish democracy.

Gwiazda distinguishes between the level of democracy and the quality of de-

mocracy. While a certain level of democracy can be attained through the process of democratisation, the evaluation of the quality of democracy is possible also in old, consolidated democracies. Gwiazda's evaluation of the Polish democracy concerns four aspects, derived from the procedural definition of democracy: representation, participation, competition and accountability (p. 13). These four dimensions of procedural democracy are examined in detail in chapters 3 to 6.

The book follows a logical structure derived from the theory. Excellent theoretical reflection well supported by research of the classic literature on measuring democracy, democratisation, and the quality of democracy turn this into a useful reference also for scholars not specialising in Central and Eastern Europe. As convincingly argued in the introductory chapter (p. 3), the diachronic single-country case study, comparing two decades of democratic politics, is also a valuable contribution to comparative political science. Her analysis of the Polish case follows a clear structure based on the objective criteria. Empirical chapters rely on abundant data from the first 22 years of the Third Polish Republic. Rich and detailed information is a strong side of the book. It offers one of the most complete and best researched overviews of Polish democratic institutions since 1989.

Chapter 3 focuses on representation. It discusses the socio-demographic characteristics of legislators, and addresses the problem of women's representation and the representation of national and ethnic minorities. The author offers also short descriptions of parties represented over the past 22 years in the Polish parliament. It is a pity that she does not sufficiently state the fact that most Polish parties emerged through the division or merger of other parties. More information on how parties are related to each other would be helpful for readers not familiar with the Polish party system. Presentation of changes in the elector-

al system is quite instructive. The most important developments are summarised in the clearly arranged Table 3.12 (p. 66).

Chapter 4, focusing on participation, is particularly important in the context of the current crisis of Polish democracy. 'Despite the fact that Poland has a history of societal mobilization and political activism under communism, its 20 years of democratic politics have not resulted in active participation', observes Gwiazda (p. 90). Still, the conclusions offered are optimistic. Gwiazda emphasises the increase in the membership of organisations and in the number of citizens' initiatives over time, as well as rising levels of interpersonal trust between 2010 and 2012. Nevertheless, compared with other European countries, levels of both interpersonal trust and trust in political parties recorded in Poland are low as exemplified, for example, by the results of the European Social Survey (ESS) 2014 [Marcinkiewicz 2016]. This issue should be analysed in more detail in future research.

The discussion of party competition presented in chapter 5 is a good complement to the overview of Polish parties offered in chapter 3. Gwiazda can draw here on her own substantive contribution to the research on party and party system institutionalisation. One of the most interesting topics is party switching, extensively analysed earlier also by McMenamin and Gwiazda [2011]. The detailed description of indicators of party system institutionalisation in consecutive legislative periods structures the debate and summarises developments observed over the years. It is a useful reference for all students of Polish democracy.

The major problem of Gwiazda's contribution is the fact that the optimistic picture of the Polish democracy it offers became outdated in the year of its publication. The victory of the Law and Justice Party (PiS), which paved the way for the first majoritarian single-party government, started a process of rapid destruction of the

crucial components of 'thick' procedural democracy. This applies especially to government accountability (chapter 6), which, according to Gwiazda (p. 28), means 'that members of government are obliged to provide information concerning their decisions and actions, explain these to their citizens and their representatives and demonstrate that their exercising of power complies with constitutional rules'. According to the logic of government accountability 'sanctions are imposed if the government oversteps its competences as defined in the Constitution and other regulations' (p. 28). Thus defined, accountability has actually ceased to exist under the PiS government created following the 2015 parliamentary election.

Drawing on North [1990], Gwiazda distinguishes between formal and informal institutions (p. 3). The PiS government rejected both of them. The concerted offensive of the PiS-dominated executive and legislative against the rule of law had most tragic effects for the judicial review, as exemplified by the case of the Constitutional Tribunal (chapter 6.3). The decision of the government not to publish the verdicts of the Tribunal in the Journal of Laws and to stick to the law on Tribunal, which the Tribunal found unconstitutional, can be considered the symbolic end of the rule of law in Poland. Combined with the domination of the PiS in both houses of the parliament and its control of the presidency, it translated into a serious limitation of democratic accountability, one of four dimensions of procedural democracy quoted by Gwiazda.

Of course, the author could not know that the history of Poland would take an unexpected turn. Interestingly, authoritarian tendencies are facing relatively little resistance from society. In spite of the protests of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (KOD) organised in major Polish cities since December 2015, the ruling party was leading in early 2017 by a dou-

ble-digit margin in opinion polls [CBOS 2017a] and its elite were considered very trustworthy [CBOS 2017b]. This paradox indicates that Gwiazda's analysis underestimates the importance of a factor without which democratic institutions are unable to survive: society. Low levels of trust in politicians and the weak social base of democratic parties (addressed in chapter 4) made it possible for the party of Kaczyński not only to win the election, but also to demobilise the electorate of the opposition. Its hierarchical structure, high level of discipline and strong support from the Catholic Church and trade unions brought PiS masses of devoted supporters. Extensive welfare programmes, such as universal child benefits, attracted more centrist voters. This turned out to be sufficient to undermine the pillars of Polish democracy.

'The most notable democratic deficit in Poland is clearly in the dimension of participation: electoral participation remains low, as does non-electoral participation', notes Gwiazda in the concluding chapter (p. 153). The weakness of the Polish civil society facilitated developments which resulted in the virtual collapse of accountability mechanisms. The reform of the law on local and regional elections announced by the PiS may, if implemented, be a first step towards changing the institutional framework of party competition which can in turn potentially affect democratic representation. Very soon after the publication of this book, it is clear that seemingly minor problems related to one of the four dimensions of democracy may have detrimental effects for the stability of the whole system.

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- Rogers Brubaker: *Trans: Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities***
Princeton, NJ, and Oxford 2016: Princeton University Press, 236 pp.
- Designed as an essay rather than a classical monograph, this book delves into fashionable yet thorny issues of gender politics. In line with his well-known constructivist agenda, Brubaker breaks down the umbrella-term 'transgender', unearthing the tension between *changing* gender and *challenging* gender hierarchies altogether (p. 17). Throughout its two major parts (with five individual subchapters), *Trans*, albeit rooted almost exclusively in US society and politics, aims for broader intricacies of identity-politics (p. x).
- The book starts from two highly mediated cases—Rachel Dolezal, self-identifying as 'black' yet 'ousted by parents in 2015 as white' and Bruce Jenner's transition into Caitlyn Jenner (pp. 2–5). Part One, containing two sub-chapters, establishes a common ground for analysis and comparison between the politics of gender and