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Book Reviews

Section edited by Carla Monteleone and Stefania Panebianco

SILVIA BOLGHERINI, *Navigando a vista: Governi locali in Europa tra crisi e riforme* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2015). 225 pp., €20.00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788815258267

Navigando a vista: governi locali in Europa tra crisi e riforme by Silvia Bolgherini is a compelling book that provides an analysis on a topic still developing: the evolution of local government restructuring in three countries. In photographic terms, in this book the author applies the technique of "panning" that is particularly useful in capturing any fast-moving subject. The basic idea behind panning is that you pan your camera along in time with the moving subject and end up getting a relatively sharp subject but a blurred background. This gives the shot a feeling of movement and speed.

Despite in the book a comparison is accomplished, the study of "new local government," the "new local politics" would have been worthwhile even if focused only on the Italian case. It represents a crucial case for the important reforms experienced and the central role played by local governments. In addition, the wave of decentralization and strengthening of local authorities has affected, in turn, all the general administrative structures. If this set of reforms have succeeded in pushing changes, albeit unevenly, among local governments, it is because the reorganization of the relationship between politics and administration began previously. The process started with a reform of local self-government (Law No. 142/1990), which included a number of ground-breaking provisions aimed at improving the efficiency of the *comuni* (municipalities) and *province* (provinces). Law No. 81/1993 was politically a very significant step toward raising awareness of local self-government, with the introduction of direct elections for mayors and president. The law was followed by a new reform of the budget structure (legislative decree no. 77/1995). The political and administrative reforms culminated in the changes in Title V of the Italian Constitution, made in 2001 (Constitutional Law 3/2001) and the law on fiscal federalism (no. 42/2009), "the last great policy clearly connected with the decentralizing and federalist trend" (p. 128).

Volume 11, Issue 2, pp. 40–61.

But the Bolgherini book is not bound to the Italian case but carries out a comparison between the three great democracies, Italy, Spain, and Germany, that, in some respects, seem similar—all have three levels of government; a considerable share of small and very small municipalities; an intermediate provincial level with a long and consolidated historical traditions; the recent spread of unions of municipalities; recent reform of local authorities—and, in other respects, seem different from each other. First, regarding the institutional framework: "Germany represents a case of cooperative federalism model *par excellence*, Spain introduced with the constitution of 1978 the so-called state of autonomies and as a result of this is not a fully-fledged federal system, but a strongly regionalized state, Italy with the constitutional reform of 2001 has definitively confirmed its regionalized structure" (p. 58). Second, according to the distribution of competences, unlike in Italy and Spain where the local government is a matter under state legislative powers and only partially it may delegate them to the regions, in Germany the individual Landers are vested with this competence.

Furthermore, the three countries underwent reforms recently approved (as in the Italian and Spanish case) or are still under discussion (as in German case) and thus any assessment on the ongoing transformation of local authorities is hard: it is "currently still all in evolving and there are not few blurring areas" (p. 170).

The book is organized into six chapters. The first chapter examines the successful decentralization model in the decades from the 1970s to 2000, when it seems that decentralization was more likely to show up shortcomings. The economic crisis that began in the second half of the 2000s highlights, in fact, the weaknesses of this pattern and increases the role of some challenges to decentralization and local authorities: the challenge of the overload—the progressive increase of the demands and the expectations toward local governments from the citizens and the political system in general; the challenge of the budget—management of resources gradually declining in the face of growing demands; the challenge of optimal-sized local government—the search for a balance between competence and services management and the size, as well as the degree of democracy (p. 40 ff.)

The second chapter analyzes the organization and the characteristics of local government in the three countries, from municipalities and the sharp problem of municipal fragmentation ("one of the problems to be solved in order to meet the challenges of the overload, of the budget and of the optimum size," p. 67) and the so-called meso-level institutions, namely the provinces ("intermediate bodies of government are vested with the major changes and play a leading role in the political-institutional debate of the latter years", p. 53). Finally, the third chapter discusses the emerging inter-municipal associations, *Unione dei Comuni*, which "despite having a more recent development, have come to play an increasingly important role, whereas provinces have lost most of the original powers in all three countries" (p. 104).

The fourth chapter introduces the concept of institutional sustainability: "An institution should be deemed sustainable if it has the strength to survive and develop to fulfill its functions on a permanent basis with decreasing levels of external support," Norad in 2000, cit. p. 110. Starting from main dimensions of analysis (self-reproducibility, fulfillment, self-sufficiency and political legitimacy) it tries to as-

sess "the well-being" of local governments, particularly municipalities, provinces, inter-municipal associations (and metropolitan cities?), in the three countries studied before (and after) the reforms.

In the fifth chapter, the most recent reforms are considered and analyzed according to the concept of "institutional sustainability": "throughout the analysis the level of institutional sustainability –despite enjoying moderate levels so far –as a consequence of recent reforms drops out in the Italian case mainly in relation with small municipalities and provinces whereas inter-municipal associations increase their sustainability. In Spain and Germany, in contrast, the reduction in the sustainability concerns only the small municipalities and the same has not occurred in the provinces and the inter-municipal associations" (pp. 173–174).

In the first part of the sixth chapter, the goals of the reforms are considered, mainly to assess their impact on the institutional sustainability and in relation to the three challenges of local governments. The second part (which I would have turned into a new section of the conclusion) includes "a sum up of assumptions elaborated and states some conclusions on the comparison of local governments in the three countries and more generally, on the prospects of local governments in Europe" (p. 167).

The main argument is that the "financial and economic storm" was a "turning point", a "critical juncture," which affected negatively some consolidated dynamics. It showed the weaknesses of the decentralization model and by increasing the impact of existing challenges paved the way for the reforms. Rightfully, the crisis has posted new challenges for local governments. Instead, one may wonder if the crisis has enhanced the reforms. Bolgherini underlines that the reforms are like a pendulum oscillating between the center-periphery model that currently resulted in moving toward a centralizing trend, and toward a real re-centralization. The economic and financial shocks and the consequent fiscal austerity as commitments by European and international institutions has decreased the centrality of territorial dimension, and reduced the room for maneuver of local and regional authorities. The internal stability agreement and large cuts in financial resources clearly resulted in a shift of paradigm from territorial autonomy toward other aims.

As suggested by the title (*Navigando a vista*), this interesting book promotes the view that Italy and Spain (using Dante's words, "ship(s) without a pilot in great tempest" [Purg. 6. 77]), in which "the local government's reforms were largely inspired by a process of adaptation to new challenges, aimed at addressing adjustments to the financial situation and in particular to stem, in both cases, the sovereign debt crisis and the country's possible collapse" (p. 181), are juxtaposed to the German case. In Germany (focusing on Brandenburg Land), "the outcome is to have local authorities close to citizens, more efficient and cost-effective and virtuous. This implies a division of powers between the various levels of government politically well-organized and well-conceived. [...] The proposal of reform has clearly this goal, and only incidentally including some financial aspects" (pp. 182–183).

Interestingly, in Germany the crisis might offer a window of opportunity and has been a determining factor for latent or potential changes and thus reforms, whereas in the other two countries, it is "further evidence of the rambling character and lim-

ited focus of local government reforms without inspiring by a policy agenda stable over time" (p. 187). In Italy, the future prospect of local government reform is still uncertain, depending on the result of the referendum on 4 December 2016 on constitutional reform proposed by Renzi-Boschi (particularly, the revised Title V of the Constitution and the abolition of provinces).

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Nicolò Conti and Francesco Marangoni (Eds.), *The Challenge of Coalition Government. The Italian Case* (London, New York: Routledge, 2015). 174 pp., £24.49 (e-book), ISBN: 9781138815100

This is a book on the challenges of coalition governments. In fact the coalition as a 'temporary alliance for combined action' (Oxford Dictionary) is a challenge by definition. A theme all the more stimulating because about 60 per cent of the democracies since 1945 have had coalition governments. Among these, as well-known, the Italian case is the most interesting: 63 governments since 1948, most of them based on coalitions and no alternation in government in the so-called First Republic.

A group of young scholars from seven different Italian and foreign universities, coordinated by Nicolò Conti and Francesco Marangoni has addressed this issue in order to assess whether coalition politics in Italy has really changed.

They start with an analysis of the institutions and their changes after the important turning point of the mid-nineties, to reach their focus on the activity of governments. The authors, while recognizing the importance of literature on coalition politics in Italy and from a comparative perspective, do note however that most of the studies on governments are limited to the analysis of their formation, or their first stage of government, without going into all that follows.

The aim of the book is to make an in-depth analysis – and with a new and significant data collection – that covers all the various aspects of government: the agenda, the implementation of priority policies, the management of inter partisan coalition conflicts, relations with parliament in the legislative process and the relationship between government and citizens.

As far as concerns the institutional ambit, the turning point, of course, was the choice of the new almost-majoritarian electoral system in 1993 that projected Italy for the first time towards a new model of coalition politics. This new system encouraged the formation of coalitions before the elections and not after, as was the procedure in the previous forty years; it also introduced the presentation of a common electoral program and, more importantly, the indication of a common leader as the future prime minister. The larger question behind the book is to see if these changes have led to the abandonment of the old model of an «input democracy» in

which the main objective of the parties «was simply to provide citizens with en 'entrance' into the circuit of representation through the parliament» to arrive to a complete «output democracy» where the government becomes a major player able to «provide citizens with tangible output through policies» (p. 6).

In order to understand if and how the new politics of coalition and formation of governments, the bipolar party system and the presidentialisation of executives produced more efficient and accountable governments, the authors decided to focus their analysis on the performance and results of the activities of governments through an empirical analysis of six dimensions: coalition conflictuality, the executive agenda, the implementation of government agreement, the consensual approval of government legislation, the post-enactment legislative revision, and the citizens' support for the government.

In regard to the intra-coalitional conflictuality, Marangoni and Vercesi highlight the discontinuities of the second republic from the first, starting from the practice of coalition agreements made by electoral governments. But at the same time, through a very precise and detailed analysis of the government conflicts, they underline the difficulties of transformation of the Italian political system into a true output democracy. The rate of fragmentation of policy decisions, in fact, continues to adversely affect the government's action.

In the chapter on the formation of the executive agenda, Borghetto and Carammia, as part of a larger comparative project on this topic, study the evolving agenda of political parties from the election manifestos right up to the formation of the government's agenda. Although the introduction of the Second Republic's coalition agreements is an important factor, the authors do not actually find any correspondence between the pre-electoral commitments and the cabinet priorities.

In the third chapter Nicolò Conti documents the achievements of the Italian government in pledge fulfillment and reaches fairly negative conclusions – especially in the case taken as an example, the fourth Berlusconi cabinet – where achievements were not distributed among the policy field that were announced in the government agenda. So, the mandate model of the Second Republic is not enough to overcome the centrifugal tendencies of coalitions.

In the fourth chapter Andrea Pedrazzani investigates the complex issue of government bills in parliament, with special attention to the final voting stages, highlighting in his conclusions how the mechanisms of their approval are actually consensual even in the Second Republic.

The fifth chapter, by Enrico Borghetto and Francesco Visconti, is the most original of the book. It deals with legislative revision as an instrument of government, studying the post-enactment policy change in Italy and its dynamics from the First to the Second Republic. Surprisingly the advent of alternation in government did not involve an increase in the revisions of the previous majorities. The legislative process, undergoing massive party fragmentation, became more complex: «intra-coalition bargaining might have moved from the pre-enactment to the post-enactment phase, leaving majorities with the option of governing by revising» (p. 124).

Finally, the last chapter, by Vincenzo Memoli, making use of multi-variate analyses, investigates the impact of institutional efficiency, together with morality and legality on the citizens' declining support for the Italian government.

To conclude, each author, by focusing on the single challenges posed by the coalition government, describes Italy as a case that has not yet become an actual output democracy.

This is a fairly ambitious book because, beyond the widely shared conclusions, it puts together chapters with different methodologies and often with time spans that do not perfectly coincide. This is why the work of the editors has been all the more valuable in coordinating themes that often reproduce repeated statements (such as the differences between the First and Second Republic).

With its interesting findings, and in the light of the recent redefinition of the Italian political system in a tri-polar sense, it may offer an inspiring research agenda for the future.

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SERGIO FABBRINI, *Which European Union? Europe After the Euro Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). 376 pp., €25.37 (paperback), ISBN: 9781107103948

How many visions of the European Union (EU) are being propounded in Europe today? Can they coexist or do they rather collide? Has the Euro crisis made them more or less plausible? These are the questions that Sergio Fabbrini asks and answers in this book, which has received already wide acclaim, in addition to providing his own vision of the EU of the future.

Given the complexity of the questions raised, the answers are also necessarily complex and demand attentive reading. In order to answer these questions, Fabbrini adopts a comparative politics approach he contrasts to the still largely hegemonic (in EU studies) international relations approach, and which he organizes in a very personal manner by creating analytical categories and producing a distinct vocabulary the reader needs to acquire in order to follow the argument. The book is divided into three parts. Part I is an analytical account of the evolution of the EU. Part II focusses on the three perspectives that have vied for hegemony throughout the EU's existence, economic community, supranational union, and intergovernmental union, and which have emerged with particular clarity during three critical junctures, the failure of EDC in 1954, the Maastricht Treaty of 1991, and the Euro crisis of 2009. Part III looks at likely future development of the EU to which Fabbrini contraposes his own vision, a compound union for the Euro-area member states.

I will reproduce the backbone of Fabbrini's complex argument by organizing it into ten steps, asking some questions of my own along the way.

1. Currently the EU is governed by a *dual constitution* that was introduced in Maastricht when the Treaty on the EU regulated the Single Market through a *supranational constitution* and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) through an *intergovernmental constitution*. The coexistence of these two constitutional regimes is a problematic feature of the EU. Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) fell, as it were, between the cracks sharing features of both constitutional regimes.
2. The main cleavages in today's Europe are still *interstate cleavages*—a statement that could be more problematized—and consequently the units of Fabbrini's analysis are member states, treated as if they had preferences, visions, and wills of their own.
3. A fundamental analytical distinction is drawn between *nation-states* and *union of states* and particularly between *federal states* and *federal unions*, the former being the result of the disaggregation of formerly unitary states and the latter the result of the aggregation of formerly distinct states (federal theory, according to Fabbrini, does not entertain this distinction but implicitly assumes that all federations are federal states). The reader must accept this somewhat apodictic dichotomy in order to follow the rest of the argumentation, but one is left wondering whether federal states and federal unions are not in fact the same constructs at two different stages of their development.
4. In federal unions, power is separated along two fundamental dimensions: a vertical dimension, between the federal center and the federated units (of different sizes), and a horizontal dimension, among institutions representing different aggregations of citizens at the center. Fabbrini insists that the different population size of the constituent units of federal unions requires a careful balancing of states' and citizens' interest representation at the center through multiple separations of powers. The two examples of federal unions that Fabbrini produces, the United States and Switzerland, are characterized by many common traits (among which the original need to defend themselves against an external threat) but display a lower degree of dishomogeneity among federated states/cantons than the current EU (which for Fabbrini is so crucial). The original 13 colonies that federated into the United States had populations ranging between 442,000 (Virginia) and 46,000 (Delaware) (less than 10:1) according to the 1790 national census, hardly a huge disparity; while the difference between the most populous canton (Bern) and the least populous canton (Züg) in 1815 was of 291,000 to 12,500 (more than 23:1) according to official historical statistics, a somewhat more significant disparity although compensated for by other features such as a common language. Given the delicate and difficult balance, Fabbrini claims that a written constitution is necessary to regulate the decision-making powers of each component of these *multiple separation of powers systems*.

5. The EU is *in fact* a union of states and *potentially* a federal union, but it is not organized as such because it lacks a proper constitution that orders the functioning of the political system not only by apportioning competences between levels but also by attributing and regulating powers among different institutions. The EU, rather, has a *material constitution*, given by the constitutionalization of the Treaties, which however is not conceived as a *basic law*, but rather as a text that disciplines decision-making in different policy areas (and for this reason, and for the way in which the treaties are interpreted by the European Court of Justice, it is a *material* or *empirical* constitution).
6. Therefore, the multiple Europes of which the book title talks about are not different-speed Europes, but fundamentally different visions of what the EU should be. By and large, in Fabbrini's analysis each member state subscribes to one and only one vision of Europe and is enlisted in one and only one constitutional camp, an aspect of the argument that descends from electing states as units of analysis and which could perhaps be more nuanced.
7. The main critical junctures that have marked the life of the EU are:
    a. The *postwar period* and particularly the fateful decision of the French parliamentary assembly to vote against the creation of a European Defense Community, which would have consolidated the supranational vision of the Community (instead, only the economic—Common Market—aspect of the community could be pursued, which induced other member states to embrace this purely economic community vision as the only desirable vision);
    b. The *Maastricht Treaty* which, while extending the competences of the Union to areas close to core state functions, entrusted these policy areas to an intergovernmental regime, thus inaugurating the dual constitution later confirmed by the Lisbon Treaty, which also runs through the EMU;
    c. The *Euro crisis*, which impressed a new spin onto the intergovernmental management of EMU, by increasingly entrusting the management of monetary policy to a ruled-based economic creed and to technocratic institution and the management of fiscal and budgetary policies to the (hopefully loyal) coordination among Euro-area member states' executives, thus shielding both from accountability checks at either EU or member state level.
8. The three visions recalled above—economic community, supranational union, and intergovernmental union—are ruled by different principles: while the economic community and the intergovernmental union visions require simple *cooperation* among member states, which remain fully sovereign and legitimately so in all other areas, the intergovernmental union vision requires *coordination* among member states. And while sovereignty is simply *shared* in the first two cases (a term drawn from federalist theory), it is *pooled* in the third (a term used by liberal intergovernmentalists to denote a less intense kind of communalization of the respective spheres of authority).

9. Fabbrini's main, but certainly not only, argument is that the last critical juncture, the Euro crisis, has induced heads of state and government to adopt a decision-making strategy that has given a new spin to the intergovernmental union perspective, basically recalling all decision-making powers to the Council and the newly institutionalized European Council (which should properly be conceived as an executive and not as a legislative body) and marginalizing both the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice. This apparently expedient decision, contrary to expectations, has proven both ineffective and illegitimate: ineffective because coordination is more easily pledged than practiced and illegitimate because it has blurred the necessary distinction between executive and legislative powers.
10. Fabbrini's suggestion is to restore the rightful distinction between executive (European Council and Commission) and legislative (Council and European Parliament) institutions so as to allow them to check each other out and find a *modus decidendi* – the essence of a compound democracy. This should however happen only within the limited circle of the Euro-area member states, as these alone are supposedly interested in creating a union of states and in operating as a compound democracy.

Apart from possibly finding some of the analytical distinctions created along the way difficult to grasp and to retain, the reader is also left wondering whether it is really reasonable to impute such clear preferences and visions to member states, for example to the UK or Denmark (supposedly proponents of an economic community), to Germany (supranationalist until Maastricht but then increasingly more intergovernmentalist), or to France (mostly intergovernmentalist), without exploring the many other sources of disagreement that cut across them and all other member states or without wondering whether the Euro-area member states are really so internally cohesive or they are not also traversed by many other debilitating cleavages. While this is by now the standard manner in which, even in academic debates, we discuss the EU—imputing singular preferences to member states and national constituencies as if they were individuals—readers with an interest in how these preferences emerge, are negotiated and adjudicated and hence interested in *the politics of European integration*, may be slightly disappointed.

But since this was not Fabbrini's aim, which was rather that of exposing the inner working of the institutional logic inherent in different constitutional regimes, he can hardly be criticized for not providing such analysis and rather for sticking to a comparative institutional analysis. The book however makes for an absolutely compelling read and represents a strong and distinctive voice in the debate on today's EU.

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HANSPETER KRIESI AND TAKIS S. PAPPAS (EDS.), *European populism in the shadow of the great recession* (Harbour House, Colchester: ECPR Press, 2016). 394 pp., €71.20 (hardback), ISBN: 9781785521249

Reviewing a book comprising 16 chapters, each devoted to a country's experience with populism, plus an introduction and a conclusion by the two editors is a very difficult task indeed. There is no way to do justice to all the chapters, praising specifically some of them, criticizing others, mentioning them all, and, what counts more, their authors. I will begin by saying that this is an excellent collection of highly informative essays devoted to the appearance and the dynamics of populist parties in all European democracies, with the unexplained exception of Spain and Portugal.

All the contributors were asked to deal with four major hypotheses formulated by the editors. First, does a deep economic crisis enhance the antagonism between "the people" and some political or economic elite leading to populist mobilization and to the electoral success of populist parties? Second, can one explain the success of populist parties with reference to political crises? Third, is the combined effect of political and economic crises particularly conducive to populism? Fourth, will populist parties that acquire political power moderate their discourse and their behavior when in office? Attempting, with a remarkable scholarly "discipline," to explore whether and how the four hypotheses are confirmed or falsified in the populist experience of their respective country, all the contributors provide interesting and useful information on the politics and the economics of those countries.

While the economic indicators are classic and easy to find (variations in the GNP, in the rates of unemployment and in the size of the national debt), and provide reliable inter-temporal and cross-country measures, political indicators appear, at least to me, to be taken and interpreted with more caution and greater attention to the peculiarities of the different countries. Kriesi and Pappas have chosen to focus on three political indicators: electoral volatility, trust in parliament and satisfaction with democracy. An increase in electoral volatility is bound to destabilize the party system, while a decrease "serves as a sign of party system stabilization" and, somewhat more controversial in my opinion, that "the party system might have been going through an unstable period before and unrelated to the Great Recession" (p. 14).

Leaving aside the impossible task to deal with each chapter, all well worth reading (I have learned a lot from many of them, especially those on Nordic countries), I will offer some disjointed, but, I hope, useful remarks and criticisms hidden in the guise of requests for more elaboration. In the concluding chapter, the editors stress more than once that their initial hypotheses have encountered "partial confirmation", which is, of course, "partially" true. What, then, becomes truly important is to explore more in depth those cases not confirming the hypotheses, highlighting which among the hypotheses have been more significantly challenged and explaining how and to what extent they should be revised or dropped. On the basis of what I have read, the least impact on populism has been produced by the great recession, that is, the appearance, the dynamics, the ascent to office of populism are not relat-

ed, not significantly conditioned, even less, determined by economic factors. At most, these factors add something to a populist phenomenon in the making.

In some geo-political areas there may exist more favorable factors conducive to populism. For instance, Ann-Cathrine Jungar declares that "the Nordic region has been a fertile soil for populism" (p. 42). According to Giuliano Bobba and Duncan McDonnell, Italy "continues to offer excellent market conditions for populism" (p. 179), although I have lived most of my Italian life in a situation characterized by partitocrazia. On their part, Eoin O'Malley and John FitzGibbon almost seem proud of Ireland because its political system is in fact resplendent with populist actors and rhetoric" (p. 288). On the whole, however, I believe it would be a mistake to overemphasize the "threat" of populism to European democracies.

There is not a single case in which one could confidently state that had the economic crisis not appeared no populist phenomenon/party would materialize. However, some of the chapters hint, never in very strong terms, that a rise in unemployment, a decline of GDP, and a growing public debt may have been conducive to higher electoral volatility, to decreasing trust in parliament and to a lower level of satisfaction with democracy. If democratic parties, whose prestige, incidentally, is rather low and still declining in most countries, are unable to provide solutions, especially to competently manage the economy, the voters, or at least a sizable portion, will look for populist alternatives. Then, the search for alternatives will translate itself into high electoral volatility and into a growing pool of available voters. But high electoral volatility may mean just changing voting behavior among the existing parties, that is, shifting from one party to another, frequently and in significant numbers, without necessarily rewarding populist parties because—and here is my main point—populist parties may not exist.

In the 1950s the party system of the Fourth French Republic was in shambles. Yet the only populist attempt by Pierre Poujade proved to be not very successful and quite short-lived. In the early 1980s, Jean-Marie Le Pen could launch his populist challenge (and vehicle) because two opportunities were offered to him by changes in the political structure: i) the PR law used for European elections (1984) and reintroduced by President Mitterrand in national elections (1986); and ii) the direct popular election of the President of the Fifth Republic. I still harbor several doubts regarding the definition and classification of the Front National among populist parties made without hesitations or qualifications by Hans-Georg Betz because it has and it exhibits many features of "mainstream" parties. Moreover, and more generally, I would put a lot of emphasis on the quality of the (would-be) populist leader(s). Also, while I am not certain that the Lega Nord, Forza Italia, and the Five Stars Movement are all populist parties in the same analytical and political bag, I see in Italy an element that appears to be of the utmost importance in practically all the other cases of populism as well.

Yes, the populist political discourse is important. It is always based on a confrontation between the people and the elite: political, economic, intellectual, in the mass media. In some cases, the Jews occupy a place among the enemies of populism. At this point in time, two issues figure prominently in the populist discourse: immigration and Europe (that is, of course, anti-Europeanism). But at the end of the day, the

more I kept reading the excellent chapters of this book and going back and forth to the editors' introduction and conclusions, the more I became convinced that schumpeterian and sartorian perspectives throw vivid light on populist leadership and parties. No matter how significant may be the economic factors in creating discontent, dissatisfaction, distrust in those who hold political and economic power, unless a populist leader appears no one will be in a position to exploit all those favorable conditions.

Populism emerges, wins, consolidates itself and lasts if, when, and as long as there is a populist political entrepreneur. All chapters are replete with names of more or less successful populist political entrepreneurs: Orbán, Haider, Tsypras, Fortuyn, Wilders, Blocher, and to some extent Farage. Most certainly, Silvio Berlusconi's trajectory, from media entrepreneur to extremely successful political entrepreneur to poorly performing head of government, exemplifies the various phases of the populist experience. Beppe Grillo's experience ought to be situated on a different level where one could put together anti-political appeals, delegitimization of the political class, anti-system sentiments, hostility to the European Union and the dream of web-democracy. This is an unprecedented combination of elements that have little to do with nationalism and immigration. But Grillo's role of political entrepreneur who found a political space, entered into it, and exploited it, is undeniable.

What makes of a man (I apologize to Marine LePen; contrary to Matthew Goodwin, I would not consider populist either Margaret Thatcher or, even less, Tony Blair), of a personality a populist political entrepreneur? This is the question lingering in practically all chapters of this book. My tentative answer is that in addition to the structure of political opportunities, duly stressed by the editors as well as by several contributors, there may exist some cultural country-specific factors. I would also suggest that future studies on populist parties ought to focus on the impact (as done by Zsoly Enyedi in the chapter on Hungary and, to some extent, by Kurt Richard Luther in his analyzed of Austria) those parties in government have produced both on the institutions on the political system and the culture of their citizens. Populism is an integral part of the democratic discourse: how much has populism already changed it and/or will it succeed in changing it in the near future?

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PATRIZIA NANZ AND CLAUS LEGGEWIE, *Die Konsultative. Mehr Demokratie durch Bürgerbeteiligung* (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 2016). 108 pp., €9.90 (paperback), ISBN: 9783803127495

Post-democracy, populism, crisis of representative democracy: the buzzwords that dominate much of the ongoing discussion on the state of democracy in Germa-

ny and beyond form the building blocks of Patrizia Nanz and Claus Leggewie's diagnosis of the current malaise of representative institutions and the proposal for their renewal that follows from it. The authors manage, in the space of just under 100 pages of text, to present a concise and coherent plea for the institutionalization of a "consultative" dimension of representative democracy, not only as a rechanneling of the "anti-political passions" behind populism into participatory outlets but also as a means of incorporating the normative principle of inter-generational justice into the decision-making logic of representative democracy.

The account begins in Chapter 1 with what appears to be an all too familiar crisis diagnosis: increasing numbers of citizens across Western democracies have become disaffected with democracy; Crouch's post-democracy thesis has proven correct to the extent that "the uncontrolled power of large businesses accountable only to their shareholders" has hollowed out the decision-making capacity of representative institutions. It is against this background, the authors argue, that populism manages to tap into people's "growing anti-capitalist affect" and disaffection with the technocratic "passionlessness of this 'executing' politics." Populism, then, is not only about the articulation of a people-elite antagonism—as a wide range of scholars of populism have pointed out—but also an emotional regime that brings "passion" back into politics. The authors highlight numerous pathological expressions of this phenomenon such as the "electronic populism" of conspiracy theories circulated in the "echo chambers" of social media or the "authoritarian democracy" of populists in power from Putin to Erdoğan to Orbán. The key premise here is that the drivers of populism can ultimately be rechanneled by institutional means: the "anti-political passions" can be "civilized" and the "de-politicization of party competition" counteracted by offering citizens the right outlets for confronting one another "in the political arena in a different way 'with passion and judgment."

In the sections that follow (Chapters 2–5), Nanz and Leggewie proceed to outline the contours of their consultative democracy. They identify a considerable potential for participatory mechanisms that give citizens a say on matters directly impacting their local communities and/or requiring long-term planning—examples from recent German experience being Stuttgart 21 and the energy transition. These cases and others, in their own ways, speak to the need for participatory channels that allow value conflicts to be brought into the open, competing conceptions of the good to be articulated, questions of cost (of infrastructural projects, energy sustainability, etc.) to be deliberated and decided equitably, and the interests of future generations ("generational justice") to be incorporated into the decision-making calculi of the present. On the basis of their empirical diagnosis (continued from Chapter 1) and normative underpinnings, the authors (Chapter 4) propose a system of "future councils" situated at the municipal or city-district level with the task of identifying "important future problems" and presenting "solution proposals." The authors specify a number of features conceived to make these councils workable: the 15–20 members of each future council are to be selected randomly in order to overcome selectivity barriers and allow for the representation of a diversity of opinions, generations, and other demographics; the councils, with fixed two-year terms, are

to convene regularly and receive support from a team of professionally trained public administrators and moderators, all with a view to securing their institutional anchorage as the "fourth power" or "fourth estate" (*vierte Gewalt*) of representative democracy.

Nanz and Leggewie present a lucid vision of a possible institutional innovation within representative democracy that ties directly into their diagnosis of the current malaise of the democratic system. There remains a number of questions, however, related to both the practical workings of these councils and their place in the wider diagnosis. On one level, there is lingering skepticism in the deliberative democracy literature about the extent to which problems of social selectivity can be overcome by random selection and professional moderation: Merkel, for instance, identifies a "first selection barrier" in citizens' differing extents of willingness to participate once chosen (especially due to unequal time resources) and a "second selection barrier" in participants' unequal "argumentative resources" (due to differing levels of education).[1] To what extent this could be compensated for by professionally trained moderators is likewise an open question ("who guards the guardians and who moderates the moderators?").

A set of more fundamental questions concerns the extent to which the authors' concrete institutional vision does justice to their underlying diagnosis of the malaise of representative democracy. One possible objection would be that the citizens' councils should be tasked not only with brainstorming "future problems" and proposing solutions to them, but also with more substantive issues of (re-)distribution and spending, at least if one takes seriously the authors' diagnosis of a hollowing out of democratic institutions by the "uncontrolled power of large businesses" (in line with Crouch) and the resulting "anti-capitalist affect" that fuels populism. If the underlying problem of representative democracies is the distorted relationship between capitalism and democracy, as has been widely pointed out,[2] approaches to revitalizing democratic participation should then be aimed at strengthening economic decision-making instruments in particular.

While this is admittedly easier said than done, Herzberg's concept of *Solidarkommune* illustrates by example how participatory budgeting schemes in European cities, while falling short of the Porto Alegre paradigm in terms of redistributive scope, might nonetheless integrate dimensions of administrative modernization, social justice, and environmental sustainability, such as in the Seville model of municipal investments based on citizens' proposals and distributed according to social and environmental criteria.[3] (It is worth noting that the wide-

[1] Wolfgang Merkel, *Nur schöner Schein? Demokratische Innovationen in Theorie und Praxis*, Frankfurt (Main), Otto-Brenner-Stiftung, 2015 (p. 61); Wolfgang Merkel, 'The Limits of Democratic Innovations in Established Democracies,' *The Governance Report 2017*, Berlin, Hertie School of Governance, 2017 (forthcoming).

[2] Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Malden, MA, Polity, 2004; Wolfgang Streeck, *Gekaufte Zeit. Die vertagte Krise des demokratischen Kapitalismus*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2013; Wolfgang Merkel, 'Is Capitalism Compatible with Democracy?' *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2014, pp. 109–128.

[3] Carsten Herzberg, *Von der Bürger- zur Solidarkommune. Lokale Demokratie in Zeiten der Globalisierung*, Hamburg, VSA, 2009; Yves Sintomer, Carsten Herzberg and Anja Röcke, *Der Bürgerhaushalt in*

ranging mosaic of participatory budgeting (*Bürgerhaushalt*) schemes in Germany falls well short of even this benchmark.)

In addition, it is highly questionable that the "anti-political passions" driving populism can be redirected and remedied by institutional channels alone, especially if the latter's scope does not extend onto questions of (re-)distribution and spending that are a not unimportant dimension of conflict too often left unarticulated by "de-politiciz[ed] party competition." What has too often been overlooked in discussions of "input legitimacy" is that the input of democratic political systems concerns not only institutional participatory instruments, but also the key question of the extent to which social antagonisms are articulated via the party system.[4] Mouffe's critique of the "post-politics" is particularly insightful in this regard: the underlying tension at the heart of democracy's problems is not only that of capitalism and democracy, but also that of a "liberal" pursuit of universal consensus and the "democratic" articulation of conflict and difference.[5]

According to Mouffe, social-democratic parties' abandonment of an adversarial politics under neo-liberalism and the blurring of left-right distinctions have given rise to a "post-political" condition in which right-wing populists articulate conflict in exclusionary terms in the absence of larger competing projects of the left and right. Mouffe's concept of agonistics as the normative response to this predicament is remarkably similar to Nanz and Leggewie's vision of a civilized articulation of conflict within a shared framework of pluralist participation;[6] yet what her analysis helps understand is that this project cannot be limited to institutional engineering via new participatory instruments alone, but must extend onto (the more difficult task of) a fundamental rethinking and renewal of party-political competition.

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Daniela Piana, *Uguale per tutti? Giustizia e cittadini in Italia* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2016). 232 pp., €20.00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788815264336

The Italian judicial system is commonly regarded, by domestic and international observers alike, as tardy, inefficient, and unduly selective in several respects. Even if one does not consider the negative feelings of Italian citizens and firms, such a picture generates severe consequences for both the country's global economic competitiveness (with regard to its capacity to attract foreign resources) and Italy's

*Europa – eine realistische Utopie? Zwischen partizipativer Demokratie, Verwaltungsmodernisierung und sozialer Gerechtigkei*t, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010.

[4] Fritz Scharpf, *Demokratietheorie zwischen Utopie und Anpassung*, Konstanz, Scriptor, 1975.

[5] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, London, Verso, 2000; Chantal Mouffe, On the Political, London, Routledge, 2005.

[6] Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, London, Verso, 2013.

international standing in terms of democratic quality and legitimacy. Daniela Piana's newly published book (*Uguale per tutti? Giustizia e cittadini in Italia*, Mulino, 2016, 226 pages) supplies a comprehensive review that covers the weaknesses and actual performance of Italian judicial system, as well as reform attempts and their results. The volume is addressed to specialists in the first place, but can be fruitfully read also by non-specialists.

Piana starts from the assumption of an "implicit agreement" between the citizens and the state, according to which not only the law is expected to be impartial as such, but it should also be impartially applied. The state is supposed to have assumed a commitment toward each citizen: "whatever your position will be tomorrow, the legal norms will not be applied in a certain way because you are 'you,' but rather because they happen to regulate in a general way the given situation in which you are, or the specific behavior that you chose'" (p. 8).

However, as already suggested in the title of the book, remarkable differences can be observed in the way citizens' rights and claims are actually dealt with by Italian courts. Therefore, the principle of equality before the law is not always respected in practice. This is shown mainly through the analysis of statistical data concerning workload, speediness, personnel and performance at the three levels (first degree, appellate, Cassation court). Now and then some stylized cases are also presented as examples, without any reference to real trials and names. Piana underlines that between 1959 and 2014 Italy was sanctioned 1189 times (France 482, Germany 102, Netherlands 8) by the Strasbourg Court, given the excessive length of its judicial proceedings. As emphasized by international observers (such as the OECD, or the World Bank in the *Doing Business*report), on average the performance of tribunals is low. In the Mezzogiorno it is much lower compared to the rest of the country. But it is not true that all the courts in the south are more inefficient. Moreover, some courts in the center-north are also significantly below the average. The same lawsuit might be managed differently by two courts in the same *regione* or *provincia*.

One chapter is devoted to access to justice and communication about the law. The beliefs of citizens, their understanding of the system's functioning is very relevant for the decision to start a judicial proceeding or for the way they react when they are summoned. Informational, physical, linguistic, and economic aspects of access are therefore treated. The legitimation of the system by the citizens as well as their trust in it are generally low. Their satisfaction for the services received is not systematically surveyed.

Other chapters discuss organizational aspects related to the management of judicial offices. The operating style of the heads of such offices is a very relevant variable, given the remarkable differences in performance between courts. Such differences emerge even when we restrict the focus to cases located in neighboring areas, thereby exhibiting similar degrees of civicness. Piana tests the usual explanations, and shows that by focusing on the workload, given the actual size of the judicial staff, we do not always get the same results. In some of the courts where several staff positions are vacant, the ability to treat cases is among the highest; while in some courts where there are far fewer empty positions, productivity is low.

When we consider the different levels of civicness/social capital, we also see that they are not strictly, systematically and consistently correlated with different judicial performances. The role of administrative officers (by and large severely understaffed) can be relevant, if they are actually involved in executive offices of the trial court. Until recently such offices had been established only in a few courts. Decree-law 50/2014 required their creation in each appellate court and ordinary tribunal.

Other recent innovations addressed the telematic trial, the digitalization of documents, and more generally the use of ICTs. They require, in the author's opinion, a regulatory center, so to avoid disparities between territories and enhance transparency, accountability, and traceability in the way resources are used. The Higher Council of the Judiciary is its self-governing body, whose competences expanded conspicuously over time. The ministry of justice also has some relevant powers. According to Piana, the center is weak, and one of the reasons is the presence of two heads, which frequently do not appear to be mutually coordinated.

In some cases, the presidents of the tribunal or the public prosecutors pursued successful strategies of performance improvement. After 2007 also the European Union supported, through the Social Fund, the diffusion of best practices concerning, among other things, application forms, costs, timing, and results. This is in itself a good thing, but—according to Piana—might result in an increase of previous disparities and imbalances. What is needed, therefore, would be a blanket coverage, in order to obtain the general adoption of certain good practices by all courts.

The demand of justice is also relevant in a country where almost 250,000 lawyers have to make a living. Some demands are filtered, supported, and channeled through the aid of grassroots associations. Litigation is not spread homogeneously all over Italy. Relevant attempts at diverting it from judges were made, including the introduction of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

The last chapter stresses the difficulty of evaluating the many reforms enacted between 1992 and 2012. The general feeling is that they did not manage to affect the problems to any great extent. More recently, many other innovations were introduced on the basis of a somehow different and hopefully better method, based on reflections on past experiences and new approaches to impact monitoring.

This book, which also contains a comparative chapter showing that Italy is not an *unicum*, is an essential companion for reformers, legal professionals, and citizens alike (and also for non-Italian readers), because it offers an original, clear, and deep analysis of the relevant interpretations and data, convincing explanations of the crucial weaknesses, paths, and leverages for further reforms.

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PAOLO ROSA, *Strategic Culture and Italy's Military Behavior. Between Pacifism and Realpolitik* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016). 158 pp., $80.00 (hardback), ISBN: 9781498522816

The analysis of Italian foreign and security policy has recently gained the attention of Italian political scientists. Paolo Rosa's book contributes to this new wave of analysis, in that it aims to analyze how strategic culture has affected Italian behavior (p. 1).

The introduction provides a review of competing explanations of Italian foreign policy, based on international and domestic factors, to eventually claim that they are indeterminate and fail to consider the ideational dimension and the effects of the belief systems shared by the leaders on Italian international behavior.

Part I is dedicated to the study of strategic culture in international relations. Chapter two is devoted to the sociological turn in international relations, focusing on social constructivism, sociological institutionalism, and the relationship between learning and foreign policy, and suggests the usefulness of security culture as a theoretical "bridge" (p. 27). Chapter three is specifically dedicated to strategic cultures. The author adopts Johnston's definition of strategic culture as "a system of symbols that expresses a society's prevailing ideas" about the role of war in international relations, the nature of the adversaries, the efficacy of the use of force, and the ranking of the various strategic options (p. 54). Accordingly, the author applies the following research scheme to Italy's strategic culture: 1) identification of the main cultural elements (images of war, of the adversary and of the role of force held by the political and military elites); 2) identification of the preferred strategic options; 3) analysis of the actual military behavior.

Part II engages with the analysis of Italy's strategic culture and of Italian security policy. Chapter four is specifically dedicated to the identification of the characteristics of Italian strategic culture, providing an overview of the images of war and of adversaries, an assessment of the military instrument, and of Italian strategic preferences. In particular, the author highlights that during the Liberal period Italy shared with the other European powers the "cult of the offensive." During the Fascist period, Italy showed a greater adherence to realpolitik tenets, viewed war as a natural event, and relationships with opponents as zero-sum games. It also expressed a clear preference for offensive military plans. World War II, however, was "a fundamental watershed that led to the emergence of a strategic culture diametrically opposed to that of the previous era," leading to the "emergence of an elite that refused the use of military force as a means for solving international problems" (p. 70). After 1945, Italy's national identity was heavily affected, and nationalism, militarism, unilateralism, and offensive strategies were refused. Italy adopted strict limits to the use of force in its constitution, strongly supported multilateral organizations, reorganized its armed forces on the basis of a conscription army and, certain that its actual defense would have been guaranteed by the United States, it rescaled its military-industrial complex, and created a "mito autoassolutorio", in an attempt to distance itself from, and delegitimize, Fascist rule. All of this contributed to the stabilization of a non-militarized strategic culture. Although with important differences (that tended to fade away over time), this non-militarized strategic culture was shared by both Christian Democrats and left-wing parties, and translated

into an anti-war attitude and the possibility of using military force only in a defensive or multilateral framework. Accommodation strategies were preferred to defensive strategies and offensive strategies became residual.

Chapter five assesses the impact of strategic culture on Italy's military behavior. After defining hypotheses based on a neorealist perspective versus a cultural approach, the author proposes a quantitative analysis elaborating data from the Correlates of War project on militarized interstate disputes (MID) (version 3.0, with data up to 2001). Through a cross-national comparison of nations' involvement in MIDs in the period 1946–1992, the author shows that Italy is not a war-prone state, and this is confirmed also in the post-Cold War period when comparing Italy to the other medium-sized powers. A longitudinal comparison of four subperiods (Liberal, Fascist, Republican, and post-Cold War) confirms a resistance toward realpolitik practices (p. 98), and comparing pre- and post- 1945 this resistance becomes more evident. The author then concentrates on the level of violence, on the presence of revisionist objectives, and on the type of conflictual actions used by Italy, all supporting evidence of the strategic culture approach. Finally, he moves on to analyze armed forces and military spending, and highlights the importance of the Lebanon mission (1982–1984) in restoring a positive role for armed forces within a society in which strong antimilitarist feelings were present, and the inclusion of international security actions in the 1985 White Paper on defense still met a robust political opposition, evidence of the strong constraints still posed by its strategic culture. However, after the end of the Cold War, Italy's military spending decreased less than other European countries, the country became increasingly involved in international crises showing an increased activism, and its armed forces moved from conscription to a professional army. All of this shows the inclination to give Italy a greater capacity for force projection. Nevertheless, as the author points out, changes occurred "within the parameters determined by the strategic culture, sometimes pushing these parameters to their limits, but never breaking them" (p. 109). The strong support to multilateral security organizations has been internalized and Italian involvement in multilateral peacekeeping missions has increased. Finally, the author analyzes the eight military operations in which Italy has been involved in the period 1990–2008 to highlight elements of the political debates held. While sharing with other scholars the relevance of the identification of this involvement as international policing or *peace* operations, the author reverses the explanations given so far, advancing the idea that caveats and limitations in the use of force were *intentionally* imposed, in line with the Italian idea that peacekeeping operations are intended as a contribution to reconstruction and pacification. Accordingly, the author concludes that, despite Italy's greater assertiveness in the post-Cold War period, its behavior still shows "the decisive weight of a nonmilitarized strategic culture" (p. 132–133).

Throughout the book, the author effectively makes the case for the importance of ideational factors. He devotes less attention (although he does devote some) to fully enlighten why existing explanations based on material factors and other explanations based on ideational factors are unsatisfactory. This is surely fine, because the assembled evidence is noteworthy and confirms his stance. Still, at times the col-

lected evidence leaves room for competing explanations (as the author admits). For instance, all European countries have shown, to a greater or lesser extent, restraints on the use of force since the end of World War II, so it is possible that the European dimension (and a European security culture) have interacted with and strengthened Italian strategic preferences. Moreover, the reduction of interstate wars and the rise of intrastate conflicts (protracted and with different dynamics) may have created different incentives regarding the instruments to be more effectively used and the chosen framework. Finally, the overall increase in peace operations may be useful in better explaining Italian behavior in the post-Cold War period. This is not to say that these are better explanations, but just to suggest that, for as ambitious a goal as it is, explaining whether and how a combination of different explanations (based on both material and ideational factors) is possible would have also been a useful contribution not only to our understanding of Italian security policy, but also to the strand of literature dealing with strategic culture.

Another element, hardly explored by the literature, that could have benefited from receiving more space is the "obsessive focus" on balance of power in Italian political thought (endnote 52, p. 94). As the author explains, strategic culture influences the means (diplomatic versus military actions) rather than the ends that policy-makers try to accomplish. However, there is a tension between the two, because balance of power can be not only a goal, but also a lens through which policy-makers read the world to decide whether they should enact balancing policies or otherwise. If they believe (correctly or not) that their survival is at stake, it may become more difficult to ignore calls for the use of military means. Accordingly, this would have made an even stronger case for the author's argument.

As for the data used, Rosa uses one of the most authoritative databases. This choice, however, only allows him to cover until 2001,[7] and therefore to compare a significantly shorter sub-period (post-Cold War) with longer ones (Liberal, Fascist, and Cold War), leaving occasional doubts on the interpretation of data regarding Italian choices in the post-Cold War sub-period (for instance, Italy's involvement in MIDs per year in the post-Cold War sub-period is quite close to the one during the Liberal sub-period; likewise, the level of violence used by Italy in the post-Cold War sub-period is rather close to the Liberal and Fascist sub-periods). Now that a newer version (4.1) is available and covers until 2010, it would be interesting to see whether the observation of a longer period is helpful in clarifying the occasional doubts.

Rosa has made an original, interesting, and very useful contribution to our understanding of Italian security policy, and has brought attention to the importance of the analysis of the impact of strategic culture on the Italian policy-makers' choices.

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[7] Probably because the book was originally published in Italian in 2012 as *Tra pacifismo e realpolitik: Cultura strategica e politica estera in Italia*, Rubbettino.

GIULIA SANDRI, ANTONELLA SEDDONE, AND FULVIO VENTURINO (EDS.), *Party Primaries in Comparative Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2015). 248 pp., £67.99 (hardback), ISBN: 9781472450388

This book's aim is to explore the adoption, functioning, and consequences of party primaries, an instrument quickly spreading through advanced and new democracies and used to increase intra-party democracy. The emergence of party primaries is studied in its origins and mechanics as well as in its consequences on parties' organizational strength, cohesion and electoral results. Accordingly, the volume provides a first descriptive account of the main rules (formal and practical) governing primaries elections in the selected cases, and then attempts to assess the effects of the adoption and use of primaries on party membership and electoral performance.

The need for such a research is evident from the beginning: the literature has not yet come to a commonly agreed definition of what a primary election is and what is not. So, we are still left with the doubt of what can be included under this concept. Unfortunately, although Chapter two is dedicated to differences and similarities between leadership selection and candidate selection methods, the book accepts this shortcoming and does not explore the definitional logic using the sartorian ladder of abstraction. Thus, the research focuses on open and closed primaries to select both candidates and party leaders. Some scholars may question this choice, asking if leader selection can be subsumed under the umbrella of a primary election. While the debate on the concept of primary elections is still open, a better understanding of the phenomenon cannot avoid a serious attempt to find a univocal definition of the phenomenon climbing or descending the ladder of abstraction.

The book tries to give an answer to three very fundamental research questions:

> **"RQ1: What are the main factors that lead parties to use inclusive procedures to select their leaders and candidates?**
>
> **RQ2: What are the main features of the primary election process, particularly in terms of formal rules, degree of participation in internal elections and competitiveness?**
>
> **RQ3: What effect, if any, do primaries have on parties in terms of electoral performance and membership appeal?" (p. 16)**

The editors admit that the research framework, while offering a great amount of new data and information on party primaries, does not allow them to give a conclusive answer regarding the consequences of primaries on membership and electoral performances. Actually, a pre-and-post study suffers from some analytical shortcomings (e.g., too many intervening variables to be taken into account) that cannot be overcome without, for example, comparing cases of primaries with cases of non-primaries. However, future inferential studies will undoubtedly benefit from Sandri, Seddone, and Venturino's explorative study on the causes and consequences of party primaries.

The volume, unlike the average customary edited books, is really well structured as each chapter is "disciplined" in its comparative analytical framework. While Chapters 2 and 3 provide the basis for data collection and the framework for the comparative analysis, subsequent chapters adopt the following structure. In the in-

troduction, they analyze the political context showing the main explanatory factors at political and party system level for the adoption of primary elections (political culture, electoral system, party system format, etc.). In the second part, the context and rationale for adopting primaries is explored (degree of decision-making centralization, role of the leader and of the dominant coalition, etc.). The third part provides a detailed description of the process of primary elections (formal rules, degree of participation, and degree of competitiveness). Finally, the study of the consequences of primary elections focuses on two main variables: the evolution of overall membership figures and parties' electoral performance in general elections before and after primaries.

Case selection has been developed under the method of the most similar system design. Each chapter (apart from the one on Iceland) is designed as a paired empirical comparison exploring two countries that are similar in several political system features (electoral system, party system, form of government, level of concentration of executive power, etc.) in order to control for those variables. The proposed comparisons concern three cases of leadership selection, Spain and Portugal, Belgium and Israel, Japan and Taiwan, and three cases of candidate selection, Italy and France, Romania and Slovakia, Iceland, although the former concerns cases of selection of candidates to the role of chief executive.

After a well-conceived analysis of the cases, Sandri, Seddone and Venturino offer, in the final chapter, some analytical conclusions. The aim of clarifying "*why* and *how* political parties in different countries choose to reform their methods of selecting candidates and leaders in an inclusive direction, and *what* the effects brought about by that choice are" (p. 181) is pursued at three levels: political system, party system and intra-party level. At the political system level, parties choose primaries as an instrument providing a new source of legitimacy for party leaders and candidates. At the party system level, parties adopt primaries after an electoral defeat or due to a sort of contagion effect. At the intra-party level, primaries can be an instrument for party elites to retain power and/or a strategy for reactivating relationships with activists and enrolling new members. "In sum, primaries have a positive effect on public opinion and therefore on the citizens' perceptions of the party. For this reason, the contagion effect at the party system level represents an effective incentive for the adoption of inclusive tools. However, [the book concludes] this does not directly correspond to a positive impact at electoral or organizational level" (p. 192).

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