

## VIII. BOOK REVIEWS

**Gianina JOLDESCU-STAN** ⇔ *On Culture Class*

**Adrian Ionuț BOGDAN** ⇔ *What is the Future of the International Order*

**Diana Cristina COSMA** ⇔ *On Deliberative Democracy in Europe  
Success and Losses*

**Laurențiu PETRILA** ⇔ *The Need for Education and Intercultural  
Communication for Better European Integration*

**Nitin HINGARH** ⇔ *On Whether Democracy Can Safeguard the  
Future*

**Anca OLTEAN** ⇔ *Perspectives on Democracy and Rule of Law in  
Romanian Civil Society*

**Michelle NICA** ⇔ *On Humankind. A Hopeful History*

## ON CULTURE CLASS

*Gianina JOLDESCU-STAN\**

**Book review of** Marth Rosler, *Culture Class*, Sternberg Press, 2013

**Keywords:** *artistic autonomy, political art, gentrification, urbanism, crative class, the role of culture*

Martha Rosler is an artist that works in photography, videography, performance text and installation. Her art is a feminine approach towards everyday issues and specific matters such as war and national security climate through the lenses of art.

In her collection of essays, Marth Rosler follows the destiny of artists in the urban jungle, the way the environment affects the art and the way in which it is perceived. *Culture Class* is a book that includes essays that are considered to be representative for the written art of Martha Rosler. The first one, 'Take the Money and Run? Can Political and Socio-Critical Art 'Survive'?' describes the evolution of art during war, and the effects of post-war politics on artist and performance art. It is a very comprehensive and detailed essay on how artists can benefit from their culture without commercializing it, and the critical and comparing perspective of artist as part of the middle-class workers. This chapter of the book also approaches the difficulty that artists encounter in the process of internationalisation of culture and the 'loss' of originality in the process. The question that stands at the basis of this chapter is: 'deciding to be an artist means aspiring to serve the rich?', and the question remains unanswered, because the point of such a question is not to be answered, but to raise more and more questions.

The second chapter, 'Culture Class' is divided in three parts: Art and Urbanism, Creativity, and Its Discontents, and In the Service of Experience(s) and started from an invitation to speak about Richard Florida and the 'creative class'. The discussion on the subject start from Lefebvre's idea that 'the society has been entirely urbanizes' (Lefebvre, 1970). The complexity of the urban life is analysed, and industrial economy constitutes a starting point for the discussion on *Situationist International* (an international organization constituted by avant-garde artists, political theorists, and intellectuals). One of the slogans of situationists 'Culture is the commodity that sells all the others' is the starting point for the second part of this chapter: Creativity and Its Discontents. This part of the book speaks about the new vision on art, and the orientation on *production* rather than *vision*, making art less elitist. (Zukin, 1982), while the third part of the chapter discusses how newcomers influence the urban development and the evolution of art in cities such as New York, following their cultural, stylistic, and occupational integration.



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The last two chapters focus on gentrification, contemporary art, and revolution of art from Centre to Periphery. These chapters insist on the ideas described in the first chapters of the book related to idea of 'creative class' and follow a more political-oriented approach to the matter in case, including ideas such as: 'capitalism can increase inequalities and lead to catastrophic collapse', 'the new welfare-state appeared as a way to keep a large middle-class but failed because of the European social welfare model' (Roubini, 2011).

'Culture Class' is very complex set of ideas, based on solid research made by the author on matters of social and political aspects of culture, how crisis situations such as war and conflict affect the evolution of culture and how culture is perceived in the evolving state of urban development. Analysing the urban sociology and the thesis of creative class, Martha Rosler presents various points that raise questions with regards to the new purpose of culture and art in a globalised era. The style of Martha Rosler is direct, trenchant, and incisive, showing a strong feminist perspective on art and culture. In this book, she manages to present her historical and political analysis on the role of artists in urban gentrification and contemporary art.

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## WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER?

*Adrian Ionuț BOGDAN\**

**Book review of Professor Dr. Valentin Naumescu, *The USA-China War for Supremacy and The Five Forces that change the World: Consequences for Romania*, Polirom Publishing House, 2021.**

### ***General Presentation***

Published at the end of 2021, the book *The USA-China War for Supremacy and the five forces that change the world: Consequences for Romania* is a novel appearance at the level of Romania in terms of the field of study of international relations. The author is a career diplomat, former Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Consul General of Romania in Toronto, University Professor Dr. Valentin Naumescu. Structured in two parts, the book published by the prestigious POLIROM publishing house captures in a very analytical and meticulous way the current changes regarding the structure of the international system, mentioning scenarios or coalition possibilities, answering questions of remarkable importance regarding the further evolution of what international relations will become in the short and medium term. The valuable observations regarding the consequences that the rearrangement of the international system will have on Romania should not be ignored, also the elements that the author mentions in the second part of this book (the five forces that change the world), are worth looking at analysis as a whole and in a perspective of complementarity with the discussions regarding the international order and the actions/capabilities that states undertake intending to bring the evolution of the system to their benefit.



### ***The First Part of the Book***

The first chapter begins with one of Napoleon's most famous quotes about China: "Let China sleep, for if she wakes up, she will shake the world." Indeed, for more than seven centuries, Imperial China and the forms of government that succeeded it were in a continuous "isolationist sleep" (Kissinger, 2018: 129) that deprived them of the chance of involvement and influence in the international system. The events that the author considers important in the evolution and "awakening" of China are specified and concisely explained. The Communist Revolution, the Civil War, and later Deng Xiaoping's famous reforms that saved "Mao's China" (Kissinger, 2012: 108) from disaster and allowed the sustained and accelerated development of the People's Republic of China, a development that was continued in an even more accelerated by successive administrations. This chapter objectively and analytically captures the explanations for what enabled the existence of the Chinese miracle that surprised the world toward the end of the first

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decade of the new millennium. The "Long Western Crisis" as Professor Naumescu calls it, was represented by the involvement of the Euro-Atlantic world in a veritable war in the Middle East through the interventions of the US (Kaplan, 2020: 98) and its allies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Often weakly or erroneously (the inexistence of nuclear and chemical weapons in Iraq) argued, or motivated by the discrediting of former autocratic leaders (such as Muammar al-Gaddafi or Bashar al-Assad), the Western world's interventions in the East have generated more disorder than order, led to the deterioration of relations with the Arab world and allowed a favorable context for the "quiet" but rapid rise of China. In the fallout of the years 2000-2010, the supremacy of the victorious United States after the Cold War was significantly eroded (Friedman, 2020: 54), a fact that allowed the appearance in the international system of some revisionist ambitions on the part of Russia and China.

The perspective of the confrontation between China and the USA in the author's view must be analyzed in light of the evolution that the concept of confrontation has undergone. Today, a confrontation does not boil down to just conventional warfare, although this cannot be completely ruled out either. Professor Naumescu mentions the "Thucydides Trap" and the idea that the current hegemonic power and the immediately following opposing power will end up fighting each other militarily, but this reality of the geopolitics of the ancient Greek world is contradicted, says Naumescu, by the way, the US and the USSR clashed in the Cold War, not resorting to direct war, but clashing at the highest level.

Of course, the European Union is an actor that cannot be ignored in the perspective of the reorganization of the international system (Brie, 2006: 64), however, the internal problems and the institutional and post-Brexit crisis are open wounds in the European project. A new "Eurosclerosis" (Petrila, 2019: 32) can lead to the fragmentation of the European bloc, creating the premise of choosing any bloc by the European states. However, the stability of the EU still cannot be definitively called into question, just as the author does not launch any other hypothesis than that of the Euro-Atlantic alliance. Traditionally, Europe and America are cultural, state-wise, and ideologically similar, and neutrality of the EU, desired by China, will not be possible, even with Europe's economic dependence on Beijing's products and economy, says the author. Trump's mandate represented a distancing of the US from the European Union, but Biden's mandate represented the restoration of the Euro-Atlantic alliance.

Near the end of this part of the book, the author captures the increasingly unclear role that Russia will play in this new world order, even in the context of Moscow's increasingly aggressive foreign policy. The professor believes that Russia has few options left regarding its international positioning, offering three scenarios: the creation of the third pole of power in contradiction with the US and China, the adoption of neutrality in the conflict, and, finally, the support of China in this confrontation. The first scenario is highly unlikely due to the lack of economically or militarily important states for Russia to coalesce into a third pole, the second option does not lend itself to a re-emerging superpower like Vladimir Putin's Russia, so the third option remains only the alliance between Russia and China. Nor is the prospect of the Moscow-Beijing Axis a very happy one for Moscow, as the outsized ambitions of Putin's Russia, cannot be overshadowed by a secondary role behind China. Professor Naumescu was talking about this crack in the alliance between China and Russia as early as 2021, and they cannot be seen better than now in the current context of the Ukraine Invasion, when the People's Republic of China refused to recognize the Russian annexations of territories in September 2022.

And finally, Professor Valentin Naumescu presents four important scenarios regarding the escalation of the confrontation between the US and China, also presenting the possible consequences of each scenario for Romania. The first scenario is considered that of the "Cold War" between the US and China, but the current context is categorically different from that of the US-USSR confrontation. China is a completely different actor from the Soviet Union, and the United States has undergone major changes, so this new "Cold War" would be radically different from its predecessor. In the case of this scenario of bipolarity, Romania will benefit from all the attention that the Western states also benefited from during the Cold War (Naumescu, 2014: 89) developing, even more, its relations with the USA and the West. A second scenario is represented by the direct or indirect confrontation between the US and China, this being the most pessimistic scenario, leading to either an indirect proxy war, but there is always the chance of a real direct conflict. Of course, this second scenario is a catastrophic one, also because both nations are nuclear powers, and for Romania, such a situation would put it in front of fulfilling its duties as an ally of the US in a possible fight with Communist China. The third and fourth scenarios specified by Professor Naumescu rely on the self-implosion of China or the United States. The social and political problems facing the authoritarian communist regime in Beijing are obvious. Pollution, human rights violations added to the weakening of giant Chinese companies, and the possibility of political instability are elements that can blow up China's economy and international fortunes. The flip side of the coin, that is, the reverse scenario of an American decline (Ferguson, 2019: 29), cannot be completely ruled out, as the US has faced the most domestic crises in the nation's contemporary history in the past two decades, from the 2008 Economic Crisis to the Black Lives Matters protests. In the situation of those scenarios, Professor Naumescu believes that a possible fall of China will have net positive effects vis-à-vis Romania, but a fall of the USA could mean the beginning of the deterioration of the democratic regime in our country, so extremely disastrous consequences.

### ***The Second Part of the Book***

In this second part of the book, the importance of elements such as Education, Technology, Environment, Communication, or Ideology are causally mentioned and detailed. Professor Naumescu mentions that "these are the five forces that change the world", and this may prove to be true considering the importance of these factors in the existence of a state. A state with a high educational and technological degree takes on another importance in the international system, influencing as much the policies the state undertakes regarding the environment, but also the global communication channels it uses and possesses, as well as the ideological system of the state itself.

### ***Conclusions***

*The USA-China War for Supremacy and the five forces that change the world: Consequences for Romania* is a book of synthesis, analysis, and innovative research that succeeds in bringing to light, a series of questions that are at the heart of discussions in the field of international relations. Through some already confirmed predictions, the present work represents a real guide in understanding and deepening international relations, but also an important resource in organizing genuine academic debates regarding the scenarios suggested by the author of the book.

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## ON DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE SUCCESS AND LOSSES

*Diana Cristina COSMA\**

**Book review of** Gherghina, Sergiu; Mișcoiu, Sergiu & Mokre, Monica (2021), *Democratic Deliberation and Under-Represented Groups in Europe*, Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research”, (34):5.

The book is concerned with the analysis of the implication of the minority groups in deliberation with political, social, cultural or environmental ends, pointing out at situations of under-represented groups issues of inclusiveness, in several countries of Europe. It is co-edited by the following social and political scientists: Sergiu Gherghina, Associate Professor in Comparative Politics, Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Glasgow, Monika Mokre at the University of Vienna and Sergiu Mișcoiu, Professor at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.

The following lines are meant to help anchor the process of deliberation from a conceptual point of view. In the last two decades, researchers have started to give more space to the so-called „deliberative turn”. It was firstly tackled rather from a theoretical point of view, just to advance towards more practical enforcement, step by step [Chambers 2003: 307]. Although quite suggestive and indicative in its name, the process of deliberation has been approached, studied and problematised through a wide variety of domains and perspectives. When talking about deliberation, we are, in fact, talking about a transdisciplinary concept. In an effort to systemize the existing literature on deliberation, one could encounter, at a first-hand grouping, a normative and an empirical narrative. Abiding in the political science field of study, one can observe numerous multidisciplinary approaches to deliberative processes, in conjunction with psychology, philosophy, critical theory, pragmatic theories like those concerning policy-making. The book under discussion covers transversally the issue of inclusiveness, or, better-said, the lack of inclusiveness in the analysed processes.

The effort of providing a comprehensive definition of this complementary tool to political participation has been undertaken by a great number of theoreticians. One of the most indicative rests Gutmann's definition: "we can define deliberative democracy as a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future." [Gutmann:7]. So one can observe why deliberation is more consistent than political participation. It is reflection-



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centric (Tamura 2018:1), it means “working together” to clarify a disagreement, to decide in policy-making, to enhance legitimacy, when complying with its normative ideal and prescriptive endeavours.

The first chapter is entitled “Poorly designed deliberation: explaining the banlieues’ non-involvement in the Great Debate” and it is written by Professor Sergiu Gherghina and Professor Sergiu Mișcoiu. One of the most evocative matter is the particular definition in terms of identity, background and administration of the peripheral areas of Paris Metropole. By the means of seven interviews and one focus group carried out in 2019, the two professors established the four main reasons of non involvement: *the re-legitimation function of the debate, its lack of inclusiveness, mismatch of demands, and format of the deliberative setting* (Gherghina & Mișcoiu 2020).

The structure of the article is clearly organised. It firstly presents a wealth of theoretical argumentation in the incipient phase on non-participation in political processes, followed by the qualitative research explanation, by an contextualization of the research, a definition of the banlieues and an in-depth explanation of the aforementioned reasons for abstinence.

The Great Debate in France seems like providing opportunities for heavy research, in all of the steps of its happening. Its third stage, if we can refer to it as such, the aftermath of the action is highly indicative of the recruitment and conduct of the process as well. The concept of re-legitimation of the incumbent administration has been often invoked by the respondents. This allusion means that the Great Debate represents only a tool used to give voice to people’s dissatisfaction, in an attempt to regive credits to decision-makers. So, it has been perceived as specifically designed to consolidate the power, leaving on purpose aside preoccupations for ethno-cultural communities they cohabit with. The Great Debate was, in fact, aimed at the French middle-class, including the country-side, the traditional profession middle families. The banlieue are a totally different segment of population, possessing a distinct identity, facing issues such as the need for better housing, health and education infrastructure, security etc. Neglection does only suppress and increase tensions, being only a matter of time until crisis blows up.

One of this chapter remarkable conclusion is that it was not the lack of interest or the incapacity of the community members to understand and debate on specific issues that dishearted participation in deliberation in banlieues, as generally invoked by the existing literature, but rather the convoluted process of participation and the superficial, if not the void impact of their participation. Among the hundreds of thousands of e-mails and requests their demands would get lost. A case in point are the Muslim banlieues, needing funding for a mosque or more empowerment for imams at the community level, which was not at all on the Great Debate agenda. All the interviewed people were well-informed and knew the process of participation, but it was simply not the appropriate setting (Gherghina & Mișcoiu 2020).

One could basicaly argue that the findings of the research under discussion has virtually disqualified any deliberative capacity the Great Debate, which would find serious support among the critics [Dobler 2019].

The second chapter focuses on a more young democracy, entitled ”Diaspora, deliberation and democracy: examining externally-sponsored initiatives for the development of local fora in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. This chapter is written by the Jasmin Hasić from the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology, Political Science and International Relations Department and Aiša Telalović at the Journalism Development Network. Its particularity resides in the definition they assign to diaspora community: “ex-

territorialized minority”. This association with the regular, predictable minorities, ensures access to political decision-making. By its empirical study, the article checks if deliberation could be impregnated in six local governments of Bosnia, where agencies of foreign governments worked for the implementation of externally funded project to enhance democratic functioning of the institutions. Most importantly, it discusses on how the *underrepresented* diaspora community was involved in a post-conflict zone and what was the efficiency and sustainability of such an approach. Diaspora is considered to be resourceful not only financially, but also in terms of an alternative, mostly westernized experience, knowledge, lobby capacity etc. both for the national governments and for the local ones.

The structure of the article is classical. After the literature review, the author presents the epistemic method of research, which involved institutional analysis in 6 communities of Bosnia, an explanation of the Bosnian diaspora’s link with the nationals, and the final remarks.

One must observe how highly contributory for diaspora expertize literature, leadings ways to possible integration from abroad, if we can call it like this. Basically, integration without physical presence. Since diaspora pools resources for reconstruction and consolidation, why shouldn’t it be part of decision-making, as well. In general terms, the study concludes that the projects worked in favour of diaspora by raising their inclusiveness, but it is still not decently accomplished. The hope is that the institutional means of the interaction created could have a long-term impact, but the guarantees are considerably feeble [Telalović & Hasić].

The third chapter is entitled “If no vote, at least voice? The potential and limits of deliberative procedures for the creation of a more inclusive democracy” and it is written by Monika Mokre and Tamara Has. Their study has concentrated on the run-up to the municipal elections held in Vienna, in 2020, and has in its centre the residents who do not possess Austrian citizen status, and hence are not allowed to vote. Still, all decisions taken are binding upon them, as well. This status quo alters the state of democracy in Europe and contributes to social imbalances.

The article points out at shortages of deliberative democracy, mainly at the fact that deliberation rests merely a complement for political participation and could not approach itself problem solving stands. While the democratic deficit in Vienna is one of the highest in mature democracies, precisely because of the high migration mass, one third of the population being unable to vote. This is due to the the process of acquiring Austrian citizenship for third-country nationals, remaining one of the most difficult in Europe. More space for expression, is undeniably needed.

The study included deliberation sessions, in the form of a mini-public, gathering those who did not possess the right to vote, followed by a request of solutions from the political parties. It analysed a question register, drawn up together with the disenfranchised inhabitants. The conclusions drawn are that although deliberation contributes to raising the voice of those who are not able to vote, it cannot substitute the process of voting. The research theme is more than interesting and shows the complementarity of participation and deliberation. The method, however, might find critics of being too aggregative here and there [Mokre & Ehs 2020].

The next chapter is entitled “Democratic innovations in (subnational) constitution-making: the institutionalized case(s) of the Italian Provinces of Trento and Bolzano” and is written by Martina Trettel from the Institute of Comparative Federalism. The article looks at how deliberation could help reform the Statute of Autonomy of two Italia

provinces (Trento and Bolzano), by involving high input coming from the citizens. The article first presents literature elements related to constitution-making. It then passes to an analysis of the status of these provinces, describing their level of independency, namely to establish their own institutions, their way of governance, financial system, all enshrined in the subnational constitution under discussion, together with detailed technical aspects.

The novelty of the reforming process is precisely the involvement of deliberation in *Consulta* and *Convenzione*, subject to important internal diversity of these entities, in terms of language and identity.

On the occasion of deliberative fora, the study has find out interesting attitudes regarding minorities. The most popular two opinions were either advocating for loosening minority protection, through bilingual schools for example, or for maintaining the status quo. Special attention is paid to the linguistic division in design, as well, since the Province of Bolzano possesses national linguistic minorities. In order to make deliberation function, each participant used its mother tongue (German or Italian) and translators were provided. The province of Trento is rather more linguistically uniform, so minorities could openly join discussion. Here, the Ladins were preoccupied with strengthening their protection. So, the article demonstrates that language does not pose barriers in deliberation, but the technicalities rendering the resolutions consultative does not guarantee their implementation [Trettel 2021].

The following chapter relies on the dangers that hunt deliberation. “Using deliberation for partisan purposes: evidence from the Hungarian National Consultation”, is written by Daniel Orros and Paul Tap from Babeş-Bolyai University. The study focuses on how the elite populist radical right party FIDESZ, in Hungary, transformed deliberation in a tool to better scan and incorporate social atmosphere. It analyzes the National Consultation in 2015, establishing that this apparently innocent political endeavour turns out to be nothing more than a strategy of legitimizing the party lines. The aim is to secure votes and to investigate where to adapt the discourse, which is also called in literature authoritarian deliberation. The review of the literature reveals how deliberation may take over a top-down approach, compromising the quality of the process. Many parties actually use deliberation internally, which makes them more trustworthy and appealing for citizens, changing the public perception if they are genuine. However, cases of populists employing deliberation are popular, as they constantly raise discontents as matters of discussion.

The National Consultation was launched as an attempt to bring people closer to politics and a chance for the politicians to scrutinize the will of the citizens. By the means of 27 semi-structured interviews with Hungarian politicians and experts, the authors found out the real outcome of the Consultation, organised by the populist right-wing party. It seems that the strategic objectives of the FIDESZ were to obtain convenient migrant quotas determined by citizens, before the elections. The party allegedly influenced, through the wording in the questionnaire the answers people would give. Moreover, the consultation has only increased the rupture between parties, deepening the clivage and the polarization, through the support it managed to obtain. In terms of normative objectives, the legitimizing factor is salient [Orros & Tap 2021]. One could argue that no matter how much a theory is worked on, those who will finally operationalize it, hold the power.

The next chapter brings to our attention an important aspect related to the quality of the content of deliberation, which is highly influenced by the composition. Under the title of “When citizens met politicians – the process and outcomes of mixed deliberation according to participant status and gender”, this article is the result of a research carried

out by Kim Strandberg, Janne Berg, Thomas Karv and Kim Backstrom. The heart of the research relies on a series of mixed deliberation, that were carried out on the occasion of a municipal merger in Finland, in 2018. The reason behind the mixed deliberative systems is the need for ensured inclusiveness, and the politicians could facilitate the integration of this principle. Discussions over the level of homogeneity or heterogeneity of the deliberative group remain active. On one hand, more homogeneity provides a less intimidating environment for the citizens to express their opinions, while, on the other hand, in homogenous environment, no reflection of the society can exist. This subject of research attempts to bridge, in some way, the representative and deliberative decision-making. The classical hypothesis of such deliberation concern, firstly, the disheartening presence of the politicians, who would immediately use their expertise and talent in order to dominate the talks. Secondly, females are expected to involve less, possibly inhibited by their condition of vulnerable group.

The event that provided the opportunity for this research were the inflamed negotiations between Vasa and Korsholm, two cities in Western Finland, trying to merge. The issue at stake was that, this merger would turn the Swedish speaking majority in Korsholm into a minority, in the newly erected municipality. The research design implied three deliberative sessions, mixing politicians with citizens, prior to the official negotiations. The findings of the study confirmed the fear only in the case of status. Politicians did dominate the discussions, but they also contributed as facilitators which meant that they basically ensured a smooth discussion, avoiding frustrating, unhinged situations. In terms of gender behaviour, there was none identifiable discrepancy in the inter-gender dialogue and assertiveness [Strandberg, Berg, Karv & Backström 2020]. The article approaches old, traditional shortages of democracy in an innovative, up-to-date fashion.

The last article is entitled “Looking to the future? Including children, young people and future generations in deliberations on climate action: Ireland’s Citizens’ Assembly 2016–2018” and it is written by Clodagh Harris. It tackles the use of Citizens Assemblies and Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (JOCCA) deliberations on climate action, in Ireland. The unique feature of this case its preoccupation with the long-term effects of today’s deliberation outcome, manifested through the advocacy for children and teenagers’ seat at the table, as future generations exponents directly affected. One proposal related to the inclusiveness of younger generations in this sort of debates is that of an “enclave deliberation”, taking over the Irish Youth Parliaments. The *enclave deliberations* seem to represent the perfect venue for the ones who are traditionally marginalised or overlooked. It embodies a welcoming and safe space for these people to organise their ideas.

A divergent view is put forward in the context of the present discussion, between the futurists- teenagers as “citizens of tomorrow” and the presentists- rights-based approach, rejecting paternalistic drives. MacKenzie tries to bridge this differentials, claiming that the interests gap in present and future generations can be filled by the deliberative sessions, enhancing the societal input in creating useful and qualitative policies, which is also a form of legitimacy.

The Irish Citizen Assembly under discussion was a three stage- action. Deliberation comes second, after the information sessions and it is followed by decision-making. In a submission of policy recommendations, it turned out that only 3% were coming from children. This inequality reflected in deliberation sessions, show that the ones left aside needed to be treated separately, in the so-called enclaves. Their impact

seems to matter. It surely does not hold the key to the utopic, perfect political scenarios, but makes the imbalances more bearable [Harris 2020]. This chapter almost closes the circle of approaches, orienting on the future of policy-making. It also shows that, even if imperfect normatively and technically, enclave deliberation can be a very useful civic exercise, that might be developed later on in more complex venues.

### Conclusion

The book touches up-to-date topics related to many aspects of contemporary politics, approached through creative, but realistic spectacles. It institutionalization for a better warranty that it represents a long-term project. A one-off exercise is not enough to create a pattern. Besides, the consultative role of the deliberation session renders it quite neglected by the politicians. A slight reform is asked in this sense, as well. This literature work is clear evidence on the transdisciplinarity of the deliberative processes. Inclusiveness cannot be separated from deliberation. While the prescriptive literature insists on the principle, in practice, things are moving slower than society might wish. Nevertheless, people get socialised with this practice. Time and exposure remain important.

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## THE NEED FOR EDUCATION AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION FOR BETTER EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

*Laurențiu PETRILA\**

**Book review of** Mircea Brie, Karla Melinda Barth, Dragoș Dărăbăneanu, Istvan Polgar: *Integrarea europeană și reforma educației românești. Comunicarea culturală și dialogul multiethnic*. Debrecen University Press: ISBN 9789634734251

**Keywords:** *education, European integration, multicultural dialogue, intercultural communications.*

The present work comes at a very appropriate moment considering the recent challenges regarding education both from a health point of view: SARS COV 19 (Simuț et. al.: 2021) and the multiple challenges related to European integration after Brexit .

Immediately after the global pandemic, a series of studies on education and the new paradigms of thinking regarding digital education appeared (Petrila et. al.: 2022) - a situation that put classical education formats to great test (Barth et. al.: 2022). When elements of ethnicity, multiculturalism, minorities, confessions are also involved, the equation becomes more complex, and this work comes to the aid of specialists who want to better understand these challenges in order to develop public policies regarding European interculturality and multiculturalism education.

The volume is also a guide on the need for education as a continuous form of modeling and monitoring human behavior. Through education, the citizen acquires the necessary skills to know how to react in multicultural contexts. In fact, education from an intercultural perspective is the link through which such a heterogeneous society as the population of the European Union today can generate rights and obligations for a consensus specific to European values (Brie et. al.: 2016).

The work is made up of six chapters that deal with the problem of the proposed subject from different perspectives and angles. The first chapter reveals a brief but almost exhaustive understanding of the education systems in the European Union. The next chapter comes naturally and deals with the different epistemological and conceptual approaches to learning about the European Union. The third chapter comes with a deeper problematization of the phenomenon, namely: the interdisciplinary perspective in learning about minorities. Chapter four comes as a turntable where the optimization elements of



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intercultural communication are analyzed, emphasizing the risk of the appearance of some forms of discrimination through educational programs.

The last two chapters focus on the analysis of the school curriculum regarding intercultural education in Romania, but also the necessary dialogue from the multi-ethnic perspective as an approach to the domain of European studies.

In addition to the elements related to the topicality and relevance of the subject, we must emphasize an important plus regarding the approach. Through this work, the ideas of specialists from different fields but related to the treated subject are brought to the table: the field of educational sciences, sociology, international relations and European studies, and even the field of theology. All these approaches from different scientific angles - corroborated with each other, help us to understand in a much deeper way inter-ethnic, multi-ethnic and even confessional overlaps (Brie et. al.: 2011).

The authors agree that an increase in intensity regarding the manifestation of intercultural education is important, which will subsequently ensure an increasing productivity between members of different socio-cultural spaces. Thus, by means of education and intercultural communication, the main theme of European integration can be realized and that helps those who are different to realize a series of fundamental principles for European cohesion.

Through this scientific approach, I believe that we are dealing with an analysis regarding the promotion of intercultural European values that must be seen as a pleasant effort regarding the consolidation of the European social space.

Through intercultural education and the updating of educational programs in which there are also ingredients of multiculturalism, many and inter-ethnic and confessional, we can say that we would have the chance for a much deeper European construction, and that Eurosceptic emanations would be reduced as much as possible.

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## ON WHETHER DEMOCRACY CAN SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE

*Nitin HINGARH\**

**Book review of** Graham Smith, *Can Democracy Safeguard the Future?* Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 2021, ISBN-13: 978-1-5095-3924-6

**Keywords:** *Short-termism, democratic myopia, Offices for Future Generations (OFG), Deliberative Mini-Publics (DMP), Diversity, Inclusiveness, Empowerment*

The Book *Can Democracy Safeguard the Future?*, written by Graham Smith in 2021, tackles the issue of whether democratic systems can provide long-term solutions for the future generations, with a democratic design approach of policy making for future generations.

Graham Smith is a Politics Professor at the University of Westminster, where he is also the Director of the Center for the Study of Democracy which belongs to the school of social sciences. His main research is focused on participatory democratic institutions, climate and environmental politics, and social economy.

The author structures his book into four chapters and an afterword, starting with an analysis of the causes why democracy fails to provide long-term solutions, then investigating changes which can be applied to existing institutions to deal away with democratic myopia, to later provide examples of new initiatives several governments have taken, and in the end, he proposes new solutions for the democratic systems to be more long-term focused and design decision making models with the future generations in mind.

Describing the tendency of democratic systems to take short-term oriented decisions, in the first chapter, the author calls it short-termism and provides examples such as climate change, the health system, infrastructure, and pandemics as clear representatives of democratic myopia. He further identifies the four main factors which drive short-termism, as in:

- 1) the absence of the future generations as an integral part of policy making
- 2) the electoral cycle with too short terms for politicians to see the creation of long-term policies as an advantage for their next electoral campaign
- 3) responsiveness to interest groups, especially the wealthy, providing a case in point with the wealthy and well-organized business groups benefitting the most from the decision-making process in the United States



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4) speculative capitalism as a shaper of thinking patterns in the modern society, with democratic governments frequently leaving decisions to the market, the latter already known as being focused on short-term economic decisions.

The author considers these four factors to be the ones restricting the ability of democratic institutions to provide long-term solutions. The author ends the chapter with the question whether we should renounce democracy and adopt more authoritarian regimes, providing well-reasoned examples why this is not a solution. In his view, it is still the democratic regimes which need to remain in place, should their institutions be reinvigorated, restructured, and designed for the long-term.

Examining the institutions that require changes in his second chapter, the author compares four significant institutions in several countries: the legislature, the parliamentary committees, the electoral rules, and the constitution. He states that the legislature is formally expected to defend political equality, although he admits that this might not always be the case, a fact which leads to democratic myopia. However, we also find suggestions for the legislature to focus on changing the existing internal practices or on a structural change with the aim of reshaping the electoral rules in mind.

The author continues by presenting examples of parliamentary committees in various countries and their initiatives. He analyzes the reform the Finnish Parliament has undertaken by being the first committee to adopt a long-term view across all its policy-making process. Other countries whose committees have taken a long-term policy making approach are Hungary, The UK, and Scotland. Although the last three countries mentioned here have not reached the extent to which Finland has committed, they are still worth mentioning as worthy examples of reform initiatives.

The electoral rules have also been considered by the author as an institution in dire need of reform, with a mentioning of two sets of proposals moving in opposite directions: on the one hand there was a strong argument against the deficient short electoral mandates, with the suggestion to extend the terms, and on the other hand the proposition to empower the young voters through various schemes:

- 1) giving parents the right to vote on their children's behalf
- 2) asking young people to voice their concerns and focus the policy decisions around those concerns
- 3) creating a surrogate group to represent the future generations
- 4) giving all citizens two rights to vote: one for themselves and one for the future generations.

While some of these proposals may be radical, they do make a strong argument that we need to give more consideration to future generations.

The last institution the author proposes for reform is the constitution. Here he walks us through constitutional reforms adopted by countries, such as Norway, which has adopted environmental rights for future generations, and Hungary which is determined to preserve its natural resources for the sake of the future generations. He continues by providing well-reasoned arguments why constitutions play an important role in safeguarding the future.

While proposals to reform these institutions come with very strong arguments, they often remain on the drawing table for several reasons, among which we can mention the public's trust in these institutions to protect the interests of the future generations over time.

Arguing that the changes in the existing governmental structure may prove inadequate to safeguard the future, the author proposes the creation of new institutions in

the third chapter of this book, providing examples of successful initiatives in this area. He provides detailed descriptions of institutions such as The Committee for Climate Change (CCC) in the UK, the Commission for Future Generations in Israel, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations in Hungary, and the Future Generation Commissioner in Wales, analyzing their roles, powers, and the reasons why they were successful or unsuccessful. He then proposes the idea of Offices for Future Generations (OFG) as one of the most important independent voices, emphasizing the idea that these bodies are created to remediate dysfunctions. While emphasizing all the advantages the OFGs could bring to the reform of the current decision-making system, the author also mentions their vulnerability in the fact that they lack a well-organized system, which could attract political support, and further proposes constitutional protection for these institutions. Although OFGs may be critical actors in changing democratic dynamics, their vulnerability prevents them from being considered a major part in the reform design.

In the fourth chapter the author proposes the public's participation in the long-term Governance as one of the most important solutions for the future generations. He does admit that the idea has been dismissed by many for the public's shortsightedness and their focus on everyday decisions, but he argues that the public can also bring merits to the decision table, such as inclusiveness, enhancement of the legitimacy of political decision-making, and the fostering of democracy practices worth passing on to the future generations.

He embraces the idea of participatory politics and provides the following reasons why it should be adopted:

- 1) it being a radical solution to resolve democratic myopia
- 2) its possibility to bring in deliberative democracy with public attendance
- 3) its ability to enable the public diverse voice (for the unborn and for the less represented segments of society, such as the women, the poor, the physically impaired).

He proposes the Deliberative Mini-Publics as informed knowledgeable groups which could provide support for the established political institutions to take informed decisions not only for the wealthy, but for people in all walks of life.

He mentions that the DMPS would make a major contribution in:

- 1) better reflecting the public's experiences
- 2) being a viable solution to the lack of constituency for future generations, an attribute which can challenge short-term electoral drives
- 3) help the public and the political institutions become aware of their obligations towards future generations.

Taking all these points into account, we can define DMPs as a combination of design characteristics and actual practice that can promote empowerment, diversity, inclusiveness, and deliberation.

In his afterword, the author summarizes the importance of independence, diversity, deliberation, institutionalization, and empowerment as the key drivers for a reform of our democratic systems toward long-term orientation.

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## PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW IN ROMANIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Anca OLTEAN\*

**Book review of** István Péter Németh, Zoltan Zakota, Sorin-Gelu Borza, Laurențiu Petrila (Eds), *Civil Szemle (Civil Society-Romanian Diagnoses, Különszám-2022- Special Issue 3, Civil Szemle Alapítvány-Due Press.*

**Keywords:** *Short-termism, democratic myopia, Offices for Future Generations (OFG), Deliberative Mini-Publics (DMP), Diversity, Inclusiveness, Empowerment*

The volume *Civil Szemle (Civil Society-Romanian Diagnoses)* published in 2022 under the coordination of editors István Péter Németh, Zoltan Zakota, Sorin-Gelu Borza, Laurențiu Petrila, contains a variety on interesting papers on which I tried to focus below.

In the article of Sorin-Gelu Borza, entitled “The European way of thinking and the crisis of democratic practices within procedural societies”, the author wanders “How does the <<European way of thinking>>influence democratic practices?”. The analysis of history is dominated by the sens of good and European values in the European way of thinking. Modern rationalism distance itself from the mythologies of the Antiquity world.

In Europe, asserts Sorin Borza (Borza, 2022:6) the reinterpretation of history and of social becoming follows a “rationalist scenario” and “scientific objectivity”. Political modernity is linked and influenced by science and scientific prestige.

Concerning the legitimacy of political power, the author Sorin-Gelu Borza asserts: ”The legitimacy of the political act in modern societies is grounded on a public consensus on an interpretation of everyday life. Any governance bases its authority on a grand recit (a great story) that entails an agreement. There is always an elite that creates the condition of putting into circulation a story that it uses to explain public actions” (Borza, 2022:7).

Political leaders, in the same time, speak the “language of the people”, considers the author. (Borza, 2022:7).

The author Sorin Borza points out that the competition in the domain of the philosophy generated certain crises starting to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century such as the crisis of European humanity (Edmund Husserl), the crisis of unity of meaning (Jan Patočka) (Borza, 2022:8). Last, but not least, in the opinion of Sorin Borza, “The procedure for election, of political decision-making in democratic societies has always enjoyed the attention of the social sciences”. (Borza, 2022: 9)



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In case of major military crisis, the author observes the limits of the action of civil society asserting that “In practical terms, during the major military-political crises, the means of expression available to public opinion are dramatically limited and this is obvious, the best example thereof being the recent events in Ukraine”. (Borza, 2022: 13) Relatively to the conflict from Ukraine the author considers that these challenges require new formula of actions that are derived from the central set of values that lay the basis of the European Union. (Borza, 2022:14).

Bogdan Popoveniuc, in the article “Moral-democratic competence as a pillar of civic society. In memoriam prof. Georg Lind”, says that in his opinion there are many burdens of democratic legitimacy and one of them is “political consensus” (Borza, 2022: 21). The author also points out the existence of factors that erode the democracy and there are: the wrong doing of corrupted individuals, the incompetence of the bureaucracy of the democratic system, “illiberal governance and legislatures” which undermine democratic governance process. One of the discrepancies of the democratic power, underlined by Bogdan Popoveniuc, is that “Democratic power must be accountable, but it is kept accountable, in practice, only by those who are already in power”. (Popoveniuc, 2022: 21)

Considering the presence of moral values in the political sphere, Bogdan Popoveniuc notices the existance of an “axiological clash” between “democratic advance and resistance of traditional values” (Popoveniuc, 2022: 23).

In the opinion of Max Weber points out the author, reflected in Weber’s book, *The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of Capitalism*”, individuals who are decision-making factors in other professionals spheres (than politics) “are more willing to make, rather than follow, decisions in the public sphere” (Popoveniuc, 2022: 24)

In a state, asserts the author, exists state institutions and “voluntary associations” (“voluntary groups”) who express the will and are an Eurobarometer of the civil society. They are active in domains such as education, healthcare, religion, acting as NGOs, promoting democratic values. There are complementary structures to politics. (Popoveniuc, 2022: 25).

The more democratic society it becomes, the most present are undemocratic forces that undermine the respective society. In liberal democratic order, citizens are entitled to “lawful, social and ethical rights, that are granted by a governing body”.

Last, but not least, the author mentions moral-democratic education that can also be reflected by mass media and in the liberal democratic political discourse. The development of the ability of reasoning for political factors and citizens is important in the development of contemporary democratic society, together with democratic education that is considered by the author as a main pillar of the society. (Popoveniuc, 2022:38)

Andrei Țăranu and Cristian Romulus Pîrvulescu, in the article “The crisis of liberal democracy between populism and technocracy” define populism which developed during the time, mentioning that “Over the centuries, it has taken such forms as the traditional alliance between king, church and city mob”. (Apud Worsley, 1969: 241) The authors assert that including communist system had populist aspects. But they considered that the march of populism started in the years ’80 “but increased after the events from 9/11 2001 as a social reaction in the West against political correctness and multiculturalism” (Țăranu&Pîrvulescu, 2022:44). The economic crises after 2007 generated right wing movements and also determined the death of multiculturalism, is the opinion of the authors. (Țăranu&Pîrvulescu, 2022: 45) After the end of the economic crises, explain the authors, a new trend emerged in the political life and this is illiberalism.

The authors consider that the emergence of search engines such as Facebook can influence consumers' choices and the voters by the information they present.

Other actual trend is that between elites and citizens came up a social distancing while the populist parties increase their pressure.

In the opinion of the authors the populism criticized the voice of genuine elites of a state (political, economic, scientific) and uses popular "social and economic frustration" to win their cause. Moreover, nowadays the impact of populism is very much amplified by the "new media" point out the authors. (Țăranu&Pîrvulescu, 2022:48).

The authors mention "agrarian populism" very encountered in Central and Eastern European countries, an area were "illiberal democracy" always win in the political life. Such expressions of "Agrarian populism" is the policy of Viktor Orbán in Hungary and the new Romanian party, very extremist AUR (in Romania) p.50. Populism does not unify nations, but divide them, they are pro free-market, but they oppose to globalization. The link between populism and technocracy often invoked can lead to the emergence of illiberal models where the interests of the "mob" are finally undermined.

Laurențiu Petrila și Marius Țepelea in the article, "The Church as a civil society. Introduction and short history", asserts that in the Roman Empire, the Christian believers tried to be model citizens of the Empire. Romanian Church was influenced by "Greek philosophy, Roman logic and ancient Roman citizenship". (Petrila&Țepelea, 2022: 61) The Saviour himself, concluded the authors, honored Roman laws and authorities. The difference between the Christians from Roman Empire and other citizens of Europe was relying in a superior Christian morality (Petrila&Țepelea, 2022: 62). The idolatry of Christians for the Roman Caesar came as a consequence of a "natural feeling toward a state that ensures peace and prosperity for its citizens" (Petrila&Țepelea, 2022:63) An important place in the Christian religion belonged to the women who "visited the sick, took care of the poor, visited those imprisoned for faith and taking care of orphans" (Petrila&Țepelea, 2022: 63).

However, the authors point out that, along the history, the relation between Church and state was a "complicated one". After the end of the meeting from Milan, the relation Church-King, improved as the king was a supporter of God and Church. There were thinkers like Saint Augustin who were disappointed by the role of the temporal power (state administration and leadership). The authors wonder "is religion a threat to international stability, or can it be a tool for promoting peace?" (Apud Dark 2000: 24) And the answer is that church helped in the consolidation of totalitarian regimes in the name of this tight alliance, or it encouraged democratic movements, in Western Europe, when it was possible.

The authors quote the book of Max Weber, *Protestant Ethics and the spirit of capitalism* which revealed that certain values of protestantism helped to the development of modern economy. Then the authors are focusing on the relationship between religion and politics which influences each other and this aspect is very visible in United States where Christians brought their contribution to political decision making In USA (For instance, the evangelists in United States were active during the Cold War trying to pursue in Soviet Union a politics of acceptance of religious freedom).

The conclusion of the authors is that Church can influence globally the politics and decision-making of the political leaders.

Dénes Kiss in the article "The role of the non-profit sector and the churches in the institution-building strategy of the Hungarian minority of Transylvania in the post-communist period", wants to show in his study "how this institution building process looked like for Hungarians in Romania" (Kiss, 2022: 78). Among the needs of an ethnic minority, the author



points out the need for education in the maternal language of the respective community (Kiss, 2022: 78). Other need for the respective communities is to create organizations of their own which to help, for instance to the solving of governance difficulties.

The author asserts basing his study on his bibliography that definitely it exists a minority non-profit sector. The author defines this way this cooperation in the non-profit sector: "The non-profit sectors typical of Western and Southern European countries are called the model of the European-style welfare partnership. In these countries, the non-profit sector is large, dominated by service organizations and operates primarily from public funds" (Kiss, 2022: 80)

In Romania, Hungarians are the most important community and they live in the Western region of the country, Transylvania. In 2011, the Hungarian community summed up 1,2 million inhabitants in 2011. These Hungarian institutions established in Transylvania nowadays are state-funded institutions, militating for the "preservation of cultural identity of the minority, these institutions are largely limited to serving cultural needs of the minority" (Kiss, 2022:83) Hungarians are represented in Romania by Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania. Romanian and Hungarian state finances these institutions. The author points out the role of the Hungarian Church that is connected to Hungarian population, their members being mostly Hungarians. So Reformed Church and Roman Catholic Church receive great rapport from the Hungarian state. The author concludes that "Minority churches appear as bridges in relation to both states" adding that they play "a mediating role between the minority community and the Hungarian state". (Kiss, 2022: 89)

They wanted to show, in part of conclusion, that thanks from the support of Romanian and Hungarian state "the analyzed minority non-profit sector is characterized by the presence of a significant and diversified level of intermediary organizations". And not at last, the author wanted to show the role played by Hungarian churches in fostering the cooperation of Hungarian community with the Romanian state.

Rita Pásztor and Katalin Gil in the article "Social Enterprises in Bihor County" refer to the concept of social economy and to the concept of social enterprise. The concept of social economy was developed after the publication in 1994 of European Commission White Paper focusing on growth, competitiveness and employment. In the context of social economy, explains the author, there are developed social entrepreneurs. The authors finds a definition for social economy that "can be defined as a totality of organizations that do not pursue a profit but seek to generate social advantages for communities or disadvantaged people" (p.98)

In Romania, in the opinion of the authors, social economy became present in strategic papers and sources of funding, asserts the authors, by EU funds provided by European Social Fund and Operational Programme for Human Capital between 2007-2013.

The research provided by the author is going to "explore the social reality of social entrepreneurs in Bihor County, to get an insight into their operation, typology as well as into their social impact". In Bihor County there are a lot of people with Higher Education Diplomas and the unemployment rate is insignificant. According to the data provided by Bihor County Employment Agency, there are 38 social entrepreneurs existent in Bihor County in October 2021.

The conclusion of the author is that the sector of social entrepreneurs is growing and developing in Bihor County. Many of such entrepreneurs focusing to help the disabled Romani community.

Adrian Hatos și Béata Fatime Gyarmati, in the article “The role of right-wing authoritarian attitudes in explaining Covid-19 pandemic related conspiracy beliefs. An exploration with Romanian Data”, assert that the pandemic of Covid 19 lasts in Romania since February 26, 2020 when it was registered the first case of infection. The authors assert that the number of cases of Covid-19 increased up to 100 until March 14, 2020. During the 2020 year, the number of cases of Covid-19 increased and also the restrictions and the necessity of the population to isolate as much as possible.

The perception of the population relating the pandemic of Covid 19 was more moderate than the impact of the news regarding the evolution of the pandemic of Covid 19: “According to a survey made in the first part of May 2020, almost two thirds of Romanians believed that the government and the Romanian media were exaggerating the dangers of the current pandemic. (Hatos&Gyarmati, 2022:122-123).

In the opinion of the authors regarding the subject of Covid 19, this was a subject that generated conspiracy theory beliefs. A few blamed Americans for the emergence of this pandemic, is the opinion of the authors.

Usually people who sustained such theories had a lower level of education, is the opinion of the authors. Also these theories are an expression of the stress generated by a society in crisis dominated by “uncertainty” and “lack of control” (Hatos&Gyarmati, 2022:125). This theory of international conspiracy in the issue of pandemic, false theory, offers to the stressed population the illusion of “control”. The authors consider that extreme right political ideologies tend, usually to believe in conspiracy theories (Hatos&Gyarmati, 2022: 127).

The parties who monitored the crisis of Covid-19 in Romania was the Liberal Party helped by Save Romania Union and the opposition was constituted by Social Democratic Party.

The authors based their research on an online survey focusing on 623 Romanian adults having more than 18 years old. The hypothesis was confirmed by the members of the survey and the conclusion is that right wing parties attract conspiracy theories. There was a political polarization regarding the issue of Covid 19, but while the parties in the government do not usually adopt the conspirative theories in explaining the pandemic situation, the voters especially of the opposition parties often make reference to these theories. (Hatos&Gyarmati, 2022: 134)

Ana Gabriela Pantea and Sergiu Mișcoiu publish the article “Family, faith and freedom” for whom? The reactions of the Roma Civil Society to the 2020 re-emergence of the Romanian far-right”, an article that deals with “the perception of Roma activists of the emergence of the newly established Romanian right wing populist party –The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR)”. (Pantea&Mișcoiu, 2022:147). This Alliance for the Union of Romanians had a nationalistic discourse displaying negative feelings towards ethnic minorities in Romania. (*Ibidem.*)

The authors remark the ascension of the populist forces (parties) in Europe, dissenting from the voice of elites, their ideology “having the core principle that politics should be about acting in concordance with popular sovereignty” (Pantea&Mișcoiu, 2022: 148) Authors consider that populism “is xenophobic, politically naive and stubborn” and “suspicious” to democratic governance. (Pantea&Mișcoiu, 2022: 149)

Then the authors make the portrait of AUR (The Alliance for the Union of Romanians) that is an expression of “populism” and “nationalism”, having at its base conservative Orthodox ideologies. The author mention that the present article “deals exclusively with the perception of Roma civil society and discusses views from the Roma

nongovernmental organizations regarding the AUR, without considering other vectors of the society, for example the Roma elite (a relativistic concept in the Romanian Roma context) or political parties themselves (in 2021 a Romani party with self-proclaimed representation claim does not exist, and the former ones lost their legitimacy)” (Pantea& Mişcoiu, 2022: 152). For Roma community in the context of economic crises and turbulent political life, the success of AUR in the elections of the Romanian Parliament from 2020 represented the advances of denial of the pluralism and of the inequality in inclusion politics is the opinion of the authors.

Roma population, in the opinion of the authors, see AUR as promoting the legacy of Fascist movement in Europe and they see AUR as a danger for the development of the relations between the Roma community and the majority of Romanians.

Roma population, in the opinion of the authors, see AUR as promoting the legacy of Fascist movement in Europe and they see AUR as a danger for the development of the relations between the Roma community and the majority of Romanians.

Sorin-Gelu Borza and Victor Papp in the article “When the demos take to the streets. Protest participation in Romania, between myth and reality (1990-2021)” analyze in their paper the demos participation in post-communist Romania as “Golania” and “mineriadele” from 1990-1991, “university square 2012”, “Post-Colectiv Political Revolution” from 2015, # “Rezist phenomenon” (2017-2019) and “Protest of Free Romanians” during the Covid pandemy. Understanding the public diplomacy manifested on the streets we can understand how it developed democracy in Romania, consider the authors. (Borza&Papp, 2022: 166)

The authors Borza and Papp points out the role of political myths in these manifestations development. These myths play a “mobilizing” and “performative” effect upon civic manifestations (Borza&Papp, 2022: 170) and they manifest in an “ideological context” (Ibidem.) Romanian society was influenced by “Manichaeian framework”, based on opposition between “good” and “bad”.

The authors believe that it was a relation of congruence between the “radical character” of the Revolution and post-communist political life (p.171.) It was a democracy born from violence, is the author’s opinion. It exists a cleavage between political forces appeared on political scene (“communism/anti-communism”). It started a process of an “original democracy” that was based on “neo-communists” in the first years of the Romanian transition period.

National Salvation Front –the main leading party from Romania undertook the role of “saviour” of Romanians, while PNŢCD and PNL, the former historical parties were perceived as enemies of the people. The episode with “Valea Jiului Miners” that came to vandalize the University Square is revealed by the authors and they were welcomed by president Ion Iliescu and Petre Roman in Bucharest. The episode “2012 – University Square Relouded” is surprised by the authors, these protests emerging in the context of global economic crises reverberations in Romania. Prime minister Boc was replaced after these manifestations with Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, but not for long time. In 2012 president Băsescu knew a spectacular revival, say the authors, and save the country from economic collapse.

Another event broght forward by the authors was “Colective 2015” or the political revolution as a protest for the death of young people in the tragedy of Club Colectiv.

And last, but not least, the events from “Rezist (2017-2019)” against the social-democrats who won the elections a year before, in 2016. In 2019, PSD lost the power.

The manifestations during the pandemy of Covid 19 started from the frustrations of the Romanian population in front of the “health crisis”, believing many in the theory of international conspiracy revealed by the pandemic crisis. The issue of vaccination and the introduction of green certificates generated some people’s discontent.

Felix Angel Popescu and Laurențiu Petrila in the paper “The effect of democratic instruments between civil society expectations and political intentions: Referendums in Romania after 1989” focus on two cases of referendum in Romania in the post-1989 period: 1. Referendum to amend Article 48 of the Romanian Constitution 2018 and referendum on justice 2019. The first referendum intended to replace the phrase “between spouses” with the more restrictive term “Between a man and a woman” putting the base of a fundamental right that a man and a woman could marry and begin a family life.

On May 26, 2019 it took place a referendum on justice. The topic of referendum was “banning amnesty and pardon for corruption offenses and banning of government from adopting emergency ordinances in the field of crimes, punishment and the organization of the judiciary, linked to the right of other constitutional authorities to report directly to the Romanian Constitutional Court on ordinances” (Popescu&Petrila, 2022: 200) Referendums in Romania, conclude the authors, by the massive absenteeism to vote could represent an “anti-system movement”.

Ioana Albu and Zoltan Zakota in the article “The evolution of civil society in post-December Romania” make the portrait of post- 1989 transition years mentioning the Revolution of 1989 that started in Timișoara on December 16 and spread in the whole country. In what concerns the development of civil society, it was born after Romanian Revolution. (Albu&Zakota, 2022: 207) Later on it was pursued a governance of “human-faced communism” instead of a democracy derived from the pattern of Western Europe. But civil society in Romania did not develop properly and “civil society organizations were forced to change or adjust, in turn, their purpose, objectives, activities and discourse” (p.208) The authors approaches the issue of the Constitution adopted in 21 November, 1991 in the context when the communist constitution had to be abolished. The new adopted constitution stipulated freedoms such as “the freedom of the individual, the freedom of assembly and association, the freedom of the press, the inviolability of the home and of property, the right to vote” (Albu&Zakota, 2022: 208). By the Law no. 21 of February 6, 1994, it was created the possibility that the civil society institution to emerge, the possibility to be created “non-profit and non-patrimonial associations and foundations”.

The transition period that followed after the Romanian Revolution of 1989 was dominated by a lot of problems. In the same time, Romanian society tried to implement models of development derived from the Western societies. Democratic system in Romania developed hand in hand with the Western societies: “Non-profit organizations reflect society and its degree of democratization. They represent the interest of its own members and of the community in which it operates and in some cases of the financiers it has. In the post-December history of Romania, there have been numerous cases in which civil society organizations have carried out partisan activities in the service of politicians or political parties” (Albu&Zakota, 2022: 215).

Ioana Albu in the article “Foreign language education in Romania and education for the civil society in the context of languages for democracy” asserts that access to foreign languages for children and adults is a priority of European Cultural Convention (Albu, 2022: 219). It was signed in 1954 and since then it implements the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Europe.

Slowly, plurilingualism gained more and more terrain and it was implemented through different projects on the territory of European Union as Europe was perceived as a “multilingual continent” (Albu, 2022: 220). Thus “The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” was disseminated widely through Europe, outreaching its

borders. It was designed to provide a transparent and comprehensive basis for the development of languages syllabuses and curricula, teaching and learning materials and assessment of foreign language proficiency”. (Albu, 2022: 221). This happened in the context when a good command of languages was essential in the European states. The multiethnic European environment and state imposed the necessity to implement the idea of “multicultural education” that facilitates the integration of minority groups on the territory of European Union. (Albu, 2022: 225) Knowledge is approached from an intercultural perspective in multicultural education and multilingual education.

Last, but not least, the author emphasizes how important is in the Romanian society the mastering of foreign languages. It can mean the access to a better workplace.

Last but not least, the author quotes the European Commissioner Verhofstadt to emphasize “the need to preserve diversity and multilingualism as a way of promoting a truly European of citizens” (Albu, 2022: 227).

Other interesting articles belong to Karla Melinda Barth and Ana Gabriela Pantea on the topic of online teaching in Romanian universities during the pandemic of Covid-19, Daniela Angi, Gabriel Bădescu and Sorana Constantinescu on the topic of youth civil engagement in Romania from a comparative perspective, Cristina Brânzan and Antal Szidónia Rusu on the status of information society in the Transylvanian civil sphere and Zoltan Zakota and István Péter Németh regarding the situation of civil society education in EU. These papers approach subjects very in vogue in the European Union political and cultural landscape focusing mainly on the idea of civil society, the finality of Romanian transition to the world of European values, education in contemporary Romania, the pandemic and its impact on education and daily lives of Romanians, the way to democratic values in a society (Romanian) affected by the economic crisis, the importance of multilingualism on the territory of EU and in Romania. They offer us a broader perspective on the events that happened in Romania in the last years and in spite of difficulties we notice a continuous trend of development of the civil society and political environment in our try to adjust to European values and standards.

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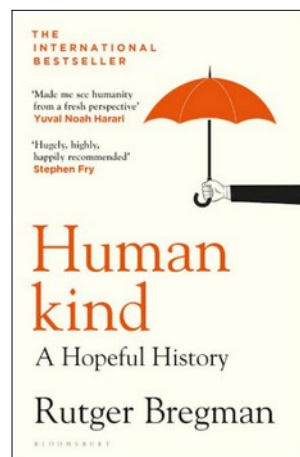
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## ON HUMANKIND. A HOPEFUL HISTORY

*Michelle NICA\**

**Book review of Rutger Bregman, *Humankind. A Hopeful History*, London, England: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021 ISBN 9781408898956**

Bregman is a Dutch historian and thinker, journalist and author, whose rather idealistic approach towards topics such as politics, welfare or globalization, is a nudge for the reader to revitalize their cynical views on traditional paradigms and look at them from a more progressive angle. He embarks on a multidisciplinary journey to investigate one of the most fundamental and divisive poles in social sciences: basic human nature. On the one hand, most famously represented by Thomas Hobbes' depiction of a brute, natural man, who needs civilization as a firm and controlling hand, on the other, represented by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's stance, that in fact it is exactly civilization that corrupted and ruined humanity's fair side. He creates a captivating argument for us to rethink the very premises that our current life was built on.



The assumption of the book is that humans indeed are rather decent beings by nature, but when projecting a negative perspective on human nature, it is exactly what gets reflected back. Bregman brings numerous arguments to back up his premise, such as evidence of evolutionary processes which led to the apparition of the homo sapiens, based on innate cooperation and collectiveness, putting a great accent on not necessarily the survival of the fittest, but also of the nicest “homo puppy”, as he puts it. He brings forth archeological evidence suggesting peaceful cooperation from pre-agrarian times, pointing at large scale collaboration between populations, like the case of Turkey's Göbekli Tepe temple, rather than proof of warfare and slaughter between brutes. He also uses as evidence studies based on the most unbiased humans to find today (infants and toddlers) who show an innate favoring towards fairness and cooperation, but he also reasons through the cases of some contemporary hunter-gatherer populations. Then brings forth a real-life case of Tongan children involved in a shipwreck in the Pacific, who acted anything but the way the famous and grim novel, *Lord of the Flies* depicts unattended, rudimentary humans would.

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While building a case for decency in humans, he also tries himself at treating the problem of the Holocaust. He points out solidarity between people hit hard during the war, who instead of turning into individualistic brutes, showed great sense of cooperation. Bregman also puts forth cases of simple soldiers on the front who were driven by camaraderie rather than extremist ideology and recurrently refused to directly aim at the enemy. The case of Nazi leaders is more difficult to tackle. He notes that distancing oneself, be it physical or psychological, from the other might be the answer. According to him, paradoxically, the same characteristics that are able to make humans friendly “homo puppies” is also what fuels the dark side which can create an “us” and “others” kind of approach, leading to cruelty and destruction.

Another section of the book faces faulty scientific findings and history, which have become some of the most fundamental tools in “veneer” theory backing up humans’ brutal nature lightly covered by a layer of civilization. The case of the Easter Island’s population and its presumed self-made cannibalistic extinction is actually more likely to be explained by the appearance of explorers and colonialists. A chapter on the Stanford prison experiment reveals that the guards’ cruelty to the prisoners was not actually a natural response to holding absolute power but rather something coached into them by those conducting the research. Moreover, bad science prevails, he argues, because of our quick and cynical tendency to cling to evidence backing up our innate brutality, while dismissing evidence that our actual natural response is much friendlier.

Another example is that of some Norwegian maximum-security prisons, where inmates roam freely, maintain the buildings, pursue hobbies, grow their food and actually eat meals with guards, who do not carry weapons. Here, recidivism is cut in half in comparison to traditional facilities and inmates are prepared to eventually return and get integrated into everyday life. The actually reasonable thing he points out to do is not denying the crime and the bad, but shifting the focus from it to finding a viable solution for the future and start working towards that. He challenges the traditional perspective, suggesting that by expecting better we actually get better.

According to him, Hobbes’ grim view on humanity seems to be winning the argument in the large, exactly because key institutions and mechanisms have been constructed with negative assumptions regarding human nature. Still, Stanley Milgram’s obedience experiments make place for human evil in Bregman’s perspective, but mostly as he finds, because of a methodological flaw of the researchers. Explained by him as our social instinct to conform, not necessarily following the good but rather the herd.

Bregman brings an exciting and challenging argument, relevant in and for social sciences, in a way which does not inspire the reader towards dichotomizing but rather towards looking at the world and what is happening in it, through different lens. Moreover, by not making a case to dismiss today’s reality and way of working, he stimulates the reader to embark on a moral journey through civilization itself, which according to Rousseau was the destructive element of our

innate goodness. Instead of tearing down everything that it has brought with itself, learn ways to navigate with it towards reviving and furthering human decency, cooperation, collectiveness.

An exciting inquiry and tonic for the idealist hiding in us, there are numerous questions that arise during this lecture. Bregman's message is a positive and moral one and stimulates the need to seek this decency in a whole wide range of dimensions surpassing our species, such as the environment and climate change, especially problems triggered and nourished by a "civilized" humanity. Perhaps, the direction towards a solution lies somewhere and somehow, like his idea of homo puppy, in the problem itself, which is more complex and intertwined.

In spite of some lacks and oversimplifications, this book brings its contributions as an element of inspiration and nudge towards having the courage to see and understand humanity in a less cynical, more flexible and constructive way. Perhaps after all, with or without civilization to nourish or hinder our decency, we are the designers of our nature now and we have a real opportunity to shape it into a more moral and sustainable concept and reality.

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