

## Editorial

**Stefania Panebianco**  
**Francesco Zucchini**

ITALIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE CO-EDITORS

Several Italian Political Science issues have explored specific sub-fields of political science to allow for an intra-discipline fruitful dialog. This IPS issue is entirely dedicated to the relationship between gender studies and political science, but also social sciences in general. The institutionalization process of this relationship has been long and tortuous – in Italy or France maybe more than in other European countries. Nevertheless, an increasing number of studies reveal the existence of a very active research area that profits from the interaction between political science and other disciplines, political philosophy and sociology in particular.

Yet, important questions remain to be addressed. In which different analysis perspectives are gender studies organized and what contribution can each of them offer to the study of politics? Will gender studies become a political science sub-discipline or a cross-sectoral approach? Is the success of a gender perspective related to or dependent on the number of female researchers in Political and Social Sciences? To answer these and other questions, IPS issue n. 2/2016 publishes the papers delivered by prominent scholars in the seminar “Gender and Politics. Research, practice and education: moving behind the obvious” that took place at the University of Padova under the academic coordination of Claudia Padovani and Giovanna Vingelli in June 2016.

FOCUS ON:  
**Gender and Politics:  
research, practice and education.  
Moving beyond the obvious**

**Claudia Padovani**

UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

**Giovanna Vignelli**

UNIVERSITÀ DELLA CALABRIA

GUEST EDITORS

The 2015 congress of the Italian Political Science Society (SISP) hosted a temporary section, titled *Gender, politics, and policies*.<sup>1</sup> This was organized to mark the 20th anniversary since the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 and where the international community made commitments to gender equality objectives in a number of critical areas, including education, research, and knowledge. Panels in that temporary section provided a space to discuss the (dis)connects between European developments in gender-focused political science, Italian local experiences in teaching politics with a gender perspective, and the realities of our research practices.

**As convenors of those panels, we felt it was important to keep that space open, and possibly to expand it, in order to share and discuss—in a comparative and trans-disciplinary perspective—a number of concerns about the role, relevance, and visibility of gender-sensitive approaches to the study of politics and international relations. Thus, in June 2016 the Center for Gender Studies at the University of Padua invited European political scientists and colleagues from different Italian institutions and disciplinary fields to a conversation that is now reproduced in this themed issue of Italian Political Science. On that occasion, decades of work to “en-gender” political science as a discipline, through research approaches, objects, and methods, were acknowledged.**

It is worth mentioning that within the American Political Science Association (APSA), where a Women’s caucus<sup>2</sup> has existed since 1969, a 2004 report titled “Women’s advancement in Political Science” solicited a debate on under-representation of women in the profession and its consequences; as well as on the possible means to overcome inequalities

---

<sup>1</sup> The section programme is accessible at: <http://www.sisp.it/convegno2015/?pagename=cms&name=sessiontracks&trackname=genere-politica-politiche>.

<sup>2</sup> Online at: <https://womenscaucusforpoliticalscience.org>.

in the discipline, through measures such as monitoring, mentoring, and creating networks for collaboration. This debate that was revived in 2013, when Maliniak, Powers and Walter published in *International Organization* an article titled “The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations” showing that women are systematically cited less than men.

The International Political Science Association (IPSA) witnessed the constitution of a study group on sex roles and politics as early as 1976, which later became Research Committee n.19 on Gender Politics and Policy.<sup>3</sup> In that context, a collection called *Gender and Politics: the State of the Discipline*, has recently been edited by Jane H. Bayes (2012),<sup>4</sup> providing a review of a field that is emerging globally. It highlights the major themes that characterize scholarly works carried out across the world: **the nexus between the creation of knowledge about gender and global hierarchies of political, economic and linguistic power; the exclusion of women from democratic political institutions; the diffused and productive critique to mainstream concepts, theories and discourses, as gender biased; and the political significance of social relationship and hierarchies that are not considered to be “public”** or related to the state by mainstream political scientists.

The European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) also established the Standing Group on Women and Politics back in 1985. The group then evolved into a Gender and Politics section<sup>5</sup> which since 2009 has organized well-attended biannual *European Conferences on Politics and Gender*<sup>6</sup> (ECPG). In this context, scientific symposia have recently addressed different aspects of the nexus between gender and political science; contributions that are now available in two themed issues of the journal *European Political Science*. In 2015, a special issue of *EPS* titled “Women in European Political Science”, edited by Stephen Bates and Heather Savigny, explored how women and men are represented in the discipline, and positioned institutionally, in Spain, Finland, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The cases show the ways in which institutional structures and recruitment mechanisms may serve to disadvantage women; while issues of under-representation emerge (women at senior level in the discipline stands at 7% in Spain, 8% in Finland, and 28% in Germany), alongside unofficial gendered division of labor (through small circles and informal networks), gendered symbols and interactions, and the well-known “leaky pipeline” effect throughout (female scholars’) carrier paths.

A 2016 second themed issue of *EPS* focused on “Gender in European Political Science Education”. There, scholars from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom offer an overview of gender in political science education, addressing questions related to how the consolidation of gender studies as an interdisciplinary field may affect political science curricula. Editors Mugge, Evans, and Engeli state that “gender is virtually absent from much of the political science curricula”; in their view, **gender and political science courses suffer from issues of supply (rather than demand), such as the persistent under-representation of women academics within political science, as well as tight budget constraints**. At the same time, they indicate why a gender-sensitive

---

<sup>3</sup> Online at: <https://www.ipsa.org/research-committees/rclist/RC19>.

<sup>4</sup> The volume is published within the IPSA series “The world of political science” edited by Michael Stein and John Trent, Barbara Budrich Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> Online at: <https://ecpr.eu/standinggroups/standinggrouphome.aspx?ID=8>.

<sup>6</sup> Online at: <http://www.ecpg.eu>.

approach to teaching politics is necessary: on the one side politics is about power and power is always gendered; on the other, embedding gender in the core of political science education may positively affect gender equality in the profession and politics.

As we can see, the reflection is ongoing across Europe and beyond. Yet the Italian political science community has not been attentive to these debates; and, we argue, most of the above issues have seldom been addressed in our professional circles. As our community is increasingly inhabited by a diverse constituency of emerging female and male scholars, we suggest it is time for an open discussion on the potential of promoting and supporting gender-aware approaches to political science research and education in the country.

As a starting point, it can be pointed out that in Italy a gender perspective is increasingly present in the social sciences—in sociology, economics, linguistics, psychology, and literature—and there is a growing debate also within the “hard sciences”. Among scholars and academics there has been a long-standing discussion concerning both the need to mainstream a gender perspective across different disciplines and curricula, and the challenges accompanying attempts to institutionalize women’s and gender studies in academia, given the specific constraints of Italian universities’ institutional frameworks (Saraceno, 2010; Pravadelli, 2010; Magaraggia and Leone, 2010). In the last few decades, many individual scholars have successfully introduced a focus on women and/or gender in their teaching subjects and research, while a growing number of seminars have contributed to increasing the visibility to, and recognition of, gender approaches and methods.

It has thus been recognized that putting gender into the research agenda offers new ways of understanding social, cultural, political processes, and structures through which societies are organized. **It has also become clear that gender studies demand an understanding of power relations, and thus of politics, within and beyond government.** In other words, gender has emerged as a fundamental aspect of the organization of power: an aspect that is unambiguously *political*.

A deeper engagement of Italian political science with gender studies seems urgent first of all on the grounds of an evident delay in acknowledging and taking advantage of the innovation brought by national and international scholarship in this area of research and knowledge.

Notwithstanding the problems in dealing with the structure and organization of academic power (Saraceno 1995), there have been developments in theoretical and practice-oriented bodies of knowledge that critically question the accepted paradigms and categories of particular disciplines and promote the affirmation of gender issues in society at large; while new theoretical models and interpretive tools have often emerged from productive dialogs across disciplines. Gender perspectives, in fact, have always aimed at crossing disciplinary boundaries and challenging subject compartmentalization.

Disciplinary intersections, although potentially productive in terms of generating alternative ways of explaining and acting upon social relations and inequalities, are not simple nor without tensions. This is partly the case also with the present collection, where diverse voices have been invited to contribute to a better understanding of the nexus between gender and politics, by “moving beyond the obvious.” **The obvious conceived as the persistence of gender inequalities, in society and in the discipline; as well as the obvious of a (still prevailing) narrow understandings based on the conviction that “counting women”—in politics, and in political science—would be an adequate**

**measure to redress such inequalities.** Finally, “the obvious” of too easy identification of “gender” with “women”, and of thinking of “gender and politics” as a research object of concern to a specific category of scholars, that of female political scientists.

In their foreword to this collection, Kantola and Lombardo outline the contributions that gender lenses to the study of politics and power relations have made to political science over the past 20 years, in relation to concepts, research questions, and analytical approaches; in redefining “the political” as well as the nexus between theory and praxis, while indicating persisting challenges towards mainstreaming gender in the discipline. Sara de Jong provides an overview of recently published literature in the U.S., U.K. and Australia on the state of gender in political science; while self-reflectively and critically articulating the tension between the progress made, through building networks of academic collaboration and designing courses, and persisting gender biases and blindness.

Adopting a national perspective, Catherine Achin contributes a storytelling of French political science in relation to (the institutionalization of) gender studies as summarized in the introduction of the *Dictionnaire Genre & Science Politique. Concepts, objets, problèmes*, which she edited with Laurence Bereni (2013), where 40 entries unleash the contribution of a gender perspective to the discipline, in terms of knowledge, findings, innovative research and new tools.

It has also been argued that “the fact of being excluded from the mainstream has made gender studies of politics particularly open to inclusion and diversity” (Kantola and Lombardo, this issue), both in building bridges between political science approaches, and in opening spaces of dialog across disciplines. This is reflected in the present collection where inter-disciplinarity is widely referred to as a necessary condition to support change; and where, alongside contributions from political scientists, other disciplinary perspectives show “the potential strength of methodological pluralism” (Siim 2004: 98).

In that vein, Barbara Poggio, building on the experience of the Center for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies at the University of Trento, recalls the steps toward institutionalizing gender studies in the Italian academic context; and focuses on networking and partnerships as strategic practices to that end. Lorenza Perini composes a lively storytelling of her teaching experience in the course titled *Gender Policies* at the University of Padova; while, from a sociological perspective, Carmen Leccardi speaks directly of/to the younger generation, addressing issues of young women expression, reflexivity, and subjectivity in their connection to “the political” and to an (increasingly adverse) social world in contemporary fragmented and “nomadic” experiences.

The conversation continues with a contribution by Isabelle Chabot, former president of the Società Italiana delle Storie (SIS). By sharing fragments of the history and experience of the SIS, Chabot provides a concrete review on what it has taken to “engender” a discipline like the study of history over the past three decades, including through an interdisciplinary approach to issues such as leadership and power. Finally, a challenging contribution by political philosopher Flavia Monceri invites readers to reconsider the very assumptions of gender studies, starting from a direct question of “Who is entitled to perform that kind of research and for whom?” and forcing us to move beyond stereotypical “obvious” that affect research as much as the social world.

Differences in languages and styles among these contributions are evident, and yet a number of common concerns emerge from these writings: a strong focus on the “how to”

of gender studies, with emphasis on the methods and approaches adopted in research and educational practices; a shared understanding of the centrality of education and training (including formal and informal) as tools for transformation; and a recurrent reference to networking and fostering interdisciplinary and multi-vocal exchanges. In particular, the building of alliances and networking practices among scholars, academic centers, and research groups is seen as an effective strategy to sustain ongoing efforts in fostering gender in the study of politics, thanks to reciprocal support and legitimation.

**In this sense, professional associations are seen by all contributors as a strong element for women’s further advancements in political science; in creating opportunities, combat sexism, and address masculine assumptions of the discipline.** We would like to see this “strong element” activated across our scholarly community. We hope this issue of IPS may contribute to bringing closer, and making visible, the variety of gender-aware contributions that have enriched the discipline over the past years and the potential for new knowledge and intellectual exchanges in the future. This, adhering to the idea that gender-aware and feminist analyses, conceived as “an approach that challenges some of the concepts, models, and methods developed within political science, (are) of importance for the whole discipline, and not just for feminists” (Allwood 2005).

## References

- Akhtar, P., P. Fawcett, T. Legrand, D. Marsh and C. Taylor (2005). ‘Women in the Political Science Profession’, *PSA News* 16, 1(1), p. 28.
- APSA (2004). ‘A Report on the APSA Workshop on the Advancement of Women in Academic Political Science in the United States’. Accessible at: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495970.pdf>.
- Bates, S. and Savigny, H. (eds) (2015). Themed issues of *European Political Science* “Women in European Political Science”, Volume 14, Issue 2.
- Bayes, J. (ed) (2012). *Gender and Politics. The State of the Discipline*. Opladen, Berlin, Toronto: Barbara Budrich Publishers.
- Carroll S. and Zerilli L.M.G. (1993). “Feminist Challenges to Political Science.” In *Women and Politics and Gender and Politics*, ed. Ada W. Finifter. Washington DC: APSA.
- Cassese, Erin C., Angela L. Bos, Lauren E. Duncan (2012). “Integrating Gender into the Political Science Core Curriculum,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45: 238-243.
- Krook M.L. and F. Mackay (Ed.) (2011). *Gender, Politics and Institutions*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lovenduski, J. (1981). ‘Toward the Emasculation of Political Science: The Impact of Feminism’ in D. Spender (ed.), *Men’s Studies Modified*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. 83–97.
- Lovenduski, J. (1998). ‘Gendering Research in Political Science’, *Annual Review of Political Science* 1, pp. 333–356.
- Maliniak, D., Powers, R. and Walter, B.F. (2013). ‘The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations’, *International Organization*, 67(4), pp. 889–922. Accessible at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-organization/article/the-gender-citation-gap-in-international-relations/3A769C5CFA7E24C32641CDB2FD03126A>.
- Mugge, Liza, Elisabeth Evans and Isabelle Engeli (eds) (2016). Themed issue of *European Political Science* “Gender in European Political Science Education”, Volume 15, Issue 3.

- Randall, V. (1991). 'Feminism and Political Analysis', *Political Studies* 39(3), pp. 513-532.
- Randall, V. (1994). 'Feminism and Political Analysis' in M. Githens, P. Norris and J. Lovenduski. (eds.), *Different Roles, Different Voices*. New York: Harper Collins, pp. 4-16.
- Randall, V. (2002), 'Feminism' in D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Sapiro, V. (1998). "Feminist studies and Political Science – and Vice Versa" in A. Phillips (ed.), *Feminism and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shames, Shauna Lani (2010). "Women's Leadership in Political Science." In Karen O'Connor, ed., *Gender and Women's Leadership: A Reference Handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 669-678.
- Siim, Birte (2004). 'Towards a contextual and gender sensitive European political science?' *European Political Science* 3(2) Spring 2004, 97-101.
- Squires, J. (1999). *Gender in Political Theory*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Vickers, J. (1997). *Reinventing Political Science: A Feminist Approach*. Halifax: Fernwood.
- Waylen, G., Celis, K., Kantola, J. and S. L Weldon (2013). *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

# Gender and politics studies within European political science: contributions and challenges

**Johanna Kantola**

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

**Emanuela Lombardo**

UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

## 1. Introduction

Gender and politics has become a vibrant subdiscipline of political science over the past twenty years. To reflect this, political science associations organise conferences and panels on gender and politics, books, journals, specialized book series and journal special issues are published, and courses are taught at universities (Mügge, Evans and Engeli 2016; Ackerly and Mügge 2016). However, the contributions of gender and politics to political science remain to be fully recognized. In this foreword, we draw on our recent work to outline these contributions and the challenges that feminist analyses still face within political science (see Kantola and Lombardo 2017; 2017a; and 2017b).

## 2. Feminist contributions to Political Science

Gender and politics has made three main contributions to politics studies: first, it has inspired the rethinking of political questions and concepts from gender lenses; second, it has provided a variety of different analytical approaches to analyze politics; third, it has expanded the boundaries of 'the political'; and fourth, it has strengthened the link between theory and praxis. With respect to the first contribution, Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True (2011: 63) suggest that 'gender analysis opens up a whole landscape of new research questions as well as giving us tools to rethink old research questions' of power, institutions, agency, and democracy.

Second, feminist political analyses are extremely diversified. In our new book *Gender and Political Analysis*, we show how they range from a women approach (investigating the representation of women in political institutions), to a gender approach (exploring gender-biased structures and practices within institutions), a deconstructing gender approach (analyzing the construction of gender in political discourses and its effects on people), an intersectional approach (studying the interaction of gender with other inequalities), and a post-deconstruction of gender approach (such as new materialist studies on the impact of matter on the politics of gender and the cultural politics of emotions) (see Kantola and Lombardo 2017). Each approach captures aspects of political reality that oth-



er perspectives may have overlooked, and jointly they shed light on dimensions of power and inequalities that gender blind political studies tend to neglect.

Third, gender analyses have expanded the boundaries of ‘the political’ to include gender relations and issues formerly considered private. As the famous feminist slogan ‘the personal is political’ shows, power relations are not abstract but rather embodied in gender subjects. Two main consequences for conceptualising ‘the political’ follow from this: the first is that power relations and values are considered gendered, because they reproduce gender norms and biases against women; the second is that gender analyses consider issues formerly defined as personal – or that are still *de facto* marginalised in politics in spite of their inclusion in existing legislation – such as sexual violence or child-care, as highly political.

Fourth, gender and politics research is especially apt to connect theory and praxis, something that politics as a discipline especially needs in current times of crisis and conflicts (see Kantola and Lombardo 2017a). Equality theory is engaged with real world problems questioning gender power hierarchies and suggesting ways to put equality into everyday practice. Gender and politics tends to be conducted through feminist theory and lenses. This normative component, on the one hand, has made it vulnerable to critiques of being ideological in the eyes of mainstream political science. On the other hand, the normative side of the feminist analysis of politics adds to its strength to explain, understand, and change relations of domination that take place in existing societies (Kantola and Lombardo 2017; Mügge, Evans and Engeli 2016; Ackerly and Mügge 2016).

The contribution of gender and politics studies to the field of political science and International Relations has nowadays partially been recognized so that Liza Mügge, Elizabeth Evans and Isabelle Engeli (2016: 2) argue that ‘Gender scholarship is gradually becoming part of mainstream political science, while retaining its distinct identity’. Indicators of this are the fact that gender and politics publications are increasingly present in political science journals that do not specialise on gender, at the same time that new gender-specialised political science book series are created; and gender and politics research is now embedded in national and international political science associations such as ECPR and IPSA.

### **3. Challenges for gender and politics studies**

Despite the key contributions and the significant expansion of scholarship gender and politics studies still face challenges within the discipline. Dominant approaches in political science affect the recognition of gender studies in the field and influence the emergence and marginalization of particular gender approaches to politics, such as deconstructivist and new materialist ones (Kantola and Lombardo 2017b). Teaching of gender is still marginalised or inexistent in most political science departments, including UK and US (Foster et al 2013: 13; Mügge, Evans and Engeli 2016: 2). In their study of citational practices in political science, titled ‘What’s Queer About Political Science’, Nicola Smith and Donna Lee (2015: 50) argue that: ‘Far from being the broad and inclusive discipline it purports to be in modern textbooks, today’s political science is consciously marginalising issues of gender and sexuality and hardly doing justice to the political analysis of social relations that queer theorists have been successfully doing for quite some time.’

The marginalisation of gender approaches in political science, despite their recent gradual integration in the discipline, argue Celis et al (2013) still exists because men are overrepresented in the field, and because the discipline reproduces androcentric biases. Concerning the first point, ‘women are underrepresented at virtually every level of the discipline, from graduate school to APSA leadership, and they continue to face gender-related obstacles in their professional lives. Moreover, women and politics scholarship remains somewhat marginalized in the discipline’ (Tolleson-Rinehart and Carroll 2006: 512). In the European context, Drude Dahlerup (2010) relates the progressive institutionalization of gender and politics within the ECPR, through the creation of a standing group and a specialized conference on politics and gender. And at the same time she reports ‘resistance and even anger’ on the part of ‘male oligarchs’ in the ECPR as gender studies developed and women demanded more leadership positions in the organization, because according to Dahlerup (2010: 91-92) this ‘represented an attack on the fundamental self-perception of academia as being free from any bias and being strictly based on merit as its selection criteria. The university seems to be the last institution in society to recognize that gender is a structuring factor in all institutions, even in academia.’ Feminist scholars make similar diagnoses on the lack of integration of gender in political science for contexts as different as the UK, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Spain, or Finland (Evans and Amery 2016; Bonjour, Mügge and Roggeband 2016; Abels 2016; Sauer 2016; Alonso and Lombardo 2016; Kantola 2015).

Feminist political theorists and epistemologists have shown that knowledge and science have been constructed on the basis of androcentric biases that have privileged the questions, issues, and methods relevant to hegemonic men (Harding 1991; Hekman 1990). Political science is not an exception in this respect. The theory of political science has been developed within a line of thinking that, from Aristotle to Machiavelli, Locke and the contractualists, has justified the right of men to rule over women and public affairs and the subordinate position of women and their association with the private domestic sphere. Although feminist scholars have exposed and challenged the gender stereotypes present in male-dominated classics of political science (Pateman 1995; Shanley and Pateman 1991), ‘the notion of a separation of the public and private spheres persists today’ (Celis et al 2013: 7), with the symbolic association of women with the private and men with the public sphere of politics. The very concepts of politics, power, citizenship, or the state have been conceptualised in androcentric ways, reflecting the experience, interests, and values of embodied dominant male subjects (Lister 1998; Brown 1988; Pateman 1988). ‘These ideas have again affected what has been deemed suitable subject matter for the academic discipline of politics’ (Celis et al 2013: 7).

The experience of being excluded from the mainstream has made gender studies of politics particularly open to inclusion and diversity, so to challenge marginalisations and build bridges between different approaches in political science. According to Birte Siim (2004: 97), gender and politics approaches have adopted a ‘methodological pluralism’ that has challenged the ‘methodological split in political science between different schools, for example between “rationalists” and “social constructivists”’. Siim recognizes the existence of a dialogue within feminist political research between empirical studies, comparative context-aware analyses, and discourse analysis inspired by post-structuralism (2004: 97). She traces the emergence of interdisciplinary ‘conversations’ in

feminist political research between ‘political theorists, gender theorists and comparativists, as well as between neo-institutionalists and social constructivists’ that did not generate methodological splits but rather ‘productive tensions between different positions’ (2004: 98). These dialogues have contributed to build an agenda around three main elements: ‘the contested and constructed nature of key concepts; the principle of diversity and differences among women’, and ‘the inter-relation between discourse, agency and institutions’ (Siim 2004: 99). In this way, feminist political research has shown political science the ‘potential strength of methodological pluralism’ (Siim 2004: 98).

Gender and politics studies are characterized by a huge variety of approaches (Kantola and Lombardo 2017 and 2017b). The value and contribution of gender approaches to political science lies precisely in their diversity, because each of them is able to capture aspects of political reality that another perspective had overlooked. It is therefore tremendously important that the contributions of gender and politics to political science receive wider academic recognition within the discipline, so that scholars may enjoy the benefits of a more complete range of analytical approaches for understanding, explaining, and transforming the political.

## References

- Abels, Gabriele (2016) ‘The Gender Gap in Political Science Education in Germany’ *European Political Science* 15(3): 322-331 doi:10.1057/eps.2015.80.
- Ackerly Brooke and Liza Mügge (2016) ‘Teacher Symposium: Mainstreaming Gender in the Teaching and Learning of Politics. Introduction’ *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49(3): 1-5. doi:10.1017/S1049096516000949
- Ackerly, Brooke and Jacqui True (2011) *Doing Feminist Research in Political & Social Science* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Alonso, Alba and Emanuela Lombardo (2016) ‘Ending Ghettoization? Mainstreaming Gender in Spanish Political Science Education’ *European Political Science* 15(3): 292-302 doi:10.1057/eps.2015.77.
- Bonjour, Saskia, Liza Mügge, and Conny Roggeband (2016) ‘Lost in the Mainstream? Gender in Dutch Political Science Education’ *European Political Science* 15(3): 303-313 doi:10.1057/eps.2015.78.
- Brown, Wendy (1988) *Manhood and politics A Feminist Reading in Political Theory* (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield).
- Celis Karen, Johanna Kantola, Georgina Waylen and Laurel Weldon (2013) Introduction . In: Waylen, G Celis K Kantola J and Weldon L (eds) *The Oxford Handbook on Gender and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-26.
- Dahlerup, Drude (2010) ‘The Development of gender and politics as a new research field within the framework of the ECPR’ *European Political Science* 9, 85–98.
- Evans, Elizabeth and Fran Amery (2016) ‘Gender and politics in the UK: Banished to the Sidelines’, *European Political Science* doi:10.1057/eps.2015.79.
- Foster, Emma, Peter Kerr, Anthony Hopkins, Christopher Byrne, and Linda Ahall (2013) ‘The personal is not political: At least in the UK’s top politics and IR departments’, *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 15 (4), 566–585.
- Harding, Sandra (1991) *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women’s lives* (Ithaca: Cornell university press).

- Hekman, Susan (1990) *Gender and knowledge: elements of a postmodern feminism* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Kantola, Johanna (2015) 'Political Science as a Gendered Discipline in Finland' *European Political Science* 14(2): 79–86.
- Kantola, Johanna and Emanuela Lombardo (2017) *Gender and Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Kantola, Johanna and Emanuela Lombardo eds (2017a) *Gender and the Economic Crisis: Politics, Institutions and Intersectionality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Kantola, Johanna and Emanuela Lombardo (2017b) 'Feminist political analysis: Exploring hegemonies, silences and novelties', in *Feminist Theory*, forthcoming.
- Lister, Ruth (1998) *Citizenship: feminist perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).
- Mügge, Liza, Elizabeth Evans and Isabelle Engeli (2016) 'Introduction: Gender in European political science education – taking stock and future directions', *European Political Science* 15(3): 281–291 doi:10.1057/eps.2015.72.
- Pateman, Carole (1995) *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).
- Pateman, Carole (1988) 'The Patriarchal Welfare State' in Amy Gutman (ed.) *Democracy and the Welfare State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 231–260.
- Sauer, Birgit (2016) 'Austrian Exceptionalism? Insights from a Huge Department in a Small Country' *European Political Science* 15(3): 332–342 doi:10.1057/eps.2015.81.
- Shanley, Mary Lyndon and Carole Pateman (1991) *Feminist interpretations and political theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Siim, Birte (2004) 'Towards a contextual and gender sensitive European political science?' *European Political Science* 3(2) Spring 2004, 97–101
- Smith, Nicola and Donna Lee (2015) 'What's Queer About Political Science?' *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 17 (1), 49–63.
- Tolleson-Rinehart, Sue, and Susan J. Carroll (2006) "Far from Ideal." *The Gender Politics of Political Science* *American Political Science Review* 100(4), 507–513.

# Beyond Good News and Bad News: Narrating Gender in Political Science

Sara de Jong  
OPEN UNIVERSITY

Thinking and writing about gender in political science conjures up two affective states. On the one hand, there is the joy coming from the tangible vibrancy that is often generated when feminist political scholars meet. The seminar on ‘Gender and Politics: Research, Practice and Education: Moving Beyond the Obvious’, organised in June 2016 at the University of Padova, is a case in point. On the other hand, other situations and encounters leave one in a rather gloomy mood. In what follows, I will try to show that these two apparently competing moods are illustrative for the narrative about state of gender in the discipline of politics and that we need to unpack this when we want to ‘move beyond the obvious’, the slogan that the Padova organisers used for their event.

As a Dutch national, mostly trained in the UK academic context but working until recently in Austria, I am an outsider to the Italian national academic context. As co-chair of Atgender, the European Association for Gender Research, Education and Documentation, and in other capacities, I am engaged in intellectual and social conversations with Italian scholars in and outside of Italy. I have learned from these conversations that gender theories and approaches are less institutionally embedded in Italian academia compared to some other countries and that this has led some Italian feminist scholars to look across borders to learn lessons from feminist allies abroad. This neither implies that feminist political science scholars in other countries are not struggling nor that Italian feminist political science simply needs to ‘catch up’. The rich academic and activist work of Italian feminist scholars, the ambivalences about the institutionalisation of feminist perspectives, and the struggles of feminist political science scholars in the hegemonic academic centres belie that judgement. In the next section, I will offer a quick survey of recently published literature in the US and the UK on the state of gender in the discipline of politics to map these struggles.

## Narrating Gender in Politics: Some Good and Some Bad News

An obvious entry point is the 2015 Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics edited by Georgina Waylen, Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola, and S. Laurel Weldon. In the rich introduction to the handbook, Celis, Kantola, Waylen and Weldon recognise that the discipline of politics now encompasses a wider research remit and broader understanding of politics than traditionally was the case. However, they also soberly remark that ‘despite the vibrancy of the gender and politics scholarship shown in this handbook and a long history of gender activism, gender is still ignored in much academic political science’ (2015: 2-3).

They stress that the positive developments that can be witnessed, for instance in the increasing number of female political science scholars, are only tiny steps on a much longer road to a 'gender equitable' discipline (2015: 6). This pessimistic tone, amidst some positive observations, is echoed by Elizabeth Evans and Fran Amery (2016) who mapped the UK landscape of politics and gender Higher Education. In their tellingly article called 'Gender and Politics in the UK: banished to the sidelines' they observe that the teaching of gender is still seen as marginal to the discipline of politics, or worse perhaps, as a 'luxury' (2016: 1; cf. Bonjour, Mügge and Roggeband 2016 for a similar observation for the Dutch teaching landscape). The results of their survey of undergraduate courses of politics in the UK show that less than one-third of 91 institutions offer a module on gender and politics and that none of these are compulsory. Combined with the fact that no UK university offers a gender or women's studies undergraduate degree (Evans and Amery 2016), this challenges the idea that UK would be 'ahead' compared to other academic contexts. While the authors add some positive notes on the work done by feminist scholars in organising themselves, liaising with other associations and pressuring institutions for change and suggest that the multiple global crises have encouraged students' interest in non-mainstream critical perspectives, their general outlook is rather bleak.

While some concerns might be shared across different disciplines, Smith and Lee (2015) find political science particular reluctant to gendering the discipline: 'What we have discovered is a sharp discrepancy between how issues of gender, sexuality and the body are treated in political science compared with the social sciences and humanities more broadly ... the absence, in particular, of serious consideration of queer theory is notable and appears to place political science in something of an intellectual silo' (Smith and Lee 2015: 50; 59). To understand the specific gender blindness and underrepresentation in the discipline of politics, Celis, Kantola, Waylen and Weldon (2015) suggest that these echo the gendered nature of politics in the world 'out there'. Evans and Amery (2016) add to this picture by drawing a link between the political and economic context of Conservatism and austerity and the precariousness of staff teaching gender and politics modules.

The importance of looking at the relation between the world of politics and the discipline of politics is also underlined in recent work of Karen Beckwith (2014) who suggests drawing on effective political strategies to change the discipline. For efforts towards gendered change in the discipline and world of politics to be successful, it is crucial to work collectively and to find allies, as well as to have key figures in positions of authority who can push political agendas. In a related vein, Carol Mershon and Denise Walsh, editors of a 2016 Dialogue Section on 'Diversity in the Discipline: why it matters and how to get it', collected contributions from feminist political science scholars who turn the analytical lenses they usually employ to study politics in the world, such as attitude survey data and intersectional approaches, to research the discipline of politics. Their suggestions for developing different strategic interventions are presented alongside an equally condemning diagnosis of the 'stubborn reality' of 'slow progress both in diversifying political science faculty at all ranks and in redressing bias in the discipline', where despite many efforts 'political science remains largely the domain of white men' (Mershon and Walsh 2016: 1).

No doubt many of us can add our own stories and anecdotes about gendering the discipline of politics that resonate with and illustrate some of the research findings presented above. The School of Politics and IR at a UK university that enabled my own development

as a feminist political scholar, was at the time an institution with no female professor. Recently, I had to explain once more to one of the many male professors, a mentor and friend who I value very much, why I considered it problematic that the single activity organised to enhance informal contact between PhD students and staff was a weekly game of football. So what do we do with these stories as well as the more substantial findings from the research presented above?

## Moving Beyond the Obvious

What many of the accounts about gender in the discipline of politics share can be summed up in the idiom ‘I have some good news and some bad news’. The good news is a story of progress and of achievement. It is a narrative which rightfully acknowledges the hard work of feminist scholars who have made a difference to the discipline, for example by building networks of support, designing courses that expose the gendered dynamics of politics, and pushing for appointments of female scholars. The bad news part takes stock of the current state of the discipline, in particular the disappointing gender bias, often hidden as gender blindness. The good and bad news components combine in a narrative that describes that we came some way, but we are not there yet. Since the bad news unfortunately tends to overshadow the good news, feminist scholars in political science heavily invest in understanding the gendered and sexist mechanisms in the discipline in order to make effective proposals for change. That means that the stories about the road we have travelled (the good news) and the observations that we are not there yet (the bad news) are generally concluded with recommendations on ‘how we can get there’.

There are good reasons for the narrative of gender in political science to take the tripartite form of ‘recognising progress/seeing that we are not quite there yet/proposing how to get there eventually’. Pragmatically, we hope it has the function of encouraging further action. Affectively, we need something uplifting to end a gloomy story. It is also a recognisable academic genre as well as a common genre for social movement analysis. It is a tempting format that my presentation at the University of Padova, which formed the basis for this article, also adhered to. I alluded to some positive news, then referred to evidence to demonstrate how much work still needs to be done and finally felt compelled to offer some directions for change.

Without challenging the content of these subtle, well-researched and well-told accounts, I propose to have a closer look at the recurrent structure of this narrative. Celis, Kantola, Waylen and Weldon explicitly address the force of standard narratives in their introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics* (2015: 4):

Our starting point is to recognize the big changes that have taken place both in politics as practice and political science as a discipline over the last century. We do not adhere to a standard metanarrative [...] of a uniformly patriarchal world that began to be transformed when feminism (depicted as originating in the West in the 1960s) spread to the rest of the world.

Clare Hemmings’ (2011) work on feminist narratives, which has forcefully demonstrated that stories matter, presents an even a more complex challenge. Writing about feminist historiography, she asked: ‘How does this story about the 1970s come to be told and accepted?’ And (...) ‘Why do I want to tell this story, and in telling it, what kind of subject do I become?’ (2005: 119). Applying these questions to our reflections on the stories

about gendering and queering political science, we can ask ourselves what our investment is in the narrative where we recount our successes before lamenting the current state of gender in politics. Or, why do we feel that we have to tell the story in this way? What are the pressures making us sandwich our critique by first recognising progress and ending with positive and proactive proposals? Or, what emotional labour are we performing here? How much space is there to revel in resignation, or make our anger a productive force, refusing to provide a set of recommendations to the mainstream of political science?

I also propose to stand still by the temporal and spatial elements implied in the three components of our story: 'this is how far we have come'/'we are still not there yet'/'this is how we could get further'. Where, or rather what is the 'there' where we want to go? The narrative focus on the lack of progress and the pressure to provide recommendations might inhibit us from further developing our vision of what our aims are in the first place. It might also smooth over important differences among feminist and queer political scholars that are worth discussing. The 2015 European Conference on Gender and Politics in Sweden, prompted Jonathan Dean to write a thought-provoking blog post reflecting some of the critical discussions that had taken place at the side-lines of the conference. Under the title 'Feminising Politics, Politicising Gender', he distinguished between scholars predominantly concerned with (formal) political representation of women, in the tradition of plenary speaker Joni Lovenduski, and scholars whose broader interpretation of politics as always already gendered, leads them to extent this remit. This intervention complicates the narrative of gain, disappointment and projections into the future and raises important questions about the directions of our efforts.

Finally, with reference to a recent experience, I want to pick up on the contrast between mainstream political science on the one hand, and feminist and queer political research on the other. About a year after Joni Lovenduski's keynote at the ECPG was described by Jonathan Dean and other conference participants as representing a traditional approach to gendering political science, a similar intervention by Lovenduski at the 2016 15th Dutch and Flemish Political Science Association conference marked her as the first female (let alone feminist) keynote speaker in the history of the Association. Moreover, in this context she stood out as a radical, progressive speaker. This anecdote helps to unpack a further layer to the common narrative to recognise that the progress documented in many commentaries, has mostly been about building a gender and politics subfield within the discipline of politics with its own conferences, networks and journals. Much of the sense of discontent arises from the limited imprint on political science as a general discipline. While we might have hoped for a more straightforward connection between the achievements of the subfield and influencing the mainstream of political science, much of the evidence suggests that this is not the case.

With every evaluation of the state of gender and politics we write (and often repeat) a particular story, and that story has certain effects. Therefore, we need to take a critical look at the evolving master narrative and consider our investments in it. Moreover, when we can liberate ourselves from providing the compulsory positive vision and roadmap for change to cushion our critique, this might open new avenues for thought and action. In this vein, this contribution has refused to end with a set of recommendations on how to integrate gender in political science, instead offering some suggestions on how to 'move beyond the obvious'.



## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Claudia Padovani and Giovanna Vingelli for organising the ‘Gender and Politics: Research, Practice and Education: Moving Beyond the Obvious’ seminar at the University of Padova and for inviting me to this thought-provoking event. This article has also benefitted from a conversation about gender in the Italian academy with Sabrina Marchetti, University of Venice.

## References

- Beckwith, K. (2015) ‘State, Academy, Discipline: Regendering Political Science’, *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 48(3), 445-449.
- Bonjour, S., L.M. Mügge and C. Roggeband (2016) *Politicologie 2.0: Gender in het kerncurriculum*, *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, 19(2): 141-164.
- Celis, K. J. Kantola, G. Waylen, and S. Laurel Weldon (2015) ‘Introduction: Gender and Politics: A Gendered World, a Gendered Discipline’ in: *Oxford Handbooks Online* (eds. G. Waylen, K. Celis, J. Kantola and S. Laurel Weldon). Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-31.
- Dean, Jonathan (2015) ‘Feminising Politics, Politicising Gender’, *PSA Women and Politics blog*, June 17, 2015
- Evans, E. and F. Amery (2016) *Gender and Politics in the UK: banished to the sidelines*, *European Political Science*, doi:10.1057/eps.2015.79
- Hemmings, C. (2005) ‘Telling feminist stories’, *Feminist Theory*, 6(2): 115-139.
- Mershon, C. and D. Walsh (2016) ‘Diversity in Political Science: Why it Matter and How to Get it’, *Politics, Groups and Identities*, 4(3): 462-466.
- Smith, N. J and D. Lee (2015) ‘What is Queer about Political Science?’, *BJPIR*, 17(1): 49-63.

# Gender and Political Science: Lessons from the French Case

Catherine Achin

UNIVERSITÉ PARIS-DAUPHINE

In this paper, I present some of the arguments put forward with my colleague, Laure Bereni, in the introduction of the dictionary we edited, *Dictionnaire Genre et science politique: Concepts, objets, problèmes*, concerning the links between gender and political science (Achin and Bereni, 2013).

With this book, we aimed to offer a practical and accessible guide for the studies on gender and politics and to further the integration of gender studies in the discipline of political science. We sought to demonstrate how a gender approach challenges and breathes new life into the main issues of political science and to summarize in 40 entries related developments in terms of knowledge, findings, innovative research, and new tools. The book also provides an extensive bibliography, comprising mostly books and articles written in French or English. The 40 entries reflect different areas of political science in France: political sociology, public policies, political theory, and international relations. They map some canonical concepts and objects of the discipline (democracy, political parties, institutions, representation...) but also some topics and concepts drawn up by gender specialists or re-addressed from a gender perspective (feminism, care, intersectionality, body, globalization, and so on). The articles were written by French-speaking specialists on these issues, mostly from the field of political science, but also from history, philosophy, and sociology. We asked for contributions from a diverse range of authors who have developed various approaches but share a critical concept of gender. In the different articles, gender is considered as a category for critical analysis and as a power relationship constructed, relational, and embedded in other social power relationships.

I will first review the main factors that may explain the strong and long resistance of political science to gender studies in France. I will then highlight the structural conditions that have allowed a relative recognition of this approach in the last 15 years. Finally, I will set out what the gender perspective has done to political science (and vice versa) and all that remains to be done.

## The resistance of political science to gender studies

Three main factors can be identified. First, the time it took for political science to become recognized as an independent field of study (in comparison with others, like history, sociology or law) and the fact that political science was for a long time considered as a science “at the service of the state”. This prescriptive and strongly institutionalized view is aimed

at forming the political, administrative and diplomatic elites of the state. Furthermore, this state's elite was masculine.

Second, in the 1980s, a "critical turn" occurred in French political science that represented a missed opportunity for the gender perspective. Indeed, the development of a critical political sociology allowed the elaboration of studies focused on the production and reproduction of relationships of social domination (and not domination based on gender, race or nationality). The "social class" perspective has thus masked the specific working of male domination of the political field. Gender hierarchies were still excluded from the field and relegated to the private (personal, affective) sphere or to economical determinism.

Third, the late feminization of teaching-research personnel in political science must be noted. In 2011, in political science departments of French universities 40% of assistant professors and 23% of full professors were women, but these rates have been achieved only in recent years.

Thus in France, political science has been built as an eminently masculine discipline, male-dominated and based on an androcentric vision of political phenomena. Moreover, unlike what happened in sociology or in history where feminist activists could extend issues arising from the social movement into the academic arena, there was no direct link between the feminist movements of the 1970s and academic research in political science.

## **The conditions of a relative acclimatization**

Several triggers exist for the relative establishment of a gender approach in political science. The role of electoral sociology and of the analyses of women's political behavior in the 1950s must be underlined. Those studies provided a first denaturalization of the female citizen's behavior, which was however linked to exogenous explanations (socialization and family structure).

Later in the 1980s and 1990s, the pioneering work of Mariette Sineau and Janine Mossuz-Lavau (1988) analyzed women's relationship to politics by emphasizing the role of social and economic inequalities between men and women.

Significantly, the development of a reflection on the nexus between "women and power" found place outside the discipline. The role of the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989 was decisive. It allowed the development of new questions about the place of women in the founding moments of the country's democratic modernity, fostering research conducted mostly in history and philosophy (for example Fauré 1985, Fraisse 1989, Rosanvallon 1992). Moreover, debates around the demand for gender parity in the late 1990s, which were accompanied by the mobilization of academics (Gaspard 1992, Riot-Sarcey 1995, Scott 1998) led to a questioning of the links between gender and politics.

Another important factor was research carried out in countries where the institutionalization of gender studies occurred earlier (in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain), which began to structure an international space for dialog (in English) on gender and politics. French-speaking researchers from Quebec, Switzerland, and Belgium, more directly connected to this discursive space, played the role of "mediators", or "translators" between the two linguistic and cultural areas.

Gender research has been conducted in different sectors relevant to political science: in political theory (Elshtain, Pateman), post-structuralist feminism (Landes, Butler and

Scott, Benhabib), but also in empirical political science (Carroll, Sapiro, Norris, etc.), feminist sociology of organizations (Kanter, Acker, etc.) and institutions (Freeman, Lovenduski, Ferguson, etc.), and finally in international relations (Enloe, Tickner, etc.)

In France, the passing of the parity law in 2000 placed the issue of women and politics at the heart of the functioning of political institutions. Studies concerning the effects of a change in electoral laws on political competition, politicians, and public policy were widely conducted, and produced a favorable environment for the establishment of gender studies in political science.

Some events can be highlighted to illustrate this gradual institutionalization. In 2002, a symposium on “Gender and Power” was organized at Sciences Po Paris with the support of the French Association of Political Science. In 2004, a standing group on “gender and politics” was founded within the same association.

Moreover, in the 2000s, many theses were defended in political science adopting a gender perspective (first in political sociology and public policy analysis, then in political theory and cultural areas, and international relations). This new generation of scholars is finally obtaining long-term research-based positions in French universities and in the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*.

## **What a gender approach has done to political science (and all that remains to be done)**

Two classic but fundamental contributions can be highlighted. On the one hand, many studies have contributed to demonstrating the political production of gender, and the gendered production of politics. They have highlighted how gender “fits” into the political system (its history, institutions and mechanisms that structured the field). It was brilliantly proved that by giving different political rights to men and women, modern politics in France has served to differentiate men and women and has mostly contributed to giving a political significance to the difference between the sexes. Thus, the gender perspective has contributed to characterizing political institutions and organizations as not neutral and as deeply gendered; while a gendered grammar impregnates their organization and, at the same time, produces gender. Gender is thus a political language that is central to political competition and structures all public actions. On the other, research on gender and politics has helped to rethink and question the boundaries of politics. It has questioned the gap between the public sphere and the private one, by showing the political dimension of what is called ‘private’ and the role of gender in giving credence to the hierarchical separation of the two areas and in the ‘naturalization’ of this boundary. This research has succeeded in making the political dimension of political behavior visible outside the conventional political field (for example the role of women mobilizations in religious, social or philanthropic organizations). Finally, the gender perspective has contributed to a different definition of the meaning and borders of political activities.

Despite these major contributions, the legitimacy of such an approach is still to be defended and guaranteed. Today the standing working group on gender and politics in the French Association of Political Science no longer exists. However, in every scientific congress, sessions are regularly dedicated to gender, sexuality, and intersectionality issues.

In this “normalization” process, the role of international associations must be underlined. The European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Standing Group on

Gender and Politics forms a broad-based network on issues relating to the study of gender and sexuality in politics and world politics, and contributes actively to encouraging workshops, panels and research groups with an emphasis on gender.

While the main political science journals (in French) have devoted some themed issues to gender and politics (including a regular and specialized “book review” in the *Revue Française de Science Politique*), there is no journal in French political science specially dedicated to gender. French journals on issues relating to gender are transdisciplinary or mostly inscribed in history and sociology (*Nouvelles questions féministes*; *Les Cahiers du genre*; *Travail genre et société*; *Clio*; *Genre sexualités et société*).

Two developments must be noted concerning specialized university courses on gender and politics. Some courses about gender have been created in political science curricula (in universities and at Science Po); while in transdisciplinary master courses on gender there are courses dedicated to the links between gender and politics (Université Paris 8, EHESS, Paris 5, Lyon and Bordeaux).

All these developments concerning gender issues have produced a dynamic area of research that remains, nonetheless, diverse and confrontational. The main controversies concern the various definitions of “gender” (a term of critical analysis versus a “mainstream category”), and the different ways to think the relationship between gender and other social power relations (class, “race”, sexuality, age).

In conclusion, we should not minimize recurring obstacles on the road to the institutionalization of a gender approach in political science. This perspective remains poorly integrated in non-specialist research and is always suspected of “activism” and “subjectivity”. Recognizing the consubstantial links between gender and politics continues to be a challenge. Nothing is guaranteed, but a positive outlook is to be found on the part of students’ appreciation and interest (courses relating to gender are much in demand), and of consolidating international research networks.

## References

- Achin, Catherine, and Laure Bereni, 2013, “Comment le genre vint à la science politique”, in *Genre & science politique. Concepts, objets, problèmes*, Paris, Presses de Science Po, p. 13-41.
- Fauré, Christine, *La démocratie sans les femmes. Essai sur le libéralisme en France*, Paris, PUF, 1985.
- Fraisse, Geneviève, *Muse de la raison. Démocratie et exclusion des femmes en France*, Paris, Gallimard, 1995 [1989].
- Gaspard, Françoise, Anne Le Gall, and Claude Servan-Schreiber, *Au pouvoir, citoyennes! Liberté, Égalité, Parité*, Paris, Seuil, 1992.
- Mossuz-Lavau, Janine, and Mariette Sineau, *Enquête sur les femmes et la politique en France*, Paris, PUF, 1983.
- Riot-Sarcey, Michèle (dir.), *Démocratie et représentation*, Paris, Kimé, 1995.
- Rosanvallon, Pierre, *Le sacre du citoyen. Histoire du suffrage universel en France*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992.
- Scott, Joan W., *La citoyenne paradoxale. Le féministes françaises et les droits de l’homme*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1998 [1996].

# Networking and Partnership as Strategic Practices for Gender Studies in Academia: the Case of the University of Trento

Barbara Poggio

UNIVERSITY OF TRENTO

Gender as a concept entered the Italian political debate in the late 1970s. As in many other European countries and the United States, theoretical reflections on gender first emerged outside academia and were closely linked to political activism by women on issues such as abortion and divorce. The debate then moved from women's studies to gender studies. It thus no longer focused solely on women and women's rights, but also encompassed broader aspects of gender relations and the intersection between gender and other identity categories such as race, ethnicity and sexual identity. Only in the late 1980s did gender studies begin their fight to become a discipline fully acknowledged by Italian academic institutions.

As Saraceno (2010) states, there was a debate among women feminist academics on how better to achieve institutionalization within academia: by introducing specific women and gender studies curricula, or by attempting to mainstream women and gender perspective in existing courses and curricula. Given the institutional rigidity of the Italian university system, feminist scholars opted for a mainstream solution. They introduced a focus on women, and later on gender, in their regular teaching subjects. They offered students seminars, initiatives, and events in addition to normal curricula, and eventually established gender research centers. The first such center opened in 1991 at the University of Torino. This was the CIRSDE (Women and Gender Studies Interdisciplinary Centre) whose founders came from many academic fields: both humanities like sociology, psychology, history, political science, literature, economics, foreign languages, and "hard" sciences like biology, law, medicine, and chemistry. Thereafter, several research centers and programs were founded, and today there are around 20 research centers at universities across Italy.

## The Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies at the University of Trento

The Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies (CSG) of the University of Trento belongs to this tradition. On the one hand, it aims to transform social reality and promote equal rights for women and girls; on the other, it works to develop critical and interdisciplinary theoretical approaches to gender relations. CSG was formally established in 2008 by a group of scholars and researchers from different faculties and departments. Its aim

was to give formal recognition to an existing active collaboration among gender scholars in multiple fields. Cooperation among scholars in these fields had been informally in existence for several years, and their collaboration was strengthened by the joint effort to establish an interdisciplinary specialist program, “Gender Policies in the Labour Market”. This collaboration was based from the outset on the conviction that studying gender needs a composite approach, the adoption of multiple perspectives, and the ability to consider the complexity of cultural, social, and structural factors that come into play in the social construction of gender. Of necessity, therefore, gender studies must draw on varied knowledge bases—sociological, legal, economic, political, psychological, narrative, and philosophical—in an interdisciplinary perspective.

A second cornerstone of CSG is recognition of the importance of collaboration between university and community. For this reason, the Centre is open to external members, including individuals as well as public and private institutions concerned in any way with gender issues. The ultimate goal of the Centre is, in fact, to create a multidisciplinary laboratory in which interaction between the university and society can become a stimulus for reflection, debate, and social change.

In order to achieve its goals, CSG undertakes initiatives in three realms: teaching and training, conferences and seminars, and research and action.

The first set of activities is aimed at promoting a gender-sensitive culture through graduate and postgraduate programs and courses, as well as continuing education on different issues (in particular gender policies in the labour market, gender and politics, gender and education, gender and law, gender and interculture).

A second group of activities includes conferences and seminars on a variety of topics usually connected with key issues in the Italian debate on gender and feminism and addressed both to students and a wider audience. Moreover, every two years the CSG organizes a national conference to deal with a specific issue, always from a gender perspective (topics that have been addressed: Gender and Precariousness; Gender and Power; Gender, Knowledge and Science).

The third area is that of research and action. We are involved in research projects at national and international level, focused on such diverse issues as gender policies within organizations, gender pay gap, gender implications of precariousness, fatherhood, gender and education. Several of the activities carried out have been based on interdisciplinary collaborations with other national and international scholars and research centers.

## **The GARCIA project**

Currently the Centre is engaged in a European Project, GARCIA (Gendering the Academy and Research: combating Career Instability and Asymmetries)<sup>1</sup> concerned with the implementation of actions in European universities and research centers to promote a gender culture and combat gender stereotypes and discriminations. Particular attention is paid to the early stages of academic and scientific careers: the main targets are researchers with non-tenured positions and people who have left the university after their PhD or a temporary position (Murgia, Poggio 2015).

To this end, we have constructed a partnership consisting of seven European universities<sup>2</sup> and research centers representing different EU countries. By involving both STEM and SSH disciplines, the aim of transforming academia and research into a more gender

equal environment may be extended to all disciplines by adopting the best systemic organizational approaches. Macro, meso, and micro level analyses are followed through the implementation of Gender Action Plans, which are mainly directed to: gender regimes; gender equality in management and decision-making; awareness raising on gendered practices; everyday working conditions; recruitment and selection processes; and the “leaky pipeline” phenomenon.

The role of coordinator of the GARCIA project has enabled us to become part of a network of “sister projects” (i.e., the structural change projects funded under the FP7 from 2010 to 2013) engaged in encouraging and supporting mutual learning dynamics, the purpose being to integrate the efforts that each project is making toward gender equality in scientific organizations. Moreover, in order to disseminate the results of our project, we have organized several streams in different national and international conferences and scientific networks (for example, the Gender Summit, Gender Work and Organization, the International Sociological Association, the European Group for Organizational Studies, and the Society for Advancement of Socio-Economics). This has created a solid international network.

## **Building partnerships and networking**

In the last part of this short contribution I would like to focus specifically on the issue of partnership building and networking, because they are critical dimensions for the survival and development of gender studies in academia, and in particular for research centers working on these topics.

There are various reasons for this importance. First of all, I must mention the interdisciplinary vocation of many of these centers, which makes it vital for them to have and to create opportunities to interact and to relate with other scholars, other disciplines, other perspectives.

Another important point is that these centers do not usually have a very easy life within universities, where gender issues are not considered a priority, and sometimes are even dismissed as “non-scientific”. It is therefore important for gender issues to gain legitimacy through relationships with other universities and similar organizations, as well as with other institutions, both public and private. In the case of our center, being chosen as an honorary member of the US Sociologists for Women in Society network or coordinating an important international project are examples of ways to obtain internal recognition within the university.

Moreover, networking can be useful in order to act as pressure groups linked through meta-organizations, such as the gender-dedicated sections of disciplinary associations (for instance, the Gender Studies section of the Italian Sociological Association) or the European network of women scientists (EPWS) (Antonucci 2013), and therefore able to lobby national and supranational bodies.

Networking is also necessary to establish close relations with local stakeholders, in our case, the provincial ministry for equal opportunities and equality bodies, trade unions, and other public institutions. Networking at the local level makes it possible on the one hand to obtain additional authority, and on the other, to affect local policies, experimenting with innovative measures. In our case this has happened through both innovative work-life balance initiatives in public organizations and gender-sensitive education in schools.



Finally, it is also important to build and consolidate a network within the university. In our case this has been done at institutional level by establishing contacts with all representative groups and categories of the university and identifying delegates within each department. The outcome is a group of motivated and proactive people who can collect in a widespread manner the needs and requirements of individual departments and disseminate the actions and policies enabled.

Networking is certainly a very fatiguing and delicate work. It requires a constant activity of relationship and connection; but at the same time it is a necessary condition for legitimizing and supporting change.

## References

- Antonucci, M.C. (2013) "Promotional or public interest group? The advocacy and lobbying activity for gender equality in science and research by the European Platform of Women Scientists, in S. Avveduto, L. Pisacane (eds) *Portrait of a Lady. Women in Science: Participation Issues and Perspectives in a Globalized Research System*, Gangemi, Roma, pp. 91-95.
- Murgia, A., Poggio, B. (2015) "Il progetto GARCIA – Università e Ricerca in ottica di Genere: superare le asimmetrie e l'instabilità lavorativa", in S. Avveduto, M.L. Paciello, T. Arri-goni, C. Mangia, L. Martinelli (eds) *Scienza, genere e società. Prospettive di genere in una società che si evolve*, CNR-IRPPS: e-Publishing, pp. 247-252.
- Saraceno, C. (2010) "Women and Gender Studies in Italy: Lack of Institutionalization or a Different Kind of Institutionalization?" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 17 (6): 269-274.

# Teaching in a Gender Perspective

Lorenza Perini\*

UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

## The gender perspective as an opportunity for change

*Gender Policies*, the subject I teach at the University of Padua, is not a very common topic in Italian Academia for at least three reasons. The first is that in our country there is little recognition of the category of ‘gender’ from the perspectives of both political science and political history (Stabili, 2015). The second is that this reception – or ‘cultural translation’ – is, in most cases, distorted, as it tends to be superimposed on the biological category of female sex. Therefore, as a category of analysis, the gender perspective appears to be greatly weakened. Today, while normally taken into account when discussing topics such as violence or migration, on other issues there is a persisting mistrust of gender as a category of political analysis and, unfortunately, there is no revolution underway to change this way of thinking.

There is also a third, more practical reason, which is that ‘gender’ is not a real subject to teach, but it is rather a perspective, a point of view, a cross-cutting category (Scott, 1986). Teaching in/with a gender perspective is therefore more like using a particular type of glasses to look around and see things differently. Through the lens of gender students are asked to take a deeper look at life around them, at the society they are living in and – possibly- reconsider some of their own beliefs and understandings. Taking ‘gender’ into account as a category of analysis, they are asked for example to re-think their research interests for their final dissertation. The aim is to make them aware of the differences – “through a gender perspective I see *this*, without this perspective I see *that*” - and aware of the fact that, in a high percentage of the cases, the gap between ‘this’ and ‘that’ is an issue of gender discrimination. In this scenario one of the main goals of courses like *Gender Policies* is to highlight that there are differences in the outcomes of policy-making that simply derive from gender differences and these should be considered and taken into account. As stated in the Introduction to this themed issue, it has been recognized that putting gender into the research agenda offers new ways of understanding social, cultural and political processes and structures through which societies and the relationships between sexes that substantiate them are organized. The gender perspective is therefore a critical look that makes clear and emphasizes differences between sexes not in the biological sense, but in how women and men participate and take part in the making of everyday ‘facts’, how they are affected by the political choices of national as well as local govern-

\* Lorenza Perini is Adjunct Professor at the University of Padova. She has been teaching the course Gender Policies and Welfare State in the European Union since 2010, first in Italian (with prof. Alisa Del Re) and then, since 2013, in English. The course is offered within the Master’s degree in European Studies. The course she teaches is attended by an average of 20-30 students from all over the world.

ment, and this has nothing to do with the ‘point of view of women’ or with ‘gender as women’s stuff’, as it is usually interpreted in our culture.<sup>1</sup>

Since there are no specific and institutionalized degree courses dedicated to gender in the Italian academic system, students who decide to attend a class like *Gender Policies* may come from very different backgrounds, such as human rights or political science; many of them also from economics, science, medicine, urban planning, or law. In this particular case, the class I teach is attended not only by Italian students but by a lot of foreign students coming from all over the world – from Europe to North and South America, from Africa to Balkan and Asian countries. This ‘attraction’ is very positive in my opinion, and is certainly due to the fact that, since 2013, at the University of Padua a number of courses in the field of Political Science – including *Gender Policies* – have been offered in English. Like in the past, when the course was held in Italian, the main objective is to introduce students to the very basic concepts in the approach to gender studies, but what has changed in the last three years is the territorial perspective. A much broader approach is now necessary, taking into account the different experiences of the students. In class, we start discussing basic concepts like the meaning of sex, gender, gendering, gender system (patriarchy), power, homophobia – in terms of effectiveness of policies at international, national and local levels. We introduce concepts like heteronormativity, we address the importance of gender awareness in decision-making and we discuss the implications if a non-discrimination perspective were to be taken into account in the implementation of policies, especially in the urban context (‘engendering the city’).

We also reflect on the role of the European Community which, despite the resistance of local institutions, in the last ten years has strongly pushed for gender issues to be mainstreamed in all fields of research and aspects of life in academic environments. In order to increase the personal sensitivity of the students in a non-prescriptive way, the lessons are not organized as traditional lectures. The presence of foreign students is a great opportunity to use different sources and methods, which has led me to review the structure of the course, framing each lesson as a sort of interactive workshop, where it is easier to discuss, to share knowledge and exchange views depending on the interests and the personal sensibility of the participants, without imposing my personal orientation. At the end of the course I ask all the students to prepare not only a term paper but also ‘a lesson’ for the rest of the class on the topic they have been most interested in. To foster the students’ curiosity, during the lessons guest lecturers are often invited to present their books and papers; specific seminars on ‘how to write a good final dissertation’ with the support of librarians from the faculty and experts on digital resources are organized and, during the course, students have the chance to attend seminars and activities organized by the University Center for Gender Studies – CIRSG – on topics of their interest.

The opportunity to teach in English allows us to go beyond English as a means of communication and refer broadly to the international environment in which the issues we deal with have emerged. At the end of this third year of teaching in English I recognize that

---

<sup>1</sup> An example that shows how simple it can be to misunderstand what gender really means: “women in the labor market” is completely different from studying “the labor market from a gender perspective”. Although both take women into account, only the second considers the interaction of the sexes and the different perspectives from which women and men are affected by the policies and the rules of the labor market. This may seem to be a minor difference, but it is not; there is, indeed, a considerable cultural and political distance between the two.

I made a great effort in renewing the contents of the course as a consequence of the language change: switching to English means switching to another way of thinking, of organizing topics within the lessons and the type of lessons themselves. This different perspective is very useful when talking about gender: the center is represented by the students, who are women and men, by their unique and different stories, their backgrounds, their experiences that the new pair of gender glasses have made richer, deeper and more productive. The challenge proved to be a great opportunity for the course to become a real multicultural space for discussion, sharing experiences, listening to different voices and, most of all, for fruitful mutual learning.

### **When the students are not (only) academic**

This type of educational perspective, very fruitful in academic courses does not exhaust its potential with a mark or with a final dissertation. ‘Gender glasses’ are very useful also outside University, to analyze the challenges emerging from each specific local context and the dimension of life-long-learning that accompanies women and men at any stage of their life, in their working dimension, as well as in the social and political commitments they decide to undertake, up to the decisions they may take in their private life. It was in this perspective of offering learning opportunities on ‘gender policies and equal opportunities’ to people outside academia that, in 2004, the Italian government, decided to fund a National Project entitled ‘Women, Politics and Institutions’. The ultimate aim was to help create cultural and educational conditions in order to increase the participation and presence of women in political life, both at national and local level, in elected assemblies, in councils and consultative committees, where women are typically absent (Forcina, 2003).

Involving the Ministry for Equal Opportunities and a number of Universities, the project included 100 hours of training a year, directed both to undergraduate students and to people outside the academia with a strong interest in gender issues. There was no tuition fee and there were two tests, one mid-term and one at the end of the course, with a final grade and a certificate of attendance. The aim of the project was to raise awareness of the importance of women and men participating together in the public sphere and in political life, both at national and local level, in elected assemblies, in councils and consultative committees, where women are usually under represented (Folke-Richne, 2014). This was driven by the belief that it is “mostly the cultural factors that prevent a broader participation of women in politics and in all decision-making bodies” (Asti et al. 2008).

Focusing on the formal structure of national politics, on the knowledge of how decisional arenas work and leaving the analysis of local dynamics to the universities involved (especially to the scientific coordinators responsible for the implementation of the project, one for each university, chosen for their specific skills, personal experiences and some of them for their long-feminist militancy), it was possible, in part, to go beyond the stereotype of a clear role division between sexes – the institutions with their rituals, occult mechanisms and male tested schemes on the one side and the social and reproductive roles of women on the other. Considering the ‘institutional box’ together with its political content of practices was the new and decisive element. Inserting the point of view of gender equality in an apparently neutral scenario was certainly a difficult task of mainstreaming, but a harbinger of good results, giving the participants an idea of ‘politics’ from all possible points of view: as a path toward the conquest of rights for women and

men that differs both in achievements and in chronology; as a growing difficulty in maintaining these achievements; as a real impossibility to access certain spheres of political power for no other reasons than sex. This course was a platform of awareness and recognition in short, offering not mere acquisition of theoretical knowledge, but an active ‘tool’ to propose and suggest, allowing participants to identify the crucial issues of how to enter and remain in the political arena, to understand how to propose changes to the access mechanisms and to find a position given the skills acquired.

Fourteen thousand applications arrived for the first two editions (2004 – 2006) and about seven thousand participants took part in the project, involving 44 universities across Italy. The experience continued with these high numbers until 2012, organized with the formula of co-participation (and co-financing) of Universities and the Ministry. Then, in 2013, the government funding stopped and the organizational and financial burden ended up on the shoulders of the universities, who were able to carry on one or two more editions of the project, in collaboration with local institutions in some cases with the help of a sponsor.

A negative implication of this is that the government has clearly lost interest in this type of initiative; but a positive one is that this type of course still exists today in many universities under various and different labels – as postgraduate training, or as professional development, continuing to create bridges from academia to the territory and to promote knowledge sharing. As Carmen Leccardi, coordinator of the project at the University of Milano-Bicocca since the very beginning, stated: “These courses are the only time when the university actually opens to the territory, fulfilling in this a vital function” (Leccardi, 2012). The formula of the project, mixing students and people interested in the topic of gender equality<sup>2</sup> has clearly shown that the desire for gender-aware knowledge, aimed at acting in the public sphere, is very strong. Second, it has contributed to educating a generation of young women who look to politics as an opportunity to express their personality and skills, and as a career option.

From the point of view of the results achieved by the students, because the course took place in the universities and involved a lot of academics, it has put in place an important mechanism of recognition of the knowledge acquired. It was not just a course ‘sponsored’ by the academic institution, or hosted in a university classroom. It was a project entirely organized within the universities. The importance of this recognition of authority is two-fold, because on the one hand it has connected the university to its territory, placing it at the center of an osmotic circulation of knowledge and skills. Secondly, it has encouraged the participants to get passionate about its contents, asking for further information, additional classes, advanced courses, as well as requesting academic spaces where they can hold meetings and self-managed seminars, beyond the margins of the course itself. It was a chance to re-create a positive imagery around academic knowledge, no longer seen as separate from the practice of everyday life, but in dialogue, towards the concept of a University open to training throughout the course of life (lifelong learning), which is the foundation of a modern and European conception of academic places.

---

<sup>2</sup> In the first edition (2004-2005) the course was delivered only to women. Then the subsequent editions were open to the participation of both men and women.

## Gender perspective as ‘expert knowledge’ in policy making

It is a fact that after the Seventies many occasions of ‘speech’ for women in Italy simply closed. For a long time, their participation in the political life of the country took place underground. The place to present themselves in the decision-making public arena was missing, due to political circumstances, to the ‘resilience’ of a patriarchal society, and also due to the fact that part of the feminist movement was (and still is) hesitant if not reluctant about a real participation and involvement of women in the institutions (Del Re, 2008). Today the situation has partly changed: the place does exist, women want to participate, and yet what prevents them from doing so is mostly the burden of the care activities that is today (as it was thirty years ago) mostly on their shoulders, without any real chance to share it with men. A burden that holds them back a centimeter, just one centimeter, but decisive. Discriminating.

The issue of the crisis of the forms of citizenship and of the political representation of leadership is the focus of the current political debate and compels us to rethink the past as well as the present and maybe also to redesign the forecasts for the future. For this purpose, a gender perspective in policy making could be a key of great help to interpret and solve many problematic issues. It is about taking responsibility and having the courage to reformulate certain categories of values: the gender perspective should be considered as ‘expert knowledge’ to be taken seriously into account inside and outside academia. Recognizing the importance of the presence and the action of women in the public sphere – not just in terms of numbers, but in terms of thoughts, opinions, expertise – is a matter of *justice*: this is the type of ‘cultural work’ that academic institutions should provide to students and to the whole society, and it is what a democracy should adopt as a target priority to achieve.

## References

- Asti A., Fantone L., Giuliani G., Perini L., Una ricerca sul progetto formativo Donne Politica e Istituzioni, *Inchiesta*, 160 (oct. 2008), p. 56-62.
- Del Re A. (2008), Gli studi di genere e i loro luoghi: ricerca, diffusione e formazione, *Inchiesta*, 160 (oct. 2008), p. 3-10.
- Folke O., Richne J. (2014), *The Glass Ceiling in Politics: Formalization and Empirical Tests* Research Institute for Industrial Economics, Sweden, working paper.
- Forcina M. (2003), *Una cittadinanza di altro genere. Discorso su un’idea politica e la sua storia*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.
- Leccardi C. (2012), *Donne Politica istituzioni: la politica di genere all’Università*, interview with Assunta Sarlo, available online at: <http://www.elle.it/Magazine/Donne-politica-istituzioni-cultura-di-genere-universita>.
- Scott W.J. (1986), *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis*, *The American Historical Review* Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), pp. 1053-1075.
- Stabili M.R. (2015), *Il genere come categoria analitica nella storiografia politica italiana*, *Ricerche di storia politica*, 1/2015.

# Young Women's Subjectivities and New Feminisms in the Neo-Liberal Age

Carmen Leccardi

UNIVERSITÀ DI MILANO BICOCCA

The generations of young women raised between the last decade of last century and this century inherited from second wave feminism (the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s), the expression of subjectivity as a taken for granted right. Nonetheless, there are important differences between the ways in which women who considered themselves a part of the second wave of the feminist movement used this right and its dynamics today, in a time when the neo-liberal values of the market and of individualization, of the emphasis on freedom of choice and enjoyment, redefine the meaning of agency (and of the political) for everyone, but for young women in a special way. For women in the 1970s, expressing their own subjectivity was first of all a political issue as it was able to bring the dominant social roles back into question (Ferree and Hess 2000; Bertolotti and Scattigno 2005), but new scenarios take shape for women in younger generations. The following notes are intended to pause upon these transformations, to draw attention to the importance of placing the subjectivity and ambivalences its expression entails at the center of analysis.<sup>1</sup>

## Subjectivity and the women's movement

While identity is an issue viewed as part of social sciences' tradition, and gender identities were analyzed and widely debated in the late 20th century, subjectivity has usually remained excluded from this analysis. Analyses of modernity have focused on the triumph of rationality and disenchantment, marginalizing the subjective dimension. In this frame, subjectivity is generally considered as the equivalent of the subject's intimate dimension, a manifestation of its consciousness, and therefore stripped of any social meanings. According to Martuccelli (2002, 437), on the contrary, subjectivity and the social world are strictly connected as the first is "marked by the ideal of a domain of self subtracted to the social". In other words, subjectivity is fully expressed where public identities are brought into question. This dynamic, and the significant role it plays in creatively reworking existing

---

<sup>1</sup> The writer is scientific director of the Interuniversity Centre for Women's Studies "Culture di Genere" ("Gender Cultures") at the University of Milan-Bicocca. Since it was founded in 2013, the Centre has promoted a systemic reflection on the daily lives of women from different generations, with particular attention focused on the relationship between forms of subjectivity and public space.

social conditions, rose to the fore with the movements of the 1960s and 1970s—the students’ movement and feminism in particular.

Second wave feminism broke the male monopoly on subjectivity and focused public attention on women’s ability to reject any form of social fixity, including identitarian and institutional fixity. The political nature of this exercise of subjectivity is thus obvious. No connotation of introspection and intimacy can be related to it. Thanks to this collective and political exercise, subjectivity is about more than just forming a personal critique of the social world; it is connected to a genuine project of the self. This is in turn necessarily bound up with forming a relationship with otherness. Indeed, it is the exercise of subjectivity that enables people to relate to others.

Above all, for the women involved in second wave feminism, subjectivity comes about thanks to relationships with other women; through the communication, dialog, and “thinking and acting together” that these enable. And through these relationships the bond between the body, sexuality, and the construction of new forms of knowledge, capable of challenging established knowledge of the social world, can be explored.

This subjectivity finds its strategic arena for expression in the public sphere. As it has been so often underlined, the personal dimension is far removed from the intimate sphere of life (“the personal is political”). The personal is inseparable from the political, being a strategic arena for political action, as the patriarchal oppression and power dynamics that underpin it are reproduced in the personal sphere. For the women’s movement subjectivity is an explicit form of resistance to the normalization of behaviors. Involving the subjective viewpoint is a way to challenge dominant world visions and belief systems.

As Martuccelli (2002) points out, reflexivity and subjectivity appear to be inseparably linked. On a general level, in the women’s movement reflexivity is an everyday social practice that changes the relationship with action. Women treat themselves and their status as an object of knowledge, thus making room for forms of experience capable of challenging power relations. In a nutshell, reflexivity enables subjectivity to distance itself from givens. Forms of knowledge that are produced in this way, shaped by a critical vision of the self and one’s social setting, represent an opportunity to gain control over one’s life and rethink one’s political role. Reflexivity thus reinforces the arena of subjectivity through an ongoing process of critical formulation.

The method of self-awareness practiced by the women’s movement in the 1970s, and centered around starting from one’s experiences, effectively exemplifies both the bond between the personal and the political, and the strict link between subjectivity and reflexivity. This shapes the critique of the capitalist society through which women define themselves as subjects.

These remarks set out to highlight the strands that link the second and third waves of feminism. These strands, given the known differences between the two waves (Gillies, Howie and Munford 2007), are distinguished by a common reference to the assertion of subjectivity even though in a very different social scenario. This is characterized, especially in southern Europe (Murgia and Poggio 2014), by widespread job insecurity even for highly-educated young people. In recent years, for example, the numerous organized groups of young feminists in precarious jobs (e.g., Sexyshock, Fiorelle, Sconvegno, Precas: see Fantone 2011b, 32) in Italy, probably the backbone of feminism in the new century (Fantone 2007; Galetto et al. 2007; Reale, 2008), describe themselves as a “plurality of



subjectivities in relation”, and “unclassifiable subjects”. Through this description they wish to indicate their separation from institutional politics and other institutional expressions. They lay claim to multiple belongings, fragmented identities, and forms of organization that are experimental and open. Individuals can belong to one group or another, but are free to experiment when it comes to politics.

These young feminists describe their subjectivities as “nomadic” (Braidotti 2011) and exploit their employment insecurity as leverage for the exercise of subjectivity. In the groups, which do not have (do not want to have and do not intend to create) a collective identity, diverse identities come together. What connects the young women in each group is a common culture based on the recognition of diversity and their self-determination as subjects. Where identities exist they are not set in stone but positively asserted as mutable. They arise from practices of creative experimentation, like those developed by the queer movement for example. The imagination comes to the fore, challenging stereotypes and conventional mind sets. What these practices have in common is taking a critical distance from the existing world through irony, avoiding self-pity for the problems occasioned by existential precariousness, the so-called “victim mentality” often attributed to second wave feminism. This precariousness thus reveals ambivalent traits: while it is bound up with a negative lexicon (Morini, Karls, and Armani 2014) such as instability, impermanence, fragility, on the other hand it is linked with an idea of flux, possibility, and redefinition. By definition these practices are immersed in the present and do not look to the future; they have to enable, above all, forms of self-narrative able to guarantee self-recognition. In the foreground there is a resilient subjectivity that tries to resist the attempts to assimilate it.

The link between these different subjectivities, for which the web is the chosen political tool, is their common reference to a life shaped by intermittent work (a condition that is both personal and generational), by financial freedom that is extremely difficult to obtain, but also the idea that “the pleasurable is political” (Jamie Pond). And also, the ability to recognize one another, and to attribute value one another.

Most of these women do not call themselves feminists (with many actively rejecting the label: see Aronson 2003); and when the term is used it is in the plural (they talk about feminisms), in order to avoid pigeonholing, labels and limitations. Yet they do assert their generation as a political generation, in search of new practices and new modes of expression for the political. Unlike the women of the second wave, these young women no longer define themselves in relation to the world of men; it is their own subjectivity that defines them.

## **New gender identities, new gendered subjectivities**

The analysis by the Norwegian scholars Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg (1994), of the various historical stages in the construction of gender identity, gives us a useful analytical framework to complete the reflections on young women’s subjectivities. According to these scholars, in the second half of the last century, at least up to the 1970s, the phase of gender polarization was followed by a stage of open gender battle that we can link to so-called second wave feminism. The following phase, the one we are currently in, is instead centered on the process of female individualization, which can in a way be linked to third wave feminism.

As highlighted by Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2003) among others, the prevailing desire among generations of young women in recent decades is that of building “a life of one’s own”: no longer exclusively bound up with the family, but centered around the individual, a life that can also be constructed without a stable male presence. In the temporal architecture that is thus defined, a strategic role is played by “time for oneself”—time devoted to the subjective exploration of one’s own needs and desires outside a logic of self-sacrifice (Bryson 2007, 134–136; Odih 1999; Piazza 2006). It follows that women are plagued not only by continuing worries over achieving the right work-life balance, so elusive especially in southern European countries; for younger women, the main concern seems to be achieving recognition of their right to be present in various different worlds simultaneously, without necessarily having to choose one or another: in other words, without being denied the right to exercise active ambivalence (Libreria delle Donne 2008).

Nielsen and Rudberg’s reflections (1994) offer another valid element when it comes to concluding our analysis. Although their considerations relate to the 1990s, they include many of the characteristics highlighted in contemporary studies and empirical researches concerning young women. To comprehend processes of social change as intertwined with gender relations, the Norwegian academics suggest taking three different aspects into account: *gender identity* (the gender I have), *gender subjectivity* (the gender I am) and the social and cultural resources that the environment offers to express these. The generation of women growing up in the 1940s and 1950s experienced the contradiction between a modernized gender identity and a lack of adequate social and cultural resources to implement it. The generation of young women growing up in the 1960s and 1970s had to come to terms with a different contradiction, namely between a modernized gender identity and a subjectivity still linked to the relationship with the male sphere. Second wave feminism broke this bond, enabling young women to practice self-determination in full. Starting from this time, the “assumption that women do not need a career because they derive their livelihood from a man, as well as a complete identity from the heterosexual nuclear family has been challenged” (Harris 2004: 6).

The contemporary generations of young women therefore feel able to act in complete freedom. Characterized by a strong need for independence, these young women set out to leave the mark of their subjectivity on the world (Thomson 2009). However, the life plans to which the new levels of education lend legitimacy are beginning to come up against limitations, clashing with the lack of social resources available to enable this form of self-expression. While they cultivate the belief that they can fulfill their objectives with no impediments whatsoever, the generations we are talking about are starting to experience increasingly adverse conditions in reality. The employment precariousness we talked about earlier effectively exemplifies these limitations.

With reference to the ideal type of young woman of these last generations, Nielsen and Rudberg write: “She wants everything and believes she can do anything. But is that possible?” (1994: 111). These are the women of “making it”: intended as the art of inventing oneself and solving one’s own problems. Self-fulfillment is considered exclusively an issue of individual responsibility, the product of a do-it-yourself attitude. While inequalities of class and race continue to exert a concrete influence on people’s lives, the “can-do girl” ideology is taking hold.

## Concluding remarks

For some time now the young women of Europe have been getting to grips with these cultural representations, now increasingly explicitly bound up with the neo-liberal ideal of a flexible, self-governing, and self-realizing individual. In this scenario, as emphasized by Wyn and Dwyer (1999), it is therefore fundamental that researchers do not remain anchored to issues that only marginally affect the lives of young men and women today (for example the question of citizenship in abstract terms). Young women's subjectivities call for the creation of a different agenda of issues; taking account, for example, of their deferral of long-term relationships and their later-life motherhood; of their wish, and need, of social recognition here and now (starting from the social networks: see e.g., Mainardi 2015).

After reflecting on the many aspects and nuances of young women's existential conditions and experiences, Anita Harris (2004: 186) writes: "it is important to honor young women's own capacities to make positive meaning in their lives, to enjoy the agency they have, and to respect their strategies for doing the best they can". Those who recognize themselves in this exhortation feel themselves part of the job of defending young women's choices of self-determination. These choices are realized despite the heavy threat, which young women experience daily, of an uncertain and ever more presentified existence, the result of the new capitalist economy and of neo-liberal values of efficiency, competition, and speed that accompany them.

This process, as is known, can create the conditions for an annulment of critical thought, and can preclude the elaboration of collective responses. If this does not happen and, instead, types of social critique and openly gendered mobilizations grow, it is certainly thanks to the specific ability of new generations of young women to express forms of political subjectivity (Magaraggia e Vingelli 2015), in particular through forms of presence on the public space connected to the fight against precariousness and the oppression of institutional identities.

As has been underlined (Harris and Dubson, 2015; McRobbie, 2007), this representation can easily be confused with the neo-liberal ideal of a flexible individual, who is always able to self-govern, despite external circumstances. An ungendered individual, who looks with detachment upon group movements, and considers his/herself self-sufficient; who does not recognize the power that social structures have in conditioning life paths; who considers political mobilization superfluous. In this respect, it is important to be aware of that which Angela McRobbie (2007) defines as the "new sexual contract" according to which the new degrees of freedom young girls have, together with access to consumer culture, are today exchanged with the marginal role assigned to a critical vision of the relationships of power. Being aware of this risk, and of the ambivalence that marks the expression of subjectivity by young women of recent generations, can help us to better understand the "indirect" character of some forms of resistance that they express, and the redefinition of politics they practice.

## References

- Aronson, Pamela. 2003. 'Feminists or "Postfeminists"?' Young Women's Attitudes toward Feminism and Gender Relations.' *Gender & Society* 17(6): 903-922.

- Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth. 2003. 'From 'Living for Others' to 'A Life of One's Own': Individualization and Women', 54-84. In Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization. Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences*. London: Sage.
- Bertilotti, Teresa and Anna Scattigno. 2005. *Il femminismo degli anni Settanta*. Roma: Viella.
- Braidotti, Rosi. 2011. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bryson, Valerie. 2007. *Gender and the Politics of Time: Feminist Theory and Contemporary Debates*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Fantone, Laura. 2007. 'Precarious Changes: Gender and Generational Politics in Contemporary Italy'. *Feminist Review* 87(1): 5-20.
- Fantone, Laura. 2011. 'Una precarietà differente'. In *Genere e precarietà*, edited by Laura Fantone, 13-40. Napoli: Scriptaweb.
- Ferree, Marx Myra and Beth Hess. 2000. *Controversy and Coalition: The New Feminist Movement across Three Decades of Change*. New York: Routledge.
- Galetto, Manuela, Chiara Lasala, Sveva Magaraggia, Chiara Martucci, Elisabetta Onori and Francesca Pozzi. 2007. 'A Snapshot of Precariousness: Voices, Perspectives, Dialogues'. *Feminist Review* 87(1): 104-112.
- Gillis, Stacy, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, eds. 2007. *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration*. London: Palgrave.
- Harris, Anita. 2004. *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century*. New York – London: Routledge.
- Harris, Anita and Amy Schields Dubson. 2015. 'Theorizing Agency in Post-girlpower Time.' *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 29(2): 145-156.
- Libreria delle Donne. 2008. *Il doppio sì. Lavoro e maternità*. Milano: Quaderni di Via Dogana.
- Magaraggia, Sveva and Giovanna Vingelli, eds. 2015. *Genere e partecipazione politica*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Mainardi, Arianna (2015) 'Le adolescenti e le performance di genere online: oltre il panico morale', 209-218. In *Violenza di genere e percorsi mediterranei. Voci, saperi e uscite*, edited by Iganazia Bartholini. Milano: Guerini.
- Martuccelli, Danilo. 2002. *Grammaires de l'individu*. Paris: Gallimard.
- McRobbie, Angela. 2007. 'Top Girls. Young Women and the Post-feminist Sexual Contract.' *Cultural Studies* 21(4): 718-737.
- Morini, Cristina, Kristin Carls and Emiliana Armano. 2014. 'Precarious Passion or Passionate Precariousness? Narratives from Co-Research in Journalism and Editing', *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques* [on line] 45(2), available at: <http://rsa.revues.org/1264>
- Murgia, Annalisa and Barbara Poggio. 2014. 'The Passion Trap. Experiences of Precariousness by Highly-educated Young People in Italy, Spain and United Kingdom', 62-86. In *Young People and Social Policy in Europe. Dealing with Risk, Inequality and Precarity in Times of Crisis*, edited by Myra Hamilton, Lorenza Antonucci and Steven Roberts. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nielsen, Bjerrum Harriet and Monica Rudberg. 1994. *Psychological Gender and Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Odih, Pamela. 1999. 'Gendered Time in the Age of Deconstruction.' *Time & Society* 8(1): 9-38.
- Piazza, Marina. 2006. *Un po' di tempo per me*. Milano: Mondadori.

- Reale, Paola. 2008. *Passioni e ragioni nelle voci del femminismo dal dopoguerra ad oggi*. Roma: Luca Sossella.
- Thomson, Rachel. 2009. *Unfolding Lives: Youth, Gender and Change*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Wyn, Johanna and Peter Dwyer. 1999. 'New Directions in Research on Youth in Transition.' *Journal of Youth Studies* 2(1): 5-21.

# The Association of Italian Women Historians and the Promotion of Gender Culture in Italy

Isabelle Chabot

SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DELLE STORICHE

The *Società Italiana delle Storiche* (SIS, Italian Association of Women Historians)<sup>1</sup> was founded in 1989. Its aim was to promote women's and gender history through research, teaching and the conservation of documents and source materials. Over more than 25 years, the Association has worked to highlight women's experience and subjectivity through research and to further enrich the legacy of knowledge that has stemmed from women's and gender history: it is already a well-recognized and acknowledged player in academia and not only in the field of the history and politics of women. The SIS is an association of professional historians, but also a women's association that is very active in the dissemination of a gender culture that has its roots in history. Two SIS conferences, organized on very current issues, should, we believe, be read in an historical perspective: a recent one on "Violence against women in an historical perspective",<sup>2</sup> and one on "Women, citizenship, and religion in the history of the Mediterranean," held in Rome in November 2016.<sup>3</sup>

This paper aims to present, very briefly, two of the SIS's main activities in the dissemination of a gender culture: the summer school and the training courses.

## History and politics of women: The SIS Summer School

Right from its beginnings the SIS has privileged the relationship between research and training. In 1990, the SIS summer school (*Scuola estiva*) was founded, in partnership with the University of Siena; since then the school has taken place annually at the Certosa di Pontignano, during two weeks at the end of August-beginning of September. The SIS wanted its school to be open to a wide group of women from very different backgrounds: students and academics, but also school teachers, librarians and archivists, workers in public administration, women involved in trade unions, political parties, and cultural organizations focused on equal opportunities between men and women, etc. The *Scuola estiva* aimed to offer training both in women's and gender history and in gender culture

---

<sup>1</sup> Online at this address: <http://www.societadellestoriche.it>.

<sup>2</sup> *La violenza contro le donne in una prospettiva storica. Contesti, linguaggi, politiche del diritto (secc. XVI-XXI)*, Rome 27-28 November 2015; the proceedings of the conference will be published by Viella Editrice in Rome.

<sup>3</sup> *Donne, cittadinanza e religione nella storia del Mediterraneo*, Rome 4-5 November 2016.

and politics. Across the years, the SIS summer school has proved to be an innovative and successful format of interdisciplinary training that interweaves the skills of historians, philosophers, sociologists, jurists, etc. In 2003 the *Scuola estiva* moved to Fiesole, near Florence, and is now open to male participants.

Starting from a historical perspective open to the contemporaneity, and the changes at work in the world of women, some of the last editions of the *Scuola estiva* dealt with specific themes, including: *The challenge of feminism to the movements of the Seventies* (2004); *Women in the monotheistic religions: Faith, politics, freedom* (2006); *The construction of motherhood: History, science, feminist reflection* (2013); *Disobedience: gender, power, resistance* (2014).<sup>4</sup> The 2016 edition of the SIS summer school took place from 31 October to 2 November and focused on the very current issue of *Procreation and motherhood, between history and biotechnology*.

## Training for leadership

Starting in 2010, the SIS has also undertaken a wide-ranging educational program, initiating a fruitful collaboration with local administrations, first of all with the Toscana region and the province of Florence (Department for Equal Opportunities), continuing with the cities of Narni and Rome, in the Lazio Region, and with the Veneto Region (provinces of Venice and Padua).

The implementation of a new and innovative law (16/2009) of the Toscana Region on “Gender citizenship-equal opportunities between men and women”<sup>5</sup> gave SIS the opportunity to improve its own original style of training, combining a conceptual approach of high scientific level with a solid professional training facility.

From spring 2010, in order to implement the law, the Toscana Region considered – among other initiatives – funding projects proposed by associations whose statutes provide for “the dissemination and implementation of the principle of equal opportunities between men and women; or the promotion and enhancement of the status of women; or help to protect in court in case of violation of rights” (Art. 6). Selection and funds were to be managed by the Departments for Equal Opportunities of the nine Toscana provinces.

Between 2010 and 2014, four SIS projects were selected by the province of Florence, the first three being fully funded.<sup>6</sup> In these years, the thematic areas of the SIS training courses were: Gender Stereotypes (language and images);<sup>7</sup> Relationship between women and work (work-life balance; leadership);<sup>8</sup> Leadership: work and politics.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> See the programmes of all the editions from 1990, online at this address: [http://www.societadellestoriche.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=105&Itemid=117&limitstart=0](http://www.societadellestoriche.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=105&Itemid=117&limitstart=0).

<sup>5</sup> Regione Toscana, Legge regionale 2 aprile 2009, n. 16 ‘Cittadinanza di genere’.

<sup>6</sup> In 2014, the project was ‘financed but not funded’ due to dire lack of funds (only four years after the enactment of the law 16/2009).

<sup>7</sup> 2010 – *Fuori dal senso comune. Corso di formazione per combattere gli stereotipi all’origine delle discriminazioni di genere (dicembre 2009–marzo 2010)* (Out of common sense. Training course to fight against stereotypes at the origin of gender discrimination). Project by Isabelle Chabot and Anna Scattigno. More information available online at this address: [http://www.societadellestoriche.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=245&Itemid=303](http://www.societadellestoriche.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=245&Itemid=303).

<sup>8</sup> 2011 – *Sebbene che siamo donne... Corso di formazione per promuovere la parità nel mondo del lavoro (febbraio–maggio 2011)* (Although we are women... Training course to promote equality in the workplace). Project by Isabelle Chabot, Elena Martini, Alessandra Pescarolo, Anna Scattigno.

Women's leadership emerged rapidly as a crucial issue, so we decided to devote the third course to it. But leadership is also an open concept, not reducible to a single definition, and it did not seem to be an easy subject to handle in a training course.

To begin to circumscribe our object and better tackle the related issues, we decided together with the Assessora Sonia Spacchini, to organize seven meetings between May and June 2012 in seven different places, across the territory of the Province of Florence.<sup>10</sup> The aim of these public debates was to stimulate a collective reflection, gather ideas, needs, aspirations, and experiences of leadership both in politics and work. We involved several local administrators (mayors, assessori, city councilors, etc.) because local government seemed to us a strategic field, where interesting forms of female leadership had developed in recent years. We asked for their help to involve workers, entrepreneurs, and women active in the organizations in the area.

Participation in these debates was large and active, and contributed to raising many issues and to highlighting some keywords (summarized in a report).<sup>11</sup> Examples of themes that emerged during these public discussions are as follows:

- Power: the different attitudes of men and women with respect to power; exercising power with others (but not over the others); women gaining power not for themselves but to generate changes in the social, economic, political order and to transform gender relations (an issue addressed by Anna Loretoni in the opening conference);<sup>12</sup>
- Leadership models: is there a different leadership model from the male pattern? Is there a necessity to build a leadership in which even men can recognize themselves?<sup>13</sup>
- Participation and representation of women: the urgent need to increase this, both in the political parties and in organizations, in order to affirm a women's leadership;

---

<sup>9</sup> 2013 – *Leadership femminile: diciamo sì al cambiamento. Corso di formazione per promuovere e valorizzare le competenze di leadership femminile nelle organizzazioni, nella politica e nel mondo del lavoro (marzo–giugno 2013)* (Female leadership: Say yes to change. Training course to promote and enhance women's leadership skills in organizations, in politics and in the workplace). Project by Isabelle Chabot, Elena Martini, and Anna Scattigno. More information online: [http://www.societadellestoriche.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=242&Itemid=300](http://www.societadellestoriche.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=242&Itemid=300). See also, 2014 – *Esercizi di leadership (al femminile)* (Female) leadership exercises. Project by Isabelle Chabot and Anna Scattigno (not funded).

<sup>10</sup> The 2012 'tour', and the following training course on female leadership (spring 2013) were a very exciting experience that we quickly gathered in a 'Quaderno di formazione', a digital training notebook entitled *La leadership che fa la differenza. Esperienze femminili. Quaderno di formazione*, Anna Scattigno (ed.), with Isabelle Chabot, Barbara Imbergamo, Elena Martini, Francesca Maria Casini, Vanessa Moi (November 2013). The book can be downloaded for free from this address: [http://www.societadellestoriche.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=494&Itemid=293](http://www.societadellestoriche.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=494&Itemid=293).

<sup>11</sup> See the report of the seven debates: A. Scattigno, *Una discussione a più voci attorno alla leadership*, in *La leadership che fa la differenza*, cit., pp. 12–19.

<sup>12</sup> Anna Loretoni, *La leadership femminile tra Empowerment e Gendermainstreaming*, in *La leadership che fa la differenza*, cit., pp. 21–24.

<sup>13</sup> See the report of the lectures: Maria Cristina Bombelli, *Esercizi di leadership*, in *La leadership che fa la differenza*, cit., pp. 35–36.



- Laws: to remove discrimination, promote equality (much was said on “quotas”, with differing opinions);<sup>14</sup>
- Education and training: to fight against stereotypes; to empower women;
- Empowerment: develop and strengthen the skills and abilities of women;
- Courage: train women to take a step forward;
- Value: recognize the value of women, recognize valuable women; awareness, self-confidence, self-esteem (issues elaborated upon by Carmen Leccardi in her lecture);<sup>15</sup>
- Visibility: communication, the need to train in public speaking.

This somehow unusual public “brainstorming” was invaluable when structuring the training course (March–June 2013): many of these issues were raised at the opening conference (20 March 2013) through lectures (open to the public) that provided a theoretical framework to the course. Further elaboration on the concept took place within two following workshops: one on *Leadership and Politics*, a second one on *Leadership and Work* (only open to 60 selected participants).

The training course was free of charge and open to a wide range of the public, female and male, coming from the province of Florence. Participants, mostly women, came from different backgrounds and had different expectations: students and school teachers; unemployed and managers; public administration staff; operators of the centers for employment; operators in the sectors of training, human resources within the institutions and the organizations; representatives of the Equal Opportunity Committees (*Comitati Pari Opportunità*) within public institutions and organizations; and women who were politically active (political parties, trade unions, movements).

The first two meetings of the workshops<sup>16</sup> aimed to form a critical consciousness through participatory discussions, with the aim to: a) conceptualize women’s leadership and reach to shared definitions (conceptual map); and b) draw a map of the skills and qualities of women leaders.

The starting point of the reflection was: is it possible to recognize and promote a “feminine” leadership, with its own style and special features, and then different from a “masculine” one? or is it more useful to build and promote new “good practices” of a participatory leadership, not precisely characterized by gender, which could be shared by men and women? Although there was no unanimity on this important point, the participants were nevertheless all convinced that greater access of women to positions of command would be the bearer of changes, both in politics and in organizations. And it was stressed that the economic marginalization and discrimination of women are related to the problem of participation and representation.

In the second stage of this discussion, we aimed to outline a woman leader profile, developing a map of skills and qualities that could be played out in politics as in work

---

<sup>14</sup> See the report of the lectures: Alisa Del Re, *Le donne nei governi locali*, in *La leadership che fa la differenza*, cit., pp. 39–40.

<sup>15</sup> See the report of the lectures: Carmen Leccardi, *Tra generazioni: soggettività femminili in mutamenti*, in *La leadership che fa la differenza*, cit., pp. 37–38.

<sup>16</sup> See the report of the two workshops: 1) *Leadership e politica*, in *La leadership che fa la differenza*, cit., pp. 41–60; 2) *Leadership e lavoro*, *ibid.*, pp. 61–77.

contexts. This map was divided into three areas: knowledge (what *knowledge* I need to give content to my leadership?); skills (what *know-how* is useful to express my leadership?); and personal qualities (what ways of being can sustain and make efficient my leadership?). The discussion drew a distinction between, on the one hand the knowledge and skills that are acquired through education and training and improved with experience, on the other hand qualities and talents that are part of one's own personality. In general, the participants placed less emphasis on knowledge with respect to knowing how to do and knowing how to be. Moving from these maps, participants had then to identify women leaders in the world, not only politicians, and discuss their profiles.

The third workshop, "Leadership and Politics", was an empirical test: a) to acquire methods and tools useful to the development of skills and capabilities emerged as central to a participative leadership (narrative, active listening, group building management, and public speaking); and b) to simulate a strategy to support the election campaign of a woman in the local elections.

In the workshop "Leadership and Work", learning was rooted in individual work experience, with the narrative of leadership skills, successes and failures, conflicts. This phase ended with the drawing-up of a self-assessment questionnaire then administered to all members of the group.

In subsequent meetings, participants met two women at a different stage of a political career—a young candidate for mayor (group 1) and a regional councilor (group 2)—and had to draw up a grid of questions before interviewing them.<sup>17</sup> In another workshop, a researcher was invited to present and discuss a study conducted in 30 companies in Lombardia on the role and responsibilities of women and young people in times of crisis. A conclusive seminar allowed the different groups to share their experience and findings.

Since its founding in 1989, the SIS has placed at the core of its activities training and transmission of knowledge, even beyond the university, as a tool for the transformation of social reality and enhancement of the female subjectivity. The gender training was designed as a positive action that would allow women to acquire tools, to analyze, and deconstruct stereotypes and mechanism of exclusion, to promote women's work and leadership.

## References

- Scattigno, A. (2013) (a cura di) *La leadership che fa la differenza. Quaderno di formazione*. "Leadership femminile: diciamo sì al cambiamento" Corso di formazione organizzato da Assessorato alle Pari Opportunità della Provincia di Firenze. Società Italiana delle Storiche. Progetto realizzato con il finanziamento della Regione Toscana (LR. 16/2009 Cittadinanza di genere).

---

<sup>17</sup> See the report of the interviews to Brenda Barnini and Daniela Lastrì in *La leadership che fa la differenza*, cit., pp. 52–60.

# Beyond the Obvious: Whose Gender Studies?

Flavia Monceri

UNIVERSITY OF MOLISE

The situation of gender studies in Italy is still quite troubling for a number of reasons, but in this brief commentary I will touch on only one from the standpoint of a political philosopher who also teaches gender studies (*studi di genere*). To come directly to the point, the most urgent question to address, if we really want gender-sensitive research to develop across disciplines, concerns who is entitled to perform that kind of research and *for whom*. In fact, I find that if we try to “move beyond the obvious”, as the subheading of our international seminar suggested, we discover that Italian gender studies is still dominated by certain implicit presuppositions concerning the kind of people fully entitled to become researchers in gender issues. Such presuppositions may also become, if unwittingly, a powerful means to exclude all non-fitting people through a mild form of epistemicide by the part of the relating “scientific community”, one of whose tasks is to police the borders of admissible knowledge about “gender”. I will try to briefly argue for the previous statements, although I am very well aware that a much more detailed analysis would be needed, moving from my personal experience as a researcher and teacher in the field. As far as I see it, anyone should be entitled in principle to engage in Gender Studies and gender-sensitive research, not least because all of us *are assigned, are, have, and perform* a (particular kind of) gender. Moreover, both gender studies and gender-sensitive research should be performed in principle in the service of all concrete individuals, in that they also *are assigned, are, have, and perform* a (particular kind of) gender. However, this is not what happens, at least not in Italy, where gender research seems to have become, and still is a prerogative of “women”, both as researchers and as a target group. In a sense, it could probably be stated that in Italy (although not only) gender studies and women’s studies run often the risk of overlapping, with the result that the very term “gender” becomes an equivalent for “women”.

As a philosopher, I find that the most dangerous outcome of such an overlap is that this renders it no longer necessary just to “move beyond the obvious” in order to give a precise definition of the two notions, let alone of their privileged relationship, to the extent that when you say the word “genere” (gender) the image immediately is evoked of “donna” (woman), without any doubts that all the speakers and listeners immediately understand what properly a “woman” is and therefore also what “gender” means.

This implies that if you are usually identified by others as a woman, as happens to me, no one asks you anymore if you are satisfied with such an identification, and you become part of the group, without having the possibility to put in question that identification.

Of course this has the advantage of entitling you to “do” gender studies, because you have the right *physique du rôle*, so to speak. But the other side of the coin is that if you dare to question that original “obvious” identification you immediately find yourself marginalized. To give only one instance, it may happen because you feel a much greater affinity with research and teaching fields such as queer and transgender theories that refuse sexual and gender binaries and hence a stable and definite identification as one sex and one gender of the only two currently allowed. In short, it is my contention that far from being open to all possible *genders*, gender studies are generally the realm of researchers who are identified or (accept to) self-identify as women.

It would not be so difficult for anyone interested in the matter to find out that the overwhelming majority of those engaging in gender studies are identified or self-identify as women, as it is the case with the members of the various research centers, institutions, journals, etc., in which the words “gender” or “genere” appear. When conferences, workshops, and seminars are held on “gender issues,” it usually happens that the vast majority of speakers, as well as most of the audience, are “women”. This has the side-effect of reaffirming the by now stereotypical idea that “gender issues” are something pertaining primarily or especially to women, something that is “reserved” for them, because the addressed issues are “women’s issues” or issues on which women give their (womanly) point of view when relating to the only other accepted gender, that is to say “men”. It might seem strange that women themselves do not fight against such an automatic and uncritical association between gender and women, but here a political philosopher may have something appropriate to say. As a matter of fact, that association reinforces the sense of belonging to an identity group, that of “women”, which can be put in the service of an identity politics activated by, and targeted to, women in order to promote and campaign for women-oriented policies under the label of “gender-oriented policies”.

The same goes with the audience that gender studies, and generally gender issues, are able to attract in Italy. The students attending my classes are almost all women (at least at first sight), even if my radical and unconventional position is well known and the classes themselves include lectures and activities on queer theories, transgender theories, (critical) disability studies, Crip theories, as well as on non-mainstream case studies, such as sadomasochism, disability, sexuality, intersexuality and the like. The same happens when I give lectures or seminars in other universities, or in courses on, say, gender violence: the vast majority of the people looking at me can be inserted, according to the prevailing sexual and gender norms for stereotypical classification, in the category of women. Now, I must confess that this is a problem to me, urging me to ask *why* it is (still) so. I am aware that I could find a reassuring answer in putting the blame on the so-called patriarchal society, which keeps “men” far from gender issues because they are none of their business. I might also find some relief in believing that things will change in the future, as soon as “women” succeed in dismantling that society and in convincing “men” that being gender-sensitive is also in their interest.

Unfortunately, these and similar answers are not enough to me and asking “Why?” immediately brings me back to the questions of “who” and “for whom”, and hence to the responsibility of those who “do” gender studies in deconstructing the stereotypical association between gender and women. In fact, a great part of the difficulties that gender studies are currently undergoing in Italy lies in a widespread defensive and exclusive, if

not “isolationist”, attitude by the part of many women researchers. This does not mean that people not identified as women are banished, but that those perceived as “outsiders” are requested to follow the rules set up by the in-group of women regarding the correct way to perform research about gender issues and the results it should achieve. I tend to suppose that this holds true also for the few “men” researching gender issues, although I would prefer reading, and listening to, what they have to say about the issue, before taking a position. Be it as it may, such an attitude lets some unintended consequences emerge that make the theoretical and political potential of gender studies vanish. I will mention only two of them.

The first has to do with the reaction by those who are not engaged in, or are suspicious toward, gender studies, especially people identified or self-identified as “men”. The association between gender and women, as well as the above-mentioned defensive attitude, may and do have the undesired outcome to reinforce the idea that “gender affairs” are actually “women’s affairs” and that therefore men should rather keep at arm’s length, so to speak. This is something quite typical of an oppositional group-dynamics such as the one currently at play both within academic circles and the wider public discourse when it comes to gender issues. In other terms, when women researchers reiterate the idea that the primary focus of the discipline should be women, though adding that this does not mean to exclude men, they are giving men good reasons not only to consider gender as a womanly affair, but even not to feel themselves curious to better understand what “gender” is about, eventually becoming interested in gender by being explicitly involved on equal terms.

In a sense, then, I am suggesting that the lack of “men’s” involvement in developing gender studies might be ascribed, at least partially, to an inability to show how gender affects *all of us* in that it is a social construction of roles, practices, and so on to which *all of us* have been, are being, and will be subject to, independently of our anatomy.

But this cannot be done until women themselves give up the association between gender as a general category and only one particular gender. Until then, things will not change that much, for all the attempts to dismantle “patriarchal society” through gender/women-oriented policies, laws, and rules.

The second unintended consequence has to do with the exclusion of people who, like me, maintain that gender studies can show its usefulness and potential only if it is able to open to a pluralism of genders, by shifting to “genders” studies. And I must also confess that sometimes I wonder if it would not be rather the case to simply overcome this by now seemingly exploited discipline to replace it with something different. What leads me to this discomforting conclusion is something my personal experience of epistemic marginalization simply because I take other theoretical options, such as queer and transgender theories, so seriously as to state that not only genders, but also sexes and sexualities are nothing more than cultural co-constructs built up by people who have the power to do so at the expenses of all those who are still, and will probably remain, a minority. I understand that this form of exclusion originates from the adherence to a notion of (collective) identity functional to the performances required by identity politics, but still I find that this implies diminishing the role of “gender” for a “progressive” politics.

Therefore, I would suggest, by way of a provisional conclusion, that accepting to enter an unbiased dialog with non-mainstream and sometimes even “heretical” positions com-

ing from outside the somehow established front of gender-as-women's-studies could result in building a wider front, more capable to campaign and fight for a greater and greater acknowledgment of the role that gender-sensitive research might play for *all of us*, independently of our identification in a stable identity. This is not meant to imply that "women's issues" should be downplayed or considered irrelevant: just the opposite. It is rather meant to suggest the usefulness of building flexible networks of alliances among different and even divergent approaches to gender issues that will never converge or unify, but would nonetheless be able to fight together toward less and less exclusion. This is also the main goal that I still believe, although from a radically critical perspective, was the one dreamed about by the original pioneers of the notion of gender.

# 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).

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).

**Maurizio Cerruto**, *Università della Calabria*

\* \* \*

**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 an ‘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.

**Annarita Criscitiello**, *University of Naples Federico II*

\* \* \*

**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 (Zug) 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.

**Simona Piattoni**, *University of Trento*

\* \* \*

**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 re-introduced 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?

**Gianfranco Pasquino**, *University of Bologna and Johns Hopkins University*

\* \* \*

**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).<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> (It is worth noting that the wide-

---

<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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;<sup>6</sup> 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.

**Seongcheol Kim**, *WZB Berlin Social Science Center and Humboldt University, Berlin*

\* \* \*

**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 Gerechtigkeit*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Fritz Scharpf, *Demokratiethorie zwischen Utopie und Anpassung*, Konstanz, Scriptor, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, London, Verso, 2000; Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, London, Routledge, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

**Antonio La Spina**, *LUISS Guido Carli University, Rome*

\* \* \*

**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 sub-periods (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,<sup>7</sup> 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.

**Carla Monteleone, *University of Palermo***

---

<sup>7</sup> 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-

roduction, 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).

**Marta Regalia**, *LUISS Guido Carli University, Rome*