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BOOK REVIEWS

Young people, citizenship and political participation: combating civic deficit?

by Mark Chou, Jean-Paul Gagnon, Catherine Hartung, and Lesley J. Pruitt, London, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017, 147 pp., index, £80.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-7834-8993-0, £24.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-7834-8995-4

Young people around the world are voting less and fewer among the new generations consider democracy as the best political system to rule the society they live in. While the upper echelons of the political world scream blue murder, little has been said about how young people are engaging in different, new kinds of democratic processes. Why are young people not participating in the electoral process? "They do not vote because they do not see it as an effective way of getting what they want" (9). However, if young people are engaging in their own way of politics, why is it important to successfully implement civics education in schools? Because "citizenship education provides young people with an opportunity to learn about what it means to live in a democracy" (56). Therefore, the question this book addresses is how should young people be included and motivated to engage in the different rituals of democracy? For the authors of this book, the answer to this last question lies in the "practice of co-designing civics education *with* a broad, representative sample of young people" (xi, emphasis in original) in which policymakers should engage regularly in order to increase younger generations' democratic participation.

Co-designing the civics education programmes, the authors argue, will take young people from citizens in the making to full citizens. Moving away from a "state-knows-best" approach, it makes sense that those who would be the most affected by a public policy get the greatest say during the design of the curriculum for the courses and activities they will participate in during their formative years. A co-design approach in education policies promotes a dialogue between policymakers and citizens. Moreover, with "more first-hand interactions with the subjects of their analysis […] policymakers and curriculum experts unlock the potential to co-produce with young people a curriculum that is more in tune with the lived realities of today's young people rather than merely replicating unhelpful stereotypes" (132). What young people think of the civic education they get at school and how this type of education better relates to and accounts for what younger generations understand for citizenship are questions that should guide policymakers if they truly wish to achieve a full understanding of what is currently happening with our youth. And they should do so, because "there is nothing to suggest that young people cannot make an invaluable, engaged and considered political contribution" (131).

Chapter by chapter, the authors make the case to revitalize and rethink the importance of citizenship education. In her chapter, Catherine Hartung argues that, "without critically engaging with the taken-for-grantedness of citizenship and citizenship education, we run the risk of reproducing rather than overcoming social and political inequality and disengagement" (67). However, the empirical cases in the book focus on the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and its conclusions are

limited to these contexts. By focusing on only three countries, this study excludes how younger generations in different regions around the world, such as Europe and South America, are effectively engaging in traditional politics, even when they do not have access to civic education programmes in schools.

Perhaps the biggest strength of this book is the simplicity and clarity with which the authors tackle the persistent paradox in the literature about democracy and youth; that is, the dichotomic views on whether the younger generations' disengagement from traditional politics is hindering democracy or expanding it. The crisis of democracy has long been considered the result of younger generations' abandonment and dispassionateness for traditional politics. On the contrary, and drawing on Pierre Rosanvallon's theory of "counter-democracy", the authors argue that the plurality of democracy conceptions within a society clash with each other in a constant process of balancing. Indeed, as it is argued throughout this volume, there are many ways of doing politics, as there are many ways of being political. As Chou points out in the chapter that opens this volume, "simply voting at national elections is no longer politically sufficient" (18). This puts tensions on the sacralisation of certain political acts, and down the road, makes traditional politicians nervous. However, and here is the crux of the matter, young people are not simply going home. Rather, they "are rejecting, refining as well as revolutionising politics" (19).

By the end of the volume, the main question of whether or not implementing co-designed civics education curriculums in schools will improve the younger generations' participation in traditional politics remains unanswered. The authors have made a good case of demystifying what the younger generations' lack of participation actually means, and shows how the youth can inform policymakers and policymakers can inform the youth through co-designed civics education programmes. On the other hand, the authors have not shown any definitive proof through data that co-created programmes will single-handedly alleviate the youth's disengagement in politics. Yet, this book remains a recommendable invitation to anyone who wonders what will happen when today's youth become tomorrow's voters.

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How democracy ends, by David Runciman, London, Profile Books, 2018, 249 pp., index, £14.99 (hardback), £12.99 (ebook), ISBN 978-1781259740

It is common knowledge that democracy is in decline. From the high point of the immediate post-Cold War period until around the late 1990s or early 2000s, democracy seemed to be on the up. Fukuyama identified the late 1980s as the "end of history" with liberal democracy unchallenged by alternative political systems. When we are all democrats now, it seems that the only way to go is down. Fast forward a quarter century: