

## **After the Revolution: Youth, Democracy, and the politics of Disappointment in Serbia. By Jessica Greenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014. Pp. 235.**

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Jessica Greenberg's book *After the Revolution: Youth, Democracy, and the Politics of Disappointment in Serbia* focuses on student activism after the mass protests of October 2000 in Serbia that toppled Slobodan Milošević. She argues that the politics of disappointment preceded and shaped students' engagements with democracy. Post-revolutionary disappointment with political and social developments in Serbia was not a "failure of political modernity but a central feature of it." (2014:182) The book captures uncertainties, complexities, and contradictions of youth activism and democracy building. It contributes to our understanding of youth activism, citizenship, political participation, and democracy by expanding these concepts to entail temporal, spatial, affective, performative, and ethical dimensions. At a more general level, it contributes to the scholarship of democracy as a cultural and political practice grounded in local and international contexts.

In chapter 1, Greenberg considers the politics of disappointment by analyzing the relationship of youth, politics, and time. Chapter 2 analyzes the changing political meanings of urban space and protest as well as engagements in representative politics as part of students' democratic citizenship. Chapter 3 examines students' efforts at university reform within the context of European Union Bologna initiatives. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the rise of expertise talk as a form of student activism and students' attempts to create democratic politics through practices of representation, accountability, and transparency.

The book begins with the discussion of popular reflections on the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić on March 12, 2003, the day associated with the end of Serbia's democratic revolution. (2014:1) What happens when the revolution is over and the heightened atmosphere and hopes are shattered by post-revolutionary disappointments? This time of disappointment is taken seriously as the "ethos of many new (and not so new) democracies. Disappointment is neither an absence—of hope or possibility—nor the after effect of "real" politics having taken place in another time or place. It is a complex political and affective form in its own right." (2014:9) Greenberg argues that disappointment is a new ethical and affective knowledge, a form of political participation integral to democracy building. It is about future-looking change and becoming embedded in critical revisions of the past and the present. In its explorations of the politics of disappointment, the book nicely captures the "spirit" of post-Cold War politics, which extend beyond Serbia: cynicism, humor, depression, energy, and belief in the future interconnected with resignation and disbelief in politics.

Greenberg advances our understanding of democracy beyond democracy as utopia, a Western (or NGO) export, and an elite power technology in post-Soviet Europe and beyond. For Serbian students, who are willing to depart from the nationalist and violent past of Serbia,

democracy is a new regime of governance and self-governance. Students are critical of their parents' generation, who represent Serbia's past, as well as politics in general. In case of student activism, we have a specific type of democracy: democracy as a procedure, or an ethos, which shapes students' activism. It's an ethical alternative grounded in local contexts and student sensibilities. It is a politics of depolitization falling within the political tradition of *apolitics*, prevalent in the region since socialism. Students' democracy is not bound to elections and electoral politics. Instead, it is related to students' expertise, professionalism and embedded in material forms, such as the pamphlets, policy papers, and other artifacts of expertise, through which their new political culture emerges. (2014:chapter 4)

*After the Revolution* inspires us to ask important questions about the politics of disappointment and democracy: how do politics of disappointment evolve and take different forms? How are the politics of disappointment different among different gender, class, status, and age groups? Can politics of disappointment emerge in non-democratic political engagements? How does democracy become a source of self-identity and action? In the book, democracy is discussed as procedure, even if not in electoral contexts. It is about creating transparency, accountability, representation, the rule of law, interests and rights, and civil society. This gives us evidence for "democracy" in the making and at the same time introduces an active, rational, and productive subject. Can we see democratic citizenship disconnected from activism and emerging in other types of agency? Would apathy, discussed in Jessica Greenberg's other work, be a form of democratic citizenship? How do various forms of democratic citizenship circulate and interconnect in a political community? Since the concept of citizenship entails belonging to the state and nation as well as political subjectivity, what kind of belonging and subjectivity does "democratic citizenship" entail?

Greenberg's powerful arguments about political transformations and thorough analysis of everyday technologies of democracy building are an important contribution to the anthropology of global politics. *After the Revolution* is a good example of a theoretical endeavor, which transcends common analytics prevalent in scholarship on post-Cold War Europe for several decades. This book should be of interest to students and scholars of politics within and outside of anthropology.