

Foreword

This is a most timely and much needed book. Domenica Gräfin von Preysing-Lichtenegg-Moos presents the first in-depth and real-time study of the ongoing and highly contested Transitional Justice (TJ) policy processes taking place in Tunisia. Since Ben Ali was ousted in 2011 the country underwent a turbulent but mostly peaceful transformation process. Tunisia is the first Arab country to develop encompassing mechanisms in order to deal with the human rights violations of the past making it an important case to study in depth.

Based on qualitative critical discourse analysis, Domenica Preysing looks at the arguments and practices of the Tunisian political elites between 2011 and 2013, when finally a TJ law was accepted. Focusing both on content and function of these discourses her work traces the many highly contested issues implicated in any TJ-process. Who was a victim in the first place? How to prove that? What to expect as material or symbolical reparations? How to deal with the functionaries and politicians who were implicated in the old regime? The answers to these questions are at the same time of utmost importance for the manifold social and political processes of transformation, which normally come with a political transition. In her book, Domenica Preysing analyses the different answers, which were articulated by decision-makers and opinion leaders in Tunisia. She concludes that the deep rift, which lies between these political forces has also been highly relevant to the turns and twists of the TJ debate in Tunisia. Transitional Justice in Domenica Preysings words, then, should be understood as a

„two-way tug-of-war with nor clear winners or losers emerging from the meaning making process of transitional justice à la tunisienne. Policy discourse formation has been a highly antagonistic, conflict ridden affair, which saw two increasingly defined antagonistic discourse communities pit against one another, waiting „before the law“. In the process, international discourse on what constitutes good transitional justice and human rights policy served as a repository or „power-knowledge-system that has been drawn upon selectively to produce and discipline social subjects like „victim“ and „counterrevolutionary“. The preliminary outcomes of the policy process align in principle with international prescriptions in terms of the standard four dimensions of transitional justice „best practice“ (...) Key areas of contestation have been the subject positions of „victim“, „revolutionary“ and „democrat“ and the legitimacy of claims that may be derived from occupying this status as opposed to the other („perpetrator“, „counterrevolutionary“, „antidemocrat“).”

Looking at the different “logics” of the policy discourse she points to the importance of the “Logic of Translation”, a new and highly important category, which is derived from her data-analysis. It dominates the way, in which international policy prescriptions are translated and re-interpreted by local actors. Thus, the book is not only a highly valuable contribution to critical policy studies but also reveals the importance of the domestic scale of any global policy. Norms such as “transitional justice” are not simply “diffusing” from no-where, they are actively incorporated, translated and re-appropriated. While following the political confrontations of the last years, Domenica Preysing develops a highly sophisticated set of analytical tools, which will leave an impact on the practices of policy analysis. Not the least, Domenica Preysing offers to complicate any simplified readings of Tunisian politics. This is more important than ever as the transformations are ongoing and open-ended and entail much more than political conflict between secular and religious forces.

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