The reviewed book is a summary of six political analyses. Each of the authors were devoted researches to the processes of transformation that took place in Poland for the last 25 years. The book is divided into six separate sections compiled by different authors, an introduction and a bibliography.

The idea to write this type of books seems very appropriate. An analysis, which would order this area of research and provide an assessment, is missing. From my point of view, taking as form of scientific monographs adds value to the analysed publication since it provides a completely different point of view. Each of the authors is a specialist in a given area of research and presents his findings.

The book starts with a consideration of the Poland’s political transformation by Jerzy Kornaś. The author takes an important dimension of transformation of Poland and its political system. The author disclaims that there is a direct relation between a gradual or radical reform in the economy of a country and its adaptation in other spheres of a functioning country. According to the author it is one of the possible scenarios. Moving on to the analysis of polity change, Kornaś indicates that the government of the Polish People’s Republic which at some point tried to reform both the political and economic systems, had to face a basic difficulty - a build public confidence. Therefore, the introduction of such major reforms required the acceptance of different social groups like the Catholic Church. It goes without saying that the approval of the proposed reforms is closely related to the expected results.
Trying to define the general attitude towards the proposed changes in the 1980s, the author describes this idea to be a ‘quadrature of the circle’ (p. 14). The fundamental change was brought by the round table council which is recognized as a source of argument and discussion. Kornaś denies the achievements of one of the opposed sides saying that the compromise was achieved by the cooperation between the ruling party and the opposition, not one of the sides. Whether their motivation is official (tactical) or authentic is not of importance.

In the second chapter Rafał Lisiakiewicz discusses the position of various researchers who were the subject of local government in Poland. He brings in your text to the report concerning the state of local self-government in Poland prepared by a team of experts, working under supervision of Jerzy Hausner. At the beginning, Lisiakiewicz of trying to find an answer to the question of decentralization of power in Poland, recalling the researchers of the problem, i.e. Marek Kulesza, Jerzy Hausner or P. Antkowiak. All of the aforementioned scientists and many others agree on the fact that the reform of decentralization of the country was positive. The scientists are definitely more critical about the very model of the three-level ladder territorial local self-government that was introduced in Poland. They challenge the existence of boroughs. In the later part of the chapter, Lisiakiewicz describes the problems connected with certain levels of local self-government, invoking the opinions of the experts that study the area. One of the problems connected with the activities of municipalities that are being analysed in that part of the book is supervision of the executive body by the municipality council. Whereas in other European counties such relation is standard, in the Polish conditions it is the other way round. It is the executive body that subdues the commission, marginalizes it or stays in conflict which was accurately pointed out by Jerzy Stępień. Another debatable question that is raised by the author is the number and size of the Polish boroughs since the variability of size stands for an unfavourable tendency. Such disproportions build up considerable development differences. In the case of counties, the most important complaint, whether some historical motivations may be found or not, is that such decision was not caused by the contemporaneous needs of Poland. The author indicates the problem of leaving a fairly broad list of responsibilities to a borough. This, in turn, caused a situation where the duties of a county had to be artificially make up. Whereas most of the communities criticise the necessity of a county, it is not possible to imagine a situation where they are completely repealed. Finally Lisiakiewicz engages in topic of democratization of local self-government. It includes the problem in communication between the government and the society, strengthening of the political parties’ impact on the self-governing parties, merging of the self-government and bureaucracy.
The author of the next chapter is Łukasz Danel. In the analysis the author engages in the area of the theoretical basics which are essential for studying the party system. It is very hard to use an idea of some Polish and foreign scholars i.e. Andrzej Antoszewski, Ryszard Herbut, Katarzyna Sobolewska-Myślik, Maurice Duverger, Jean Blondel, Marek Sobolewski, Giovanni Sartori, Peter Mair to differentiate between the political party systems. Scrutinizing of the theories enabled the author to move into the next part of his paper where he reflects on the party systems of the countries which experienced the system transformation. Danel states that such systems are characterized by significant instability. This in turn influences frequent changes of their shape and structure. It is caused by various factors which he wrote Waldemar Wojtasik. It concerns the non-competitive character of such systems. Before the transformation, the attrition of economic and political non-efficiency with the free market developing interest of wide social circles developed. The author alludes to the very political parties and creates a thesis that argues that the role and the conditions of operation in which such bodies operate were very different from the mass parties that functioning at the same time in the European democratic countries. It was caused by a different mass party organization model. They represented the interests of specific social groups and therefore were much deeply rooted in the social structure. This makes the author believe that when analysing the political parties of the central-east European region we have to remember that the dynamics of change is very different from the western equivalents.

In the next part Danel discusses the character and dysfunctions of party system in Poland. In his view, we can detect signs of institutionalization of the party system in Poland which can be seen in the decrease of the number of political parties or the stabilization of the political scene. On the other hand we can say that despite the changes, the party system of Poland is still underdeveloped and it is shown in a very low election attendance and a pretty high election wavering.

The fourth chapter, written by Robert Jakimowicz, is an emphasis that Polish democracy has already been consolidated since it achieves all of the criteria which complete it. It is also worth to remember that Polish democracy is still a dynamic democracy which differentiates it from the western European democracies.

In the first part of his chapter, Jakimowicz analyses the electoral system. Based on it, the author comes to a few basic applications. First, changes of the electoral law in the years 1991–2011, had a direct impact on the dynamic changes in the simply parliament. The introduction of thresholds of voters had a special significance, which significantly reduced the representation of political forces in parliament, limiting them to a select few that had a seat in parliament. Secondly, Polish politicians are able to use democratic tools, which according to the author confirmed double dissolution of
Parliament before the end of his term. Thirdly, in the opinion of the author, the aims of the electoral system were achieved with particular emphasis on representativeness. Another thesis is the thesis about not presenting specific groups, such as women, younger and older people, less wealthy and less educated people. In the second part of the article Jakimowicz raises very important issues of financing of political parties, discussing models that exist in Germany, Italy, Britain, the United States and comparing them to the one in Poland. As well, the author argues that the weakest link in the lack of transparency and effective control of expenditure, in relation to virtually every political party.

In the next chapter, Karolina Kotulewicz deliberates on the groups interests and their impact on the Polish political system. The author claims that at the time of the changes which begun in 1989, interest groups have become an important link to the political parties in the Polish political system. Then, the author tries to define the concept of interest groups in relation to the Polish solutions, and she discusses the structure and typology of them. Based on the type of activity the author singled out a group operating within the economic system and a groups working in the social sphere, a group operating in the sphere of culture, science and religion and loosely organized interest groups that its formula resemble social movements. The author singled out institutional interest groups, independent interest groups based on kinship and common descent, as well as union interest groups. (p. 139–140) In further discussion Kotulewicz presents such topics as the basis of political and legal functioning in Poland, interest groups, the manner of their political influence, interest groups and their role in the forum of reconciliation of interests, characteristics of lobbying in Poland and the influence of interest groups on civil society. Summing up her reflections, the author argues that interest groups are actively involved in the process of decentralization of power in the transition period. Kotulewicz divides interest groups on the economic and uneconomical ones, and also underlines that from the perspective of 25 years, we can say that interest groups in Poland complete the decision-making process, thus ensuring the balance of the Polish political system (p. 170).

The reviewed monograph completes the chapter by Joanna Dzwończyk on civil society and the barriers to its development. At the very beginning the author emphasizes that her research does the issue of NGOs as one of the manifestations of civil society, as a result of restrictions on publishing. At the beginning of the author trying to define the concept of civil society and to show their respect to the revolution and the political system. A key part of the article are the reflections on civil society in Poland after 1989, and the barriers to its development. Author indicates that the entities that make up the Polish third sector are mainly associations and foundations. In 2014, there were 100,000 associations and 17,000 foundations registered.
Surveys, which are evoked by author, indicate that the Poles still are not willing to engage in this type of activities. Among the main barriers to the development of civil society, we can distinguish the legislative blockade, low level of social trust, as well as problems with the communication between political elite and civil society. Because of it, civil society feels neglected and marginalized.

Very important part of this monography is trying to summarise changes in 25 years of polish political, party and law systems in polish local government and civil society. This it’s possible to perform systematics of researches and show total sight of transformation. In my opinion the selection of the subject matters of all of the chapters is relevant and show differentiation of researches and complexity of polish transformation. Only objections is about too enlarge theoretical part of the chapters. Enlarge part of theory in introduction is necessary of course, however shortening of theoretical part can allow to better analyse of the problems with the use of specific examples.

References:

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