Stein Ringen: The Liberal Vision and Other Essays on Democracy and Progress

Stein Ringen is a professor of sociology and social policy at the University of Oxford and a versatile socio-political thinker with a rich background, covering the large area between statistics and social philosophy. Between 1992 and 1996, Ringen was also a lecturer in politics and social policy at the Central European University in Prague (still existing at the time), where he organised three conferences on social policy, published in three volumes as the 'Prague Papers in Social Transition'. For his extensive cooperation with the Czech social sciences he was awarded doctor honoris causa from Masaryk University in April 2008.

Drawing on his wealth of experience in political science, sociology and statistics, Ringen has written several books that have had a great impact on social policy thought. The year 2007 was exceptionally fruitful in this sense. Besides the book under review, Princeton University Press published his book What Democracy is For: On Freedom and Moral Government, wherein he refers to democracy as the victorious system, though more in quantitative terms (the number of democracies in the world) than in qualitative terms (how well those democracies perform). Indeed, both books expressed his strong confidence in democracy and liberalism – led by ‘wide-eyed optimism’ (p. 14 of the book under review). His confidence is essentially Churchillian: deeply rooted and soundly argued, without any naivety, but with an awareness of the fact that, basically, ‘democracies perform pretty badly’ (p. 18).

The book under review contains 18 essays collected in three parts, aptly titled ‘Reason’, ‘Solidarity’ and ‘Democracy’. These are also the key concepts that must be forged and linked together. Strong beliefs combined with methodological accuracy have led Ringen to build on common sense and formulate visions crucial for the functioning of modern society. In his book The Possibility of Politics of 1987 he argued his confidence in the welfare state, rebuffing all the gloomy forecasts of its future. In one chapter of his What Democracy Is For and in the article ‘The Truth about Class Inequality’ (published in CSR 3, 2006), Ringen expressed his strong belief in the massive thrust of upward social mobility achieved through educational and other reforms. Against the sophisticated methods used to prove the stability of class divisions, he applied a more direct method to substantiate the obvious conclusion of falling class inequality (p. 12). As Raymond Boudon notes in the introduction to the book, Ringen knows how to translate the intuitions of common sense into words (p. xi). I would add that Ringen’s informed use of statistics enables him also to prove that what is obvious is not always an illusion.

This book’s starting point is that ‘[t]he liberal vision is simple and elementary. It starts with individual who possesses dignity by force of his or her existence as a human being and who lives this dignity through freedom and reason.’ (p. 185) The idea is presented as a simple one, but it is not in reality. For Ringen, the distinction between ‘liberty’ and ‘freedom’ (a distinction that does not exist in Czech, for example) is crucial. Liberty is only a condition of freedom, while freedom is the fusion of liberty and reason. To be free is not enough, as one should also have skills and capacities ‘to be reasonably able to practically live according to what one has good reasons to believe to be right and good’ (p. 19). In this Ringen follows Amartya Sen and Raymond Boudon, by relating liberty to positive values and resources (both material and knowledge) that empower a person to act – and to act well.

The book offers a rich and inspiring set of ideas that cannot be easily condensed.
Yet two main and interlinked ideas matter in particular: we have to cherish and develop our visions, but challenge and test them simultaneously. Liberty, democracy and solidarity are the foundation stones of any modern society, but none of these concepts is ever accomplished and completely utilised. We should avoid – Ringen stresses – talk of crisis, since the meaning of crisis under democratic governance is that ‘governments lack the motivation, resolve, power or tools to adapt public policies to changing demands and constraints’ (p. 70).

It is this reviewer’s opinion that that the expected qualities of democratic government are in Ringen’s view not guaranteed in the ‘marketing age’. Given the existing mechanisms of the party system and electoral democracy, the next elections are usually more important for political action than the next generation’s well-being. In the Czech Republic, the balance of political forces in parliament often renders governments powerless. Alternatively, policies and institutions can fail as a result of bureaucratic and corrupt behaviour. The ‘ultimate control over collective decisions’ that in a democratic polity should lie with citizens (p. 147) is somewhat conditional. The author identifies the condition of the ‘securely institutionalised manner’ of citizens’ control, but maintaining procedures cannot guarantee that citizens will engage themselves and, if they do it is questionable whether they will be provided with the necessary information for rationale – or at least just reasonable – choice.

However, Stein Ringen is by no means a naive enthusiast. He subjects key concepts to criticism and stresses the need to challenge them, democracy in particular. Democracy has many weaknesses, and ‘even in the most democratic countries is sinking into an abyss of corruption’ (p. 186). He refers several times to Arthur Okun’s warning of the ‘transgression’ of economic power into the domain of politics. He also recalls the critical lectures of classic political scientists such as Robert A. Dahl and the lesser-known Norwegian Study on Power and Democracy, a long piece of research in 1998–2003, which resulted in fifty books and many studies. ‘The conclusion was not only that there are weak points in the chain but that a chain that was once solid was falling apart.’ (p. 158) Even if this was the conclusion for such a stable and solid country as Norway, what about other countries, and the post-communist states in particular?

Ringen’s way of thinking is comprehensive, fruitfully utilising ideas from the classics and from the leading modern thinkers in sociology and political science. He gains also from his personal touch, from long visits to different countries and continents. Necessarily, his oeuvre provokes debate – one such debate was over the stability thesis, at the Brno session of RC 28 in May 2007 (see the report by Michael L. Smith in CSR 6, 2007). His faith in democracy and progress contrasts sharply with, for example, the views of John Gray, the advocate of the New Right in the 1980s and then of New Labour in the 1990s, and the author of Two Faces of Liberalism (2000) and Heresies: Against Progress and Other Illusions (2004), who reminds us of the failures of democracies in the past century and takes a sceptical view of the future of capitalism and democracy, particularly owing to globalisation.

Although Ringen appears to have a penchant for the word ‘mystery’ – using it, for example, to describe the true purpose of social policy – he prefers clear and transparent methodology when describing reality. His credo that ‘the right methodology for the job at hand is always the simplest one that will do the job’ was also applied in his criticism of the stability thesis mentioned above. Similarly, Ringen does not introduce any new path-breaking political-theoretical concepts, but rather uses the accustomed ones in order to question them, and then to develop, probe, and fine-tune.
their usefulness. The book’s recommendations are ambitious. Ringen advocates the extension of voting rights to children, the tying of supra-national decision-making to the democratic chains of power, and the re-introduction of local democracy. In particular, voters should be empowered instead of parties, concretely, by distributing party funds in the form of vouchers. These suggested innovations are certainly visionary and brave. However, channels to improve democracy for a better use in the future must pass through democracy as it exists today, with all its corruption and imperfections.

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Chris Hasselmann: Policy Reform and the Development of Democracy in Eastern Europe
Aldershot (UK) and Burlington, VT (USA) 2007: Ashgate, 196 pp.

During the 1990s a vast number of studies ventured to explore the complexities of political and economic transitions or transformations in Central and Eastern Europe. Regrettably, the numerous and often very detailed and extensive investigations of democratisation and market reform processes in the region for the most part omitted a comprehensive discussion of policy and especially social policy. The end of the decade brought about a welcome change to this trend. Many scholars ‘rediscovered’ the significance of the welfare state, and of pension reform in particular, as one of the most fundamental and potentially perilous elements of this unprecedented historic change. Today, however, much too often analyses pay insufficient attention to the domestic and international contexts that shape policy making and policy outcomes. In this regard, Chris Hasselmann’s book is a welcome exception. His study aims to connect three processes that are rarely analysed together and compared on the basis of detailed empirical evidence: democratisation, privatisation (market reform), and social policy (pension) reform.

The attempt to explain the complex politics of welfare state reform in connection to the emerging system of new interest groups deserves particular attention as an original and potentially theoretically rewarding premise of the book. Hasselmann seeks to demonstrate the existence of a causal link between the privatisation process and its outcomes, producing both ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, and specific groups and individuals mobilised in an effort to shape the process of pension reform in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. All this, the author claims, provides solid proof of the success of democratic consolidation in the region.

By far the book’s greatest strength lies in its analysis of the politics of pension reform in each country and in the convincing argument in favour of the predominant role of domestic actors. The author demonstrates broad knowledge of all cases. Yet it would help the analysis considerably to include at least sample data on pension spending. Hungary stands out as the most thoroughly researched example of the extremely convoluted and frequently misunderstood struggle for pension reform during the 1990s. The few omissions or errors are mostly confined to the other two cases, Poland and the Czech Republic. For example, the Polish Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) opposed mandatory private accounts for a long time, especially since this idea was first introduced in Poland in 1991, long before the famous World Bank report of 1994 was publicised there. Also, the role of stakeholders and various actors involved in the process of pension reform could be expanded and explained a little better. For instance, there is no mention of the close fusion of union and governmental
social policy expertise in the Czech Republic (and previously in Czechoslovakia) and the pivotal role of the office of the minister of labour (not just personalities) in social policy-making in Poland. Moreover, in the 1990s the pension reform process should not be reduced to the introduction of the mandatory private pillar. Throughout the period discussed in the book, issues such as the level of indexing, retirement age, and various bonuses for key occupational groups were no less important. Whereas the last two of these are addressed in the book in some fashion, the indexing problem is mentioned only briefly, even though it appears to have been of pivotal importance to the public in all three countries, where the paramount concern was to preserve, and if possible, continue to increase the existing benefit amounts for current retirees. In addition, regardless of the formal label, proposed ‘private’ pensions were invariably a ‘public’ as well as a ‘private’ (individual) good (see p. 127) as long as they remained firmly within the larger social insurance system underwritten by the government. Indeed, we must keep in mind that the state guarantees for the existing pension payments and privileges, much more so than anything else, always played a key role in the relationship between the regime and society in the region, regardless of the type of government system.

This brings us to the central question and the main thesis of the book: does the ten-year history of pension reform in the region demonstrate the success and consolidation of ‘western-style’ democracy in Eastern Europe? I would argue that the way this argument is set up in the first place is reflective more of the earlier period in the literature, when the academic debate among the so-called transitologists focused on the very survival of the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (see, for instance, Przeworski 1991; Jowitt 1992; Linz and Stepan 1996, etc.). Since then all of these countries have been through half a dozen or more electoral cycles, and of course all of them were admitted to the EU as ‘consolidated democracies’ in 2004. Nevertheless, anyone who follows Polish, Czech or Hungarian politics on a regular basis would agree that the actual quality of democratic rule, especially in terms of the stable and effectual relationship between the state and civil society has not yet reached satisfactory levels, and in some instances has even regressed in recent years.

Hence, it would have been more timely, and also more accurate given the focus of the book on the emergence of societal interests, to concentrate more on the specific, imperfect dimensions of democracy, and in particular on the problematic quality and transparency of the policy-making processes. Although, as noted above, the politics of pension policy reform is very well explained in the book, a more comparative angle emphasising differences in national policy-making contexts would help. It would also be useful for the reader to see more discussion of the particular institutional players and their normative preferences. The author is right to emphasise the Bismarckian roots of the social security systems in all three countries, but understanding the way in which these systems have developed since 1989 and also under communism is essential if we are to understand the considerable divergence in policy outcomes today. While it is true, for example, that various societal groups participated in the pension reform, their role is neither new nor as consequential as Hasselmann sometimes seems to suggest. Many of these groups and stakeholders have carried over their mission from the communist era and their impact under new democratic conditions has varied widely among the three cases.

Although the author is right to emphasise that Poland displayed the most contestation, we should not exaggerate the actual impact of civil society in the process of welfare state reform in any of these coun-
tries. There is sufficient evidence – including data provided in this book – to demonstrate that the pension legislation was drafted and amended by a very small group of government experts, with only token ‘consultations’ with outside groups. In sum, although theoretically intriguing, the attempt to link the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of privatisation to the actual pro- or anti-reform coalitions seems insufficient to demonstrate the actual causal connection between societal pressures and policy outcomes that would contribute to democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the final attempt, in the conclusion, to shift the focus of discussion to the international factors, such as the important, but by no means pivotal role of the World Bank and the IMF, unnecessarily weakens the central argument of the book that rightly highlights the domestic environment of policy making. Finally, even though the pension reform may not be the best test case for the consolidation of democratic rule in the region, this type of investigation is badly needed in our field. Hopefully, Hasselmann’s book will be followed by many more comparative and contextualised studies of decision-making in other areas of public policy.

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Notes:
2 For a recent comprehensive discussion of the quality of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, see the special issue of the Journal of Democracy (October 2007).

Alfio Cerami: Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe: The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime

In Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe, Alfio Cerami takes on the tremendously difficult task of aggregating welfare policy information on all new member states of the EU and presenting his findings to discuss whether a new European welfare regime is emerging in Europe or not. This is a noteworthy effort. The task of the book is especially difficult granted the extent of problems that the new member states of the EU are facing in their efforts to seek a compromise between economic efficiency and social solidarity. To the extent that the Central and East European states (thereafter CEE) can establish and maintain such a compromise, their societies will benefit from European integration. However, so far, the picture of the CEE states in the EU is that their integration process is far from complete and – though at different levels – the EU integration process imparts a push for change in all new member states. Even widely-noted success stories, such as Slovenia and Slovakia, are re-assessing their models of development: in the case of the former given the stagnating competitiveness of the country and in the latter due to the social costs of the strongly neo-liberal turn in the country in the late 1990s and the beginning of the decade.

Cerami seeks to underline the underlying thread of similarity in social policy making in all CEE states rather than discussing a limited number of them in a selective and more comprehensive manner. While this approach is methodologically acceptable, the reader lacks in-depth information on the outlying cases. In the end, presenting an overview of the problems that the new EU member states face in their ‘continuously evolving’ social policy during their transformation into EU member states and of the ‘developmental
path dependency’ that they pursue (p. 85) becomes the main aim of the book. In this effort, Cerami still notes the importance of strategic interactions of economic, political and social actors and of the formal and informal rules that govern human behaviour. This is an important theoretical interpretation that the book offers. In the words of the author (p. 34), the book “aims to compare different social policy theories and to elaborate new ones; b) identify the patterns of the welfare state’s transformation in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia, at the national and EU level; c) investigate the attitudes towards social inequality in the European region; and d) explore the impact of social transfers in seven Central and Eastern European countries. Finally, this research aims to highlight the factors responsible for institutional change and democratic consolidation and to identify the prospects for the successful implementation of future welfare state reforms.”

While Cerami adopts a very demanding route to analyse social policy change, in the end he falls short of launching an analytical methodology to review all the cases under study. This may be a result of an over-reliance on secondary data – as the author notes – from European Commission reports, from Official Reports financed by the Consensus II Programme (1999), the MISS-CEE (2002), MISSOC (2006), and from information available at the websites of various ministries in the CEE region. Therefore, the author presents a comprehensive set of knowledge on social policy in the new member states of the EU, but cannot go beyond repeating what is already written in the official reports. This is partially a result of the over-demanding goals the author sets in the outset of the book and partly the wide, region-covering scope of the work rather than concentration on selected cases.

The theoretical scope of Cerami’s work is also noticeably comprehensive. The author introduces two streams of discussion around the theory of welfare and presents an overview of social policy under communism. In order to weave a conceptual net between these two streams, Cerami presents various discussions from the literature on path dependency, social policy vacuum, institutions and innovation. The theoretical thread in this discussion is the argument that what characterised the Central and Eastern European path of transformation was the situation of a social-policy vacuum, in which all social policies established by the command economy became obsolete and, thus, needed to be replaced immediately. Cerami (p. 85) therefore suggests that any analysis of welfare state change should, in fact, not only consider the crucial role played by historical legacies, culture, institutional structure, political organisations and social interactions in the ‘path of creation’ of modern welfare states, but should focus on the strategic interactions of economic, political and social actors and the set of formal and informal rules that govern human behaviour. This is one major contribution of the book. In order to support this argument, Cerami presents country overviews of the pension sector, health-care systems, protection against unemployment, social assistance, family benefits in all new EU member states from the CEE.

However, while the book summarises the social policy measures in the new EU member states, it lacks the analytical scope to discuss how these measures were affected by the strategic interactions of various policy actors or an interpretation of why such interactions affected social policy choices. While Cerami presents responses to the changes from some old public surveys, the book would have gained more in scope if we could trace the impacts of strategic interactions in a more clear and succinct way. Cerami concludes that Eastern Europe needs a more active rather than diminished welfare state: “[t]here can be little
doubt that welfare institutions have played and will play a crucial role in limiting the negative effects in income and social inequality. They have helped to reduce not only the negative repercussions of the economic shock, but have also helped to maintain a sense of public responsibility and solidarity, which has reinforced social cohesion during these difficult times” (p. 213).

At the end of the book, Cerami (p.172) responds to crucial questions such as which patterns of transformation Central and Eastern European welfare states are really following. In this respect, the author raises questions as to whether the CEE states are silently acquiring the characteristics in force in the West or whether they are successfully adapting and recombining characteristics valid during communism with the new emergent requirements of post-communist societies. The response that Cerami (p.173) gives is that CEE welfare states were by no means locked-in in their path of extrication from state-socialism, but were capable of highly innovative reform, which took place also in later stages of development.

In sum, this book presents a useful compilation of various social policy styles in the new member states and of secondary data on various socio-economic figures related to poverty, income distribution and social transfers, and some public survey results regarding attitudes towards a socially responsible welfare state. Alongside this, Cerami pursues a theoretical and empirical discussion that is convincing to varying degrees. Whereas the empirical data are widely available elsewhere, the book’s theoretical discussion can be interesting for researchers on social policy in CEE.

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Maruška Svašek (ed.): *Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe*

Emotional dimensions of socio-political processes have been attracting growing interest in anthropology in recent years. This collection of nine ethnographic studies focusing on Central and Eastern Europe highlights the role of emotions in various aspects of post-socialist transformations. The editor sets two main aims: 1) to contribute to a wider theoretical debate on the significance of emotions in politics, and 2) to advance our understanding of social and political changes in the post-socialist context by bringing emotions to the forefront of an anthropological analysis. The volume offers a number of interesting and unique ethnographies of changing property relations, uneven economic developments, dynamics of ethnic identities and inter-ethnic relations, transformations of local political structures and institutions, and reinterpretations of national history in various parts of Central and Eastern Europe. However, as a whole, it does not successfully accomplish either of its main theoretical aims. The analytical contribution of its focus on emotions is questionable, its ‘post-socialist’ framing risks essentialising and homogenising the region, and the authors’ methodological choices are not clear enough, which makes the studies less convincing.

How can a focus on emotions contribute to our understanding of politics and the dynamics of socio-economic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe? A number of general claims about emotions are reiterated throughout the book: the focus on emotions is necessary in order to fully understand political processes; emotions are always embedded in contexts and socio-cultural, political-economic practices; emotions are formed through specific circumstances and emotions should be seen
as social actions rather than individual and private states. These statements are repeatedly presented as innovative and counter-intuitive conclusions in the studies. However, they are almost never related to the literature, where ‘political’ would be examined as stripped of its affective dimensions. In other words, it is not made clear what exactly we lose if emotions are not at the centre of our analysis. This makes some of the conclusions appear less critical and questions the added value of the focus on emotions.

To constitute a meaningful analytical category, emotions should be clearly defined. However, in the present collection, emotions as subjects of study range from nostalgia, euphoria, mutual sympathy, social suffering, shame, feelings of loss and anger, hatred, trust and distrust to fear, nationalist pride and many others. Besides, they are approached at different levels of analysis: as embodied feelings, as conventional displays of sentiments in dramatic situations, or as discursive strategies to be used for various political purposes. These levels are not always clearly delineated but tend to be brought together in general claims about the centrality of emotions which, in the end, do not really advance our understanding of the social realities under study. For example, Maruška Svašek’s study of a Czech borderland village describes Sudeten Germans’ highly emotional bodily memories of spaces as they come to visit houses from which they were expelled after the Second World War. They are discussed next to the strong emotional determination of a Dutch entrepreneur who invested in buying houses in the village and surrounding lands in order to turn them into a pheasant shoot. His actions are depicted as driven by frustration and anger with local bureaucrats and with local inhabitants who have other (also emotionally charged) ideas about the future of their village. Svašek draws on these diverse emotional displays to conclude that: ‘Specific emotional dynamics have been central to the rapidly transforming property relations in the post-Cold War Czech-German border area’ (p. 110). Such a conclusion, however, does not help us to understand how the centrality of emotions impacts on the property claims of these social actors and how it influences the power dynamics in the village.

Conceptual clarity is certainly not advanced by the use of theoretically underdeveloped concepts such as ‘emotional capital’, ‘sentimental dramas’, or ‘emotional economy’ that seem to serve as little more than catchy labels for a variety of phenomena, which could be explained by more established vocabulary. ‘Emotional capital’ is particularly popular in the book. It is discussed in the introduction and in three of the chapters. While it is always provided with a brief – as if self-explanatory – reference to Bourdieu, its use boils down to an idea that emotions can be invested into and manipulated for political aims. Patrick Heady and Liesl L. Gambold Miller claim that memories of life under the Soviet Union can be seen as a source of ‘emotional capital’; Dimitrina Mihaylova says the same about the Pomaks’ displays of ‘social suffering’ in Bulgarian tobacco-producing borderlands, as they struggle for more just economic redistribution; and Zlatko Skrbiš shows that in a diasporic environment, an emotionalised reinterpretation of Slovenian national history can be used as a political tool and thus represents a form of ‘emotional capital’.

The majority of the topics covered in this collection deal with situations of political polarisation, conflict, protest or emergency, where strong emotional responses seem rather commonsensical and hardly a surprising discovery. They are often treated both as a cause and an effect and thus tend to be neither explained nor explanatory. The attention to emotions and how they were manipulated serves as an ex-post explanation of a relatively successful
political mobilisation in the Pomaks’ protest against social and economic marginalisation described by Mihaylova and also in Justine Golanska-Ryan’s study of the strategic use of emotional rhetoric in a political campaign launched by two Polish political parties opposed to the country’s accession to the European Union. However, we are left wondering about what difference emotions really made in these cases since none of the studies present their case in a comparative perspective. At least a reference to similar empirical cases or studies showing that, for instance, a lack of emotional mobilisation leads to a different political outcome, would make their case for an explanatory potential of the study of emotions more convincing. One can only agree with Alaina Lemon’s careful critique in the ‘Afterword’, where she suggests that: ‘in future studies, and in order to better understand those cases where emotions are politically effective, we need also to attend to cases where they do not’ (p. 216).

Why focus exclusively on post-socialism? ‘In many parts of the region the tumultuous political and economic developments have generated strong feelings, ranging from hope and euphoria to disappointment, envy, disillusionment, sorrow, loneliness and hatred’, reads the introduction (p. 2). The decision to make ‘post-socialism’ the main title of the volume and to select contributions only from post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe is problematic. How do we know that emotions are so critical and/or unique to the region if the book does not present any comparison with similar cases of social struggles for economic justice, political mobilisations, contestation of property relations, or the occurrence of emergencies, such as flooding, in ‘the West’? For sure, some of these processes have taken on particular shapes in post-socialist countries, and this is well reflected in the studies. However, the book itself does not show convincingly enough that the given emotional underpinning of politics is necessarily specific to post-socialist contexts. Thus, it is questionable whether the exclusive post-socialist framing of these studies brings any additional value to the analyses. Or does it rather risk essentialising post-socialist societies as emotional reservoirs of a particular kind?

Moreover, despite an introductory urge for ‘sensitivity to contextual specificity’ (p. 5), the label ‘post-socialist’ is attached to a variety of highly diverse phenomena throughout the book, such as community, consumption behaviour, village politics, trade, suffering, or cultural styles, without providing a sufficient explanation of their connection with the socialist era. Furthermore, the use of expressions such as ‘post-socialist emotional life’ (p. 34) imposes homogeneity rather than encouraging attention to contextual specificity. Would anthropologists dare to use the notion of ‘western emotional life’ with same ease? Or would they substitute ‘western’ for ‘post-socialist’ when arguing that ‘In post-socialist landscapes, trust and mistrust are basic in political practices on local, regional and national levels...’ (p. 209)?

Finally, there is a problem with the presentation of the methodological choices made by the authors of the studies. In fact, we learn very little about them. At most, the period and the length of the researchers’ fieldwork are indicated. The majority of the studies do not describe the ‘sources’ of their empirical data, such as the numbers and characteristics of informants and the settings of the observations. This is particularly problematic when gossip and rumours become prime sources and examples in the study of the emotional dynamics of local politics. In the contribution by Don Kalb and Herman Tak, situated in the Polish city of Wroclaw, hit by flooding in 1997, rumours are referred to as a vehicle of public fear and panic and an expression of citizens’ distrust in the authorities, but also as ‘a safety valve’ for these emotions (p. 200). Despite having such an important
role in the analysis, the authors give no indication of how they recorded and analysed these rumours. Thus they inadvertently situate themselves as neutral observers exercising a ‘view from nowhere’ – a perspective long criticised in anthropology.

Many of the studies in this volume provide valuable and well-researched insights into Central and Eastern European societies. However, attention to emotions would be more beneficial if treated as a sensitising device, which would indeed be enriching for (not just) anthropological accounts, rather than being treated as the primary tool and/or object of exploration. In sum, the overarching focus on emotions wrapped in ‘post-socialist packaging’ blurs more than it reveals.

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Hynek Jeřábek: Paul Lazarsfeld’s Research Methodology – Biography, Methods, Famous Projects

This book focuses on the life and works of Paul Lazarsfeld, who was one of the founders of many of the methods that are today taken for granted in the empirical social sciences. It is divided into four parts dealing with, respectively, Lazarsfeld’s research biography, his methodological innovations, his famous research projects and some of his main findings. The first chapter divides Lazarsfeld’s life into different main stages, starting with his life in Vienna, moving on to his early years in the United States, and ending with the Columbia years. There follow two general sections on Lazarsfeld’s organisational work in science and critics and the reaction to his sociology. Opening with his birth in Vienna on 13 February 1901, the chapter follows Lazarsfeld through the various posts of his career, from his first job as a mathematics teacher to his last title as Professor Emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh. It simultaneously tells the stories of the different research centres he established: the Wirtschaftspychologische Forschungsstelle in Vienna (Research Centre of Economic Psychology), the Newark University Research Center in New Jersey, the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University and its transformation to the Bureau of Applied Social Sciences at Columbia University. The author highlights the fact that these institutes dealt with entirely new topics, such as market research, communications research, and altogether new forms of research methodology. Further, the chapter presents the publications and the projects Lazarsfeld implemented over time. Attention is also devoted to some of the main critics of Lazarsfeld’s sociology, including T. Adorno and his labelling of Lazarsfeld’s work as ‘administrative research’, C.W. Mills’ criticism of ‘abstract empiricism’, and T.N. Clark’s attack on the negation of the individuality of the researchers involved in the ‘Columbia Sociology Machine’.

The second chapter looks at Lazarsfeld’s contributions to the field of sociology, such as reason analysis – the method he developed for revealing the model of decision-making processes – and the ‘programme analyser’, the focused interview, and panel analysis. Considerable space is devoted to survey analysis and the principles of the elaboration model. In a discussion of latent structure analysis, the basic concepts behind it – response pattern, probability, property space, principle of local independence, accounting equations and trace lines – are all outlined and described, as is the concept of trace lines as the core idea of this method. The section on mathematical sociology highlights how Lazarsfeld developed not only the mathematical background to latent structure analysis but also the model of the dichotomic cube and the 16-fold table, all of which examine the effect of dichotomous variables on depend-
ent variables. This discussion also mentions the work that Lazarsfeld published on methodology, including ‘The Language of Social Research’, ‘Méthodes de la sociologie’, and ‘Continuités in the Language of Social Research’, representing the ‘Columbia strategy of social research’.

The third chapter revisits Lazarsfeld’s famous study of unemployment in Marienthal, the RAVAG study, the Princeton radio project, and the People’s Choice study. All these projects are provided with their historical contexts; for example, the fact that ‘Marienthal’ was inspired by a study that Charles Booth had carried out on London and its inhabitants and by the Lynds’ ‘Middletown’ study. The section devoted to Marienthal includes a description of all eleven methods used in the study – relating to consumption, health, book borrowing, and membership in associations – and discusses their results, and it especially looks at the study’s measurement of walking speed and the perception of time. More space is devoted to the study’s main outcome, which produced a typology of four family types: resigned, unbroken, desperate, and apathetic. The section on the People’s Choice study includes a short description of the panel analysis method introduced in Chapter Two and goes on to discuss the concept of opinion leaders and the hypothesis of the two-step flow of information (information spread from the media to the opinion leader and in the second step to the people connected to the opinion leader), the concept of the political predispositions of voters, different types of voters, and distinct mechanisms of influence that can change voter preferences, such as the activation effect, reinforcement, and conversion.

The main asset of the monograph is that it offers a concise but detailed overview over the life of Paul Lazarsfeld and his contribution to the social sciences; in a tradition started by the students and successors of Lazarsfeld – research on Lazarsfeld’s life and work. The book does not claim to be an exhaustive study of Lazarsfeld. The author has simply presented what he perceives to be Lazarsfeld’s key contributions. This leaves some gaps. There is no mention here of Lazarsfeld’s role in cooperation with Oskar Morgenstern in foundation in 1963 the Institute of Higher Studies in Vienna, which is now a leading institution of economic forecasting in Austria. The monograph tends to shy away from expressing any criticism of Lazarsfeld’s work. For example, in the discussion of the Marienthal study, it is mentioned that the researchers became involved in the life in the village and implemented assistance projects, such as taking up clothing drive in Vienna, or, from one member of the team, offering free medical advice. But that was a clear violation of the methodological principle established by Lazarsfeld and his team itself that researchers must use non-influential (non-intervening) methods. The researchers’ assistance in the town may have influenced the studied population and led to biased outcomes, and that issue should have been addressed in more detail. Also, since the book just reviews the methods developed by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues and the criticism of them expressed by other authors in the past, it does not address any new criticism and thus makes no contribution to current debates on methodology. Consequently, the book’s main contribution is to historical sociology, and it is successful in its aim of introducing Lazarsfeld’s methods to scientists and students. In sum, the author manages to present the rudiments of what are sometimes very difficult methods in a clear and coherent way and additionally to embed these methods in their historical background. The outcome is a valuable textbook that can be recommended not just to students but also to scientists interested in Lazarsfeld’s methodology.

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Bob Hancké, Martin Rhodes, and Mark Thatcher (eds.): *Beyond Varieties of Capitalism: Conflict, Contradictions, and Complementarities in the European Economy*


In the last two decades, the ‘varieties of capitalism’ (VOC) approach has become a leading paradigm in comparative political economics and particularly in the study of European capitalisms. Economic systems differ and there are a number of ways in which an economy can be competitive in the environment of globalisation. Mutually interlinked institutional sub-systems shape trajectories of political economic evolution and often reinforce each other, and a proper mix of institutional ‘complementarities’ can provide distinctive ‘comparative institutional advantages’ for competitive strategies of firms. The core ideas of the approach not only offered analytical tools for understanding and comparing national political economies, but also provided a rationale for saving European capitalisms from the ideological attack that sees no alternative to the Anglo-Saxon model of capitalism. While the ‘liberal market economy’ (LME) variety, typically represented by the US and the UK, is superior in providing advantages to ‘radical innovators’, the ‘coordinated market economies (CME), of which Germany is the leading example, can compete with products relying on ‘incremental innovation’.

Offering an overview of the approach and its major research agendas, *Beyond Varieties of Capitalism* brings together contributions of the leading scholars in the field, including Hall and Soskice whose forceful statement of the VOC approach popularised the perspective. The first part of the volume includes an introduction that defends the approach against its critiques and revises the typology of capitalist varieties by bringing in the state. The chapter by Hall outlines the variety of institutional developments in the paradigmatic cases of the UK, France, Sweden, and Germany. The second part includes Soskice’s macro-economic analysis of aggregate demand management regimes within VOC. It is followed by a chapter dealing with the effects of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) on strategies of the firms in individual VOC models. Unfortunately, neither this part nor the rest of the volume includes a contribution on the macro-economic effects of EMU. Often mentioned in individual chapters (and rightly so), the problem is covered by Soskice’s chapter only to some extent. However, a more thorough and focused treatment of this crucial topic would be very welcome. The third part contains case studies of the Single Market, corporate governance, and capital mobility. Contributions in part four analyse labour market and welfare state adjustment. This part includes Molina and Rhode’s chapter on ‘mixed market economies’ (MMEs). In this type of the VOC, represented by Italy and Spain, the state has a crucial role in compensating for an absence of institutional complementarities.

The final part includes contributions by King, Feldmann, and Mykhnenko on the political economies in Eastern Europe from the VOC perspective. How do they contribute to our understanding of the region? Do they stand up to the promise of opening a post-transition research agenda? In order to highlight the liberal nature of the state and the dependent nature of the economy, King conceptualises the VOC in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as ‘liberal dependent post-communist capitalism’ (LDPC). Witnessing a predominance of the patron-client relationships in the economy and a decomposition of the Weberian bureaucratic state, he calls the variety of capitalism that emerged in the rest of the post-communist world as ‘patrimonial post-communist capitalism’ (PPC). King explains the relative success of LDPC and a bitter failure of PPC with reference to favourable legacies in the
forme (i.e. the presence of the bureaucratic state structures) and to its ability to attract FDI. The LDPC, represented by Hungary and Poland, is characterised by dependence on foreign investors for the provision of credit and organising inter-firm relations, labour weakness, dysfunctional education systems, and LME-type firm-employee relations. King leaves us wondering about the political-economic implications of these features: ‘Basically, there will be capitalist growth, but it will depend on the investment strategy of particular MNCs [multi-national corporations], the lending decisions of foreign-owned banks, and the ability to import industrial inputs and capital from, and export manufactured goods to, the core of the capitalist world economy’ (p. 325).

Feldmann’s chapter focuses on Slovenia and Estonia, the cases that are most similar to pure CME and LME respectively. His analysis shows striking similarities in the institutional forms of the two CEE ‘outliers’ and the two models of VOC. Em- ploying a theory of network-promotion and disruption, he then offers a convincing account of the origins of these VOC in the process of transition. Strikingly, however, Feldmann ignores what King identified as the crucial feature of capitalisms in CEE: the dependence on FDI in corporate governance and inter-firm relations. While this may be justifiable in the case of Slovenia, where FDI penetration is still relatively low, FDI-dependence can hardly be ignored in Estonia, the most internationalised country in the region. What is more, by focusing on institutional forms, the analysis does not address their economic effects, or the question of ‘comparative institutional advantage’. Are these coherent institutional configurations identified in Slovenia and Estonia actually providing distinct comparative advantages to the companies operating there? An analysis of export structures would probably show that the economic strategies of Estonian exporters are far remote from the ‘radical innovators’ associated with LMEs.

Analysing Ukraine and Poland, Mykhnenko’s chapter addresses some of the questions that King and Feldmann left unanswered. He identifies comparative advantage of these countries in low- and also increasingly mid-technology manufacturing. The economic expansion in Ukraine and Poland was correlated with the establishment of what Mykhnenko calls ‘mixed market economies’ or ‘weak’ CMEs. (The MME label is rather confusing here as the reader is left uncertain about its link to the MME discussed by Molina and Rhodes.) Poland and Ukraine have many institutional features similar to CMEs. Crucially, however, they lack a complementary financial system. This, among others, makes them more susceptible to sharp periodic economic fluctuations. When comparing the economic performance of the countries, Mykhnenko reveals that differences in science and technology education and training systems did not generate different comparative advantages in economic activities. Again, this may lead us to wonder whether the institutions identified as a part of the VOC model in fact matter from a micro-economic perspective. Do the companies active in the region take advantage of the opportunities provided by the specific institutional framework? Are foreign investors coming to exploit them (rather than just cheap labour and an institutional environment guaranteeing stable provision of the very basic preconditions for capitalist accumulation)? Alternatively, is the comparative advantage really institutional (rather than, for example, in supply structures)? It may well be that any relatively stable institutional framework would suffice to underpin the peripheral mode of development. It is thus an agenda for future research to establish whether the analysis identified a link rather than a correlation. This will entail addressing questions on the strategies of foreign investors identified by King. As
Mykhnenko’s concluding remarks observe, this agenda has been exogenous to the national state-oriented VOC perspective.

The real contribution of the chapter on CEE can be particularly appreciated if the contributions are read together. King’s chapter show that Eastern European economies cannot be understood sui generis, through the lenses of a nation-state perspective. Instead, we need to analyse the institutional forms in CEE countries in relation to the nature of the international integration of these countries. Here, the strategies of major MNCs and foreign banks will be key elements linking domestic comparative institutional advantages and international competitiveness. Focusing solely on domestic institutions, Feldmann’s contribution tells us much about the economic potentials that the two very different institutional configurations can offer. By identifying important differences, Feldmann invites us to unpack the LDPC model and investigate variations in the nature of dependent development in the region. Moreover, he provides important insights on the micro-foundations of the two modes of coordination and on the importance of state strategy in constituting their regulatory underpinnings. This is particularly important in order to understand Slovenian exceptionalism. The Estonian case reads more as a story of destruction of ‘the old’ and reliance on a new generation of actors, most notably foreign investors, to take over. By bringing in the economic analysis, Mykhnenko starts were Feldmann (unfortunately) stops. This allows him to investigate actual economic effects the institutions may have and thus link domestic mechanisms of coordination with the nature of international integration. Here, he manages to make a number of important steps in what I see as a major post-transition research agenda.

Sociologists working on Eastern Europe should not be impressed by the propensity of the VOC approach for a mechanical classification of institutional forms. Yet, especially those employing the tools of ‘soft economic sociology’ (i.e. projecting the logic of other socio-cultural activities into the economic at the expense of the specificity of the latter) could benefit from the ‘hard political economy’ inputs of the VOC approach. These include the concern with comparative institutional advantage and competitiveness of the companies (infused by VOC’s rational-choice institutionalist micro-foundations) in general and the implication of the dependent international integration of the Eastern European region in particular.

In sum, the book provides a ‘state of the art’ look at a very interesting and fruitful research paradigm. For this reason, it will be appreciated by researchers and advanced students alike. By addressing questions that are new to the industry, the Eastern European section probably comes closest to the promise of going beyond the VOC. Yet, when it comes to an analysis that would go beyond the mechanical application of the framework, the authors tend to stick to where they apparently feel strong: making sense of ‘transition’. We are thus left with a number of crucial questions that emerged in the region about the nature of VOC that have yet to be answered. This is by no means a bad achievement.

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Some time in 1990, a short article written by Václav Klaus appeared in the Czech daily Lidové Noviny, entitled ‘The Concealed Assumptions in Our Political Controversies’ (‘Zamlčené předpoklady našich politick-
In it Klaus stated what could be considered his main political creed. Referring to Thomas Sowell, he classified existing worldviews as variants of the two basic ‘different views of man and society’, and claimed: “The first of these worldviews is statist, the second one truly democratic, the first one is intellectual, the second one is populist (in the positive meaning of the word), the first one knows the truth, the second one seeks the way for the truth to be discovered and manifested… the first of these worldviews brought to life the French Revolution along with unlimited power, the second dominated the American Revolution, which led to limited constitutional government (and which dispensed with the guillotine and mass fury)’. Belittling the importance of contemporaneous political arguments – such as the Czech-Slovak ‘hyphen conflict’ or the controversy over whether ‘dirty money’ is a meaningful economic category or not – Klaus called for these two visions to be politically articulated rather than concealed (‘let them contest elections’). The story of the Czech right in the post-communist period can be viewed through the prism of Klaus’s creed, as an attempt to make ‘concealed assumptions’ pronounced.

Sean Hanley’s book deals with the fortunes and travails of this creed put into political practice, enlightening the reader on the concrete ways of tacit assumptions being politically voiced or, after all, ‘materialised’. But this monograph goes beyond that and can be considered a major contribution to the study of Czech and post-communist party politics. In spite of being relatively short, the book gives the kind of impression usually produced by ‘definitive accounts’, but it leaves enough room for additional thoughts and offers inspiration for further research. Hanley’s book is strong in many respects: it is a nice example of the path-dependency approach and frequently it challenges (sometimes demolishes) the many conventional assumptions and clichés used to explain the development of post-communist party politics. Hanley’s intelligent work on the Czech case has methodological implications for the entire field of study.

The first, theoretical, chapter deals with “getting the right right” and summarises a welcome conceptual contribution from Hanley’s previous writings. Hanley defines the post-communist centre-right in two instalments, and, importantly, author sticks to the logic of this definition throughout the text. He describes the post-communist centre-right ‘in the absence of a strong class base’ and without resorting to ad hoc solutions and generalisations from one individual case – vices that are often encountered in the study of, for example, post-communist populism. The sole exception occurs when he draws the fault lines between the centre-right and other groups of right-of-centre parties. A more subtle distinction between the radical and the extreme right – as, for example, recently suggested by Cas Mudde – would be of an enormous help to Hanley’s argument. It could, for example, help him somehow to avoid the problematic ad hoc promotion of an empirical indicator (‘larger and broader electorate’) to the status of a defining factor separating the centre-right from the ‘extreme’ right.

According to Hanley, ‘the centre-right in ECE must be understood as essentially “new” political forces, shaped by late communism and the subsequent politics of post-communist transformation, rather than a simple throwback to the authoritarian conservatism and integral nationalism of the past’. Those new forces try ‘to reconcile liberal-capitalist modernization with traditional and moral values and specific local and national identities’ (while ‘the extreme right [seeks] alternatives to such modernization’). These statements are the most useful conceptualisation of the moderate centre-right around. But in the light of the criticism provided, the second statement on the extreme right could perhaps be reformulated. To be sure,
the whole definition holds perfectly without mentioning the extreme right at all. But when the category of the ‘extreme’ right enters the argument, aforementioned division between the radical and extreme right would add clarity to some of Hanley’s statements regarding the ‘extreme’ right. Then, to stick to Hanley’s terms, rather than seeking alternatives to liberal-capitalist modernisation, the radical right challenges the effects of its reconciliation with national identity. The extreme right, next, proposes alternatives to liberal democracy in general without bothering with reconciliation at all. This proposed distinction will be gaining still greater significance in the near future as the space of the right-of-the-moderate-right in Czech polity has become swiftly populated by a number of actors.

In the next chapter, on historical legacies, Hanley follows many foreign researchers and a few Czech ones in understanding the importance of the (rather unusual) Czech nationalism for explaining the country’s politics. Hanley is consistent in framing the genetics of the new right in ‘the Czech historical pathways’ as ‘a consequence of the way the “modernity” of Czech society was filtered through the politics of nationalism’. This discloses the weaknesses of deductive meta-approaches which tend to take from the history of the nations in question only what fits their broad ambition to explain the whole region within a single framework. Mainly, he offers the reader the notion of the Czech post-communist right as another successful articulation of the ‘perennial’ Czech ‘National Question’. In this respect, parallels can indeed be drawn between the Czech Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and Vladimír Mečiar’s People’s Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), which succeeded in persuading public in achieving very much the same for Slovaks. The new Czech right – unlike the old one from the pre-war era – did not ‘betray’ the Czech national idea and statehood formulated in consensual and cross-class terms. On the contrary, by defining the new version of it, ODS managed to overcome what has traditionally been conceived as a condition unfavourable to right-of-centre politics. But the pillar of the new Czech right, the ODS, did not forge a new class-based right either. It transcended the old class politics and did away with necessity of prioritising the survival of the nation state over a clear ideological stance.

After putting historical legacies in context, Hanley proceeds with identifying the factors shaping the post-1989 right in the era of late communism. He contends that ‘it is in the failed reform communist project of 1960s and reactions to that failure that the roots of the new Czech right of 1990s are to be found’. In his fascinating account Hanley identifies the persons and ideas that later came to shape the right within the counter-elite produced during the normalisation era. His conclusion about the weakness, fragmentation and elite-driven intellectual character of the Czech ‘proto-right’, and its impact on the post-1989 formation of right-wing party political alternatives is fundamental, yet perhaps underestimated by other research.

The next three chapters describe the fortunes of the new right within Czech polity. It is relatively brief, yet very informative, without omitting anything important. The success of ODS as (party) organisational strategy, policy programme, and the source of the vision for Czech society is convincingly accounted for. Passages pertaining to the ‘other’ right – the Christian Democratic KDU-ČSL and the ‘anti-establishment right’ around the Quad-Coalition – are, by all means, a vital and original contribution to the English-language literature. While those ‘narrative’ chapters are very good, the chapter on ‘building the new ideology of the right’ is probably the most important part of the book. The text is captivating and novel. Hanley employs a (post)Gramscian discourse-theoretical approach to ideology.
as his methodological frame. Even though Freeden’s ‘liberal’ conceptualisation of ideology remains very useful, there is no question Hanley has largely achieved his goal of illustrating the logic and emergence of the ‘ideological compound’ that ODS produced. Indeed, this post-Marxist approach appears very suitable for reconstructing the ideology of the party’s ‘revolutionary conservatism’. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of the entire monograph lies in the ways in which it disentangles the notion of the ‘civic’ politics of the Czech right and identifies the political concepts it contains and ‘de-contests’. Hanley is perfectly aware how another post-communist right-wing party, Hungary’s Fidesz, managed to offer a strong political identity to a noteworthy segment of the electorate built upon the party’s own definition of ‘civic’ politics. Finally, the author provides a smart though not always fully convincing explanation of why and under which circumstances ODS radically – by the standards of the moderate right – redressed its ‘civic’ version of transition politics to one based on defending the national interest. This chapter will certainly be fascinating for those who are not Czech nationals and are not familiar in detail with the topic, but it may be surprising and elucidating for most domestic readers, too. In spite of the many claim to the contrary, it shows that ideologies have played an important role in post-communist transitions.

All in all, Seán Hanley’s treatment of the political ideology of the Czech right constitutes this book’s greatest achievement. Ideology and its changes are presented here as a factor enabling us to understand the interconnection between the pragmatism of party-political competition and the more or less sincere effort to politically articulate the ‘concealed assumptions in our political controversies’ – in the Czech way.

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Julia Lynch: Age in the Welfare State: The Origins of Social Spending on Pensioners, Workers and Children

Welfare states, in allocating resources, to different age groups, affect various aspects of the citizens’ wellbeing and life chances, from educational opportunities to labour and financial markets, family formation and family structure, fertility, and so forth. Moreover, different welfare states affect younger and older populations differently. While some countries focus on potential risks during childhood and working life, education, child care, the family, housing and active labour market policy, other countries highlight the needs of the elderly, by means of generous pension benefits and medical care. Prioritised social spending may thus generate inequalities among age groups. Julia Lynch’s Age in the Welfare State sheds much-needed light on this phenomenon, dubbed the age orientation of welfare states. Lynch examines how social policies in prosperous OECD democracies deal with the risks facing the elderly, the young, and working adults; what is done in different countries towards different age groups in the populations; the reasons why policies vary from country to country and over time, and the political consequences of different strategies for redistributing resources across different age groups in society.

Lynch examines direct expenditures, tax expenditures and housing policy in twenty OECD countries, on average, between 1985 and 2000, and thus draws conclusions on the age orientation of social policy. Direct expenditures include ‘income supports and services for the elderly; unemployment and active labor market policies; public spending on occupational injury and sickness programs; public spending on cash benefits and services for family per person under 15; public
education spending per person aged 0–20, and health spending ratios per capita’. Total expenditures in each category are adjusted to the size of the beneficiary pool and expressed as a percentage of the nation’s per capita gross domestic product (GDP). Lynch’s summary measure captures public social insurance expenditures on elderly age groups (aged 65+ or retired) versus non-elderly age groups (aged 0–65 and not in formal retirement), in the Elderly/Non-elderly Spending Ratio – an estimate of the relative weight of spending on these populations. Lynch concludes that countries vary, and vary consistently, in the emphasis they place on elderly versus non-elderly populations in public policies. Scandinavian and British Commonwealth countries turn out to hold the most youth-oriented social spending policies, while the most elderly-oriented countries are a diverse group that includes parts of continental Europe (Italy, Greece, Spain, and Austria), the United States, and Japan.

Chapter Three of the book then reviews a variety of potential classic explanations as for why the age orientation in contemporary social policies varies among countries. Lynch discusses changes due to the modernisation and the growth of what she terms ‘grey power’: large groups of elderly voters, interested in pension programs. However, she maintains that such explanations are not sufficient in accounting for a country’s age orientation in social policy. Other explanations based in the realm of family structures, religious orientation, and power resources similarly provide weak explanations for the ‘age’ of contemporary welfare. Lynch mentions, for instance, that Catholic-dominated welfare states differ remarkably in their treatment of different age groups. Instead, Lynch argues that the path-dependent evolution of political and social policy institutions provides a better explanation for the age orientation of welfare state spending. Lynch divides the OECD welfare state according to two features: institutional design – occupational versus citizenship-based welfare regimes – and programmatic versus particularistic political competition modes. Lynch argues that the institutional design according to which countries organised their social programmes and modes of electoral competition between politicians are the two key historical factors in determining today’s age orientation of social spending.

Lynch indicates two critical junctures in this regard. First, in the very early 20th century, welfare states emerged based either on citizenship or on occupation. Citizenship-based programmes become more youth-oriented with time, while occupationalist programmes later gave rise to more elderly-oriented social spending. At the second critical juncture, shortly after the Second World War, the occupationalist set of welfare states further divided into two groups: one which maintained occupationally based family allowance and unemployment programmes, and one which replaced many of its pre-war occupationalist programmes with new citizenship-based ones. These welfare state designs were reinforced, according to Lynch, by the predominant mode of political-electoral competition in these countries, being either programmatic (according to general policy programmes), or particularistic (tailored to specific beneficiary groups). This explains why occupational programmes persisted in some countries but not in others – and in turn why the age orientation of some countries’ programmes changed considerably over the course of the century. At the start of the 20th century, citizenship-based regimes turned to labour market outsiders – people with weak ties to unions, such as children, abandoned mothers, or the poor – by offering them state protection. In contrast, occupational regimes protected labour market insiders – people with long term, stable employment, core industrial workers between jobs, retired workers, and people with job-related health problems.
The second juncture occurred when countries took different paths; some stayed on the occupationalist track, and some made a change, adopting citizenship-based welfare programs. The latter shared programmatic modes of electoral-political competition, while the former shared a particularistic mode of competition.

Chapters Four through Six contain interesting case studies showing the development of, respectively, family allowance, unemployment and old age pension benefits in Italy and the Netherlands since the early 1900s. Lynch chose Italy and the Netherlands since both countries had occupational welfare states prior to the Second World War, but followed different trajectories in terms of their age orientation in the post-war period. Occupationalist Italy persistently continued its distinctly elderly-oriented social policy orientation supported by clientelistic political competition, whereas the Netherlands grew to have more youth-oriented policies. The Dutch welfare state today is characterised by universal citizenship-based benefits, quite generous for children and working age adults, and a moderate public pension spending system. Youth-oriented citizenship-based programmes here grew on a base of neutral state capacities, provided by programmatic political competition. However, it should be pointed out that countries need not necessarily operate according to a pure model of policy. A country can pursue the policy of a citizenship-based welfare regime, but still benefit special groups in the population, or pursue a policy of an occupational welfare regime, but still have welfare programmes that benefit the entire population. Another important factor is that countries may also shift according to more short-term dynamic politics, changing from election to election. The inner politics of a country many factors affect the changes occurring in it, and therefore policy, plans and the orientation towards groups will surely go through numerous variations during short periods of time. Nevertheless, Age in the Welfare State provides a welcome historical-institutional addition to more quantitatively oriented sociological studies of the role of population ageing and political institutions in contemporary OECD welfare states.\textsuperscript{1} In sum, Julia Lynch has without a doubt made an important contribution to the politics and sociology of social policy.

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Notes: