When I got to the end of Welfare States Under Pressure I felt a strong desire to go back to the beginning and read it again. I fought off the temptation but it would, I think, have been a very worthwhile thing to do – to re-read the six case studies bearing in mind the stimulating summary analysis of Taylor-Gooby’s concluding chapter. That I wanted to re-read the book is a tribute both to the quality of the national case studies and to the stimulating nature of the rich introductory and concluding editorial chapters.

The book is about a puzzle – the seeming resilience to-date of most welfare states in the face of two decades of powerful pressures for change and the likely future strength of that resilience. Is it likely to last, or have the constraints on reform weakened?

The originality of the book is to bring policy-making systems and processes into the heart of the analysis. Too much past analysis has looked at the pressures – neo-liberalism, globalisation, population ageing, changes in families, changes in work patterns etc. – but has failed to look with much interest at political structures and systems and the policy-making ethos, traditions and patterns which lie between the pressures and the changes which glug-glug out of the policy-making systems.

The heart of the book is six strong case study chapters which analyse pressures and responses in Finland and Sweden, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and the UK. The focus is on pensions, employment and unemployment, and taxation. The chapters are written to a common framework and Taylor-Gooby has been very successful in making sure the contributors stick to the plan. To stick to a template of this kind requires confidence and a sure command of the material. Some countries fit the framework rather better than others but in general it works very well. There is also, inevitably, a bit of a problem with rather too much detail at times – these are policy areas where the devil and the truth are in the detail. I learned a lot – particularly I felt from the cases where I was rather more familiar with the picture. As I read, I kept stopping and jotting down issues raised in the analysis which I would have liked to have been able to take up with the contributors. It is that sort of book.

Taylor-Gooby’s conclusions are essentially six-fold: (1) reform in welfare states so far has been slow and limited; (2) there is no strong evidence of convergence of different regimes in the face of similar pressures; (3) analysis of the present points the way to more rapid and radical changes in the future – ‘the resilience of established welfare systems is likely to be more severely tested, while the factors that have sustained resilience are weakened (p. 185); (4) the future will be different from the past; (5) the crucial factor driving reform is ‘the competitiveness imperative’; (6) the nature of reform depends heavily on ‘the political configuration of individual countries’ (p. 185). The crucial factors in achieving
reform are a strong central state and an ability to build a consensus for reform among key social partners and interest groups.

Is the argument convincing? ‘Generally yes’ would be my slightly cautious response. My hedging arises from three concerns. First, the UK has made the most rapid and far reaching welfare state reforms of any of the countries considered, so a UK reviewer is, perhaps, over-likely to see radical change as the likely future elsewhere. Second, the book’s focus is on pensions, employment and unemployment and taxation policy. If health and education were included would the story be the same? I’m not sure. Thirdly – and this is an issue which Taylor-Gooby refers to more than once in passing – will a concern for social stability ultimately outweigh some of the pressures for retrenchment?

How would Welfare States Under Pressure work as an undergraduate text? Pretty well, I think, though to get most from it does require quite a bit of background knowledge of the countries analysed, of globalisation, of changes in work and family patterns in post-industrial society, of the golden years of welfare states etc. But the editorial material and the case studies are rich in analysis and insight and because of the successful common framework they immediately open up fruitful avenues of inter-country comparison.

Presumably Taylor-Gooby is already at work on the companion volume on some or all of Health, Education, Housing, Social Care and Environmental Policy. I hope so!

PAUL WILDING

University of Manchester


The question mark in the title says it all. As Kleinman explains, there cannot be a European welfare state until there is a European state. But we do not have a European state, even a loosely federal one. Instead, we have a system of multi-level governance in which spending is largely the responsibility of member states and EU social policy largely consists of regularity measures that flank the labour market.

The origins of this situation are generally well understood and are touched upon by Kleinman in a number of places. European integration has always been an elite project, in which mass political mobilisation has not played a part. The chosen means of achieving integration have been economic, and the various stages of integration—customs union, common market and monetary union—have merged (p. 139). The central role of market integration in the overall process has limited other forms of policy initiative. One point not mentioned by Kleinman, which is nonetheless important, is that these chosen means were dictated by the realities of power politics in the mid-twentieth century. Throughout the twentieth century, there were many schemes of European integration advanced. The success of the current EU rests upon the chosen means of integration not challenging the central functions of the state: defence, foreign policy and, most relevant to social policy, taxing and spending.

To explain is not to legitimise, however. For Kleinman, the crucial stage of political development has occurred with the creation of the single currency.
Since the single currency deprives the member states of exchange rate flexibility and ties them to a conservative monetary regime, the only way by which economies can respond to external shocks involves labour mobility and wage flexibility. Moreover, there are no institutional arrangements in place either for giving European citizens social protection against economic fluctuations or for exercising collective democratic control over economic and monetary policy. Thus, for Kleinman, if ‘European integration is to proceed further in the future, it will have to do so as part of a more overtly political process, and one in which the social policy agenda around which most national policies revolve – jobs, health, schools, quality of life – will form a large component’ (p. 134).

But what is the force of the ‘have to’ here? One response is to say that to posit a future so very different from the past is to ignore the forces that have shaped European integration to date and have created the path on which the current set of institutions depends. Kleinman himself offers good reasons why the social policy agenda that is so much at the heart of the politics of nation states cannot be replicated at the European level. As he points out, there is no one model on which European social policy can be built. Bismarckian, social democratic, Christian democratic and liberal influences merge in different combinations. There is no European party system, and the taxing and spending powers of the EU are extremely limited. There is of course the New Deal experience in the US, which some might take as a precedent, but then it took a major depression and the greatest twentieth-century president to transform the institutionalised bias against political control of the economy in that situation.

A second sense of ‘have to’ is justifiable according to a normative set of principles. However, Kleinman does not make out this case, and some of his own evidence might put question marks against any such line of argument. Are the politics of redistribution best fought out on the European level? Kleinman shows that the diversity of European welfare states has been retained since the much proclaimed, if little analysed, fiscal crisis of the state in the 1970s. He is persuasive in showing that globalisation does not mean the loss of policy autonomy by states, though it may mean they have to learn to box clever. Nordic welfare states have, if anything, increased their comparative performance over other systems. And social policy initiatives on the part of the EU are pretty small beer.

That leaves the question of macro-economic intervention. The standard argument here is that the opening up of capital markets has weakened the capacity of the member states to control macro-economic aggregates. Kleinman follows the example of others in citing the experience of the French government between 1981 and 1983 under President Mitterrand (wrongly spelt ‘Mitterand’ throughout the book – oh, copy editors thy name is frailty). The French experiment of Keynesianism in one country ended in capital flight and devaluation. However, in many respects, this experience merely recapitulated that of the UK in the 1960s, when Labour’s high hopes of national planning were dashed by the realities of maintaining an over-valued pound, in a situation in which capital controls were tight.

In any case, the relationship between macro-economic management and social policy itself is a complex issue. For example, it is difficult to work out whether macro-economic intervention is more effective in raising employment levels than improving human capital through training and education. Given
fluctuating unemployment levels in Europe over the last thirty years, alongside the relative stability of social policy, there is at least a case for saying that successful social policy ought to be thought of as consistent with a wide range of economic strategies. None of this is to say that there are no European challenges in the field of social policy. I suspect, however, that we shall still be talking about the pre-eminence of the welfare states of Europe for the next thirty years at least.

ALBERT WEALE

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This is a book that can be read profitably at a number of different levels: as a comparative study of social policy in Europe; as an essentially descriptive account of the different mechanisms and approaches to partnership and regeneration in different countries; as an attempt to set different approaches to social exclusion and local regeneration into a broader European and global context; and as an attempt to develop theory about partnership as a new form of local social governance. This may suggest to the wary reader that the work perhaps attempts too much, but this would be a mistaken presumption. Here is a study which is genuinely informative, interesting and analytical, which has much to offer to the social policy community from undergraduate and postgraduate student, through academic teachers and researchers, to those actually engaged in trying to secure regeneration and reduce social exclusion across Europe.

The book, which is based on research carried out for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, falls into three parts. In chapters 1 and 2, the editors Benington and Geddes set the context for the case studies based on Finland, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain and the UK which follow in chapters 3 to 9. Chapter 1 provides an illuminating and succinct review of four key issues linking the parts of the book together: the notions of partnership, social exclusion, ‘the local’, and governance. A key theme running through the book is stated here: that ‘partnership is a defining element in new patterns of local governance, which are emerging as ways of regulating some of the tensions and contradictions within the political economy of the EU...’ (p. 6). Yet the evidence presented shows that the impact and outcomes of this new mode of local governance are very varied both in form and in the success they have achieved across the European Union (EU). Chapter 2 examines the EU context further since partnership approaches to social exclusion are very much a key feature of European Union social policy and economic strategies. The chapter provides a useful review of how the problems of poverty and social exclusion have been debated and formulated as policy problems within the EU, and also shows how the idea of local partnership has increasingly risen to prominence in EU debates about regeneration and social exclusion.

Having thus established the common framework which, one imagines, the research upon which the book is based was developed, the following five chapters provide case studies of the differing approaches to partnership, regeneration
and social exclusion in the countries listed above. What is especially helpful for
the reader here is that the authors provide a brief resumé of the social policy con-
text within the case study country so that the development of partnership
approaches and social exclusion strategies they then discuss can be more readily
compared. The editors deserve credit here for ensuring that the case studies are
broadly comparable in structure and approach so that whilst the differences
in approach are described, the book nonetheless holds together as a coherent
argument.

Chapters 10 and 11 round off the book with discussions of broader conceptual
and theoretical frameworks which might be employed to make sense of the evid-
ence presented. Chapter 10 by John Benington starts from the proposition that
partnerships may constitute a new form of governance designed to deal with the
crises of legitimization, innovation, problem-solving and co-ordination previ-
ously managed (or not) by state-centred forms of governance. Partnerships, he
argues, may be seen as one of the responses to a changed political and economic
environment, and which facilitate governance involving not only the state but
also interrelationships between the state, the market and civil society. Whilst
this is without doubt a theoretical chapter, drawing upon many of the key writ-
ers on the changing political economy of contemporary capitalist society (such
as Beck, Castells, Foucault and Giddens) plus writers better known to those of us
interested in EU policy-making, it is nevertheless clearly and interestingly writ-
ten. One could, for example, recommend undergraduate students to read this
with a fair degree of expectation that they would both understand and be
stretched by it. The final chapter has the most difficult brief in that it attempts to
draw together the evidence and theory and tries to draw in comparisons with
other EU countries covered in the European Foundation research programme.
As a consequence it does not perhaps read as fluidly as the rest of the book, but
this is not intended as a criticism: the chapter provides more questions than it
answers but in the best traditions of suggesting future research and analysis.

I enjoyed reading this book and I will be getting my students to read it. It will
certainly make a valuable addition to university libraries, and will provide valu-
able comparative material for those engaged in partnership work themselves in
the various projects across the EU. Which brings me to my only criticism: at this
price the book’s undoubted qualities are likely to be seen by far fewer readers
than it deserves.

ROB SYKES
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Buckingham, 2002, x + 162 pp., 0 335 20409 0 (pb), 0 335 20410 4 (hb),
£50.00, £15.99 (pbk.).
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The textbooks on risk and risk society that have appeared over the last few years
have usually worked from within a sociological frame of reference. By making
substantial room for the social policy literature dealing with risk, Kemshall per-
forms a considerable service for the undergraduates at whom her book is aimed
and, who knows, for a few academics too.
The hub of the discussion concerns the way in which need has been supplanted by risk as one of social policy’s key principles. Of particular interest for many will be the way in which, having reviewed some of the conceptual foundations, Kemshall then examines risk in terms of health care, child protection, care for the elderly and mental health. For this reason alone the book deserves to be on reading lists somewhere.

The text, though, does have its weaknesses of both content and style. It is on the short side and while this is probably a requirement of the series to which it belongs, Introducing Social Policy, it nevertheless means that many subjects and debates are squeezed out. There is no comprehensive treatment of benefits, social insurance and employment policy, for instance, and so its treatment of government reforms in this area is pretty much limited to a few passages dealing with Giddens. Furthermore, there is nothing on PFI and PPP – the whole transfer of risk argument – despite the controversies about these which have raged for several years now. Nor is there any extensive discussion of Beck and while some of you may regard this as a blessing it does leave a hole where some analysis should be. For example, there is only a brief reference to the ‘are risks events or constructs?’ debate (Adam et al., 2000) and one consequence of this is that the review of postmodernism is perfunctory – nor is postmodernism sufficiently distinguished from poststructuralism, by the way. In fact, although we are offered a brief historical overview, risk is never given a consistently robust definition and so it is not always clear when we are talking about risk and when we are talking about associated but more indirect themes.

Despite the length restrictions Kemshall also makes things difficult for herself stylistically. The text works by effectively juxtaposing a series of debates, authors, etc. but it can then come across as sprawling rather than coherent. For example, the examination of Jessop on pp. 113–15 extends the one on pp. 16–17 but at the cost of some repetition. And pp. 49–51 deals with theoretical issues that really should have been included earlier. In other words, more cross-referencing and integration would have been useful. Nor is there any real development in the argument. Like a Kafka novel you could almost read the chapters in any order – though the harried student might be advised to progress through chapters 1, 6 and 2 and then dip around in the middle according to taste, i.e., essay title.

I don’t want to sound too unforgiving as I generally liked this book and it contains many worthwhile features. The discussion of how risk has supplanted traditional definitions of need as the organising principle of welfare is very good – though Kemshall tends to conflate ‘reconfiguration’ and ‘replacement’. The book therefore roots contemporary developments in a long-term social context, without being afraid to identify a recent paradigm shift, and so avoids the hyperbole of many analyses of risk. The prose is fluent and there are effective summaries of chapters and sections along the way. Even so, the various omissions are likely to shorten the text’s shelf-life and the undergraduates most likely to find this useful are those who have already tasted the subject elsewhere.


TONY FITZPATRICK
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This is an edited collection. Some of the chapters cover basic elements of social policy courses, but most are on more specific topics, which may or may not feature in introductory courses. The book is laid out in three parts. Part 1 covers ideologies in three chapters: social democracy, neo-liberalism and Marxism. Part 2, covering ‘critical’ perspectives, has chapters on feminism, racism, homosexuality and postmodernism. The treatment of disability movements in the first edition has been dropped; postmodernism is new. Part 3, on ‘Issues and Debates’, is most altered from the book’s first edition. As in the first edition, there are chapters on distributive justice, poverty and the underclass, and universality and selectivity; discussion of citizenship and quasi-markets have been removed, and there are new sections on New Labour and managerialism, ageing and children.

The treatment of ideologies in part 1 is partial and tendentious. In a chapter of 21 pages, social democracy is given a page of discussion about its theoretical base. That is all the book has to say on the political mainstream. There is nothing on socialism, liberalism, conservatism or Christian democracy. There are 20 pages on neo-liberalism, and 25 pages on Marxism. The chapter on Marxism claims that there is currently a ‘return to Marx’, which is news to me, but it does not address any of the main criticisms which have been levelled at Marxist theory in this field, either from the right or the left (see e.g., Mullard and Spicker, 1998). If students with any sense of social conscience are given only the choice between neo-liberalism and Marxism, and believe that only Marxism is concerned with inequality or injustice, they are likely to choose the latter. It’s an old, well-tried tactic of political indoctrination. It has no place in a contemporary academic text, and I would warn beginning students not just to go to better books, but to steer clear of this one.

Part 2, covering ‘critical’ perspectives (the first edition called them ‘radical’), should have been on safer ground. What makes a perspective ‘critical’ is not however explained. The chapter on feminism canters through the main perspectives, and gives applied examples in domestic violence and child abuse. Postmodernism is not necessarily a ‘critical’ perspective, but the chapter gives a sensible appraisal of the ambiguity in the topic. The treatment of racism is little given to theory, and perhaps too parochially British. Homosexuality is a potentially interesting subject to include in critical analysis, but the case for it is not made here; the chapter is a quick, general review of the topic, with a heavy emphasis on section 28. Overall, part 2 seems more concerned with the sociology of social policy than the discussion of Social Policy in its own right. That will not play badly with the many combined courses in sociology and social policy, but it is not the same thing. Part 3, containing six miscellaneous chapters, is not presented in any kind of structure. Three chapters, on ageing, children and universalism, take a long view of British social policy. Two, on the underclass and new Labour’s view of privatisation, take a much shorter view. The chapter on distributive justice, by Brian Lund, is the only one which clearly belongs in a conceptual introduction to the field.
Taken as a whole, the agenda of the book lacks any clear rationale. The book could be about structural inequality, but if so, why is there no conceptual coverage of it? The editors open with Titmuss’s classic discussion of social policy – the allocation of resources to meet certain social needs. Some chapters in part 3 fit this agenda, but others, especially the discussion of homosexuality and racism, hardly seem to touch it. If social policy is concerned with resource allocation and meeting needs, what should resources be used for, and what are the needs? The opportunities for tying these topics to the study of social policy are wasted.

There are several basic textbooks on the market; some of the recent ones are rather good, and competition is fierce. This book doesn’t begin to feature in that competition. Despite the title, it is not conceptual or theoretical; the coverage of theory is weak, or worse, and only one concept, distributive justice, is discussed at all adequately. Despite the claims on the cover, it will certainly not be much use for students of social policy on professional training courses, because it lacks any of the specificity and relevance for such courses, and I am sceptical it will do very much for students on other courses. No less fundamentally, it is not really an introduction to Social Policy. Beyond a collection of vaguely radical topics of interest, one has to ask whether students who have thoroughly read and digested this book will have any clue of what Social Policy is about. I am not convinced they will.


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Is selfish individualism the root cause of the decline in marriage witnessed during the twentieth century? This is the question at the heart of Jane Lewis’s authoritative account of changing family forms. The introductory chapter sets out the scope of the debate, discussing the arguments and evidence about the apparent growth of individualism, the erosion of the male breadwinner model and the erosion of an externally imposed moral code. The second chapter reviews the data on changing family patterns and concludes that the separation between marriage and sex is now clearly established but there is also now a trend towards separating marriage and parenthood.

Chapters 3 to 5 provide a painstaking review of the literature on the key issues: the male breadwinner model family; from public to private morality; and the law of marriage and divorce. Each of these chapters is structured chronologically, illustrating the author’s thorough command of the historical debates and research evidence from different parts of the twentieth century. At times, however, the reader has a sense of déjà vu as each chapter charts the various changes in each decade. Nevertheless the book must be commended as an excellent encyclopaedic guide to the literature in this field.
The next two chapters in the book discuss the findings from some new empirical research in this field. The main part of the research involved qualitative interviews with 17 married and 12 cohabiting ‘intact’ couples. The couples were purposively selected so that they all had children under the age of 11 and the mothers were working either full or part time. So these families were never intended to be ‘representative’ of all married or cohabiting couples. Indeed, the cohabiting couples in the sample were far better off than cohabiting couples in general. They were chosen, perhaps, to explore any differences between ‘traditional’ married couple families and the newer phenomenon of cohabiting parents. Alongside these interviews, the parents of couple members were also interviewed to provide a comparison over time. These comparisons were illuminating. For example, the older couples had all got married because it was seen as the ‘natural’ thing to do in order to achieve adult status, have sex and have children. Among the younger couples, cohabitation had become the ‘natural’ thing to do and only those who had positively considered the option of getting married had then gone on to exchange wedding vows. The default option had clearly changed between these generations.

The main conclusion from the qualitative research was that the younger couples now had to reflect and negotiate on issues that their parents had taken for granted. This included the decision to marry and also issues relating to the allocation of money and time. Jane Lewis appears to welcome this change but she also warns that the absence of firm rules can make life difficult for people. The main differences seemed to be between the older and younger generations rather than between the married and cohabiting couples (but remember these groups were not representative of their wider populations).

The main overall conclusion from this book is that there has been a growth in individualism but this cannot be simply characterised as a growth in selfish individualism. People want to make commitments as well as pursue their own self-interest. The last chapter asks: ‘What is to be done?’ to which the author’s view is that policy should provide collective support for children while allowing individuals more choice as to how they organise their private lives.

KAREN ROWLINGSON
University of Bath

Nick Lee, 2001 Childhood and Society, Open University Press, Buckingham, xiv + 157 pp., £50.00, £16.99 (pbk.).

JSP, 31, 2002, DOI: 10.1017/S0047279402276928

Children are currently high on the social policy agenda. The Blair government began with a commitment to ‘education, education, education’ and has followed this up with a promise to end child poverty and a series of measures to combat children’s criminal and anti-social behaviour. It has been difficult even for professional social policy analysts to keep up with the apparently never-ending stream of policy initiatives targeted on children and families. Yet underlying this lather of activity is a fundamental confusion and ambivalence about the nature of contemporary childhood. This is reflected in a tension between policies which recognise and promote children’s rights on the one hand, and a greater emphasis on adult regulation and control over childhood on the other.
Against this background, any work which seeks to extend our theoretical understanding of childhood is to be greatly welcomed. Nick Lee has produced a book which is both illuminating and original in that it challenges not only the dominant developmental view of childhood but also the work of James and Prout and others involved in the newly emerging sociology of childhood. Lee’s book has the added merit of being extremely well written and guiding the reader through the closely argued text in a way which makes it easy to follow.

Nick Lee begins with Jens Quortrup’s widely cited distinction between ‘adult human beings’ and child ‘human becomings’. He then sets out to explain the historical and material circumstances which have sustained the credibility of this distinction. In the case of adulthood he attributes the idea that this can be seen as a stable, standard and ‘finished’ stage in human development to the particular circumstances of Fordism with its stability and reliability of employment patterns. The link between childhood and unstable, incomplete dependence he traces to the rise of European nation states with their emphasis on military and economic competition. Children became a key focus of investment and means whereby governments could shape their nation’s future.

Lee then goes on to argue that the circumstances which had given rise to this distinction between adults as ‘human beings’ and children as ‘human becomings’ have been overtaken by social and economic changes. In particular, the collapse of stable employment and growing instability in intimate relations have meant that there is no such thing as a standard adulthood as a fixed point of completion in human development. Adults too are ‘human becomings’. At the same time, the status of childhood is becoming more ambiguous partly as a result of globalisation and partly because of the impact of new technology. A prime example of the latter, Lee suggests, is the way television within the home gives children access to consumer choices in their own right and makes it more difficult for parents to cocoon children as dependent ‘becomings’.

This analysis leads Lee to take issue with the new paradigm in the sociology of childhood. For where the latter collapses the distinction between adults and children by assigning to children the status of human beings in their own right, Lee argues that neither ‘being’ nor ‘becoming’ is an adequate model of contemporary childhood. He is then left with the task of finding an alternative to traditional socialisation theory or developmental psychology as a framework for explaining the continual state of ‘becoming’ which is common to children and adults. He finds this in the work of philosophers such as Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari. Using the concept of ‘extension’ derived from these sources, Lee argues that both adults and children are incomplete and dependent on ‘extensions’ for their powers and abilities. Growing up involves increasing our network of ‘extensions’ but it is only one source of variation amongst a myriad of other ways in which humans differ in their access to these networks. In this respect chronological age loses a great deal of its significance.

In conclusion then, this is a rich and stimulating work. It shares with other recent texts within the sociology of childhood a powerful critique of the ‘investment’ or developmental model of childhood which is still pervasive within the social policy discourse. It shares too a challenge to the idea that children are fundamentally different, and inferior, to adults. In contrast to these other texts, though, Nick Lee does not posit a view of children as fully formed human beings
rather he suggests that human life is a continual process of change, dependency and ‘becoming’.

Harry Ferguson and Marie O’Reilly (2001), Keeping Children Safe: child abuse, child protection and the promotion of welfare, Farmar Press. £15.75 (pbk.).

This book is described in the foreword as a ‘comprehensive study’ of the care and protection of children in one part of Ireland (the area covered by the Mid-Western Health Board); it certainly achieves its aim of providing a thorough and important insight into the child welfare system as it operates there. It will be of interest to those from further afield too, because it captures some of the tensions and pressures which seem almost endemic to child care services, wherever they are provided. The challenge, for example, of finding a proper balance between protecting children and addressing their welfare needs is clearly illuminated here.

The book is based on a very extensive study of the operation of the system for responding to concerns about children’s welfare, which gains additional strength from some important features. For example, it features a discussion of children’s and parents’ perspectives on the experience of being involved with the child protection system, and it also has a longitudinal element which provides a strong sense of unfolding processes, as children move through different stages of referral, assessment and intervention.

Because of the great level of detail provided, the book works well on two levels. First, it is able to illustrate examples of good and not so good practice which help to reinforce prior understandings about important and desirable qualities of professionals and their agencies. For instance, a lengthy review of an ‘exemplary case’ highlights the importance of effective and planned inter-agency working, the positive use of authority to protect children, the value of supportive practice, and the importance of seeking a spirit of partnership with service recipients. However, the study also highlights some other deficiencies which appear familiar to us as well – such as the way in which formal processes are experienced as hostile by parents, and the sense of ‘drift’ as cases are left to float between agencies with no-one taking control.

The book also works, however, in the sense that the authors try to derive some more substantial conclusions from the extensive empirical evidence presented. The authors draw attention to what they see as differences as well as similarities between the Irish and other Western welfare systems, suggesting that these have explanations rooted in distinctive cultural and policy characteristics. The evidence of the study, for example, appears to suggest that there is a much greater likelihood of intervention in both ‘welfare’ and ‘protection’ cases than is to be found elsewhere, notably the UK. This sits rather oddly with their finding that, as elsewhere, there is evidence of trying to ‘fit cases into a “child protection” frame’ in order to attract services – there appears to be relatively less need to adopt this kind of strategy where intervention is more likely to follow from a referral regardless of its origin.
Despite this observation, the authors identify a preponderance of concern with child protection issues, and physical and sexual abuse in particular, which has something of a distorting effect on interventions. Some areas of need appear to be poorly served, including those cases where parenting difficulties are centrally related to children’s needs.

Whilst it is possible to offer criticisms of some aspects of the book (the empirical evidence is presented in rather substantial indigestible chunks, for example), its merits clearly outweigh any small defects. It presents both an important account of systems, their management and impact, and a considered review of child welfare practice which provides some significant insights into the qualities and skills associated with competent professional interventions. These lessons are certainly applicable more widely than in Ireland alone.

ROGER SMITH
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David G. Green and Benedict Irvine (2001), Health Care in France and Germany: Lessons for the UK? London: Civitas. vi + 110 pp., £5.00 (pbk.).

The market has featured prominently in recent discussions of health care. Far from New Labour abolishing the ‘internal market’, we now have an ‘external market’, exporting patients to France, Germany and Greece. New Labour has ended the class war with private medicine, with ‘surgical factories’, take-overs of private hospitals, a concordat with private medicine, in addition to the Private Finance Initiative. The Conservatives are continuing their ‘Grand tour’ of health care systems. It may appear timely for a serious debate about the market in health care. Unfortunately, this book is not it. Given the past record of the IEA/Civitas with its long history of stimulating and provocative material, and of David Green as a well-known and productive author, it is a very disappointing contribution.

The book consists of four main chapters. Chapter 1 presents the ‘consumer views’ from interviews in France and Germany. Chapters 2 and 3 give a detailed account of the health care systems in France and Germany respectively. Chapter 4 has the same title as the subtitle of book, but the ‘lessons for the UK’ consist of five and a half pages.

Chapter 1 presents material from the largely neglected vantage point of individual consumers. Given the ‘top-down’, institutional nature of much of the literature, this approach is very welcome. However, the delivery is fairly thin. There is little justification for the choice of France and Germany. They are two countries with some degree of market orientation and with fairly high satisfaction rates (pp. 4–5), but not as high as countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Luxembourg and Denmark. In other words, the implied link between markets and satisfaction is far from obvious. Details of the population and sample are lacking. It is far from clear that the fairly educated consumers that we meet can be considered a representative sample of the population. This is informative and enjoyable reading, but it adds little to accounts in newspaper and its analytical power is limited. Chapter 2 focuses on France—
‘regulation – with a heavy touch’. It is claimed that three principles – personal payment, choice of doctor and freedom of practice – remain fundamental to the French healthcare system (p. 35). Complete freedom of choice of physician and health service provider is an element that sets the French system apart from its social insurance-based neighbour, Germany (p. 40). Owing to fee-for-service provision, there is a real sense that the customer is purchasing a service (p. 41). The French demand and receive more health care services than any other European population (p. 49). Awareness of the high cost of out-of-pocket expenses has made them demanding consumers. The French people have as free a choice of doctor or hospital as anywhere in the world (pp. 50–1). We can be jealous of the 15–30 minute GP consultations (p. 40) and puzzle over the details on the French payslip (p. 33). Green and Benedict are scrupulously fair in admitting that in early 1999 the government estimated that up to 25 per cent of the French population delayed medical treatment for financial reasons, and some 150,000 people had no medical cover at all (p. 38). However, given the history of the IEA debate with Richard Titmuss in the 1960s, there is little examination of the latter’s argument about information asymmetry between doctor and patient. It is later admitted that ‘health care is different – but not that different’ (p. 80). Similarly, there is only passing reference to the higher levels of health spending in France. Chapter 3 examines Germany. Again, some positive features, such as from the age of 35 all insured persons can undergo an examination every 2 years (p. 59), are pointed out. Equally, it is mentioned that some doctors close (take a holiday) towards the end of the financial year (p. 73). The heart of the book – lessons for the NHS – appears in the short Chapter 4. Here, normal IEA/Civitas service is resumed with a series of bold assertions. For example, health care resembles other consumer goods (p. 77): ‘Equality in the sense of uniformity remains the NHS objective’ (p. 78). The six lessons – to make the market serve everyone – appear on p. 81. This implies:

1. governments should not try to be the single payer – because rationing will be the result;
2. nor should governments impose a single provider – because consumers cannot escape a bad service and incentives to raise standards will be diminished;
3. avoid a compulsory link with employers;
4. public policy should recognise the special nature of health care. This implies two further aims:
5. to get as close as possible to ensuring that self-sufficient people should be completely price conscious and that dependent people should be as price conscious as circumstances allow;
6. to ensure that people dependent on government support do not have an obviously inferior service.

The book concludes that ‘it is embarrassing for a nation to admit that it has been wrong for 50 years, but every French and German citizen has access to high quality care – a higher standard of care than we enjoy here’ (p. 82).

The book has some positive features. Like other IEA/Civitas products, it is excellent value for money. It contains detailed, up-to-date descriptions of two health care systems, with extensive notes and referencing; however, it spends too much time telling us things we generally know (of some better experiences
elsewhere), but fails to convince that the market is the cause of this superior performance. While the book is a useful corrective to those who believe that performance of the NHS can simply be explained by funding, its implicit claim that performance of the NHS simply explained by market and consumer factors is equally untenable. Huge problems of context and policy transfer are overlooked. In short, the book does not present a clear blueprint that will save Conservative politicians from setting foot on their beloved Continental European soil. The core of the book – and subtitle – turns out to be a brief, damp squib. More seriously, almost alone in IEA/Civitas publications, it is a little dull. It would take an extraordinary author to write an entertaining book on detailed descriptions of health care systems. Perhaps Civitas should return to the IEA ‘comparative advantage’ of whole books rather than under six pages of stimulating writing, audacious claims and memorable quotes (always excellent for essay questions ‘Discuss’). Rather than ‘lesson for the NHS’, the main lesson here is for Civitas: must try harder.

MARTIN POWELL
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Martin McKee, Judith Healy and Jane Falkingham (eds.), Health Care in Central Asia, European Observatory on Health Care Systems Series, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002, xiv + 222 pp., £65.00, £22.50 (pbk.).

This text analyses health policy reforms in the five central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the spirit of an evidence based approach to policy formulation. It does so according to what it claims are the agreed objectives of European health care systems, namely, universal access for all citizens, effective care for better health outcomes, efficient use of resources, high quality services and responsiveness to patient concerns (p. xii).

All five republics have suffered varying degrees of economic catastrophe since gaining independence on the collapse of the USSR. Government funding for health care has been dramatically reduced to between one quarter and one third of pre-independence levels, exacerbating the failing of their ‘command and control’ health care systems, so that economic necessity combines with intellectual curiosity in the search for alternative approaches to the finance and delivery of health care. International observers from member organisations of the Observatory such as the WHO and the World Bank, have played a key role in the development of reform plans for more pluralist systems incorporating a degree of private sector involvement, incentive based payments, choice and competition.

The book provides a reflective account of what has been attempted where and to what effect. The authors wish to support the policy community in the countries concerned, to help them learn from one another, but at the same time to appeal to a broader international audience interested in aspects of policy transfer.

The result is a tour de force of collaborative effort. Although edited by three UK
based academics, there are twenty-six contributors from W. Europe, the USA and the Central Asian Republics. What could easily have become a discordant cacophony however, is disciplined by a clear framework and excellent cross referencing. Part 1 offers the essential context for comparative study, providing an overview of the history and politics of central Asia, recent economic developments and an analysis of standards of living and patterns of health, concluding with an outline of the pre-independence Soviet style health care system. Part 2 discusses aspects of the health care reform process, including funding systems, allocation of resources, payment to providers and workforce issues. There are also chapters looking specifically at primary care, hospital services and public health. The final section provides individual profiles of the current health care system in each of the five republics.

A problem recognised by the authors, is the paucity and/or unreliability of much of the data. Where funding is attached to inputs there are incentives to maximise numbers e.g. ‘phantom’ hospital beds and staff. Another salient example is the proportion of health spending coming from ‘informal’ payments to practitioners, officially estimated at 10 per cent of the total spend but informally reckoned to be as high as 70 per cent in Tajikistan in 1999.

For the concerned health policy analyst there are a number of important lessons. The study clearly indicates the relevance of policy legacy in terms of both institutions and attitudes. Top down hierarchical organisations inherited from the Soviet era, and culture of administration rather than management and the absence of a tradition of democratic participation have all hampered the reform efforts. However, the authors also stress the limitations of the market-oriented model that all five republics are trying to emulate. Soviet style health care provided easy access for all, while fledgling health insurance schemes are shown to promote increasing inequality and to exacerbate inefficiencies. The insurance mechanism is shown to be of limited applicability in an economic climate of steep wage decline and the text concludes that, given their economic circumstances, the central Asian republics must focus their reforming efforts on ‘cost reductions and efficiency gains rather than on new forms of generating revenue’ (p. 106).

Overall, the results are disappointing. Although some micro economic reforms have clearly taken place, the authors acknowledge that much change is more apparent than real. Major difficulties identified include: lack of management and technological expertise and the interdependence of health care reform on other aspects of economic management and social infra-structure. The heavy reliance on hospital care, for example, is partly a reflection of poorly developed social care systems. Health care reform in Central Asia appears to reflect Dolowitz’ claim that ‘if a government searches hurriedly for a solution to an urgent “problem” it may be more likely that there will be a transfer because the need for a “solution” is imperative, but less likely that the transfer will be successful’ (p. 11). This pragmatic, sympathetic but critical appraisal may, however, limit the dangers of such an outcome.


VALERIE WILLIAMSON
University of Brighton
This is a bran-tub of a book. The editors have persuaded the participants at a seminar held at South Bank University in the Autumn of 1998 to revise their contributions to make up this volume. Its twelve chapters include five pieces on community (re)building in the United States; four on urban regeneration in the UK; one on the politque de la ville in France, plus the opening and concluding reflections by the editors. For UK readers the chapters on comprehensive community initiatives, community development corporations and the Industrial Areas Foundation network in the US provide a useful overview of the origin, development and impact of these attempts to redress the problems of dereliction, disadvantage and discrimination. Likewise, US readers are exposed to critical commentaries on UK urban revitalisation strategies and New Labour’s ‘Third Way’.

One of the aims of the book was to seek in a globalising world for commonalities between the US and Europe, for transferability of good practices in urban regeneration. Damon’s chapter on the large scale state intervention in France does not fit easily into this framework, as the programme, initiated in the early 1980s ‘affects around 10 per cent of the French population, or nearly six million people’ (p. 157). Whilst terms like ‘resident participation’ (p. 169) and ‘mobilization of residents’ (p. 157) are used, the partnership is essentially between the state and ‘social financial backers and local authorities’ (p. 163).

However, the UK contributions do focus on community empowerment and participation. North and Bruegel provide an appraisal of local exchange trading schemes (LETSs) as a positive if limited form of community activism and go on to comment on the continued salience of oppositional social movements, such as the anti-roads movements. This contribution argues that ‘there is a need for community resistance to initiatives imposed from above as a means of building effective and vibrant participation in revitalising neighbourhoods’ (p. 176), and, following Alinsky, supports the idea of independent, oppositional community self-organisation. Alinsky set up the Industrial Areas Foundation in 1940. Its purpose was to provide training for community organisers. Frank Pierson’s chapter on the IAF celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of IAF organisation in the south west of the US and reflected on the shift from small area community efforts to broad-based campaigns on a metropolitan or state wide scale. This growth, it is argued, was achieved by adhering over the years to a number of ‘organizing universals’ including the creation of political capability before setting up programmes of activity and a sustained focus on action. The IAF approach was contrasted with government initiated neighbourhood revitalisation strategies: ‘some comprehensive community initiatives in the US and the range of “joined-up” initiatives in the UK only further [muddy] the waters. Invariably these efforts are controlled by strong vested interests’ (p. 102).

Three of the chapters focus on comprehensive community initiatives. Kubisch and Stone conclude that the jury is still out on the potential for CCIs to transform neighbourhoods. Lawrence charges CCIs and other than urban poverty strategies with structural racism. Kubisch, Connell and Fulbright-Anderson address the challenge of evaluating initiatives of this kind, recognising the complexity of working across multiple sectors at different levels from the individual to the
political system, and the problem of identifying control groups for comparative analysis. A ‘theory of change’ is advocated, but the familiar difficult issue of pinning down the specific characteristics of an initiative’s theory of change is acknowledged. ‘Stakeholders...can more easily describe what they are doing than where they are going’ (p. 87). The argument concludes with what can only be described as ‘naïve optimism’, pointing out that any good evaluative endeavour has to start with a clear understanding of the outcomes sought by the initiative under scrutiny.

The two chapters taking a critical stance towards UK urban regeneration strategies both overlap and contradict each other. Pearson and Craig conclude that current strategic approaches to local poverty ‘operate on an ill thought-out concept of community’ (p. 129) and ‘ultimately the pursuit of local people to represent unified local communities is fruitless’ (p. 130), citing the ecological fallacy as the inevitable challenge to geographically targeted initiatives. Miller, by way of contrast, argues that the Labour government’s New Deal for Communities is an improvement on earlier phases of regeneration policy in that ‘the emphasis given to capacity building, empowerment and citizen participation provide the opportunity to facilitate genuine local democratic debate and organizational capacity’ (p. 154).

The first editor (John Pierson) suggests in his concluding chapter that there is room for some optimism about resident participation by thinking of it (in IAF or oppositional terms) as countervailing power rather than as partnership and empowerment. ‘It is important to think clearly about power and how it is deployed both within specific urban regimes and revitalization programs themselves. There are clear signs that this is happening as rejuvenated citizen politics emerges to fill the gaps opening up in political authority across state, region and locality’ (p. 217). What is puzzling about this comment is that it does not seem to flow from the evidence of the other contributions to the book, as opposed to some of the authors’ aspirations to see this kind of political activity flourish.

John Pierson has looked for commonalities and transferability between the US and Europe. What he did not appear to notice was the lack of reference to the specifically environmental dimension in the US contributions compared to UK comments on sustainable regeneration initiatives (Pearson and Craig), environmental initiatives (Miller), the wider green movement (North and Bruegel) and environmental clean-up (John Pierson). However, ‘Environment’ does not appear in the index, neither does ‘Local Agenda 21’. Overall, the book offers thoughtful contributions, but in the end the sum is not greater than the parts.

RANDALL SMITH
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Philip Bean, 2001, Drugs and Crime, Devon: Willan Publishing, xii + 212 pp. £40.00, £16.99 (pbk.).

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As the Chair of the Social Policy Association reported in the SPA News (October/November 2001), there are ‘worrying trends’ affecting the teaching of social policy, with a number of departments being closed or restructured. These developments are happening at the same time as movements in the opposite
direction, with growth of courses in other parts of the field, notably in criminology. Long established as a thriving subject area in the USA (although not in some of its most prestigious universities) much of our teaching material has had an American accent. Now publishers such as Willan have been set up to target this new and expanding market with a series of texts on key criminology topics.

Philip Bean’s *Drugs and Crime* is presented as ‘an overview of the drugs-crime debate’ (p. xi), and it should serve as a guide for students to some aspects of discussion; yet, while Bean emphasises that his is ‘a personal view’ he also claims that the ‘book includes most of what we mean when we talk of drugs and crime’, (p. xii), a claim that must be subject to some questioning. After two short introductory chapters, Bean covers a series of offender-related topics – their sentencing, coercive treatment and drug treatment and testing orders and drug courts – before moving to three chapters on trafficking, policing drug markets and informers. An add-on section deals briefly with women and drugs. A final few pages consider ‘the way forward’. Several of these discussions are illuminating: the comparison of drug courts and DTTOs (p. 91) is one example. Bean refers extensively both to past research of his own and to current projects, which give immediacy and depth to his writing, as in chapter 10, where he compares the position in the USA and the UK in historical perspective. Here he raises important themes about policies and processes in dealing with drugs, noting the problems of interagency work and accountability (p. 192) and advocating a selective introduction of drug courts in some British cities. Students will certainly find interesting and challenging points to consider here.

*Drugs and Crime* is limited for use as a text, as it does not give, as the blurb claims, ‘an authoritative and much-needed overview’. First, Bean surprisingly avoids any serious discussion of what drugs are, merely noting ‘(f)or our purposes, and to avoid a lengthy and acrimonious debate, a pragmatic, circular definition has been used: drugs are what are usually included in the debate about drugs’ (p. 3)! So there is no historical perspective on the debates, nor background to its complexities. Yet, on p. 182, he describes the NHS in the 1960s as the ‘largest “pusher” of drugs...through its over-prescribing doctors’. Secondly, while there obviously has to be selection of material and topics, some omissions do compromise the value of the text. Thus the Runciman Report (1999), the Independent Inquiry Into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which proposed the reclassification of several substances, is not mentioned, even though it formed the basis of much of the drugs and crime debate in Britain since its publication. There are many other gaps: Howard Parker’s research is only represented by one article from 1987, none of Geoff Pearson’s or Tim Newburn’s contributions to key debates appear (as in the *British Journal of Criminology* Special No. on Drugs vol. 39 no. 4, 1999) The chapter on women and drugs leaves out Lisa Maher’s major studies in New York and Sydney.

This book will be useful to many of those encountering drugs and crime issues in their studies or their work; it does not provide a full account of all of these and students will need to use other sources for their studies in criminology or social policy.


FRANCES HEIDENSOHN

Goldsmiths, University of London

This is an accessible and well-informed collection on race and housing, which must be enthusiastically welcomed. It deserves to find a readership among students, researchers and practitioners. But how big is that readership? Race and housing is hardly a headline issue in the fields of social policy, housing studies or the sociology of race. Yet the realities of racial and ethnic inequalities and of direct and institutional racism in housing are as stubborn and stark as they ever have been, as this book documents. Housing has been marginalised within social policy by the decline of council housing, the privatisation of housing associations and the dominance of the private sectors. The 1980s saw the publication of several superb academic studies of institutional racism in housing, which are frequently cited in this book, but funding for such work seems to have dried up. Anyway, those studies were either published in hardback only or in pamphlet form; their audience was largely confined to specialists. The topic has always been somewhat marginal to both the policy and academic mainstream. The prevailing silence on the subject was punctured a little by the disturbances and the rise of the BNP in the northern towns in 2001. Segregation of communities is widely deplored, but the links to housing processes are rarely considered in any depth. The government reaction has essentially been to blame the minority ethnic communities for failing to assimilate culturally. The local government reaction has been to bemoan their lack of resources and powers, having presided over racialised processes in education and housing for decades.

This collection was put together before the events of 2001, and justifiably perhaps makes very little mention of politics, national or local, because the issues are so marginalised in political discourse. Like most edited collections the seventeen contributions are diverse in form and approach. The editors have not tried to develop a pervasive theoretical or conceptual framework. This perhaps makes it more difficult for undergraduates to use. Nevertheless, the opening contributions provide useful overviews on broad topics such as theoretical issues, patterns of residential settlement, housing needs, and social housing allocation, all of which students should find particularly useful. Some chapters present research findings, which make a significant and original contribution to the field. Deborah Phillips and Rachel Unsworth report on their survey of social landlords which found ‘no evidence of a widespread attempt or commitment to promoting the idea of, or opportunities for, outward movement [of minority ethnic households] into new locations’ (p. 81). There was ‘a stereotyped view of Black and minority ethnic demands...widely held in the housing association sector [that] they wish to live close to their community and [are]...unwilling to consider moving to other areas’ (p. 83). Peter Somerville and Dianne Sodahl contribute an outstanding chapter on minority ethnic employment by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). They report on a survey of management and staff, suggesting that ‘for most RSLs that were not black-led equality of opportunity was not a core value of the organisation’ (p. 142), and that ‘most RSLs fail to embrace cultural and ethnic diversity within their practices’ (p. 151). The chapter offers a lively and carefully observed picture of the organisational culture of RSLs in the ‘equal opps’ era, closing with some pertinent suggestions for moving forward in the Best Value era.
The editors have done an impressive job in assembling contributions on a wide range of relevant topics and from a diversity of contributors including several practitioners. A few of the contributions are rather weak in terms of policy analysis and critical reflection, but there are useful chapters on women, on youth homelessness, and on refugees and asylum seekers. The latter is, of course, a particularly pressing issue which is given an expert, if fairly brief, policy review. There are also chapters respectively on Glasgow, Northern Ireland and Western Europe as a whole, clearly demonstrating the salience of race and housing matters across the UK and the EU. There is perhaps one major gap in this collection, namely home ownership. Most people of minority ethnic origin in the UK are housed in the owner occupied sector, where they face racially ‘constrained choices’ shaped by direct discrimination and institutionally racist processes. Unfortunately this book makes very little reference to experiences and processes in this sector. This is understandable in that there is relatively little research and data on a sector, which is somewhat inaccessible, particularly on such a ‘sensitive’ issue. Nevertheless it would have been possible to examine critically the impact of home ownership policies on minority ethnic communities, if only in rather general terms. Despite some weaknesses, however, this book brings a sorely needed update to an important and neglected aspect of social policy, which has something for students, researcher and practitioners to appreciate and use.

NORMAN GINSBURG
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This is an interesting, if in some ways disappointing, book. The editors note that it originated from the work of an EU Forth Framework on ‘Migrants in European Cities’ which brought together research teams from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK. Given this provenance it is surprising to find that of the fifteen contributors, ten are from the US, four from the UK and one from Germany, and that five of eleven chapters have an exclusively US focus. Moreover, a remarkable proportion of the chapters do not seem to address the main theme of the collection at all. Wacquant’s informative essay on conceptual retrenchment in the US debate on urban destitution essentially addresses the long-standing domestic concern with the position of Afro-Americans. Hamnett is interesting on polarisation in London in terms of evidence about income distribution but this is not a migration-focused chapter. The one continental European contribution, Friedrichs, on the impact of global restructuring on German urban employment prospects, again scarcely addresses migration as an issue. All of these chapters are worthwhile in their own right but seem to have little connection with the focus indicated by the book’s title.

The strengths of the collection lie particularly in the editorial introduction and in the chapter by Cross and Waldinger on migrants and urban labour markets in
Europe and North America. The introduction lays out three themes for exploration, namely, the geneal thesis of the globalisation of cities, by which is meant both increasing cultural complexity and social polarisation in consequence of the globalisation of the economy; the scale and impact of ‘new’ migration with particular reference to the position of established ethnic minorities; and the impact on ‘old divisions’ of these changes and in particular on patterns of socio-spatial segregation. They argue in general for a greater similarity than is generally supposed between the US and Europe in terms of both the patterns of migration and the social impact of that migration.

The demonstration of those similarities is largely a function of the chapter by Cross and Waldinger who pay attention both to the mismatch between spatial location of employment in the edge cities of post-industrial metropolises and traditional minority residence in inner cities, and to the high functionality of ‘illegal workers’ in economic structures striving for flexibility, whilst formal workers retain employment rights. Other general descriptive themes raised in this chapter are the extent to which large primate cities – the Londons and New Yorks – have large new immigrant concentrations but declining industrial employment. This is a major shift from the historic pattern of migration towards employment in industrial capitalism and has long-term implications which do seem important. This chapter also includes an interesting and informative discussion of the role of ethnic entrepreneurs which challenges a traditionally held view that migrant minority entrepreneurs necessarily are responding to exclusion from other employment positions and comments on the long-term significance of social networks as a continuing source of migration which becomes autonomous of ‘recipient society’ labour demands. Overall, the introduction and this chapter are excellent summaries of issues and available data.

The chapters by Reitz, Model, Clark, Howell and Mueller, and Rogers are all essentially pieces of empirical reportage which do address the themes of the book. They all are interesting and informative in terms of specific focus – for example, Reitz on Australia and Canada’s more successful ‘creaming’ of immigrants for high level skills and potential, and Clark’s demonstration, against the general line of global explains most things in the global cities’ literature, of the significance of local effects on social exclusion of immigrants in different US cities. However, the most interesting empirical chapter for me was Light et al.’s study of the globalisation effects on employment in Southern California from 1970 to 1990. Here the authors succeeded in combining empirical reportage with a serious and interesting critique of the general character of restructuring theory. Moreover, they develop the discussion of the potential autonomy of migration networks in an interesting and pertinent way. I would quarrel with their assertion that declines in real wage for both established and migrant workers indicate a decline in demand for labour. This is simplistic micro-economic theory. A key function of migrants is always as an industrial reserve army which should have precisely this effect in the short to medium term. That said, this is an interesting piece.

Overall the components of this collection are all of high quality and interesting in themselves, but it is a pity that there is so little non-UK European material. The comparative thesis advanced about similarities in the editorial introduction
in highly plausible, but the evidence base for it is not provided here. This is particularly the case because Western Europe has a highly distinctive pattern of immigration from the former Communist countries of the East and that is not really considered as an issue by any of the authors here.

DAVID BYRNE
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Between my being asked to write this review and writing it, Jean-Marie Le Pen, standing on a fascist anti-immigration platform, reached the second round of French presidential elections, Pim Fortuyn, a more maverick political figure but one with some outspoken anti-immigration and particularly anti-Muslim views, was assassinated ahead of the Dutch general election (at which his party achieved the second highest number of seats), and the UK and Germany debated new immigration and asylum legislation in their parliaments. This little sketch gives a simple picture of the speed at which the asylum and immigration debates are moving in Europe.

I don’t know where this book has been for the last two years but, unfortunately, being two years out of date within the European asylum debates gives it a feel of being dated even more than many others on different topics would be. The author, an American who based himself in Switzerland for the fieldwork on which the book is founded, examines the recent experience of the UK, Germany and Switzerland in relation to the granting of political asylum. About 90 per cent of the book consists of three country chapters which review parliamentary asylum debates in each country at two or three key historical stages, and there is a brief contextual introduction and a concluding chapter which attempts to draw out some common themes.

The choice of case studies is somewhat strange. Britain and Germany would be in anyone’s European collection of examples. Britain’s particular experience of immigration and refugee and asylum seeking with their strong relationship with its colonial past, its alleged liberal stance towards refugees (now sorely being undermined), and its status in the eyes of many asylum seekers as an economic magnet, make it an inevitable focus of study. Germany, with its ambiguous relationship to the notion of citizenship, which grants rights to those (the aussiedler) who have lived in Poland for fifty years but are citizens ‘by blood’ (jus sanguinis) but denies them to those who have lived in Germany for fifty years (because of their national origin) and which has the highest level of ‘immigration’ in Europe, is another. But why Switzerland? The Swiss nation barely intrudes on the consciousness of European debates on asylum other than in an historical context and it is not clear from reading this chapter that, apart from the inherent conservatism of Swiss politics, its ambiguous role in the second world war, and its size, that it has much new to offer in the way of complexity in asylum debates. France might have been a better choice as a case study with its notion of citizenship obscuring differences in ethnic origin in the republican cloak of citoyen, and thus preventing any serious examination of race-related
issues and hindering political debate on the subject (although that, of course, didn’t stop Le Pen).

One example of the dated nature of the book is demonstrated early on when the author notes that he had ‘found no study that considers the economic impact of refugees on receiving countries’ (p. 4). In the last year, the Home Office, no less, has published a detailed and closely argued study of the social and economic impact of refugees on the UK which suggests that there is an annual net benefit of the order of £6bn to the UK economy and this was followed by a statement from the UK employers’ association (the CBI) which, in response to the British White Paper on Immigration and Asylum, argued strongly for the economic benefits of migration, with migrants in 1999/2000 making a net contribution of £2.5bn in taxation to the British economy.

The book claims to explore the complexity of refugee debates in Europe but this claim is misleading. The book is narrow, uses a limited and inadequate selection of case studies and focuses largely in reality on parliamentary debates. In that very limited sense, the book does do what it claims to do but that is not how the title would be read by those seeing it advertised in the present febrile political context. Its claim to complexity is supported largely by the very nature of the debates themselves which are indeed complex and, as Steiner shows, draw on a range of political, social, economic, moral, philosophical and religious arguments for any position which parliamentarians choose to take. Actually, what the book ends up doing is not so much reflecting the complexity of debates about asylum (whether in Parliament or not) but the ebb and tide of morality within Parliaments when the subject is debated. And that doesn’t show most parliamentarians in a very happy light. In this respect, the book does us all a service as we all attempt to grapple with what Steiner rightly calls this most controversial topic.

GARY CRAIG
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There is hardly a day goes by without some aspect of the pensions crisis (or scandal) being revealed in the media. Just a few examples from the last few months are: (1) many companies are trying to change the payout terms to workers who have been paying into schemes for years; (2) there is increasing evidence of pension funds being ‘dipped into’ by companies as they look for access to extra funding; (3) increasing numbers of employers are failing to pay their contribution – or their share of contribution – to schemes, leaving question marks over the schemes’ viability; (4) the government’s attempt to move towards ‘stakeholder’ pensions is failing – with little take-up; and (5) the government, and pension agencies, have been underestimating the longevity of the population, so the demand on pensions is going to be even greater over the next few years than analysts have previously suggested. Good investigative journalists in the quality press have revealed many of these stories, but why are these ‘difficulties’ emerging now and what is the wider context to these processes? Surely this
is an area where good academic social scientific skills could be utilised to engage with these questions and enlighten public debate?

Richard Minns’s book, *The Cold War in Welfare: stock markets versus pensions*, is an excellent and timely book that sets out to analyse the roots of the pension crisis. He does so by taking the arguments of ‘pension privatisers’ seriously. He looks at the logic and rationale of their case – before going on to provide a devastating critique of the consequences of the privatisation process.

Minns looks at what he calls the new ‘cold war’ that is emerging between different welfare regimes over the extent and nature of state welfare provision. Within the Anglo-American model the stock market plays an increasingly important role in the provision of pensions, social security and the financing of the economy and welfare more generally.

‘Pension dollars’ – the savings people have put aside for their pensions, either privately or in various schemes – amount to a staggering $12,000 billion worldwide in assets. As Minns tells us, this is ‘more than the combined value of all the companies quoted in the world’s three largest stock markets’ (p. 1). This fact has occasionally been used to argue that ‘old fashioned’ notions about class and inequality do not fit the real world – that vast numbers of us are in effect share market gamblers and asset strippers and hence we are ‘all capitalists’. Such claims have never deserved more than a moment’s consideration. Effective control over these vast resources resides in a very few, very wealthy individuals and companies – it is bankers and financiers who gamble on the global markets with pension investments, actions that always leave pensioners’ future assets and livelihoods at risk. But now the stock market companies want to increase the amount of ‘pension dollars’ at their disposal. The vast resources used to finance state benefits have become the target of the fund-holders’ greedy eyes.

One of the great strengths of Minns’s book is the way he unpicks the ‘crisis of ageing’. Across much of the ‘advanced economies’ the ageing population is depicted as a major social problem. But the vast wealth in these countries (and indeed globally) means it is not necessary or inevitable that increased life expectancy should be a problem, surely it should be something to celebrate (and such benefits should be spread globally not restricted to the ‘West’). But the ways in which the problems of ageing and changes to the dependency ratio are framed are, he suggests, an excellent cover for pension privatisers who argue that the problem of providing for our ageing population cannot be solved by inefficient state provision but only by efficient market methods. Minns shows this is a political and ideological argument from neo-liberals. Stock markets are not more efficient, in fact they gamble with peoples lives and state transfers are an effective and affordable means of providing pensions.

Minns provides a theoretically rigorous and committed investigation and analysis of pension provision and the increasing global hold of the neo-liberal privatisation agenda on welfare. If I were to make two small points of criticism it would be that, first, although the argument is very important and deserves a wide readership this is unlikely. I think, because the book is written at a high level of theoretical abstraction. ‘High theory’ is important, this book is important – but if it had been written more accessibly it may have had a wider impact. Secondly, the image of ‘competing welfare blocs’, analogous to the cold war political-military blocs, is interesting but I think overplayed. The competition
between privatisers and state providers is portrayed as an almost geo-political clash of ideologies – and in places this leads to a pessimistic ‘privatisation inevitablistm’ – if this is the future there is not much we can do against these powerful interests and global neo-liberal institutions. I am much more optimistic. The developing global anti-corporate or anti-capitalist movement is challenging the neo-liberal assault forcefully, offering the hope that ‘another world is possible’. The challenge from below has also come from the pensioners’ movements which are increasingly active in their pursuit of their rights to a decent pension and life after retirement. Unfortunately these movements do not feature perhaps as much as they should.

But these are small points – I really am nitt-picking – this is an excellent book and deserves to be read and debated widely.

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Bent Flyvbjerg (2001), Making Social Science Matter: why social enquiry fails and how it can succeed again, Cambridge University Press, x + 204 pp. £37.50, £13.95 (pbk.).

Most of us at some time have been drawn by those adverts in newspapers and magazines which promise to dramatically improve our memory or our reading powers. All one has to do is pay the money and purchase the book in order to effect the required transformation. Flyvbjerg’s text exhibits many of the key features of this genre: the bold statement of the problem (why social enquiry fails); what we need to do about it (make it matter again); and the practical answers (rejecting the pursuit of law-like generalisations in favour of deeply contextualised case study). A further feature of the genre is that the efficacy of the proposed nostrums crucially depends on how the problem itself is defined. And so it is with Flyvbjerg’s text.

Thus, the reason why social enquiry has failed (an apocalyptic claim also characteristic of the genre) is that it has not produced any general explanatory and predictive theories. Even supposing this to be the case, it is not clear why it should be regarded as an indictment of social science. It will be, argues Flyvbjerg, for as long as social scientists continue to view social research naturalistically by emulating the methods of the natural sciences. The key feature of natural science theory, according to Flyvbjerg, is its predictiveness and this is based on the context-independent nature of its knowledge. Natural science can produce powerful, general predictive theories because it investigates an objective world composed of entities whose behaviour is to a great extent knowable because it is not dependent on context (under certain conditions, water will always boil at 100 centigrade).

The social world, on the other hand, is composed of entities – human beings – whose behaviour is only explicable on the basis of context, intuition and experience. Human behaviour is not rule based, and therefore context-independent, rather, it is situationally specific and highly context-dependent. The fruitless pursuit of the general, predictive theory when ‘there’s nowt so queer as folk’ has, then, ensured the failure of social enquiry.
Flyvbjerg’s remedy is to advocate another sort of approach that fully recognises the situationally specific nature of human social action, and can allow for and comprehend the role of values, power and reflexivity in the constitution of the social world. Making social science matter means attending to what Flyvbjerg claims the social sciences do best: analysis and interpretation of the values and interests involved in practical social action. Drawing on the work of Nietzsche and Foucault and, more surprisingly, Aristotle, Flyvbjerg argues that a focus on the specific and the particular, rather than the general, will restore social science to a position of relevance.

There is not much that is novel in this to anyone familiar with hermeneutic and phenomenological criticisms of social science. More original is the introduction of Aristotle’s notion of phronesis to bolster the practical thrust of Flyvbjerg’s case, and to avoid the slide towards relativism which he wishes to avoid. Whilst acknowledging that the term does not translate exactly, he offers the notion of prudence or ‘practical wisdom’. Such ‘practical wisdom’ refers to the knowledge of how to behave in each particular situation that every competent person has. Since it is the product of experience, understanding and intuition it is not reducible to, nor can it be captured by, theoretical axioms; rather than rule following we have a reflexive engagement with the details of each social situation.

Even with the addition of Aristotle, though, this is not a distinctively fresh approach to the problems of objectivity and knowledge in social science, and the ‘phronetic social science’ that emerges from this anti-naturalism turns out to be relatively humdrum. In Flyvbjerg’s own words ‘it focuses on values...on the minutiae and practices that make up the basic concerns of life...make[s] extensive use of case studies in context, and [uses] narrative as expository technique’ (p. 63). This is a perfectly reasonable argument for concrete case studies and detailed historical accounts of how the social world works (an illuminating example of which is provided by Flyvbjerg, based on his own experiences as an urban planner in Aalborg, Denmark). Yet it is implausible to argue that social science has ceased to matter because it has not adhered to these methodological guidelines, and difficult to see how following them might make social science more appealing to politicians who are presumably the people to whom it must be made to matter.

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