

only a limited account of the multifaceted social and cultural struggles that characterised the period in question. Choosing between the focus on gender and minority politics turns out to be a less productive strategy than would be an attempt to integrate the two perspectives. As the author herself concedes, the question of dealing with difference is crucial to democracy and remains as pertinent to debates about gender as to those about national or ethnic identities. Feinberg's exclusively Czech version of the women's movement's struggle for democracy risks reproducing the dominant version of history in the style of Czech history textbooks. It reproduces the silencing of other groups overshadowed by Czech nationalism. One of the important arguments made in the book is that democracy in interwar Czechoslovakia was both egalitarian and ethno-nationalist. The analysis reveals how the Czech feminist movement thrived in conjunction with the nationalist movement. Although women were among the first groups to have their rights subordinated to the 'needs of the nation', the book offers surprisingly little analysis of the relationship between feminism and nationalism.

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Irena Kogan, Michael Gebel and Clemens Noelke: *Europe Enlarged: A Handbook of Education, Labour and Welfare Regimes in Central and Eastern Europe*
Bristol 2008: Policy Press, 389 pp.

To assess structural and institutional changes of almost two decades in their entirety and complexity is a difficult task, particularly in view of the considerable differences that exist between countries, of which the editors of this book were clearly aware.

Their book focuses on three 'regimes', which are argued to be the main systemic determinants of social stratification: education, labour markets, and welfare provision. Changes in the institutional setting of any of the three systems have important consequences both in terms of individual life chances and of countries' abilities to respond to new socio-economic challenges and risks. In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), 1989 marked the start of the simultaneous transformation of the economy, the political structure, the legal system, everyday life and political ideology – all of this at an astonishing speed. By 2004, eight countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) became members of the European Union, followed by Bulgaria and Romania three years later. To what extent were the education, labour market and welfare systems of these countries altered during this 'great transformation'? Where do we find major differences between them? To what degree were policy choices and outcomes shaped by country-specific factors? These are the main issues that are addressed in the first three chapters of this book. A set of core indicators the editors compiled for each of the three topics helps to identify national variations. However, most of these are standard Eurostat indicators.

On education, Irena Kogan provides a comprehensive description of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the education system, highlighting, in particular, the differentiations that exist both within the secondary and tertiary level. Kogan's chapter is full of valuable and interesting information with the potential to explore a wide range of issues. For instance, the gradual shift away from vocational training programmes towards general secondary education, which can be observed across all CEE countries, raises a number of questions about changes in the value and the quality of education in these countries. Is

secondary vocational training, traditionally a strong and important feature of the socialist education system, losing its value? If so, is it reflected in students' academic performance and in the quality of teaching staff? How did the privatisation of state owned companies affect the quantity and quality of training opportunities in vocational schools? These issues are not investigated, however. There is no mention of how the reorganisation of the education system affected the educational opportunities of students with disadvantaged social backgrounds or the access of ethnic minority (Roma) students to quality education. Nor do we learn about subsequent reforms addressing these issues.

The chapter on labour markets identifies the cross-national variations in labour market institutions placing them in the larger region-wide context of economic transformation. Trends in labour force participation and unemployment dynamics, as well as changes in employment protection legislation and industrial relations are presented. Clemens Noelke's discussion of emerging market risk, the sudden and dramatic increase of unemployment and income inequality that followed the breakdown of socialism connects well to Michael Gebel's analysis of the labour market. Nevertheless, the title 'Social Protection, Inequality and Labour Market Risks' does not entirely correspond to what is actually covered in this chapter. Social protection is discussed mostly in terms of protection against labour market risks (e.g. unemployment benefits, active labour market policies) and family policies are only dealt with in the individual country chapters, to which the second and larger part of the book is dedicated. The ten country chapters are probably the most valuable contributions to this book. Here, a number of issues, left unexplored in the comparative chapters, are evaluated by country experts. Jana Straková provides some interesting explanations for the relatively low unemploy-

ment rates in the Czech Republic during the first six years of transition (the Czech miracle), while in the Bulgarian country chapter, Dobrinka Kostova draws attention to the geographic distance from the West as one of the main factors responsible for the slower pace of change compared to other CEE countries. In the chapter on Hungary, Erzsebet Bukody and Peter Robert give a thoughtful account of formal childcare in the Hungarian context, pointing out significant regional disparities. According to them, the problem is especially worrying in the smaller settlements in regions characterised by high unemployment. Unemployed parents who have to take care of their small children due to the lack of available nurseries or kindergartens have even less chance to enter the labour market. Because of the highly selective admission process in primary schools good pre-school education has become increasingly important. Children of those families who have no access to kindergartens that can provide that will obviously start their formal education with a disadvantage.

In sum, *Europe Enlarged* is a good reference book. It can be useful especially for those social policy students, policy-makers and academics who wish to have more detailed introductory information on the institutional settings, past and present, of these three policy domains in the ten new CEE Member States. Although the individual chapters succeed in placing this information in the larger theoretical framework of institutional and structural changes, a summary of the key points identified in the country chapters with a link to the comparative discussion in the first part of the book would have been useful. In its absence, the book at present is quite segmented; rather like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle placed in glass jars. It is up to the reader to pick and piece together important information. This is rather unfortunate for a handbook. Those not familiar with the region will find it particularly difficult to spot

those main problematic areas and issues, common to CEE countries, which were not or were inadequately addressed both by earlier and later reforms. For them, the rich and valuable body of literature published on this topic and listed in the references does offer lifelines. These earlier and often more in-depth studies to a large extent already cover the alleged gap this handbook purports to fill (e.g. on education Koucký [1996] and Micklewright [1999], on labour market Svejnar [1999] and Rutkowski [2006], on welfare Kornai [2006] and Barr [2001]). One of the advantages of a descriptive approach is that it safely manoeuvres complex policy domains. However, describing facts without offering possible explanations is, in my view, telling only half of the story. The topics at hand deserve a fuller treatment.

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Joseph D. Lewandowski and Milan Znoj (eds.): *Trust and Transitions: Social Capital in a Changing World* Newcastle 2008: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 340 pp.

This book collects a number of contributions on social capital in the context of the post-communist transition process. The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 deals with social capital in the context of the post-communist transition generally, while Part 2 collects articles written specifically on the Czech Republic. This division is, however, somewhat arbitrary. In fact, most of the 'Czech' articles in Part 2 address issues of general relevance to the study of social capital, such as the process of building social capital or the relationship between the various different measures frequently interpreted as representing social capital. Part 1, in contrast, tends to focus on relatively narrow issues. Therefore, in this review, I will start by discussing the articles with general application and only then proceed to the more narrowly focused studies, even though this necessarily deviates from the order in which the individual chapters are published.

Social capital is an interesting concept of great practical and academic importance. Broadly speaking, it encompasses the various social norms, networks and relationships among individuals that allow them to cooperate more effectively. Consequently, countries that are endowed with a relatively high stock of social capital in turn tend to do better with respect to economic development, quality of life and quality of institutions alike. In a seminal 1993 study, Robert Putnam referred to social capital as the factor explaining the divergent economic, political and social outcomes in North and South Italy. Accordingly, Northern Italians trust each other, cooperate and prosper, whereas the Southerners tend to distrust one another – and remain poor.