

economy. The empirical chapters provide a thorough analysis of various changes and growing tensions, critically reflecting on the implications of the German export-led growth model for increasing transnational macroeconomic instability. The fact that the individual contributions, despite their common objective, are not subordinate to a uniform and integrated theoretical approach makes it possible to capture a broad range of changes in different domains of Germany's political economy (from skill formation systems to corporate governance and industrial relations) and on the most diverse levels (institutions, power relations, and ideas). However, the central finding of a generally growing imbalance remains somewhat vague against this background, since it is difficult to theoretically link the consequences of the various developments back to the architecture of the German economy as a whole. This would require a more dedicated theoretical examination of an ideal-typical concept of balance, against the background of which the individual shifts and changes could have been systematically classified and evaluated. A starting point for further development could be a critical examination of the manifold meanings of the concept of complementarity (see Crouch 2010; Deeg 2007; Höpner 2005), which implicitly and at least partially represents the antagonist to the concept of imbalance. This could provide a more nuanced diagnosis of changes, their mutual interrelation and implications in order to evaluate in how far transformations have resulted in social, political or economic disadvantage. Nevertheless, a reorientation towards imbalance as a central analysis dimension would clearly be profitable for future comparative analyses of political economies beyond the German case study.

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Ute Klammer, Simone Leiber and Sigrid Leitner (eds) (2020), *Social Work and the Making of Social Policy*, Bristol: Policy Press, £26.99, pp. 256, pbk.

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Social Work and the Making of Social Policy provides critical theoretical and empirical insights into the heightened role of social work in the formulation of social policy. The book exploits three stages of the policy cycle as a primary analytical framework for integrating the chapters' recurring themes: problem definition and agenda-setting, policy formulation and decision making, and social work and implementation. The curated chapters covered a wide range of case studies on how social work influences the dynamics of social policy making in seven welfare state nations, allowing the findings to be easily generalized and applied to other welfare state country scenarios. The case study materials are extensive, including a wide range of topics involving social policy issues such as anti-poverty measures, trafficking, labor market activation

and child protection programs, all of which are examined through the combined lenses of social work and social policy theories.

The first section discusses the concerns and the broader policy agenda bridging social work and social policy. The chapters provide insights on how social work is becoming increasingly relevant in influencing and defining social policy as a result of perceived societal problems and social workers' growing responsibilities. Structural poverty is highlighted as one of the difficulties encountered not only by clients, but also, to some extent, by social workers, despite their tendency to downplay it. This austerity constraints make it difficult for social workers to properly perform their duties and restricts their ability to participate in policy reforms. The chapters argue for the need for social workers to participate in policymaking and policy evaluation through legislative improvements and key political office positions in order to better define the problems and achieve the political reform agenda.

The second section deals with various sorts of actors in the field of social work to enhance policy formulation and decision-making processes, and is probably the most engaging part of the book. The chapters present empirical evidence of social work engagement in political actions, such as how the cash transfer programs were reformed in response to social worker feedback. The considerable roles of social worker academic were also recognized, since their relatively secure employment and well-connected standing with politicians give them influential voices in policy arenas. Other issues were raised in the case of a labor market activation program in which the placement officers in charge were borderline functioning as social workers due to the required assessment of their clients' livelihood problems. This is a difficult scenario because they are not trained as professional social workers, thus they must rely on their own intuition to cope with such issues. It also relates to the contestation that social workers are frequently required to strictly comply to the intentions of legislators and employers, limiting their ability to influence policy. The chapters acknowledge that social movement and social worker organizations have made significant standing in public discourse.

The third section demonstrates how social works are implemented in the context of relevant social policies. The chapters emphasize the key sources of limitation and limits faced by social workers via the perspectives of "implementers" of social policy such as the conflict between professional responsibility and personal intuition. Several case works are reviewed, ranging from child protection and labor market activation reforms to anti-poverty measures. A case study discussed the failure of well-intentioned child protection reform because social workers are unable to translate policy into practice, whereas another study was successful in transforming ineffective welfare programs into active social policy through the use of cognitive, normative, and emotional approaches by the case workers. The importance of professional certification and sufficient training, leadership and organizational culture, and professional supervision and guidance are all lessons learned from the ambivalent findings. Furthermore, access to external resources is necessary for social workers to fill the institutional gaps when problems to policy implementation arise.

The finest element of this book is the editors' expertise and in-depth understanding of integrating the subject matters and common themes in the introduction and conclusion parts, which bring together the progressing and hindering features of social work for playing instrumental roles in policy arenas. The different tasks and responsibilities of social workers were studied, ranging from "policy innovators" to "policy implementers" to grassroot social movement players, with unique perspectives and critical lessons learned. Nevertheless, feedback and varied degrees of appraisal from multiscale stakeholders, including end-users and involved political actors would be critical to be incorporated in the intricate process of social policy making, which was a topic that the book barely touched on. Despite the paucity of end-user perspectives and representation in policymaking, as well as the limited range of evaluation

instruments (the majority of case studies used qualitative methodology), this book is exemplary in bridging the gap between the fields of social work and social policy.

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Paul Spicker (2022), *How to Fix the Welfare State: Some Ideas for Better Social Services*, Bristol: Policy Press, £27.99, pp. 168, pbk.
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This is a slim volume with a large remit. It is also refreshing. Writers looking for research excellence recognition tend to focus on detailed accounts of their understandably focused projects. Spicker, as a fellow retired person, has the luxury of being able to stand back and ponder the big picture. His focus here is the British welfare state but whether we can (still) talk about a singularly British welfare state is now highly debatable. He adopts an extensive definition of 'the welfare state' including employment services and a wide range of public services since they are central to any full meaning of individuals' 'welfare' and they interact crucially with traditional 'social services'.

He treats each service area historically looking for the major shifts in ideas, dominant values and presumptions that have driven policy. There have also been stubborn failures to change in the face of a changing world. Politicians' obsession with the 'workshy' has given us low benefits, complex rules and sanctions for working age families. Yet most beneficiaries are not workshy. The scale of demographic change could have justified a major rethink in our services for older people. That has not happened. Standardised organisational responses take too little account of the variety and vulnerability of many peoples' lives. Yet he is also sceptical of 'grand solutions'. The 'state' is too centralised and essentially incapable of letting go even when it trumpets 'devolution'. All parties have been guilty of this, responding to the temptations inherent in a highly centralised political economy. The sheer scale of complexity that has evolved is a cumulative result of many well-meaning attempts to respond to perceived deficiencies. Each year I am reminded of that as my Child Poverty Action Group Welfare Benefits Handbook (now 1918 pages long) thumps through my letter box. But for welfare workers in the field this must be a daily experience.

Spicker's menu of 'solutions', are multiple and gradual. Few are 'new' but they do add up to an extensive menu. Examples include extending the universality of the basic pension, raising child benefit substantially for those children up to three, introducing benefits for particular disadvantages, or medical conditions, making benefits less conditional. Scottish experience, seeking to make health services more sensitive to varied local situations, is drawn upon. There is a case for more multi-disciplinary team work in primary care and more variety in the design of local health and social care models. He has a sensitive discussion of the limitations of remaining 'independent' as a frail elderly person and the forced choices which families face. We need, he argues, teams of people able to help with all the necessary elements of personal care not the rushed performance of discrete tasks. This would require better paid staff with proper career development. Our present 'care market' does none of this. Schools have been forced to narrow their goals and their curriculum in the face of fewer resources and inspectorial regimes. The wider educational goal of 'human development' has been downplayed and needs to be restored and enhanced both in schools and afterwards. The final stages