Gramsci (more relevantly), but does not re-
view the contribution of the Budapest
School to this debate. A review of Ágnes
Heller’s and Ferenc Fehér’s work in re-
lation to the capitalist development in
Hungary under socialism could have been
useful.

Overall, this volume promises to deliv-
er an elaboration of the roots of the Eastern
European picture in the 2000s and engages
with the most recent socio-political and so-
ocio-economic turmoil in the region in view
of both its history and international devel-
opments thereafter. It does not consistently
achieve its goal, but it certainly opens new
routes of inquiry for students of East Euro-
pean politics. The book could be a useful
tool for undergraduate and postgraduate
courses on East European politics.

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Jochen Clasen and Daniel Clegg (eds.):
Regulating the Risk of Unemployment:
National Adaptations to Postindustrial
Labor Markets in Europe
Oxford 2011: Oxford University Press,
404 pp.

Jochen Clasen and Daniel Clegg offer—
once more—an interesting new take on in-
stitutional adjustments in European labour
markets, thus continuing a series of earlier
joint publications. Following an introduc-
tion in which the two editors present their
analytical framework that ‘sets the scene
for the chapters that follow’ (p. 2), the edited
volume is divided into two parts. Part I
includes twelve country chapters, in which
the developments in the regulation of the
risk of unemployment are outlined, focusing
mainly on reforms in national unem-
ployment protection systems from the ear-
ly 1990s to about 2010. The country cases
include nine of the fifteen ‘old’ European
Union (EU) member states (excluding Aus-
tria, Ireland, Finland, Greece, Luxembourg
and Portugal), two ‘new’ members (Hung-
ary and the Czech Republic) as well as
Switzerland, a non-EU state. Part II is com-
prised of three chapters that take a cross-na-
tional perspective, and a forth, concluding
chapter by the editors that summarises the
findings.

In the Introduction, Clasen and Clegg
first argue that the shift from industrial to
service industries has generated a func-
tional mismatch between the labour market in-
itutions created during the Golden Age of
industrial growth and welfare expansion
and the needs of contemporary, post-indus-
trial production regimes. Accordingly, they
argue that with the decline in life-long,
mostly male, full-time employment pat-
terns, and the subsequent rise in flexible
working careers of both men and women,
unemployment protections systems are in
need of adaptation. This adaptation is then
captured in their proposed analytic frame-
work, which relies on three (inter-related)
processes of integration: (1) unemployment
benefit homogenisation (ranging from a di-
minishing of differences between benefit
tiers, to a reduction of the number of tiers,
to the emergence of a single, dominant
tier); (2) risk re-categorisation (ranging from
a diminishing of differences in entitlement
and conditionality between unemployment
and other benefits schemes to the creation
of a single benefit for working-age people
that also entails—perhaps as intermediary
steps—the transfer of claimants from other
benefits to unemployment benefits and the
merger of programmes); and (3) activation
(which the authors understand as the tight-
ening of job-search requirements, support-
ing all job-seekers regardless of benefit sta-
tus with job-search and counselling servic-
es in so-called one-stop shops, and the
merger of administrative units into single
gateways) (cf. p. 10).

The subsequent country chapters offer
a comprehensive and detailed account of
the changes in unemployment insurance and related benefits systems. They closely follow the volume’s analytical framework, which ensures comparability and helps to identify both common trends (the so-called ‘triple integration’ of unemployment protection regimes) and the (persistent or emerging) cross-country differences (e.g. the growing differentiation, rather than harmonisation, of treatments of different claimant groups in the Czech case, continued risk categorisation in Switzerland, the absence of activation in Spain, or the continuation of multiple gateways in Sweden). All twelve country chapters are well written, logically organised and very rich in detail. They thus represent an excellent source of reference for anyone interested in recent institutional changes in (mainly Western) European unemployment protection regimes. Three questions, however, remain unanswered. First, the country chapters provide only some evidence with regard to explaining the (sometimes similar, sometimes different) choices made by policy makers with regard to the Gestalt of the described reform trajectories. Most of the chapters implicitly acknowledge path-contingencies, while some explicitly suggest that these changes are driven by changes in the ideological positioning of political parties (i.e. the general trend toward marketisation, New Public Management and paternalism), the decline in trade union power (as trade unions are typically seen as the ‘defenders’ of the old system that benefits labour market insiders), or the diffusion of new ideas by international organisations such as the OECD or the EU (an argument that I have also made elsewhere; see Weishaupt [2010]). While the edited volume cannot give a precise answer, it provides a good starting point for future research on these issues. What remains a bit more unsatisfactory, however, is that the chapters rarely assess the impact of structural changes in the labour market itself as a cause of the ‘triple integration’.

Clasen and Clegg strongly emphasise that the process of de-industrialisation and the growth in the tertiary sector necessitate a more flexible and mobilising approach (this is inspired by the ‘service sector trilemma’ first proposed by Iversen and Wren [1998]). Yet, we find no, or only very little, reflection on this claim in the country analyses. Similarly unfortunate is that the book’s chapters offer very little reflection on the effects of the global financial and economic crisis. A discussion, however brief, of the consequences of ‘triple integration’ in the face of a massive oversupply of labour and an examination of the political will to uphold or perhaps even reverse some of the reforms in the face of mass unemployment would have been a welcome contribution to an overall very interesting and informative ‘tour’ through twelve European unemployment policy regimes.

The cross-country chapters, in turn, tackle three important issues. First, in an extremely stimulating chapter, Werner Eichhorst and collaborators ask the important question whether the expansion of service sector employment in recent years, which was supported both by labour market flexibilisation and activation, has mainly produced precarious jobs. In order to get a grasp on this question, Eichhorst et al. first test the hypothesis that the likelihood to move from unemployment or inactivity to employment is higher in 2007 than at the end of the 1990s. In a second step, the authors test the hypothesis that gains in employment are driven by employment contracts of poor quality (which are defined as fixed-term contracts). Regarding the former, they find that there ‘is indeed a pan-European trend over time towards labour markets becoming more inclusive’ (p. 292). This effect, however, is significantly stronger for the group of unemployed than for inactive persons, and also varies amongst the eight countries under review (of the twelve countries studies covered in Part I of the book, Germany, the Nether-
lands, Sweden and Switzerland are missing in the sample). With respect to the latter hypothesis, the authors find no common trend. Rather, in two flexible labour markets—Denmark and the UK—as well as Hungary (albeit statistically not significant) and Spain (where the use of fixed-term contracts peaked in the late 1990s at almost 35%), the odds of getting a permanent contract was higher in 2007 than in the late 1990s. The opposite is true for Belgium (albeit statistically not significant), the Czech Republic, France and Italy.

While this chapter represents a very interesting first stab at an important question, some doubts about the robustness of the results remain. For instance, the authors do not control for the degree of tertiarisation (the ‘driver’ of (precarious) employment growth), the macro-economic situation (which directly affects the demand for labour), or the composition of the group of the inactive (which may have changed over time due to demographic or institutional changes). Moreover, it is also not obvious to me why ‘precarious’ employment is equated with fixed-term contracts. The quality of temporary employment may itself vary—think the Dutch version of flexicurity—while precariousness may lie more in wage levels, working conditions, or hours worked.

In the second cross-country chapter, Johan De Deken and Jochen Clasen identify the lack of cross-national data on benefit receipt (or caseloads) as a major hurdle to advancing our knowledge about the effects of the ‘triple integration’ processes. For instance, social assistance is often administered locally, while early retirement schemes are organised by the social partners. In either case, the programmes remain outside the scope of national statistical bureaus. Yet, if we had comparable, cross-national data on caseloads—including unemployment protection but also four other types of benefits that affect employment outcomes, including work incapacity benefits, early retirement, sabbatical and leave schemes, and social assistance as a residual category—a new ‘dependent variable’ would be born (p. 299). Accordingly, the authors explore the possibility of generating such a data set by reviewing the availability and quality of existing sources and subsequently produce the first results with data collected for the book. The chapter is highly successful in both ways. The discussion of data and associated challenges are very insightful, while the application convincingly illustrates two points: first, it is not possible to “read off” expenditure from caseload data or vice versa (p. 308); and second, caseloads in most countries were shifted from one benefit type to another (a process the authors call ‘communicating vessels’) rather than reduced over time. The latter point is an important corroboration of Werner Eichhorst et al.’s findings from 2008 [Eichhorst et al. 2008] and proves the ‘added value’ of examining shifts within benefit regimes. Worth mentioning also is that Johan De Deken offers a Caseload Annex, in which all data discussed are presented.

Finally, in the third cross-country chapter, Giuliano Bonoli restates his earlier argument that the form and function of active labour market policies (ALMP) have changed in three waves over time [see also Weishaupt 2011; Tepe and Vanhuysse 2013]. He thus complements the overall argument of the book by illustrating the mediating role of activation on both caseloads (as participants in ALMP may not be considered unemployed) and employment (as ALMP may equip job-seekers with the skills they need to enter the labour market or offer employment opportunities in a sheltered labour market). The chapter illustrates how ALMP in six Western countries—Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and the UK—have (differently) developed from the 1950s to the early 2000s. It offers a categorisation of ALMP that differs from the
‘standard’ OECD definition as it includes aspects of activation (benefit conditionality, sanctions, and so on), and it explains why the 1990s saw a shift towards activation and how activation contributed to both unemployment benefit homogenisation and risk re-categorisation.

In sum, the edited volume represents an important contribution to the study of unemployment protection systems and activation more generally. The book’s strength lies in its excellent overview of institutional developments in the risk regulation of unemployment in twelve European countries. It thus serves as a rich and valuable source of reference, which will be of great interest for social science scholars. The cross-country chapters nicely complement the overall argument of the book, while the Caseload Annex will certainly become an extremely sought-after source for ‘data mining’.

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References

Alison Pilnick, Jon Hindmarsh and Virginia Teas Gill (eds.): Communication in Healthcare Settings. Policy, Participation and New Technologies

Conversation analysis (CA) made an important contribution during the last decades for investigating how ordinary conversations occur in everyday contexts and how interactional sequences rely on specific socially oriented procedures of human reasoning and action. Beyond epistemological and theoretical issues concerning its status (i.e. whether it is possible to consider it a well-formed, autonomous discipline or just a general research paradigm), it is clear that, since its foundation in the mid-1960s, CA has deeply contributed to changing investigation assumptions in communication research, in accordance with a more general, renewed Zeitgeist that also led to the ‘cognitive revolution’ from a behaviourist approach to cognitivism, and the paradigm shift in linguistics and semiotics from analyses based on minimal units to text-oriented research. Through audio- and videotape recordings of natural conversations, CA researchers investigate procedures through which participants constrain each one in talking, particularly in relation to the organisation of actions and the understanding in interaction between subjects. Applications of CA have been conducted in many different fields, including health-care contexts for studying interactions between professionals (i.e. doctors and nurses) and patients. In the last three decades, a good amount of literature in this sector helped to enlighten such conversations, which can be considered delicate ones because of their intrinsic contents: discussions about health and illness, symptoms and diagnoses, diseases and therapies.

The challenge of overcoming already established results in the field and addressing new (or at least under-investigated) is-