

of the adoption of European values and norms are presented, at best, incompletely both in the Turkish and Eastern European cases. I wonder whether the comparison between the ECECs and Turkey is all that revealing, as integration of the former was seen as a return to Europe and despite the socialist legacy these countries were never entirely deprived of their Europeanness. Hopefully, the similarities between these cases and lessons that can be derived from the ECECs' accession process will be studied more systematically in future work.

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**Bent Greve (ed.): *Choice: Challenges and Perspectives for the European Welfare States***

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As Bent Greve writes in his editorial introduction to this book, 'choice' has been a buzzword in many welfare states around Europe in recent years. As New Public Management ideals became embedded in the discourse over the 'modernisation' of European welfare states, these have become more market-oriented. In many contexts increased user choice has been part of a neoliberal agenda that pushed for the retrenchment of welfare states. However, the call for increased user choice in welfare states did not originate only from the neoliberal side. It also stemmed from groups of citizens that were far from seeking a retrenchment of the welfare state or the transformation of users into consumers. 'User movements' of disabled and old-age people, for whom user choice became a synonym for empowerment and increased social rights, also played an important role in the introduction of choice, as mentioned by Rummery's chapter in this book. Arguments advocat-

ing or dismissing choice in welfare states have thus been accompanied by a fierce ideological debate, which may have precluded a serious analysis over the consequences of introducing choice. This book proposes to contribute to the understanding of recent changes with regard to choice in European welfare states, both from a theoretical and empirical perspective. In particular, it looks at the impact that welfare states that incorporate choice elements (dubbed 'choice welfare states') have had on equity. It does so by bringing together contributions from several authors that analyse the issue of choice in a number of countries, covering various areas (education, employment, pensions, health and long-term care) and offering different perspectives on the subject (for example, looking at the gender implications of choice).

The first two chapters elaborate on more theoretical considerations regarding choice, while the remaining chapters present more of a case-study approach to the issue of choice, either basing their analysis on a specific country, or on a specific sector. The first theoretical chapter, authored by Bent Greve, discusses the necessary conditions for informed choice to take place without negative effects on equity, which is defined as 'equality in the ability to exercise choice and gain access to welfare state services' (p. 6). According to Greve, these conditions amount to: competitive market forces, sufficient and precise information, low transaction costs, precise incentive structure, avoidance of incentives to cream-skimming and trust in providers. By discussing each of these conditions the author depicts in a clear and precise manner the potential (if not necessarily insurmountable) obstacles that stand in the way of achieving equity through user choice. For example, precise information may be costly to produce, but even when available, some users may be better equipped to understand it than others. This can increase inequality in a choice welfare system as rela-

tively worst-off individuals may lack the necessary resources to be able to do an informed choice. Overall the contents of this chapter detail the theoretical fundamentals that one should bear in mind when analysing the impact of choice on equity, thus providing the reader with a very useful toolkit to understand and be able to critically read the remaining chapters.

In the second, more theoretical chapter, Ian Greener and Martin Powell provide a critical review of the writings of Julian Le Grand on the matters of choice and use of quasi-markets in welfare states. According to the authors, Le Grand's view on the use of markets has changed when comparing his most recent work [e.g. Le Grand 2007] to his essays from the early 1990s [e.g. Le Grand et al. 1992]. There is now a greater support for user choice to be found in Le Grand's work, as some of the caveats that he previously pointed to the use of quasi-markets (such as asymmetric information, externalities and potential for cream-skimming) are now viewed as less important. At the same time, Le Grand's views on how citizens use information available to them to make informed choices are now more optimistic. The chapter provides an interesting critique on Le Grand's work, but one is left wondering what may be the cause(s) of the aforementioned change. Has our knowledge of quasi-markets and their functioning improved over the past decades of experience? Or is Le Grand's increased support for user choice a sign of a changing paradigm in social policy analysis in favour of the market?

In a choice-based system, users may ultimately have the possibility to 'vote with their feet', that is to exit a provider or abandon the system altogether. Two chapters deal with the option to 'exit' in the context of choice welfare systems. Deborah Wilson makes the case that in the English educational system pupils act as 'quality-makers', as defined by Hirschman [1970]. This means that quality of schools, as measured

by their pupils test scores, is dependent on the pupils' abilities. In the context of the English educational system, where school funding is tied to the number of pupils and parents have some degree of choice over the school their children attend, league tables based on pupils' performance play an important role in the parents' decision. Pupils with higher ability are more likely to contribute positively to raise their school's overall results and therefore the school has the incentive to be highly responsive to the parents (typically middle-class) of these high ability pupils. The issue is that schools are therefore highly responsive to one type of consumer, i.e. to the quality elements that middle-class parents are more likely to value, such as the composition of the pupil population. This could have potential negative consequences in terms of equity, fuelling cream-skimming behaviour by schools (of which only limited empirical evidence is presented) and raises the question of the role played by rankings of providers that do not account for the case-mix of their users, or only do so imperfectly (an issue applicable to quality rankings in schools as well as nursing homes for dependent old-age people).

The possibility to exit in a choice welfare state may also give rise to adverse selection, in which low-risk individuals opt to abandon social insurance schemes, leaving only the high-risk individuals to be covered by those schemes. Thus, Menno Fenger analyses to what extent exit options have been introduced in pension, health insurance, and unemployment insurance schemes and tests the hypothesis that adverse selection has occurred in the cases where opting-out has been introduced. He finds only scarce evidence of adverse selection in the case of health insurance and even there to a limited extent. However, part of his difficulty in testing for adverse selection stems from the fact that opting-out possibilities are a rare feature in European welfare states. This would certainly

merit a more in-depth discussion of the issue of solidarity fostered by social protection systems as a core value or consensus in European societies.

In the analysis on the Italian welfare state, Paolo Graziano identifies choice as an increasingly used argument in the national political debate over the reform of the welfare state. However, the rhetoric of user choice has not really shaped reforms since choice has been mostly a 'by-product of other goals perceived to be more relevant (modernization, cost-containment, etc.)' (p. 73). Thus, the transfer of responsibilities in health care to regional authorities did come with increased choice for users in some regions, but this was far from being a national standard. Nonetheless, the author is not always successful in establishing or rebuffing the link between the rhetoric of choice present in the political discourse and the actual reforms that took place. For example, it is not altogether clear how the deregulation of the labour market fits into the 'freedom of choice' debate, or how it was influenced by it, since the 'the key argument was 'modernization' of the Italian employment protection system' (p. 66) and apparently employers have now less possibility to choose their preferred option.

In a chapter on choice in the German welfare system, Florian Blank argues that 'choices citizens face are framed by public institutions that give welfare markets in each field of social policy distinctive features' (p. 46). The conditions under which choice is exerted by users can exhibit what could be termed as 'path dependency'. Pre-existing institutions and stakeholders exert considerable influence on how welfare markets function and so do the underlying reasons for the marketisation of certain sectors. According to Blank, health and long-term care services stand as two sectors where a multitude of providers (public and private) were already in place, so that choice in this case was enhanced by in-

creasing competition between existing providers and allowing new entrants. In the case of employment services and pensions (3rd pillar), a market had to be created and nurtured outside pre-existing public monopoly, by providing vouchers or tax benefits. The idea at the heart of this chapter—that pre-existing conditions may shape both the functioning and outcome of social markets—has attracted only limited research thus far, but it could prove important in comparative social policy research.

The introduction of a long-term care insurance benefit in Germany is dealt with by Melanie Eichler and Birgit Pfau-Effinger. German beneficiaries are allowed a great degree of freedom in choosing the care option that best suits their needs. By establishing long-term care insurance the state explicitly recognised long-term care as a social risk for which it should offer protection, sharing a responsibility that until then had been shouldered by the family. The authors, however, point to the influence of the prevailing cultural setting regarding family care (still very much seen and valued as the default option when older people need care) and of notions of 'good care' on the choice made by users, and ultimately on the development of the German care market. Thus, contrary to the expectations of policy-makers, users of the long-term care benefit seem to have preferred to use it to compensate their family carers rather than to buy professional care in the market. The market seems to have failed to acknowledge the multidimensional characteristics of care-giving, which incorporates notions such as trust and flexibility. What is missing is how care provided by migrant-carers, which is a prevalent feature of long-term care in Germany [Meyer 2007], fits in this cultural milieu of traditional family-care values and notions of a 'good quality of care'.

Two chapters are specifically dedicated to the equity implications of choice welfare states on women. Taken together, they

provide an example of how choice can be used to reshape behaviour and gender roles (childcare policies) as much as to crystallise existing roles (cash-for-care policies). In the wake of an emerging literature on cash-for-care benefits in long-term care and gender [e.g. Ungerson and Yeandle 2007], Kirstein Rummery questions to what extent these benefits may be a 'poisoned chalice' for women, who traditionally bear the brunt of care. As seen from the example of Germany in this book, the option to pay family carers may entail several benefits and may be the preferred choice by those in need of care. However, as the authors correctly point out, 'at best an awareness of the gendered dimensions of care work can be said to have informed policy development' (p. 100), but cash-for-care benefits have not had gender equality as one of their main objectives. On the contrary, the authors argue that these policies have had a clearly gendered outcome, reinforcing the role of women as main caregivers. This arose because budgetary pressures have kept the payments provided by these cash benefits low, which reinforced the option to either internalise care by families (i.e. by women within the family), or employ low-paid carers (where women made a disproportionate share). The issue however is nuanced, for cash-benefits can also have a positive impact on carers by explicitly recognising and valuing their role, freeing them from disempowering obligations and raising their income. Furthermore stressing the limitations of unregulated markets to fulfil welfare goals, it seems that the more state-regulated cash-for-care benefits (such as in France and the Netherlands) may work better to protect the rights of women, disabled, and older people as citizens.

While gender mainstreaming is conspicuously absent from caring policies regarding older people, the same cannot be said of (child) family policies. Steven Saxenberg elaborates on how promotion of

gender equality need not be at odds with increasing parents' freedom of choice, using the example of family policies (childcare and child-related leaves). The author makes a convincing case that from a theoretical perspective social-democratic policies that aim to promote gender equality by fostering the employment of mothers also provide greater freedom of choice for those mothers that prefer to care for their children full-time (family-oriented mothers). Maternity leaves provided under conservative policies are not generous enough for many family-oriented mothers to permanently stay at home, thus forcing them to work to make ends meet. With limited affordable childcare services and possibilities for fathers to share parental leaves (unlike social-democratic policies), conciliating work and family is thus made difficult under conservative policies, with the end result being that many of these family-oriented mothers will have less children than they would like to. Thus, parental leaves aimed at fathers clearly have a gender-equality purpose, but these policies can also work towards increasing the bargaining power of fathers and therefore increase their freedom of choice. However, if ultimately family policies seek to give parents the choice over the number of children they wish to have, then the gap between the intended and actual number of children, even in social-democratic welfare states [Testa 2006], should be a reason for further research and debate.

Overall, this book makes a valuable contribution to the debate on choice in welfare states and in particular to the implications of choice on equity. It does so by bringing together different approaches to this matter, rather than by taking an in-depth view of just one particular sector or country. Certain overlooked issues regarding choice and market-based mechanisms in social policy are deservedly highlighted, such as for instance the role played by institutions in framing user choice, and

how cultural values may impact the outcome of social markets. The book also elaborates on critical questions such as the use of information (e.g. ranking tables in school performance) or the occurrence of adverse selection. Still, the broadness of sectors and countries covered is also its biggest weakness, as the reader may be left with only a patchy and incomplete picture of how choice is impacting welfare states in Europe. This is compounded by the lack of a conclusion that could bring all the pieces together or help the reader understand the larger picture concerning choice in welfare systems.

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**Elly Teman: *Birthing a Mother: The Surrogate Body and the Pregnant Self***  
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The best examples of social scientific research tend to emerge when a talented scholar chooses a timely topic and pursues her interest with utmost dedication and compassion. Such qualities exist in Elly Teman's *Birthing a Mother*. When Teman began collecting her data a decade ago, gestational surrogacy was only beginning to become a part of public knowledge in Israel. By the time she concluded her study, the community of surrogates and intended mothers had vastly expanded. Surrogacy was no longer perceived as a very unorthodox way to create a family; it became more integrated into the conversation about alternative paths toward parenthood. Teman does not pass judgment. She contributes to the conversation about the ethics of surrogacy by allowing the surrogates and the intended mothers to speak of their experiences in their own words. Then, she helps the reader make sense of their narratives by introducing relevant theoretical arguments.

Teman's ethnographic work took her to support groups and on hospital visits. She collected all of her data in Israel by interviewing mostly Jewish Israeli participants, but she aptly draws readers' attention to international contexts. The choice to limit data collection to Israel works well. Israel, more so than many other medically advanced nations, emphasises motherhood as a form of service to the country; therefore infertile women have even stronger incentives to become mothers and gain social acceptance.

*Birthing a Mother* is divided into four sections: Dividing, Connecting, Separating, and Redefining. Each one of these focuses on a part of the surrogacy process and addresses an aspect of embodied practices that the women engage in. Teman argues that they serve to blur the boundaries