

systems and job agencies takes away (legally defined) unemployment, but it does not take away underemployment, inequality, and poverty. In this sense, the recommendations found in the book are fairly limited. If social scientists like Karl Polanyi are right, the first industrial revolution generated a new kind of welfare model. Back then higher growth did also not turn automatically into benefits for everyone, and perhaps it would have never have done so, if not for better organisation and more solidarity among workers. If contemporaries of the industrial revolution had recommended something akin to what Brynjolfsson and McAfee suggest, we would still have Speenhamland (British 18th-century poor laws) instead of the modern welfare state. In this sense, the new revolution, assuming that there is one, will only benefit everyone if it is accompanied by fundamental changes in the social contract.

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Colin Crouch: *Governing Social Risks in Post Crisis Europe*

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This book expands on Colin Crouch's earlier work on the tension between capitalists' need for consumer spending and their preference for market principles in the sphere of work. At the book's core is the diagnosis of a conflict contemporary capitalist democracies face. How to reconcile labour market flexibility with high levels of consumption, if labour market flexibility implies uncertainties that undermine consumer confidence? Accordingly, labour market flexibility has the potential to seriously threaten the stability of consumer capitalism, but it also is an indispensable prerequisite for economic performance. This diagnosis, in its broad contours, is

compelling. In a similar form, it has served as the basis for Crouch's earlier analysis of 'Privatised Keynesianism'—a short-term solution to the consumption-flexibility dilemma whose unsustainability has become apparent in the Great Recession.

A central component of this book is an encompassing analytical scheme that maps different policy approaches to the dilemma. This scheme, which readers familiar with Crouch's work will recognise, is an admirably lucid condensation of a vast literature in comparative labour market research. In essence, it suggests that societies can resolve the consumption-flexibility tension (a) if some workers are flexible while others consume; (b) if people consume irrespective of uncertainty; (c) if public policies reconcile flexibility with security. Within these broad approaches, societies have quite different options (e.g. more 'exclusionary' or 'inclusive' ones). This makes the scheme rather complex: overall, it lists 19 different ways to address the tension. This complexity is the price to be paid for an exhaustive but still pretty elegant heuristic tool that will be tremendously helpful in mapping and comparing labour market strategies across time and space.

Besides doing just that, Crouch analyses the central hypothesis that societies mainly relying on markets as a governance mechanism experience more inequality and insecurity than those in which the state and trade unions have a stronger role (p. 50). This is, of course, not exactly a daring hypothesis given the wealth of research in political sociology and comparative political economy on precisely this question. More intriguing is Crouch's underlying contention that '[r]elationship to the risk/uncertainty mix is a classic class relationship because it is very closely related to relationship to property ownership' (p. 13). What he means by this is a growing importance of wealth as a prerequisite to benefit from the opportunities of financial capitalism. In post-industrial societies, he ar-

gues, the salience of class has declined, while 'class as inequalities of property ownership' has intensified 'but in an invisible, politically insignificant way' (p. 17).

The discussion of this theoretically interesting and politically important argument is regrettably short. Do citizens simply lack awareness of how class differences function in the 21st century? Have divides over cultural issues crowded out political class conflict? Or is the relationship to property ownership simply too fuzzy a criterion to become politically relevant? Here, Wolfgang Streeck's argument in *Buying Time* (2014) comes to mind, according to which privatisation of social security and growing middle-class savings have led to an awkward overlap of *Staatsvolk* and *Marktvolk*. Many middle-class citizens then might occupy 'contradictory class locations'. Besides economic elites, the tension described by Crouch could matter for this group in particular, because it is cross-pressured between the interests of financial markets and exposure to uncertainty created by those markets. At the same time, Crouch repeatedly mentions divides within the working class, which includes a sizable 'precariat' or 'outsiders'. But these divides seem unrelated to patterns of property ownership. It remains unclear whether they create different material interests and, more generally, what they imply for the sociology of class conflict.

Hence, the concept of class is at the core of the book and it touches upon many questions that are central to understanding contemporary class relations. The fact that Crouch does not extensively theorise these questions might result from a conscious choice to focus on empirical relationships—but one can see it as a missed opportunity. Be that as it may, the book is a welcome reminder that class differences remain essential in the 21st century and that political sociologists and political economists should continue to pay attention to them. In this context, Crouch's critique of the new-social-risk literature is noteworthy. He does

not deny that new social risks exist and create problems. However, he objects to arguments that risks can be managed mainly through investment in human capital, adaptability, and employability, because such arguments ultimately imply the responsibility of individual workers to deal with (benign) market forces. In Crouch's view, market forces are, however, not neutral or even benign. Rather, they reflect the strategies of capitalists to make money. In a nutshell: workers' risks are capitalists' business opportunities and it is the resulting class conflict that is 'obscured by the NSR school' (p. 12).

If the theoretical treatment of class appears somewhat scant, the reader is compensated with an extremely rich empirical analysis, mostly in the form of descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations. The main findings can be summarised chapter by chapter as follows. 'Class challenge', measured as a combination of union membership density and institutionalised incorporation in decision-making processes, is strongest in Austria, Belgium, and the Nordics. This group of countries has lower income inequality and a lesser tendency to exclude the young from employment, although some countries tend to exclude women and migrants. Particularly after the crisis, strong class challenge does not lead to higher public debt (Chapter 4). Public social spending, unemployment replacement rates, and redistribution tend to be high in countries with strong class challenge, but this is also true in some cases with moderate or weaker challenge. There is no straightforward link between class challenge and the use of private debt to stabilise consumption. The role of the family, in the form of inter-generational transfers, is stronger in Southern and Central Eastern Europe (Chapter 5). Efforts by governments and, unsurprisingly, the social partners, to reduce uncertainty tend to correlate positively with class challenge. The main exception is employment protection legislation. The share of the 'outsider pop-

ulation' (non-employed and non-standard workers) is higher in some Southern and Central European cases than in those with strong class challenge (Chapter 6).

In Chapter 7, Crouch shows that, based on the used indicators, countries cluster in their proximity to three ideal-typical profiles: social democratic (with strong interventions of state and associations in the economy), neoliberal (the opposite), and community governance. Community governance is found in societies in which modern institutions are absent or weak while traditional communities, such as the family, play an important role in economic life. Strong class challenge pulls countries towards the social-democratic ideal type. Countries in Southern and Central-Eastern Europe jointly lean towards community governance. This similarity is for Crouch '[p]erhaps the most surprising result of this part of the study' (p. 228), which he explains by pointing to the role of traditional communities as networks to cope with the limitations of socialist economies.

The empirical section has considerable strengths: a strong effort to maximise coverage of European (and some non-European) cases, a careful selection of indicators, as well as remarkably open discussions of their shortcomings, and compelling interpretations of empirical patterns that are grounded in Crouch's impressive knowledge about the context of his cases. The major weakness, in my opinion, is that the book is overburdened with data. On roughly 260 pages there are more than 150 tables and figures, not counting the data appendix. Particularly in the empirical chapters, the density of graphical information is so high that it is at times difficult to give justice to relevant observations. Given that the analysis includes some aspects that have been covered by previous research, less probably would have been more.

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Rogers Brubaker: *Grounds for Difference*
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Designed as a 'sequel of sorts' to *Ethnicity without Groups* [2006] (p. 1), this book delves into recent tropes of difference and inequality. It offers, somewhat more closer to the ethos and style of *Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism* [1998], a complex and intriguing set of guidelines towards (re)conceptualising social difference. Throughout its seven chapters, most of which revisit to varying degrees previous articles, this book strives to create a basis for a dynamic analytical toolkit better suited for understanding new dimensions of inequality. Brubaker astutely starts the book with the observation that the cultural and discursive turn in the study of difference seems to have come to an abrupt end as the 2008 recession re-centralised objectivist understandings of inequality (pp. 2–3). Yet, as one the key proponents of a cognitive constructivist agenda, Brubaker picks up the gauntlet. Starting from Tilly's famous work [1999], he argues that, while it is possible to show how inequality can be categorical, the process of generating inequality remains poorly researched (p. 15). This is needed because between-group differences in skills, education, and so on figure both as *explanations* of inequality and as *dimensions* of it that require explanation in their own right (p. 38). With this in mind, Brubaker argues that focusing on networks and categories is the avenue forward—on the boundary, category has primacy, but within the boundary networks are key in creating inequality (pp. 15–16). In practice, this helps shed better light on the interweaving of inequalities between categories of positions and inequalities between categories of persons (p. 39).

Chapter 2, 'The Return of Biology', represents a fascinating interdisciplinary endeavour, albeit a bit one-sided in its empirical backing, which mostly gravitates around the United States but has some ex-