construction of the social Europe through some radical measures, has also a strong left flavour. While this solution is not new, Offe's effort to show the problems of the other potential solutions makes it stand out more. However, in his desire to make the case for social justice policies, the author fails to recognise that this solution also has weaknesses: the agents most likely to push through such radical changes are likely to be the ones paralysed by the crisis. In sum, the pertinent analysis and the flowing argument make this a must-read book for social science scholars interested in disentangling the intricacies of the processes we witness nowadays in Europe. But the book's potential reach is wider, as it speaks to all European citizens who feel entrapped and are searching for a way out.

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Daniel Beland and Klaus Petersen (eds.):
Analysing Social Policy Concepts and Language: Comparative and Transnational Perspectives
Bristol 2014: Policy Press, 344 pp.

Although the push towards modern welfare states could not have been done without ideational foundations, the role of ideas has for quite some time been an Achilles' heel for social policy studies. By delving into the historical development of ideas, concepts, and language, Beland and Petersen's book represents a significant contribution to bridging this gap, as it complements mainstream literature on ideas and social policy with conceptual history tools. The research scope is truly impressive—across fifteen dense chapters the book covers worlds of welfare from Sweden to New Zealand and from the United States to Japan, and nation-states as well as highly influential international organisations. The

book tackles head on many of the problems that mainstream historical institutionalists have been facing with regard to the role of ideas in shaping policies.

If the accumulation of inequalities followed *national* patterns [Kaufmann 2012: 25], *do welfare states also evolve with distinct policy languages*? All contributors rightly note that existing answers in the literature focus mostly on the role of ideas, without paying much attention to concept formation and policy language. The book offers a two-layered affirmative answer. First, as a concept with Old Norse origins (p. 13), but British-centred spread and fame (p. 60), welfare states appear as a response to the functional necessities of industrialisation, as a nexus of the worthy-unworthy debate from the English Poor Laws and the social mediation function from the early 19th-century German Hegelian tradition [Kaufmann 2012: 59]. Second, welfare states evolved and were fundamentally shaped through concept-formation fundamentally linked with constructing the national community and national institutions (p. 297). Beyond the linguistic genealogy, which in general is given slightly too much space, the fundamental processes at play are diffusion (p. 132) and adaptation via nation-building.

Although 'concepts have a life, and like all lives, it is probably not linear' [Petersen and Petersen 2013: 177], the importance of conceptual history can be seen in the fact that, contrary to English, where the concept-notion distinction is blurred, in German and French (competing influential languages of social policy) a clear separation exists between concept and idea/notion (pp. 66–68). This is an important point and it relates to two fundamental issues. On the one hand, concepts that underpin institutions tend to have long internal temporal horizons [Koselleck cited in Escudier 2013], further lengthened by visions of nationhood. On the other, ideas have a more conflictual life on the intellectual and polit-

ical canvas of a nation-state. What follows is a very dynamic understanding of the co-constitutive relationship of agency, structure, and process that underpins the nation-building welfare-state nexus. While pre-existing national solidarity offers a solid basis for the implementation of a state-wide welfare redistribution net, social policies also pro-actively create the nation, whose identity is constantly remoulded by actors both within the state and on the international arena [see also McEwen 2010].

This deep connection with nationalism helps shed light on how and why during *unsettled times* elites proactively shape the political arena by using markers such as ethnicity and/or socio-occupational status [Vanhuysse 2007]. Therefore, the main argument of the book is extremely helpful in understanding why and how the welfare state is enmeshed in institutionalisations of the nation, which is uncovered in most of the case studies—either as a tension between occupational solidarity and national solidarity (for France p. 149), or more directly as a fear against ethno-economic cleavages eroding *national families* (interwar Hungary and Poland pp. 37–41). The book is equally strong in arguing that welfare states are a salient political issue owing to the long, path-dependent histories of entanglement with nation-building processes, understood in a non-static fashion (as it is methodologically problematic to assume nation-building as 'complete and finished'; Beland, Lecours and Kpessa [2011]).

While this partly explains the difficulties of welfare state retrenchment, by and large clear causal connections between ideas and changes in welfare state *institutions* are more loosely presented here. The volume is successful in showing why concepts and ideas influence social policy and in mapping the changes in conceptual-linguistic landscapes of welfare states, but it does not always fully explain when and why the pathway of *social policy language*

evolution intersects, overlaps, or fully diverges from the pathway of welfare state *institutional change.* The neoliberal turn of the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, did not precede welfare state change, but rather followed and was derived from economic slumps that raised a general awareness of public spending retrenchment. Granted, this is not the central aim of the book and virtually all contributors raise awareness of the roles of agency and international contingencies, yet there is a lingering sense of slight rigidity in the path-dependent understanding of causal mechanisms between ideas, actors, and institutions. Mechanisms of displacement, layering, drift, conversion and exhaustion [Streeck and Thelen 2005] are hinted at by most chapter authors, but not fully integrated as explanatory mechanisms.

Let me highlight one case study focused on a nation-state and one on an international organisation, both on the hybrid East European welfare regimes. The chapter on Hungary and Poland by Aczel, Szelewa and Szikra follows the common denominator in existing scholarship concerning the early Bismarkian influences from the late 19th century as the underlying basis of the two welfare regimes. The key discursive difference seems to have been that between the outwardly nationalistic concerns in Hungary and a more broadly defined 'statist' philosophy in the newly independent Poland. Yet, in practice, both welfare states were quite similar in their high levels of centralisation and over-protection of bureaucrats (pp. 37–40). What sets this chapter apart from other path-dependent inquiries is that by looking at policy language the inference made is that the original late 19th-century and interwar welfare arrangement in Hungary and Poland represented a coherent mechanism with powerful vested interests that became impossible to fully eradicate by the communist seizure of power. By and large social policy was almost completely excluded from the

language of communist politics because it hinted at the existence of poverty, which clashed with official propaganda (p. 41). Communist universalism provided for a high degree of policy convergence, the key marker of welfare benefits being place in the division of labour rather than social situation and/or ethnicity (p. 43). Post-communist transition exhibited a liberalisation of discourses towards poverty and social policies, but while the chapter offers a detailed mapping of the evolution of the welfarist language, it does not show the powerful common ground of strategic uses of welfare benefits to generate the social quiescence needed for marketisation and democratisation [Vanhuysse 2006]. The authors dwell more on the common ground of conflating social policy with poor policies (p. 53) and thus re-strengthen their original idea of deep cleavages between conservative- and socialist-minded elites (p. 35). The chapter is extremely convincing in explaining why interwar path-starting legacies were powerful enough to endure and in this line of thought represents a significant contribution to CEE welfare-state research, but presents a slightly amorphous post-communist argument.

In what concerns the international organisation, the EU seems a more intriguing candidate as it tries to espouse its own identity-building project to be linked with some kind of a new supra-national approach to citizenship and social protection. While EU social policy cannot exist without clear historical roots in nation-states (p. 73), 'EU level policies' are a complex interplay between path-dependent national evolutions and the supra-national English-centred discourse (p. 76). Not only is this concept far more hollow in terms in consistency than nation-state level policies, but it is also spatially contested, neither fully national, nor fully 'European' (p. 63). On top of a rather amorphous presentation of the differentiation between Bourdieusian fields and EU forums (pp. 62–64),

Jean-Claude Barbier's chapter constructs an interesting argument on how the porous boundaries between policy communities and scientific forums create a social-policy language that confines multiple national pathways into a kind of *sui generis* European English of welfare benefits (pp. 66–67). The process is further complicated by the re-adaptation of this language into nation-state-level politics, the underlying unspoken message being that, while EU social policy language is analytically traceable with some effort, its policy-implications are far from clear. What makes the chapter stand out is that it draws attention to the fact that entrenching institutions, like welfare provisions, is as much an intellectual exercise as it is a political and economic one [Scott and Meyer 1994: 64]. Throughout all the identified forums (political communication, policy community, scientific) diffusion ultimately occurs cross-nationally, but incorporation is overwhelmingly political, and generally relegates theoretical-definitional efforts to the background (as presented in the case of 'flexicurity'; p. 71).

In sum, Beland and Petersen's edited volume impresses not just by its vast spatial scope, but also by its analytical depth. More than a token interdisciplinary approach, the book improves on mainstream historical inquiries into welfare states by showing via the proxy of language how ideas shape social policies. While causal pathways are sometimes not fully brought into the spotlight, the book's implicit dialogue with most of the welfare state literature sends out the strong message that there is more to welfare states than an underlying social-democratic thinking [Kaufmann 2012: 76] and that concepts must be understood in a process-tracing sense in their national contexts.

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Marius B. Busemeyer: *Skills and Inequality: Partisan Politics and the Political Economy of Education Reforms in Western Welfare States*
Cambridge 2015: Cambridge University Press, 326 pp.

This book aims to tackle a very complex and multi-level issue. It asks how Western welfare regimes in the larger OECD world have ended up with different education and training regimes and what are the effects of educational institutions, which are a reflection of policy choices of the past. It brings together the insights from welfare-state research and political science to understand the role of education in welfare-state regimes. As posited by the author, the role of education in welfare regimes has been strongly underestimated in the literature to date. Linking politics, welfare state regimes, inequality and attitudes towards education access as well as funding, especially with the focus on vocational education and training (VET), is a very welcome and insightful endeavour.

This book makes a significant contribution to the literature and is highly relevant today when investments in education, increasing drop-out rates, and increasing inequalities in access to higher education have been so problematic across the world. Further, the choices made for financing higher education and the overwhelming rationalisation of higher education under neoliberalism have tended to spur one-sided stories about the reasons for and consequences of reforms to improve access to higher education and optimal funding models of higher education. Busemeyer's contribution provides an opportunity to look deeper into welfare systems to understand their complex interlinkages of political, social, and economic spheres and it provides a useful comparison between welfare-state types and different educational and social-policy sectors. This book also allows us to better understand the path-dependencies of the different education systems and the linkages to political preferences and feedback mechanisms in terms of popular attitudes and preferences towards public education funding and the stratification of education systems.

Theoretically, the author builds on insights from historical institutionalism, partisan politics, and welfare-state regimes. He argues that the variation in the role of VET relative to higher education and the division of labour between public and pri-