

trasting ways: for example, functional factors were seen as playing a big role in the institutionalization of social pacts in Ireland, whereas the chapter on Italy places more emphasis on power-distributional considerations. Space does not allow for detailed consideration of the case-study chapters, but each was very competently put together.

A common criticism of edited volumes is that they are disjointed and lack focus. This book does not demonstrate this shortcoming. The editors have gone to great pains to produce a coherent and integrated assessment throughout the book. The result is a scholarly and rigorous analysis of social pacts within the terms set by the authors, making it a must-read for anyone interested in European social pacts or European industrial relations more widely.

Nonetheless, the book cannot be considered the definitive work on social pacts largely because the theoretical framework employed in the book is too narrow to capture all the dynamics created by these arrangements. For example, because the theoretical framework focuses almost exclusively on the processes that drive the formation and maintenance of social pacts, there is little discussion in the book about the relationship between social pacts and economic and social performance: in other words, there is too much focus on inputs and not enough on outputs. Other important considerations are omitted from the analysis. For instance, even though the book is littered with references to the European monetary union, there is no systemic attempt to discuss the relationship between social pacts and the dynamics of European integration. All in all, the book is a fine, scholarly work, but it does not provide a comprehensive assessment of the dynamics of social pacts in Europe.

Paul Teague
Professor
Management School, Queen's University Belfast

Parties, Elections and Policy Reforms in Western Europe: Voting for Social Pacts. By Kerstin Hamann and John Kelly. London: Routledge, 2010. 226 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-58195-0, \$130 (Cloth).

Kerstin Hamann and John Kelly analyze the emergence of social pacts across a wide range of western European countries and explore the role played by electoral competition in explaining such pacts. In doing so, they depart from previous research in two important ways. First, the book emphasizes the electoral incentives governments have when offering social partners a way to become involved in the regulation of a certain policy area. The second major innovation refers to the dependent variable. In contrast to previous literature on social pacts, the authors have used social pact offers rather than social pacts actually signed. They accordingly code government choice as a dichotomous variable with two alternatives: to offer social pacts or to legislate unilaterally. Even though the adoption of this dichotomous variable seems to be the most adequate given the focus on electoral competition and voting behavior, it had been neglected in previous works that adopted government-based explanations.

One of the most important findings of the book is that government willingness to offer a pact to social partners is positively correlated with vote losses in the last elections. This would confirm the main hypothesis put forward by the authors according to which social pacts are to a large extent motivated by an electoral calculus. Moreover, the book also concludes that social pact offers are more likely to happen with center or left parties in power, coalition governments, and weak executives, hence confirming some of the insights by previous works. Other variables such as economic conditions, collective bargaining coordination, or welfare state regime are found irrelevant to explain social pact offers.

The book fills an important gap in a growing body of research that had relied mostly on industrial relations theories and more recently on welfare state reform analysis. These authors provide fresh air to the literature on social pacts, which was in a stalemate as it had failed to provide convincing explanations for the rise and fall of pacts. Once neo-corporatist theories were definitively abandoned to explain practices in countries without the appropriate institutional setting, there had been several attempts to explain the paradox of social pacts. Electoral politics had been almost absent in this debate and lacked a coherent and systematic treatment. The book provides a rigorous account of how governments build their preferences about social pacts and which variables may affect their decisions in this regard.

To successfully achieve these goals, Hamann and Kelly combine multivariate analysis and qualitative case studies. While some recent books on social pacts had already relied on a mixed method, the authors manage to achieve an optimum balance between the quantitative test of general propositions and the systematic analysis of deviations from the expected path through case studies. Moreover, the broad country coverage further enhances the validity of the theoretical arguments put forward.

The combination of a sound theoretical framework with mixed methods has successfully contributed to the effectiveness of the book in providing evidence lending support to the initial hypotheses. Even though the authors acknowledge the existence of some cases that deviate from the expected pattern, the results seem to overwhelmingly prove the authors' theoretical insights about the political nature of social pacts. Moreover, the book opens the door to further research on this issue that would address some of the aspects in need of consideration in future work. For example, one consideration is indeed related to the main independent variable explaining social pacts, namely, electoral competition. As the authors rightly point out, government's electoral incentives have been widely neglected in previous works. This would justify the adoption of an approach that pays more attention to such incentives. In their attempt to integrate this variable, however, the authors have almost completely disregarded other variables that have figured prominently in previous research. Even though they have controlled for them in the quantitative analysis and have made some reference in the qualitative case studies, there is very little evidence provided in this regard. The implicit assumption seems to be that the only actor that has the final say about the signature of a social pact is the government. As it is now, the argument misses completely the interactionist approach that had dominated the previous literature. Even though it is true that government decisions take place in a context of weakening trade unions, the latter nonetheless retain some strategic capacity and power tools such as conflict. In particular, an important variable missing in the quantitative analysis that may affect government decisions to offer social pacts or to sign them is labor's threat to call for a political strike or equivalent forms of conflict. Government decisions may vary according to the expected reaction of trade unions, and the mobilization capacity of trade unions is not necessarily related to their bargaining coordination.

In their account of the political logic of social pacts, the authors refer to legitimacy as the main variable to be considered to explain the incentives governments have to offer pacts to social partners. In other words, legitimacy is the only aspect governments would include into their calculation of whether or not to offer social pacts. However, there is another important aspect to be considered, namely, the efficacy of policies. In some cases, this efficacy crucially depends on social partners' organizational capabilities. Government regulations may be ineffective if social partners take a different stand in collective bargaining. This would certainly be the case with wage restraint, but also with labor market reforms. Thus, to assume that legitimacy is the only determinant of government strategies and that the legitimacy input is the same for all governments independent of the organizational capabilities of social partners is too strong an assumption. Even though the authors control for bargaining coordination in the quantitative test, this does not really capture the capacity social partners may have to disrupt the implementation of a certain policy.

Regarding the dependent variable, the authors rightly chose social pact offers and not social pacts actually signed as their dependent variable. By doing this, however, they exclude some bipartite agreements in which governments may encourage the process and endorse the final outcome but are formally excluded from negotiations. These would be functional equivalents of tripartite social pacts that are nonetheless excluded from the analysis. At the same time, some social pact offers may be just window-dressing exercises without any real government determination to engage in a process of social dialogue. Including them into the database for quantitative analysis may introduce some noise into the results.

The above considerations have to be interpreted as recommendations for future work on this topic that build on the excellent job done by the authors. Their contribution to existing knowledge and theory building is certainly remarkable and will become a central piece for the study of the relationship between social partners and governments in the coming years.

Oscar Molina

Lecturer

Sociology Department, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain