

Mau, S. and Veghte, B. (eds.) *Social Justice, Legitimacy and the Welfare State*, 2007, Aldershot, Ashgate, 282pp., ISBN 0754649393

The aim of the book “*Social Justice, Legitimacy and the Welfare State*” is to bring “together state-of-the-art research of what drives and determines the public standing of the welfare state” (pp. xvii). This is done by showing recent work of different scholars in this field. In the introduction (chapter one), the editors outline the state of welfare state legitimacy research and show how the different chapters in the book contribute to this knowledge. The editors argue that there is relative consensus in the existing literature regarding the fact that both self-interest and norms are important in explaining welfare state legitimacy. In addition to the existing literature, the editors stress that it is conceptually incorrect to reduce moral (altruistic) attitudes to justice principles or to argue that justice judgments do not play a role when it comes to individual interests in welfare state interventions (pp. 2). Justice principles capture ideas of equity, fairness and reciprocity, which differ from altruism or self-interest. Hence, the authors argue that justice principles should also be considered when explaining welfare state legitimacy. Furthermore, they argue that institutions at the macro-level, as well as micro-level attitudes are determinants of welfare state legitimacy. The book consists of four parts.

The first part deals with welfare-attitude formation from a cross-national perspective. In this section, existing country-differences in welfare attitudes are discussed. In chapter two, Kumlin and Svallfors show that class politics affect attitudinal class differences and these differences increase where intermediary organisations provide citizens with more arguments regarding on class-

redistributive issues. Rehm shows in chapter three that a desire for insurance shapes individual attitudes towards redistribution (controlled for self-interest, but not for moral attitudes or justice principles). In the final chapter in this part, Maier Jeager finds that perceptions of deservingness vary across countries, as would be expected on the basis of existing research on regime dependent welfare attitudes.

The second part of the book consists of two chapters considering the extent to which principles of social justice explain welfare attitudes. Mau and Liebig show that “individuals are more willing to participate in the tax financing of public goods if a certain level of saturation has been reached with regard to their own welfare”(pp.116). Following, in chapter six, Sachweh, Ullrich and Christoph examined the moral economy of poverty in Germany. They find that both self-interest as well as justice orientations explain support for social assistance. Also there is a high congruence between justice orientations institutionalized in the German social assistance scheme and citizen’s preferences. This indicates that institutional embedded justice principles (partly) explain individual support for German social assistance schemes.

The third part of the book deals with how political factors influence welfare attitudes and the fourth part of the book pays attention to recent challenges to welfare states as a result of increasing social and ethnic diversity. In the latter, Van Oorschot and Uunk investigate the public’s (informal) solidarity towards immigrants in European welfare states (chapter ten). Halvorsen studies the legitimacy of welfare states that are transforming from homogeneity to multiculturalism (chapter 11). Both chapters find that solidarity towards immigrants

or the threat experienced by immigrants depends upon the type of welfare state as well as individual-level ideas and interests.

There are a number of strong points in this edited volume. Some chapters successfully combine institutional and individual-level explanations for welfare state legitimacy as well as justice principles and individual interest in welfare arrangements (e.g. chapter 6), which is a difficult job. By doing this, it is possible to see how these different determinants of welfare state legitimacy account relate to each other and what matters more in explaining welfare state legitimacy. Furthermore, the book also deals with the often neglected question in welfare state legitimacy studies of how immigration influences welfare state legitimacy (chapter 10 and 11).

Unfortunately, although the editors argue that both self-interest as well as moral and justice principles determine welfare state legitimacy; the various chapters do not consistently explore these motives. This discrepancy could still be ascribed to a lack of proper data for measuring moral attitudes to welfare (given that longitudinal data with extensive questions on welfare state legitimacy are still rare, despite improvement in recent decades, particularly in regards to cross-national data). Furthermore, in general the book remains unclear as to when welfare institutions generate their own legitimacy and when individual preferences influence social policy, in turn, bringing about welfare state legitimacy. Hence, that remains a challenge for future studies. However, it must be said that piecing together all the various parts of welfare state legitimacy research within one

framework is nearly a mission impossible given the comprehensive nature of the subject.

In conclusion, “*Social Justice, Legitimacy and the Welfare State*” is an interesting and important contribution to research on welfare state legitimacy because it provides an overview missing in welfare state literature until now.

Judith Raven

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