

In the last chapter, Nadalutti looks into the influence the normative-ethical aspect has in regional cooperation on its micro and macro level. On two examples, from the EU and South-East Asia, she demonstrates that the role normative values play in cross-border cooperation policies, mainly on the local level. She also shows that these policies are aimed not only on economic development but also to support the feeling of common responsibility, mutual trust and solidarity in the pursuit of not only particular interests but also of the 'common good'.

Combining several new and innovative approaches to the study of regions and regional cooperation, the book *Region-Making and Cross-Border Cooperation: New Evidence from Four Continents* represents a very valuable contribution to the current debate. Not only does it challenge the approach of traditional IR theories (the most obvious case being the contradiction between realist assumptions and the proven normative-ethical aspect present in regional cooperation), it also draws attention to issues that were generally overlooked by previous studies, such as the role of norms, values, and identity in the region-making and region-building processes or the role of people and citizens as agents in these processes instead of being only passive receivers, enriching thus the research of regionalism and regionalization with new aspects. The book also offers a different conception of 'region' itself – the authors do not see regions only as territorially delimited spaces but rather as attached to the people, giving the concept a human dimension, which is then present throughout the entire book. A very important contribution of the book to the research of regional cooperation is the attempt to overcome the division in the study of macro-regions and micro-regionalism that still prevails in the academic community. The authors of the book were able to shed more light on the roles various actors

on different levels have on region-building and region-(un)making processes and even how these different levels interact and influence each other, thus offering grounds for further research. Last but not least, I would also stress the fact that the chapters of the book do not bring only theoretical findings and knowledge but often also valuable practical recommendations on how to make regional/cross-border cooperation more effective and more beneficial to the people living in the area.

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Keman, Hans:

**SOCIAL DEMOCRACY:
A COMPARATIVE ACCOUNT OF
THE LEFT-WING PARTY FAMILY.**

London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. 2017. 230 pages.

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Social democratic parties in developed Western countries do not have a stellar reputation nowadays for their political powers or policy preferences. Some have ceased to exist, some struggle with the transition into 21st century politics and are being marginalised by new political opponents, and some still enjoy considerable electoral victories. Researchers have questioned the relevance of social democratic ideology and its performance since the fall of communism. If there is one common characteristic of social democratic parties, it is that at present no single narrative what is happening with them exists. Lavelle (2008) claims the death of Social Democracy, Giddens (1998) advocates for Third Way politics, Callaghan

(2000) argues for the decline of Social Democracy, Meyer (2000) offers revisions of social democratic ideas for a new environment. It seems that something has changed for social democratic parties, but no clear interpretation has taken hold. This is the context where Keman's book fits in.

Hans Keman is Professor Emeritus of Comparative Political Science at the VU University Amsterdam. His comparative research focuses on one of his central research questions – to what extent are political parties capable of bringing about desired change in society, and under which conditions? This is also the guideline for his book about social democratic politics. Using a comparative approach, he enters into the conversation in a wider academic context. He engages in dialogue with other scholars who deal with topics related to social democracy: the welfare state, political economy, the future of the Left, the Third way, and so on. Moreover, he discusses other comparative accounts of Social Democracy (Castles, 2004; Merkel, Petring, Henkes, & Egle, 2008) as well.

Hans Keman, essentially, analyses social democracy and its performance in 21 OECD countries. He argues that we can see distinctive differences that these parties make in policy results, mainly of economic nature. Social democratic parties' aspirations for a 'kinder and more equal society' still yield results that distinguish them from political parties on the Centre or the Right. There is a consistent pattern of spending public finances on policy areas that are at the core of social democratic values (social well-being, education, labour market policies, etc.). However, they are still trapped in past solutions when dealing with modern societal problems. New challenges such as globalisation, decreasing trust in state powers, emergence of protest movements and interdependence of economic ties have caught social democratic representatives unprepared and without significant answers for voters. In the

past, social democrats proved they could make a difference, but nowadays, Keman argues, they need to adapt now to new settings. He does not, however, say how they should do so.

The book covers the journey of one political family from its origins until early 21st century. It is a comparative story of industrialised, developed, parliamentary democracies and of how social democratic parties have shaped politics and society within them. The chapters follow linear logic, starting with the background of social democracy, its values and electoral priorities. It follows with the accumulation of power resources in national political arenas and how social democracy participated in governments and performed in governmental offices. The book ends with a discussion about the responses to the changing world after 1989. It is a narrative of hope, change, diversity, failure, and transformation. All this is explained from the perspective of the group of social democratic parties as a whole. It is macro view on the development of this party family in response to the findings of other researchers.

The main appeal of the book is in its extensive use of data to back up its claims. Statistics ranging from economic indicators to party manifestos accompany the reader through the story. Important claims in the chapters are based on analyses of available data. It is an active interplay between theory and data that makes the book appealing. Although, by employing mostly summary statistics and bi-variate correlation analysis, it is difficult to prove causality.

However, the extensive use of statistical data also results in a general comparative analysis. Keman aims for universal trends and developments of this political party family (macro view). The book, therefore, does not explain the nuances of individual cases of social democracy, because it does not aim for a specific understanding of each country included in the analysis. Instead, it works with aggregates and common trends in the data. But if we take

for granted that there is a substantive diversity among social democratic parties (Keman points this out too), then such a general approach leads to more general conclusions. Sometimes, the book's claims might even sound trivial. The author points this out in the introduction as well (p. 19). It is not a book that explains the detailed differences between social democracies in different countries.

Instead, the main research aim is to provide a general argument about Social Democracy and its place in Western politics as related to other political parties. The book does its job and focuses on its research aim until the end. The comparative method, relying mostly on data, produces a general account of Social Democracy and its development in the institutional context of selected OECD countries. This is helpful mainly for students and beginning scholars who might use the book as a starting point for more specific research on leftist politics in parliamentary democracies. The book leaves many areas open for challenge and for more specific investigation due to its macro view of Social Democracy. However, such general accounts are needed in a field where unified narratives are scarce.

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Pleshakov, Constantine:

THE CRIMEAN NEXUS: PUTIN'S WAR AND THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS.

New Haven: Yale University Press. 2017. 200 pages.

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What is Crimea? This is the question Constantine Pleshakov asks the reader in the beginning of his newest book. He answers in an engaging fashion what Crimea is to him, to Crimeans, to Ukrainians, and to the world.

Pleshakov, a former analyst at the Institute of U.S. and Canada Studies in Moscow and a current professor of Political Science at Amherst College, begins the book with an introduction explaining the informal history of the peninsula and describing to the reader the unique geography of this 'Nexus'. He then closes with his own personal connection to Crimea and describes the feelings he has of being a native on the outside, looking into his fatherland in a time of turmoil when labels are forced onto those who cannot even label themselves: 'Like so many others, ours was a family of mutts. It depresses me to hear how casually many people from that part of the world call themselves "Russian" or "Ukrainian." Ethnicity is an empty word, and culture is hardly better. In the end it is little more than the mother tongue and an idiosyncratic set of prejudices.' (p. 7).

He continues the book with nine chapters of a more detailed history of Crimea and his own analysis of the events that led to the current crisis. Throughout the text Pleshakov keeps a tight scope on the area in question, only venturing out into the surrounding regions to give greater detail to the subject at hand when necessary. Unlike many other books on the