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Social Rights and Citizenship. Between an inclusionary polity and disciplining policies.

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¹ *Democracy and Social Rights in the "Two Wests."* Edited by Alice Kessler-Harris and Maurizio Vaudagna. OTTO editore, Torino 2009. Pp. 350. ISBN 978-88-95285-16-0

² The relationship between social rights and citizenship is the central topic of *Democracy and Social Rights in the "Two Wests"* (2009), a collection of essays by historians and social scientists on the development of social rights and the consequences for citizenship in Europe and the United States. It was T.H. Marshall (1950) who introduced the paradigmatic conceptual framework for the relationship between social rights and citizenship: by incorporating social rights in the status of citizenship a more inclusionary polity would be stimulated. This idea is not self-evident: the social rights introduced by Bismarck in Germany in the late nineteenth century and by fascist and communist governments in the first half of the twentieth century were a way to silence discontent and to enhance loyalty to the state. However, in many Western democracies, Marshall's expectations have, at least partially, been fulfilled in the course of the twentieth century. It is thus not the introduction and expansion of social rights per se that contributes to citizenship. An inclusionary polity is rooted not in the existence of social rights, but in the circumstances through which social rights are imagined, acquired and distributed. This book investigates the expansion of social rights and the consequences of social rights in terms of active citizenship.

- ³ The development of social rights in the United States and Europe is one of the topics the essays in *Democracy and Social Rights in the "Two Wests"* deal with. This has long been a central topic in comparative welfare state research. It was Alexis de Tocqueville who introduced the idea of American exceptionalism in his *Democracy in America*. (1835/1840) This idea has since then been explored from many different angles. In relation to the welfare state and social rights Sombart's *Why is there no socialism in the United States?* (1905) has been important. Modernisation theory in sociology predicted

that the introduction of social rights is a necessary reaction to the development of a capitalist economy. Why did this not happen in the United States, Sombart asked? He points at three possible explanations: a strong belief in political rights and universal suffrage, the stability of the two-party political system and the lack of a class distinction between the two parties. Since 1905 however socialism has indeed not taken off in the United States, but social rights have definitively been introduced in the twentieth century in the wake of Roosevelt's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society programs. America became thus less exceptional than it appeared to be in 1905.

- 4 Since Sombart, modernisation theory has given way to more institutional (and political) theories of the development of the welfare state and social rights. Institutional theory helps to explain differences between developed countries (which modernisation theory can not explain) and also gives insight in the different trajectories countries exhibit. Theda Skocpol's work on social policy in the United States is representative for this approach. She explains the specific development of social policy in the U.S. in relation to processes of state formation (Skocpol 1992, 1995). In the wake of the Civil War social policies were developed for soldiers, mothers and children. In the twentieth century the U.S. developed a distinctive model of occupational welfare that combined with the semi-welfare state programs of the New Deal (the Social Security Act) and the Great Society (Medicare, Medicaid). The U.S. thus developed a model of social policy that was distinctive from the European, social insurance model.
- 5 Esping-Andersen's *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990) is a modern classic in institutional welfare state theory. Esping-Andersen describes three idealtypical welfare states in which the role of the state, the market and the family is differently organised: a liberal welfare state (e.g. the U.S., the U.K.), a conservative-corporatist welfare state (e.g. Germany) and a social-democratic welfare state (e.g. Sweden, Denmark). Social rights are differently organised in these three types of welfare state and the development of welfare regimes is highly path-dependent.
- 6 *Democracy and Social Rights in the "Two Wests"* contains essays on national cases and essays on issues and themes. The essays on the national cases illustrate from a historic rather than a social scientific perspective the fact that national trajectories of welfare state development differ highly and that specific historical, political and institutional circumstances determine the form and content of social rights that have been developed in different countries. Although institutional theory can help explain the differences between the national cases, this attempt is not undertaken. The essays break with the idea of the "Two Wests" and American exceptionalism. Social rights have developed in the U.S. as well as in Europe and the midwife of social rights is not principally capitalism. State formation, international politics, economic expansion and the flow of ideas all play their part in the complex history of the development of social rights in different countries.
- 7 The essays in *Democracy and Social Rights in the "Two Wests"* illustrate that social rights do not necessarily contribute to an inclusive polity, to increasing and expanding citizenship. Social rights can also be modelled in a more paternalistic fashion in order to sustain social stability, community's welfare or economic participation. The essays on national cases give many examples of this. An important and interesting question is subsequently whether these kinds of paternalistic social rights do -unintendedly- put into motion a mechanism of voice and empowerment that in the end creates political

force, rather than silencing it. In this way social rights enhance citizenship by detour. In her introductory chapter Kessler-Harris cites examples of such a mechanism -for example the case of Public Housing in New York as described by Cinotto in this book. When such a detour-mechanism is universal, social rights and citizenship are, notwithstanding a paternalistic design, positively related. There are however many historical and also more recent examples that illustrate that social rights can stimulate an exclusionary instead of an inclusionary polity. This is important for the debate on the most recent developments in social rights.

- 8 Ruth Lister in a chapter on *Poor Citizenship: Social Rights, Poverty and Democracy in the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries* discusses recent developments in the design of social rights in the U.K. New Labour's policies of social investment -investment in human capital wherever possible, rather than direct provision of economic maintenance- have led to an increasing conditionality, selectivity and exclusivity of social rights. Although Lister is not conclusive about the consequences for citizenship of these kind of social rights, she suggests that, although social investment is intended to increase active citizenship, it rather reduces than enhances active involvement of citizens. This is so, because obligations and individual responsibilities, which are part and parcel of social rights in a social investment strategy, are more intended to discipline and to make social rights instrumental to economic participation, than to create an inclusionary polity.
- 9 *Democracy and Social Rights in the "Two Wests"* raises a number of very interesting and important questions. Since the 1980's the form and function of social rights are controversial. In the wake of economic and financial crises and the related crisis of the welfare state, social rights are under attack and Marshall's notion of inclusionary citizenship is traded in for Giddens' notion of social investment (1998) or for a neo-liberal destruction of social rights. Will citizenship survive? Because the book deals with such an interesting and relevant topic it is disappointing that it is little more than a collection of essays that is not bound together by a shared research question and is very inconclusive.
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- 14 Skocpol, T. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers. The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Cambridge (Harvard U.P.) 1992
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- 16 Romke van der Veen, Professor of Sociology, Erasmus University, Rotterdam