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978-1-107-05316-8 - Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity

Kathleen Thelen

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Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity

This book examines contemporary changes in labor market institutions in the United States, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands, focusing on developments in three arenas – industrial relations, vocational education and training, and labor market policy. While confirming a broad, shared liberalizing trend, it finds that there are in fact distinct varieties of liberalization associated with very different distributive outcomes. Most scholarship equates liberal capitalism with inequality and coordinated capitalism with higher levels of social solidarity. However, this study explains why the institutions of coordinated capitalism and egalitarian capitalism coincided with and complemented one another in the Golden Era of postwar development in the 1950s and 1960s, and why they no longer do so. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, this study reveals that the successful defense of the institutions traditionally associated with coordinated capitalism has often been a recipe for increased inequality due to declining coverage and dualization. Conversely, it argues that some forms of labor market liberalization are perfectly compatible with continued high levels of social solidarity and indeed may be necessary to sustain it.

Kathleen Thelen is Ford Professor of Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Permanent External Scientific Member of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne, Germany. She is the author of *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan* (Cambridge 2004), among other books, which won the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award and the Mattei Dogan Award of the Society for Comparative Research. She also writes extensively on historical institutionalism and theories of institutional change, including, most recently, *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (Cambridge 2010, co-edited with James Mahoney) and *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies* (2005, co-edited with Wolfgang Streeck). Thelen has held appointments as a research Fellow or visiting professor at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, the University of Gothenburg (Sweden), Nuffield College (Oxford), Sciences Po (Paris), and the Copenhagen Business School, among others. She has served as Chair of the Council for European Studies (2002–2006) and as President of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (2008–2009). She just completed a term as President of the American Political Science Association's organized section for Comparative Politics. In 2009, Thelen was elected to the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Berlin.

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For Amelia and Andy

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List of Abbreviations

3F	United Federation of Danish Workers (SiD + KAD)
AEI	Adult Education Initiative, a.k.a. “Knowledge Lift” (Sweden)
AER	Employers’ Reimbursement Scheme (<i>Arbejdsgivernes Elevrefusion</i>) (Denmark)
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children (United States)
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations (United States)
AGV Banken	Employers’ Association of Private Banks (<i>Arbeitgeberverband des privaten Bankgewerbes</i>) (Germany)
Almega	service-sector employers’ association (Sweden)
ALMP	active labor market policy
AMUs	Labor Market Vocational Training Centers (Denmark)
AUB	Employers’ Reimbursement System (<i>Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag</i>) (Denmark)
AVE	collective bargaining extension clause (<i>Allgemeinverbindlichkeitserklärung</i>) (Germany)
BDA	German Employers’ Association
BDI	Confederation of German Industries
BIBB	Vocational Training Institute (Germany)
BMAS	Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (<i>Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales</i>) (Germany)
CETA	Comprehensive Education and Training Act of 1973 (United States)
CDU	Christian Democratic Union (Germany)
CO-industri	The Central Organisation of Industrial Employees (Denmark)
CVET	continuing vocational education and training

CvR	Board of Government Mediators (<i>College van Rijksbemiddelaars</i>) (Netherlands)
DA	Confederation of Danish Employers
DAG	German Salaried Employees' Union (<i>Deutsche Angestellten Gewerkschaft</i>)
Dansk Metal	Danish Metalworkers' Union
DF	Danish People's Party (<i>Dansk Folkeparti</i>)
DI	Confederation of Danish Industry (<i>Dansk Industri</i>)
EFG	Basic Vocational Training (Denmark)
FDP	Free Democratic Party (Germany)
FNV	Dutch Trade Union Federation (Netherlands)
GAIN	Greater Avenues for Independence (United States)
GAO	Government Accountability Office (United States)
Gesamtmetall	Metal Employers' Association (Germany)
Handels	Swedish Commercial Employees' Union
HBV	Union of Retail, Banking and Insurance (<i>Gewerkschaft Handel, Banken und Versicherungen</i>) (Germany)
HDE	German Retail Federation (<i>Handelsverband Deutschland</i>)
HK	National Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees (Denmark)
HTF	Commercial Salaried Employees' Union (Sweden)
ICT	information and communication technology
IF Metall	Metalworkers' Union (Sweden)
IG Bau	construction union (Germany)
IG Metall	Metalworkers' Union (Germany)
IGBCE	Chemical Workers' Union (Germany)
IVET	initial vocational education and training
JOBS	Job Opportunities in the Business Sector program (United States)
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act (United States)
KAD	National Union of Women Workers (Denmark)
KIPP	Knowledge Is Power Program (United States)
Kommunal	Swedish Municipal Workers' Union
Ledarna	Association for Managerial and Professional Staff (Sweden)
LO (Denmark)	Danish Trade Union Confederation
LO (Sweden)	Swedish Trade Union Confederation
MDTA	Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 (United States)
NGG	German Food and Restaurant Workers' Union
NLRB	National Labor Relations Board (United States)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEP	Public Employment Program of 1971 (United States)
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (United States)

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PSE	Public Service Employment (United States)
PVV	Dutch Party for Freedom (<i>Partij voor de Vrijheid</i>) (Netherlands)
SACO	Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations
SAF	Swedish Employers' Association
SER	Social and Economic Council (Netherlands)
SES	socio-economic status
SiD	General Workers Union (<i>Specialarbejderforbundet i Danmark</i>) (Denmark)
SIF	Union of Technical and Clerical Employees in Industry (<i>Svenska Industritjänstemannaförbundet</i>) (Sweden)
SN	Confederation of Swedish Employers (<i>Svenskt Näringsliv</i>) (Sweden)
STAR	Labor Foundation (Netherlands)
STW	short-time work policy
STWOA	School to Work Opportunities Act (United States)
SWIT	Swedish IT Program (Sweden)
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (United States)
TF	Employers Association for Engineering (<i>Teknikföretagen</i>) (Sweden)
TFA	Teach for America (United States)
UAW	United Auto Workers (United States)
Unionen	union for white-collar employees in the private sector (SIF + HTF) (Sweden)
ver.di	United Services Sector Union (Germany)
VET	vocational education and training
VEU	Act on Adult and Continuing Training (<i>Voksen- og Efteruddannelse</i>) (Denmark)
WIN	Work Incentive Program of 1962 (United States)
WRR	Scientific Council for Government Policy (<i>Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid</i>) (Netherlands)

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This book was motivated by an interest, empirical and normative, in the continued viability of what we have traditionally thought of as the more egalitarian or “social” variety of capitalism found in much of Europe. The institutions that define this alternative model are widely seen as under siege as a result of myriad pressures associated with globalization and deindustrialization. I was interested to learn more about the changes these pressures have wrought, and what possibilities existed for preserving social solidarity in a neoliberal era. A vast literature on the welfare state has taught us a great deal about recent developments in social policy and welfare institutions. Rather than go over this well-tilled ground, I decided to focus on other arrangements that have not figured prominently in the welfare state literature but that do occupy a central position in a different but related body of scholarship, on varieties of capitalism (VofC). Specifically, I explore developments in three institutional realms – industrial relations, vocational education and training (VET), and labor market institutions – that the VofC literature sees as distinguishing the so-called coordinated market economies (CMEs) in Europe and Japan from the liberal market economies (LMEs) of the Anglo-Saxon world.

From the beginning, the VofC literature challenged the idea that contemporary market pressures would drive a convergence on a single best or most efficient model of capitalism. The idea at the very heart of the VofC framework was to insist instead that these two models represent different ways to organize capitalism; each has its own distinctive competitive strengths, and both are durable even in the face of new strains. This has been a reassuring argument for those of us who might otherwise worry about the breakdown of institutions characteristic of the CMEs, which are widely seen as supporting the “gentler” form of capitalism, rather than the alternative “cutthroat” Anglo-Saxon model (Bohle and Greskovits 2009; Acemoglu et al. 2012). Despite the reassurances, however, the fact is that we do observe serious strains and significant changes

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across all three of the institutional arenas under analysis here, not only and certainly not least in the CMEs. So the question to which this book is devoted is whether the trends we are observing are driving a convergence on the more inegalitarian LME model after all.

In addressing this question, I enter into a lively if frustratingly inconclusive debate. In the course of my research, I became convinced that in order to make progress it would be necessary to disentangle – analytically and empirically – the institutions that have traditionally underpinned coordinated capitalism from those that seem to support egalitarian capitalism. This distinction became the basis for the alternative framework that I propose in this book, which identifies three different ideal-typical trajectories of change: through deregulation, through dualization, and through what I am calling socially embedded flexibilization.

The argument developed in this volume validates the claims of those scholars who have drawn attention to the common liberalizing pressures shaping capitalist development everywhere. Yet identifying distinct trajectories of change is meant to draw attention to the fact that these common pressures are being channeled in different ways. Different varieties of liberalization occur under the auspices of different social coalitions, and this has huge implications for the distributive outcomes in which many of us are ultimately interested. The framework I propose allows us to make sense of observations that appear anomalous in the context of existing models of change, which see every liberalizing move as compromising social solidarity and every defense of traditional institutions as preserving it. In sharp contrast to the conventional wisdom, I find that the successful defense of traditional institutions and policies has often been a recipe for institutional erosion and rising inequality through declining coverage and dualization. Conversely, I find that some forms of liberalization are perfectly compatible with continued high levels of equality and indeed may be necessary to achieve and protect it.

The conclusions I reach here are based on a view of institutions that emphasizes the political-coalitional basis on which they rest. In previous work I found that institutions cannot survive long unless they are actively adapted to changes in the social, political, and market context in which they are embedded. A political-coalitional perspective makes clear why the institutions associated with coordinated capitalism and with egalitarian capitalism coincided and complemented one another in the Golden Era of postwar development in the 1950s and 1960s and why they do not do so now. Such a perspective also explains why the institutions that remain most robust and resilient today are those whose form and functions have been reconfigured under the auspices of new social coalitions that are in many ways very different from those of the past.

I have accumulated a rather daunting list of debts over the course of writing this book, and so it is almost a relief to be able now to acknowledge those

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who have helped me along the way. A number of institutions provided support and refuge while I worked on this project. The Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies has been my main intellectual home away from home for well over a decade now, and I am deeply indebted to its directors Jens Beckert and Wolfgang Streeck for keeping the door wide open. During the course of my research I also spent precious months as a research Fellow at Nuffield College thanks to Desmond King, at the Wissenschaftszentrum in Berlin thanks to Jutta Allmendinger, at Sciences Po thanks to Bruno Palier, at the University of Gothenburg thanks to Bo Rothstein, and at the Copenhagen Business School thanks to John Campbell and Ove Petersen. I am grateful to the Radcliffe Institute – and especially to Barbara Grosz and Judith Vichniac – for a very productive leave year in 2010–2011.

I thank the *Annual Review of Political Science* for permission to use Figures 1.2 and 1.5, as well as text from my article, “Varieties of Capitalism: Trajectories of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity” (*Annual Review of Political Science*, 15 (June 2012), 137–59), in Chapter 1 of this book. Figure 2.3 originally appeared in Anke Hassel, “The Paradox of Liberalization: Understanding Dualism and the Recovery of the German Political Economy,” in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* and is reprinted here with permission of John Wiley & Sons. Figure 3.2 is reprinted with the permission of the author, Daniel Völk. Figure 4.3 is reprinted by permission of the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research and the author, John Schmitt. Figure 4.5 is reprinted with permission of the author, Werner Eichhorst, with gratitude to Werner also for providing the data to produce this figure. Finally, I thank Christian Lyhne Ibsen for providing me with Table 2.5.

I began this project while I was teaching at Northwestern University, and I still miss many of my colleagues there, including especially Bruce Carruthers, Fay Cook, Dan Galvin, Edward Gibson, Ann Orloff, Ben Page, Will Reno, Andrew Roberts, and Hendrik Spruyt. More than anyone else I miss James Mahoney, who sets the standard as an outstanding scholar and person. The later stages of this book were completed at my new home in the MIT political science department, where I had the good fortune to work under the inspired leadership of Richard Locke. Beyond Rick, my MIT colleagues Suzanne Berger and Dick Samuels stand out as key sources of support, both intellectual and institutional. Above all else, I have benefited from the broader scholarly community in Cambridge. Collaborations with colleagues at Harvard – especially Dan Carpenter, Daniel Ziblatt, and the incomparable Peter Hall – have provided ongoing intellectual nourishment.

I received valuable feedback as this project took shape through workshops and presentations at various institutions. I thank the participants at Yale University, the London School of Economics, the European University Institute, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, Nuffield College, Waseda University, Sciences Po, the Max Planck Institute, Princeton University, Oxford University, the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, the

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University of Washington, the University of Oslo, Princeton University, and Australian National University, among others.

Colleagues in all of the countries featured in this book, and many more, have read and listened to my arguments over the past several years. While all are innocent of whatever omissions and problems remain, I would never have been able to complete this project without their generous intellectual and personal support. I thank Erik Bengtsson, Pablo Beramendi, Marius Busemeyer, Helen Callaghan, John Campbell, Charlotte Cavaille, Pepper Culpepper, Johan Davidsson, Bernhard Ebbinghaus, Werner Eichhorst, Patrick Emmenegger, Lukas Graf, Jacob Hacker, Anke Hassel, Silja Häusermann, Anton Hemerijck, Martin Höpner, Christian Lyhne Ibsen, Gregory Jackson, Peter Katzenstein, Desmond King, Herbert Kitschelt, Anders Kjellberg, Jette Steen Knudsen, Thomas Kochan, Regina Konle-Seidl, Alexander Kuo, Nicola Lacey, Jonah Levy, Johannes Lindvall, Mikkel Mailand, Philip Manow, Andy Martin, Moira Nelson, Renate Neubäumer, Rita Nikolai, Paul Pierson, Michael Piore, Jonas Pontusson, Justin Powell, Britta Rehder, Bo Rothstein, David Rueda, Mari Sako, Adam Saunders, Steen Scheuer, Gerhard Schnyder, Martin Schröder, Tobias Schulze-Cleven, Martin Seeleib-Kaiser, Heike Solga, John Stephens, Silvia Teuber, Christine Trampusch, Jelle Visser, Margaret Weir, Christa van Wijnbergen, and Anne Wren.

I have had the good fortune to work with fabulous graduate assistants. Jeremy Ferwerda and James Conran did far more than just research for me; their substantive input improved this project in all phases. Elissa Berwick and Andreas Wiedemann provided crucial support in the later stages of production. Kate Searle provides expert staff assistance for all that I do. At Cambridge University Press, Margaret Levi inspires me with her energy and enthusiasm; it has been a joy to work with her on this and so many other projects over the years. I am grateful to Lew Bateman for his unwavering support and patience and to Shaun Vigil for shepherding this manuscript through production with such skill.

Most of the arguments presented here were developed in the context of ongoing conversations with a phenomenal group of scholars who are also dear friends. Many core ideas were conceived in the context of a course I co-taught with Bruno Palier several years ago, and I continue to draw on the many insights he has given me over the years. In Cambridge, an extraordinary group of colleagues and friends have repeatedly rallied to read and comment on work in progress. Our little “Bloomsbury” group has shaped my views in such deep and profound ways that I now have a hard time disentangling their positions from my own. Torben Iversen and David Soskice are possessed of superior minds and hearts; both are intellectual powerhouses as well as phenomenal friends. Cathie Jo Martin is absolutely one-of-a-kind, a tremendous scholar and person. Along with the rest of my women’s group – Jenny Mansbridge, Michèle Lamont, and Susan Eckstein – she has kept me centered and sane. Wolfgang Streeck continues to amaze and inspire me with a seemingly endless

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supply of fresh ideas. I could not have asked for a more supportive colleague or dearer friend. Finally, Peter Hall anchors a vibrant community of scholars of all ages and ranks who share an interest in European political economy. He is a treasured colleague; my life in Cambridge has been immeasurably enriched by my association and interactions with him.

My extended family played a bigger role in my life during the course of this project than any previous one. Elder care issues reconnected me to my far flung siblings – Mike and Nikki, Mary and Russell, Erik and Belle, and especially Pat, with whom I shared two intense but rewarding summers – and I feel more whole as a result. I miss my parents-in-law, our beloved Oma and Opa, who passed away during the course of this project, and I am grateful for the continuing support of my own mother. Most of all, my husband and children sustain me in everything I do. I thank my lucky stars for Ben Schneider who, thirty years in, still makes me a better person. During the course of writing this book, our children Andy and Amelia transformed themselves from independently minded teenagers into deeply interesting and engaged young adults. Different as they are from one another and from me, together they have filled my life with infinite happiness and real meaning. In gratitude for this, I dedicate the book to them.

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