

**Knud Andresen/Stefan Müller (eds.), *Contesting Deregulation. Debates, Practices and Developments in the West since the 1970s (Making Sense of History, vol. 31)*, Berghahn Books, New York/Oxford 2017, vi + 233 p., hardback, 120.00 \$, ISBN 978-1-78533-620-1.**

In recent years, the 1970s have sparked debate among historians. The reason for this lies in the contradictory images the decade evokes. The »seventies« were the years of counterculture, emancipation, political mobilisation and reform-oriented governments; yet, they were also characterised by oil crises, economic malaise and the rise of a free-market conservatism.<sup>1</sup> Central to the debate has been the question whether the 1970s should be seen as a turning point in Western and global history. On a metalevel, the contested nature of the 1970s has again brought to the fore the question of whether the categorisation of the past into quantified blocks of ten years (or a bit more, as in the case of the »long« 1970s) is indeed a useful exercise.

In the face of this controversy, the editors of this collected volume Knud Andresen and Stefan Müller have set themselves a modest and laudable aim. Rather than providing us with yet another verdict on *the* 1970s, they have collected a sample of empirical case studies on state (de-)regulation in Western Europe and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. Based on this collection, they seek to show that both continuity and change, increased regulation and deregulation, mark these years.

The book, which I believe to be a follow-up of the workshop »Changes in Social Regulations: State, Economy, and Social Actors since the 1970s« held in 2012, covers a wide array of topics. They can be roughly organised in three categories: concepts and actors, regulatory policy and legislation and »regulatory transitions in enterprise practices«.

The chapters by Patrick Neveling and Alexander Ebner stress the prevalence of policy paradigms over time. Neveling lays bare the roots of the model of special economic zones (cheap locations for producing), which became common practice in the 1970s. He alerts us to the establishment of the first such zone in Puerto Rico in the 1940s, which was then transferred globally. The author warns us of the risk of looking at this decade from an exclusively Western perspective: while certain forms of economic production were phased out in the West, they were continued elsewhere. Alexander Ebner in his chapter argues that despite social and political changes in (West) Germany, the concept of the social market economy has proven resilient and continues to function as an integrative ideological factor. The contribution by Giovanni Bernardini portrays Helmut Schmidt as a way-paver of the German variant of neoliberalism. This raises the question of how these different strands of economic thought could be combined in the minds of (West) German politicians and economists. In his chapter on the *Treubandanstalt*, Marcus Böick does enter the minds of people, in this case the staff employed to oversee the privatisation of East German state-owned firms. He reconstructs their career motives and highlights the improvised and contingent nature of the operation. With a view to the contested appraisal of the *Treuband*, it would have been insightful to, in addition, learn more about the politico-economic views of the employees.

Regulatory policies and legislation form the overarching theme of the second and most cohesive cluster of chapters. They include chapters on a common tax policy on the supranational level, privacy protection, antidiscrimination in the workplace, risk technology, and education policies on the local and supranational level. Altogether, they lead to an interesting conclusion: in several policy fields, the 1970s and 1980s saw an increase rather than a decrease in state regulation. This is for instance shown by Larry Frohman, who addresses the comprehensive framework of privacy regulations developed in the Federal Republic in the context of new technologies and forms of data collection. Explanatory factors put forward for this are the political culture and constitutional tradition of West Germany, which led privacy advocates to define the privacy problem and possible solutions quite differently from their American counterparts. A similar case of increased regulation is presented by Enrico Baltrami. From President Kennedy's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity in 1961 to the affirmative

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<sup>1</sup> *Duco Hellema*, *The Global 1970s. Radicalism, Reform and Crisis*, Abingdon 2018. *Niall Ferguson/Charles S. Maier/Erez Manela* et al. (eds.), *The Shock of the Global. The 1970s in Perspective*, Cambridge/London 2011; *Andreas Wirsching/Marc Lazar* (eds.), *Forum: European Responses to the Crisis of the 1970s and 1980s* in: *Journal of Modern European History* 9, 2011, pp. 7–26. *Hartmut Kaelble*, *The 1970s in Europe. A Period of Disillusionment or Promise?*, London 2010.

action adopted by Nixon in the 1980s, Baltramini shows the important effects of government policy on the transformation of a segregated towards a more integrated American workplace.

The picture of regulatory policies and legislation offered in this volume is, however, more multifaceted than this. For one, some of the chapters reveal the limitations posed to state regulation. Hanna Lierse, for instance, argues that the European Commission failed to seize the opportunity to propose a common tax policy when a political will among member states to harmonise taxes temporarily existed in the 1970s. The trade unions' failed attempt to regulate multinational corporations at the level of international organisations is discussed by Francesco Petrini, who shows nicely how the unions tried different venues (UN, OECD, EC) to create a breakthrough.

Second, the volume includes contributions that provide evidence of a shift in the content of policies. Simone Paoli shows how the objective of a European education policy shifted from emancipation and preparation for employment to increasing the international competitiveness of the European Community in a global economy. In her contribution on »project-based learning« in America and West Germany, Anna Wellner signals a change in focus too. From political engagement the volunteering projects became increasingly geared towards CV building, while retaining their outward appearance.

The last part of the book deals with the regulation of the private sector, including chapters on the nuclear power industry in Italy (Simone Selva), the housing market in the United Kingdom (Matthew Hollow), the textile industry in the Netherlands and Germany (Christian Marx) and the earlier mentioned chapter on multinational corporations (Francesco Petrini).

What this volume convincingly shows is that it is impossible to refer to the 1970s as either a turning point or a decade when continuity prevailed. It seems a more fruitful exercise to study the areas where a change in regulatory policies occurred and where change failed to materialise. The volume offers some indication of the multiple factors that influence these outcomes, such as national political cultures, the role of ideas and individual actors and the geopolitical importance of policy areas. A more systematic analysis is, however, beyond the scope of this book. This is in part due to its limited geographical scope. While claiming to cover »the West« (without offering a further specification of the concept), the volume reveals a strong regional focus on West Germany and the USA, with additional chapters on the UK and the EC. This leaves the reader wondering how much of the (de)regulation described in this volume is representative of »the West« or of the specific countries and policy areas addressed. A more systematic comparative analysis may offer insights into emergent patterns of ideational and institutional change in the 1970s and 1980s and allow us to assess the impact of the factors cursorily addressed here.

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