

*Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*. Edited by Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xx+395. \$34.99 (paper).

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In her now infamous “no such thing as society” interview conducted for *Woman’s Own* magazine after winning her third term in 1987, Margaret Thatcher proclaimed the death of embedded liberalism and the welfare state it spawned and the dawn of a new age of neoliberalism-inspired governance. In this neoliberal age of economic independence, people can no longer say “I have a problem, it is the government’s job to cope with it,” rather they must now “look to themselves first” (see “Interview for *Woman’s Own* [‘No Such Thing as Society’],” Margaret Thatcher Foundation, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>). As one of the chief political architects of many of the policies that came to define the contours of early forms of Anglo-American-style neoliberalism in the late 1970s and 1980s, Thatcher’s remarks signal the maturation of a unique new form of the state and a broader mode of what Michel Foucault (*The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978–1979* [Palgrave Macmillan, 2008]) referred to as “neoliberal governmentality.” In this neoliberal age, governing switches from protecting people and certain social institutions from the vicissitudes of the market, as was the case for the welfare state or state socialism, to dramatically extending the reaches of the market and deliberately exposing people and institutions to it, including even the state itself through the quasi markets introduced by new forms of public management.

Since Thatcher’s remarks, neoliberalism has continued to unfold, with various stops and starts, within different national contexts, and to many critics’ surprise it continues to march on largely unscathed today despite the “Great Recession” that would have seemed to have called these exuberantly promarket policies into question. One of the central goals of the contributors to *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*, edited by Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont, is to show how despite the seemingly hegemonic character of contemporary neoliberalism, it has not gone without resistance or modification. As the contributors illustrate in these wide-ranging case studies in different locales, people have deployed a number of strategies to resist and transform the neoliberal agenda.

In their well-focused introduction, Hall and Lamont point out that neoliberalism must not be seen as an all-encompassing condition but as a “syncretic social process” (p. 10) or, in other terms, as “an open-ended stimulus that provoked a diversity of responses” (p. 1). For some groups neoliberalism has meant the expansion of opportunities and possibilities, such as for a growing middle class in places like China, India, and former Soviet bloc countries or the upper classes in the North America and Europe. For others, however, neoliberalism has meant declining incomes and power, such as North American union workers, the poor, and public sector workers. The

variations of the effects of neoliberal policy are explored in detail in chapters by Peter B. Evans and William H. Sewell, Jr. (chap. 1), and Lucy Barnes and Hall (chap. 7). Likewise, various social institutions and social movements have been forced to respond to the austerity and competition that neoliberal policies have generated. In some cases, as with the promotion of human rights or multiculturalism, discussed by Jane Jenson and Ron Levi (chap. 2) and Will Kymlicka (chap. 3), respectively, certain ideas were either adapted or altered in order to incorporate neoliberal themes of competition and markets. Also, under neoliberal conditions some regions and nation-states have been able to maintain their basic safety nets in the face of neoliberal policies. Gérard Bouchard (chap. 9) makes this point in the case of Québec, where various cooperatives and quasi-public organizations have promoted a "social economy" that has served as a buffer from the dismantling of the safety net in other provinces of Canada.

Neoliberalism is, as all the contributors to the volume recognize, not just an economic policy to bolster the rentier class or a short-term political strategy to roll back the state, but a larger moral attempt (to channel Margaret Thatcher again) to "change the soul." As such, it has been responsible for generating a "new common sense" (Jenson and Levi, p. 70) or new narratives that "tell people what their society is about, what its past embodies and its future portends, who belongs to it, and what kinds of behavior merit social respect" (Hall and Lamont, p. 4). In this new narrative, moral worth comes to be defined almost solely in economic terms. Those who have benefited from neoliberal policies and are affluent can "pat themselves on the back" for allegedly possessing the "skills" gained from their cunning adaptability and entrepreneurialism. Meanwhile, those with limited economic means are castigated as "losers" in the new intensified game of competition. This process also shows up, as Lamont, Jessica S. Welburn, and Crystal M. Fleming (chap. 4) illustrate, in historically stigmatized groups whose resilience, which has often come from group support, becomes weakened by the individualism contained in neoliberal policies.

While some degree of competition may be socially beneficial, the level of competition and its penetration into all social institutions in this high-stakes, winner-take-all neoliberal environment leave many out or vulnerable to falling or in constant fear of failing. A successful society or institution—this volume is a product of the Successful Societies Program of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR)—is unlikely to survive such a full-blown saturation of market principles into all its domains, even ironically the market itself. Markets, too, require support systems to sustain them that are of nonmarket origins, such as mechanisms of trust. This fact is understood in some contexts, such as France and Scandinavia, but ignored in others.

*Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era* suffers at points from the "disparate contributions in search of a theme" which often occurs in edited works; however, the collection in sum does provide a great way to consider both the variations of neoliberalism and attempts by groups to redirect their lives in response to it. It shows that even in these neoliberal times,

when the market and neoliberal governmentality seems to rule all of our lives, including those of us in higher education, people find creative ways to resist, mitigate, and redirect some of its most onerous effects.

*Income Inequality: Economic Disparities and the Middle Class in Affluent Countries.* Edited by Janet C. Gornick and Markus Jäntti. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013. Pp. xxii+515. \$65.00.

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As human beings we are naturally ill equipped to understand implications of the upswing in inequality of the income distribution—the Great U-turn—that has afflicted this and other societies in recent decades. We have no evolved organs to sense inequality in a large, geographically spread out, and anonymous population. Even a purely intellectual apprehension of the inequality phenomenon is difficult, requiring comparison of incomes that differ by orders of magnitude.

For the past three decades the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) has collected detailed microdata on household income (and more recently on wealth) at several points in time for a number of developed countries, harmonizing the survey procedures to make data comparable. The original set of OECD countries has recently been augmented with Latin American and other middle-income countries—providing additional insight. Janet C. Gornick and Markus Jäntti's *Income Inequality* is one fruit of this vast research effort. The book consists of studies of contemporary inequality trends using the LIS data woven into a rich tapestry of understanding of a complex historical episode. The contributors—economists, sociologists, political scientists—analyze the high-quality data using powerful methodologies capable of laying bare the underlying structure that human intuition cannot access. The rest of this review illustrates, very partially, the range of substantive issues that the book illuminates.

How bad has the U-turn been in the United States? Domestic public debate on inequality has narrowly focused on the U.S. experience. Several contributions help place this experience in perspective. Figure 1.3 (p. 22) shows the inequality trajectories from the 1980s to the 2000s for European OECD countries and Mexico. U.S. inequality has indeed increased over the period, ending at a level higher (Gini = .38) than most other developed societies. Despite the upswing U.S. inequality is still lower than that of Mexico (Gini = .48) and other Latin American countries. New data on income inequality in India (Gini = .48, higher than previous estimates) and South Africa (Gini ~.70) suggest that middle-income countries tend to have higher inequality than high-income countries. A chapter on India provides a startling visual clue to this pattern. Plotting the Gini coefficient against median household income, for Indian states together with individual countries in the LIS data, two distinct clusters emerge: one up on the left corresponds to Indian states