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Collective book review: Making Of Ageing Policy and International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy

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International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy

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Collective review of Rune Ervik; Tord Skogedal Lindén (2013): *Making Of Ageing Policy. Theory and Practice in Europe* and Sarah Harper, Kate Hamblin (eds.) (2014): *International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy*.

In 2013-2014, Edward Elgar published two interrelated books in the fields of social gerontology and public policy. Both books include domestic and cross-national case studies on selected topics that are important for ageing policy. The *International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy* edited by Sarah Harper and Kate Hamblin focuses on a global approach towards demographic change. Meanwhile, *The Making of Ageing Policy* edited by Ervik Rune and Tord S. Lindén brings a closer look at issues, programs, and activities relevant to the ageing policy and its entities, especially in the countries of the European Union (EU) that are still seen as those that have been first to construct positive responses to the ageing population. Although, population ageing has slowed in Europe in recent years, globally it will have a substantial impact in the near future, mainly in Asian countries. Thus, it is necessary to create various programs that will allow societies and economies to adapt to new demographic conditions, among others, in the fields of the labour market, long-term care, social participation of older adults, provision of sustainable pensions for all, and health services.

The *International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy* edited by Harper and Hamblin includes not only chapters related to the activities undertaken by governments but also to studies on the influence of the population ageing on the policymaking as well as the behaviour of entities in the commercial sector and civil society. Thus, the book provides a multisectoral approach to the demographic challenge by the inclusion of activities of the voluntary (third) sector, families, and private initiatives. At the same time, *The Making of Ageing Policy* focuses on the in-depth analysis of public policies on ageing that is on institutional solutions and approaches. What is important, Rune's and Lindén's volume combines policies from both the international and national level and explains how they are related to each other. Moreover, this book underlines how various discourses on ageing lead to institutional defence and advocacy for institutional change and reform. We will discuss these books consecutively.

The *International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy* includes articles by scholars from the fields of sociology, economics, demography, social policy, public health, and public administration, from countries such as the

United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Finland, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, China, Argentina, New Zealand, and Australia. The book comprises 37 chapters that are bundled in six parts. These sections are supplemented by short joint summaries of their chapters, which is an advantage of the book as it suggests further research directions. The volume covers, among others, the primary demographic characteristics of population ageing, outline of the phenomenon of longevity as well as discussions about challenges related to the pensions, intergenerational issues, and the cost-effectiveness of health therapies for older adults, examples of reforms of social policy around the world in recent years, and discussion about the lifelong learning in the context of adaptation of older workers to the changes in the labour market.

While the *International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy* provides a comprehensive overview of programs and services for older adults, it does not go into the discussion of policy ideas on ageing that are undergoing in the field of social policy; in other words, the discourses on the general concepts used by international and national organisations such as productive ageing, active ageing, and positive ageing. This handbook provides a wide range global survey of a variety of challenges and areas related to ageing policy. However, some of the features typical to handbooks for students still may be presented, such as short summaries of chapters, key terms, and critical questions and exercises.

Hopefully, the discussion about a variety of policy ideas was included in *The Making of Ageing Policy* that contains chapters by scholars from the fields of sociology, social policy, demography, and economics from Norway, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Italy, and Poland. The book includes 11 chapters that are not arranged in bigger sections. Such a structure limits the transparency of the key concept and message of the book. The authors focus mainly on at least three main policy areas: public pensions, health and long-term care, and the labour market.

The first two chapters of *The Making of Ageing Policy* form the most interesting part of the book. These chapters focus on the development of policy ideas at the macro level. In other words, they provide explanations in what way the paradigms such as productive ageing and active ageing dominate ageing policy. The chapter by Walker and Foster and the chapter by Kildal and Nilssen show that the policy discourses in the EU and member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have been dominated by the productivist perspective that perceives the ageing population primarily as an economic burden. Thus, all solutions, according to this point of view, should address improvements in the economic activity of older adults, creating more jobs, fostering longer working lives, and promoting voluntary work. In contrast, the concept of active ageing that was disseminated by the United Nations (especially by the World Health Organisation) and later by various institutions of the EU, includes interventions for supporting quality of life as people age as well as optimising opportunities for health, social participation, and security. According to Walker and Foster, the active ageing underlines people's autonomy, different life courses, and puts emphasis on partnership between individuals and society. Kildal and Nilssen, however, emphasise that there is no consensus between interpretations of policy ideas not only among scholars but also among international organisations. Disagreement in these two chapters should definitely inspire further studies on the diversity of discourses on ageing policy at all policy levels.

The discussion started in the first two chapters of the book echoes in the final chapter by Rune and Lindén who put conclusions from various chapters into one place and revisit the challenges of population ageing. They ask about the future of the ageing policy because of the influence of the European Year for Active Ageing (2012) on the reforms in the countries of the EU. This contribution also goes further and suggests that it is necessary to analyse how the financial crisis of 2008 has influenced the ageing policy. These suggestions are important as this volume shows that there is no one model of ageing policy in the EU and that the policy debates are still restricted only to areas traditionally related to ageing such as public pensions, health policy, and labour market policy. Whereas, a variety of issues, such as housing, age-friendly environments, transportation, cultural policy, and sports policy, are seen as not so important for older adults and ageing populations.

The *International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy* together with *The Making of Ageing Policy* provide a global overview of recent public policies on ageing and exchange platform for policy ideas and solutions. Moreover, they both include chapters briefly describing main challenges related to ageing in Poland. The contribution by Leś included in the first book focuses on services for older people provided by non-government organisations. This chapter shows that there are already some innovative solutions for older adults and ageing societies on the horizon. Such services include, among other, new possibilities in the provision of residential care, volunteering schemes, partnerships between the state and third sector entities as well as the community welfare solutions delivered by social cooperatives, time banks, faith-based organisations, and so forth.

The Making of Ageing Policy includes two chapters related to Poland. The first one by Ruzik-Sierdzińska, Perek-Białas and Turek shows how the general policy ideas of the UE influenced the reforms related to ageing population in Poland. The analysis briefly overviews the implementation of changes in the fields of social insurance, social assistance, and pensions. However, the authors do not go into a deep discussion of Europeanisation and mainly focus on general changes in legislation. Nevertheless, this chapter is useful as it tries to highlight the most important documents and institutions developed in Poland after 1989. Another chapter, by Drożdżak, Melchiorre, Perek-Białas, Principi and Lamura, compares long-term care policies implemented in Poland and Italy. They notice that, although these countries represent different welfare state models (Mediterranean vs. post-socialist or "in transition"), families are important providers of care for older people in both. Still, the authors show that there are some differences, for instance, commercial care services are widely used in Poland, while in Italy the use of migrant care workers is more important.

The contributions including Poland in both books clearly show that the country is still searching for its model of ageing policy and tries to balance pension scheme with programs that are more and more focused on innovative informal and civic services for older adults.

Both books show the diversity of the ideological and institutional factors and environments in which ageing policies are created and implemented, and they should be used together as complementary sources. Moreover, the discussed volumes focus more on practice rather than on the theory of ageing policy. Thus, they may be too complex to be employed as standard textbooks for early students of social gerontology. However, these volumes may be used as supplements to such courses. In addition, these books may be particularly interesting for scholars and practitioners interested in demographic challenges as well as policymakers searching for foreign policies and best practices.

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