

Review for the thesis

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Title of the thesis: A Common Legacy, Divergent Paths: Understanding the Transformation of Post-Yugoslav Welfare States

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Opponent : Ing. Mirka Wildmannová, Ph.D.

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For the assessment of the submitted dissertation I have chosen the following criteria:

- topicality and relevance of the subject
- presentation of relevant professional context
- formal level of the thesis - evaluation of the theoretical and practical part
- contribution of content and results to the development of contemporary theory and practice

This dissertation deals with the current issue of the welfare state - especially in countries representing the former Eastern Bloc. Today, the issue of social security for citizens is debated in all European countries. Social systems in the former Eastern Bloc countries have undergone different transformations. This is also shown in this paper: each of the four countries that emerged from the former Yugoslavia has taken a different approach to providing social protection. Social protection systems evolve over time and respond to current problems in society. This is also what this paper evaluates, in which the author applies Kingdon's Three Streams Theory.

The aim of the dissertation (pages 10,11), which is divided into two objectives, is ambitious and corresponds to the nature of the dissertation. After studying it, I have come to the conclusion that the author has succeeded in fulfilling the intention of the thesis very well.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter takes the standard form of an introductory section of a thesis in which the author defines the basic concept, structure and nature of the welfare state. Based on the articles studied, she attempts to present the basic context of why the welfare state is changing. The inclusion of the last sub-chapter is particularly important: „Conceptualizations of the Yugoslav welfare state“.

- *Have you encountered other elements in the literature that can change the shape of the welfare state over time? (in addition to the above-mentioned?)*

Chapter 3: Operational and Methodological Framework

The methodological part is very well and clearly prepared. All post-communist countries have passed through the development stage of social system formation. It is very challenging to examine why countries have accepted different solutions to social problems. The author chose unemployment security and family policy. These were the problems that had to be addressed most in the period of the transformation. Considering the results of the work, I think that the methods used were chosen correctly.

Chapter 4: Employment policy

This chapter details the formulation of employment policies in four countries after the transition of Yugoslavia. It is interesting to study how each country approached the criteria: accessibility of benefits, generosity, availability. The author applies the method of the multi-stream framework and analyzes in each country the approach to dealing with unemployment.

- *Which country do you find to be the most effective in dealing with unemployment?*

Chapter 5: Family Policy in Post-Yugoslav Countries

This chapter assesses approaches to family policy. In particular, it focuses on childcare policy - pre-school education and care and leave policy (maternity, paternity, parental leave). It analyses the methods that are defined in the theoretical part – availability, accessibility, generosity, flexibility, affordability, quality, which are conceptualised and measured in terms of a capability approach (CA). Subsequently, the author discusses the use of the multi-stream framework. The chapter is prepared very precisely.

In the context of researching family policy support and developments in individual countries, I would recommend analysing support for families with children in terms of the level of the benefit (child allowance, additional child allowances for single-parent families).

Given the terms of reference and the scope of the thesis, I understand that this could no longer be incorporated into the research.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In the final discussion, the author compares the countries in selected criteria. She reviews the results of her research on unemployment benefits, conditions for the payment of benefits, their generosity and disparities in access to the labour market.

Another theme is in the area of family policy, where access to generous maternity leave has been made available in all countries surveyed and maternity leave allowances can be assessed as generous. Within the gender dimension, different countries applied different approaches.

The results in the area of pre-school education are definitely interesting - the accessibility varies in each of the countries studied. This is also due to the structure of the population, the income structure of households and diversification in society.

The author also concludes with a discussion of the impact of policy measures on the different public policy areas examined. In particular, the impact of low investment in some areas, passive and slow labour market support measures.

In the context of family policy, he points to the changing model of families, where the traditional understanding of the father as the breadwinner is being abandoned, and paternity leave has been introduced. All the countries reviewed lack significant investment in early childhood education and care.

- *Would you find common problems of these researched countries with the Czech Republic?*

Formal Aspects

As for the formal aspects of the dissertation thesis, the text covers 266 pages with appendixes and has 222 pages of the main text. The cited literature is relevant and focuses primarily on main scientific journals in the field. The literature review is thorough. As for empirical parts and methodology, the dissertation follows modern econometric approaches and provides a good overview of model choices and limitations. The citations and the list of bibliographical records follow the required standards. The writing style is very mature and distinguished, demonstrating the necessary skills for academic writing at the PhD level.

Conclusion

Mirna Jusić showed creative skills in the given field of research and his dissertation meets the requirements imposed on dissertations in the academic discipline. I recommend the dissertation to be defended in front of the dissertation defence committee.

Place, date

Brno – September 5th, 2022

Mirka Wildmannová