

# Book Review

Maurice Roche (2010)

## *Exploring the Sociology of Europe: An Analysis of the European Social Complex*

London: Sage

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For many decades, there has been an evident need of the exploration of the sociology of Europe. This book constitutes therefore a timely intervention and identifies exactly what many authors and scholars have avoided exploring: the contemporary society of Europe, the understanding of the welfare state and its capitalist approach and the role, existence and function of nation-state societies in Europe. The main aim of the book is to examine the influence of modernisation and globalisation on European social formations, while at the same time exploring their importance for further understanding European nation-states and social formation. Roche's aim in doing so is to reveal a Europe of differences and commonalities as transitional societies and as a transitional social formation as a whole (p. 12). In doing so, Roche bridges the social aspect of Europe with contemporary international and European relations in order to bring a complex perspective on a renewal agenda.

Roche's book is divided into three main parts, each providing an overview of different aspects of the complexity of Europe. While the first part introduces us to the history of the development of the European social complex, the second part uncovers the differences of Europe. The third part reveals the concern of Europe with its welfare development. Prior to discussing these three parts, Roche engages in two introductory chapters, discussing the historical and contemporary aspects of the European social complex and the sociology of Europe. Each section explores questions about Europe and considers the relevancy of factors, such as war, globalisation and the normative theme. As a result, Roche's book makes for excellent reading alongside established literature on Europe and its society.

The wide-ranging scope of this book will leave some readers seeking more detail on specific cases or processes. Two particular areas could have received further attention. Firstly, the author could have discussed more the factors and changes at the global level that affect Europe. This could have included responses to the next century's global questions and perhaps could have revealed further questions about globalisation. Roche, however, did explore to a certain degree the "international" view of newcomers to the EU, such as the impact of Turkey and Ukraine. Secondly, the book could have included a more detailed engagement with the identity-building process that underpins the foundations of Europe. But in attending to these potential additions, the author has provided comprehensive references to a wider literature and list of scholars, keen on exploring the theoretical implications of different arguments and who are aware of the fragility of

Europe. This suggests that we need to clearly recognise the importance of the sociological and normative perspectives on Europe, which Roche clearly explores in his book.

One of the main strengths of the book is that it does raise questions throughout and encourages readers to question many points, such as the differences amongst European nation-state societies and the impact that these different views have on European Studies scholars and their theoretical approaches. As Roche also acknowledges, these kind of questions will improve the understanding and further research of the sociology of Europe and the EU, while establish this subject as a field in its own right.

Stylistically, Roche's book boasts a large and useful bibliography of recent works and uses those works well in reviewing and contributing with alternative views of Europe.

This interesting book is well-researched and written in an accessible manner. In this respect, it will serve as a valuable companion edition to some of the more detailed accounts of specific examples of Europe. The book is highly recommended for students of comparative politics, International Relations and European Union studies. Consequently, this text stands as an essential guide for scholars, students and practitioners interested in sociological questions and European Studies.

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