1 Social Justice

A Historical Introduction

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Social justice is a subject that in contemporary Europe is understood primarily by its absence. Whichever way one might define it – in terms of the material equality of living standards, the rights of specific social groups, the policies of public authorities, or the wider ethos of society – the perceived deficit in social justice is a pervasive element of debate in early twenty-first-century Europe. The wealth of the new global rich, the stark disparities in access to the basic securities of life between European citizens and migrant communities, and the prevalence of gendered and racial inequalities within supposedly egalitarian European societies have all contributed to the contemporary preoccupation with social inequality. Most notably, perhaps, after a period of relative marginalisation during the 1990s and 2000s, questions around material inequality have been catapulted back onto the political agenda. This is evident in the success of a range of publications – most prominently Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* – that have encouraged a debate about the prevalence of social inequality as well as contributing to broader public discontent surrounding the markers of wealth and poverty.[1] But it is also apparent in the priority accorded to social justice among groups that a decade ago would have dismissed such discussions as an absurd irrelevance. From the Davos World Economic Forum to the party manifestos of the British Conservatives, references to social justice have re-entered the mainstream of political vocabulary.

This renewed discussion of social justice is part of a larger story of change taking place in contemporary Europe, and can be seen as one of several distinctive shifts that marked the end of the twentieth century.[2] But what is less new in this debate is the tendency to refer to social justice in terms of its

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[1] T. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2014). For other examples of this genre, see, e.g., A. B. Atkinson, *Inequality: What Can Be Done?* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), and B. Milanovic, *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization* (Cambridge, MA, 2016). For a forceful exploration of the implications of inequality on life chances, see G. Therborn, *The Killing Fields of Inequality* (Cambridge, 2013).

[2] On the notion that the twentieth century has ended, see M. Conway, 'The Crisis of European History' (2020) at https://europedebate.hypotheses.org/142.

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absence. In many ways, this has always been so. Social justice is a subject that has rarely existed in the present tense. A few moments of revolutionary hyperbole aside, notably in the Soviet Union in the 1930s,[3] it has generally been used in Europe in the past tense – as a lament for a world that has been lost – or in the future tense – as a goal to be achieved through incremental or radical change.[4] Social justice has therefore always been measured in terms of the distance between an imperfect present and an ideal that resides somewhere else in time.

However, even when they are placed in this longer perspective, there remains something distinctive about the present-day debates. Concern about inequality is in part the consequence of the heightened visibility of differentials of wealth in many European societies;[5] but it also reflects changes that have taken place in understandings of what constitutes a society of civic and moral justice. The emergence of new concepts of the social rights – both individual and collective – of groups defined by their gender, sexuality, culture, or race necessarily casts a stern eye on the societies of the recent past. Not just the flagrant forms of discrimination practised by a wide range of regimes in twentieth-century Europe, but the quieter, institutional inequality that characterised almost all areas of administration and policy-making across the entire modern project of state rule, reveal just how inadequate – or fundamentally wrong – were the understandings of social justice held until recently by rulers, social organisations, and many citizens.[6]

Demands that institutions and societies should acknowledge these failures have become part of contemporary political culture: through campaigns for restitution for historic acts of discrimination committed by governments and social institutions, or for the removal of statues and other public symbols of the crimes of the past.[7] Each of these issues – and most powerfully the presence of victims bearing witness to the discrimination and suffering that they experienced – serves to deepen the divide between the present and the twentieth-century past. But it is not only attitudes that have changed. So too have the wider social and economic frameworks of European states within which demands for social justice are shaped. The shift away from an

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[3] S. Webb and B. Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* (London, 1935).
[4] The paradigmatic example of social justice as a goal to be achieved is the International Labour Organization's Philadelphia Declaration of 1944. On this, see A. Supiot, *L'esprit de Philadelphie: La justice sociale face au marché total* (Paris, 2010).
[5] D. Dorling, *Inequality and the 1%* (London, 2014).
[6] Much of this literature bears the imprint of Michel Foucault's work on the disciplining power of the state. See notably M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, 1977).
[7] Among the many examples, one might cite the Black Lives Matter and the Rhodes Must Fall campaigns, as well as the prosecutions of members of the Catholic Church in a number of countries for acts of child abuse.

employment-oriented model of the economy, as well as the development of a new fabric of social relations defined more by market forces than by state policy, has reconfigured the structures within which people work and live.[8] The European continent of the early twenty-first century is more unified than at any time since at least 1914, and yet it is also fractured within and across national boundaries by forms of economic and social fragility that find expression in protest movements, such as the *gilets jaunes* in France in 2018–19, and in the emergence of xenophobic mentalities that are emphatically products of the present rather than inheritances from the past.

These changes in understandings of social justice as well as in the wider social and political context have deprived social justice of what was for much of the twentieth century its most pervasive feature: namely, its historical narrative, built around the sense of European societies moving forward, primarily under the impetus of structures of beneficial rule, towards an ethos of equality and a reality of social inclusion. The sense of mourning for a lost ideal of social justice often voiced by the social-democratic left in Europe in recent years has its origins, especially among older generations, in an awareness that the campaigns, languages, and aspirations of the twentieth-century past no longer possess the same purchase in the much-changed landscapes of the present.[9] For some, such as Eric Hobsbawm, by the early twenty-first century the languages and politics of social justice that his generation could recognise had seemingly exited Europe and migrated to other continents.[10] For others, social justice has moved out of reach and collective imagination, as the opaque structures of governance of the European Union, the lack of democratic accountability of a transnational capitalism, and the concomitant hollowing out of the sovereignty of nation states have combined to suffocate a politics and language of social justice.[11] This pervasive loss of popular and national sovereignty and the consequent impotence of government – at any level – to construct an alternative model of society encourages more sectional and

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[8] For an early exploration of this shift away from an employment-oriented model of work, see the report for the European Commission by A. Supiot (ed.), *Au-delà de l'emploi: Transformations du travail et devenir du droit du travail en Europe* (Paris, 1999).

[9] See, e.g., T. Judt, *Ill Fares the Land: A Treatise on our Present Discontents* (New York, 2010). For an account of how mourning has always been a prominent and mobilising feature of the political left, see E. Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York, 2017).

[10] 'Today, ideologically, I feel most at home in Latin America because it remains the one part of the world where people still talk and conduct their politics in the old language, in the 19th- and 20th-century language of socialism, communism and Marxism.' Cf. 'Eric Hobsbawm: A Conversation about Marx, Student Riots, the New Left, and the Milibands', *The Guardian*, 16 Jan. 2011, www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jan/16/eric-hobsbawm-tristram-hunt-marx.

[11] See the manifold publications by Wolfgang Streeck that have popularised this sentiment, e.g., W. Streeck, *Gekaufte Zeit: Die vertage Krise des demokratischen Kapitalismus* (Berlin, 2015).

individualist attitudes in which the justice that can be imagined or campaigned for is anything but social.

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This loss of the template of societal change marks a major change from the political culture of the twentieth century. Ever since the emergence of mass politics, a wide range of regimes and other social institutions had placed concepts of universal social justice at the centre of their ideologies and actions. In the ensuing competition between various political forces, no single group could claim exclusive ownership of notions of social justice.[12] The fascist and authoritarian rulers of the 1930s and 1940s, the Socialist regimes established after the Second World War in East-Central Europe, or the various forms of welfare democracy that emerged in Northern and Western Europe after 1945 all made their claims to the provision of social justice a major focus of their public rhetoric and also of their more private self-justifications. Social justice was a means of critiquing their opponents, but also of defining the better society they were seeking to bring into existence.[13] That social justice had become deeply ingrained within what one might describe as Europe's competing hegemonic discourses was perhaps nowhere more visible than in the way in which those who mobilised against the existing regimes drew on the language of social justice as a major tool of their critique. This was most notably the case in post-war Eastern Europe, where dissident intellectuals were quick to recognise that using the very language of social justice was an effective means of attacking the existing order and challenging its legitimacy by measuring it on its own terms. As Adam Michnik observed about the collapse of Communism in Poland, this had been a 'revolt against communism in the name of the egalitarian values espoused by communism', and 'social justice was one of its key ideas'.[14]

The priority accorded to social justice was indicative, at a broader level, of the shift that occurred during the twentieth century in the legitimation of government away from languages of historic privilege or of monarchical and dynastic right: government could be justified only through the benefits it brought – or, in the managerial discourse common to many state authorities,

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[12] The notion of reading the twentieth century as a competition between different regimes owes much to the approach of M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London, 1998).

[13] T. Toranska, *Oni: Stalin's Polish Puppets* (London, 1987), esp. pp. 13–29; O. Ruin, *Tage Erlander: Serving the Welfare State, 1946–1969* (Pittsburgh, 1990), pp. 208–21.

[14] See A. Michnik, 'Three Kinds of Fundamentalism: For Jonathan Schell', in I. Grudzińska-Gross (ed.), *Adam Michnik: Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives* (Berkeley, 1998), p. 181. For a similar argument, see J. Kuroń, 'Man muß träumen: Soziale Gerechtigkeit als soziale Bewegung', *Transit – Europäische Revue*, 6 (1993), 6–24.

delivered – to the people. There was, however, little agreement as to what that social justice might be. Approached from a liberal or socialist standpoint, it implied the achievement of the emphatic civic or material equality of all citizens; but for more conservative ideologists it required the retention or reinforcement of the vertical or 'natural' hierarchies of society. Nor was there agreement as to its spatial limits. Social justice was often presented as a universal, or even global, goal; but for many political ideologies of the mid-twentieth century it made sense only within the more restrictive borders of the nation, the state, the people, or the ethnic or racial *Volk*. This also reflected a wider divergence as to the agents of social justice. For those at the centre of political power, it was the responsibility of the state to ensure equality of provision and of rights. However, for others, the over-mighty state was the problem rather than the solution. Instead, social justice could only be brought about through the devolution of power to social organisations, corporatist social and economic bodies, and the institutions of local government.

These differences indicated also the ambivalent role that the people occupied within projects of social justice. While the language of social justice was often democratic in tone, it was also adopted by those who rejected the pluralist structures of political democracy in favour of an authoritarian popular community or *Volksgemeinschaft*.[15] This was of course most dramatically so in the Third Reich, where the explicit determination to destroy the Jewish minority and create a new racial hierarchy went hand in hand with the social benefits that this would deliver to the German majority.[16] A key element of many different regimes of the mid-twentieth century was therefore not so much about taking the people as they were as about improving them through policies of health provision, mass education, and public housing, which would overcome the ills of modernity as well as giving birth to a 'New Man' possessed of a new social mentality.[17]

These projects of social engineering reflected the way in which social justice all too often served as a means of legitimation for those who knew best. In the modernising cultures of twentieth-century Europe, social justice was defined primarily by experts and elites who, according to the rational logics of modern

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[15] See the extensive debate about the concept of 'Volksgemeinschaft', e.g., I. Kershaw, 'Volksgemeinschaft: Potenzial und Grenzen eines neuen Forschungskonzepts', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 59 (2011), 1–17; F. Bahjor and M. Wildt (eds.), *Volksgemeinschaft: Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2012).

[16] See, above all, M. Wildt, *Die Ambivalenz des Volkes: Der Nationalsozialismus als Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Berlin, 2019), esp. chs. 1–3; J. Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).

[17] P. Fritzsche and J. Hellbeck, 'The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany', in M. Geyer and S. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 302–42.

government, believed themselves best qualified to identify the needs of the people, and imprint them on society.[18] These top-down policies of social amelioration did, of course, have a number of origins, including long-standing traditions of paternalist charity. But they derived much of their energy from the explosion that occurred in the scope and ambitions of the state and of other public institutions, most notably during times of war. This was not limited to the territories of Europe. Social improvement became the pervasive legitimator of imperial rule, justifying the abolition of pre-existing mentalities, belief systems, and patterns of social organisation in the name of a Western-defined modernity and civilisation. In this way, the colonies became the testing ground for ambitious projects of social engineering and 'development', which were subsequently transferred in their content and methodology to the urban centres and peripheral regions of Europe.[19]

The purpose of this collectively written volume is to explore the manifold complexities of social justice across Europe during the twentieth century. Its methodologies are primarily historical; and, as such, it consciously avoids establishing a single definition of its subject matter. Social justice was too plural and too contextual a phenomenon – in terms of time as well as space – to be encapsulated in a fixed manner. Instead, the volume embraces the different ways in which the term, but also the reality, has been understood. In doing so, it therefore also rejects a dominant narrative of social progress. The assumption – often semi-submerged in the historical literature – that the European experience of the twentieth century was broadly characterised by a transition to a more democratic, equal, and just society constitutes part of the collective inheritance of Europeans, at least in the west and north of the continent.[20] However, as present-day critiques of past projects of social justice have emphasised, there was no 'high road' towards social justice; justice and injustice were always inextricably interlinked in the projects of governments. This is not to deny the tangible benefits that were achieved: most notably quasi-universal access to health care, substantially expanded welfare benefits, and the provision of a wide range of social goods, including transport infrastructures and access to subsidised educational and cultural provision. But social justice has to be about more than adding up the benefits; and much depends on who does the addition – and the subtraction.

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[18] M. Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age 1945–1968* (Princeton, NJ, 2020), pp. 205–12.

[19] M. Nasiali, *Native to the Republic: Empire, Social Citizenship, and Everyday Life in Marseille since 1945* (Ithaca, NY, 2016), esp. p. 9; A. Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State during Decolonization* (Stanford, CA, 2013); G. Sinclair and C. Williams, '"Home and Away": The Cross-Fertilisation between "Colonial" and "British" Policing, 1921–85', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 35 (2007), 221–38.

[20] H. Kaelble, *A Social History of Western Europe 1880–1980* (Dublin, 1989).

The three decades after 1945 occupy an almost mythical place in this familiar narrative. Echoing the often-repeated but largely unquestioned designation of the period by the French economist Jean Fourastié as 'les trente glorieuses', much historical writing has described this era as the moment when Europeans got closest to achieving just societies in a period of rapid economic growth and increased affluence, through the substantial expansion of welfare-state provision, the reining-in of social inequalities, increases in social mobility, and the resulting reduction in class differentials.[21] This chimed well with the tenor of a flood of analyses advanced by influential social scientists of the time, who optimistically announced that European societies had ceased to be real class societies and had metamorphosed into what the sociologist Helmut Schelsky, analysing the Federal Republic of the early 1950s, famously called a 'nivellierte Mittelstandsgesellschaft', or a levelled middle-class society.[22] Nor was this an exclusively Western European phenomenon. Social and demographic changes in East-Central Europe wrought by occupation policies during the Second World War and in its aftermath removed privileged elites,[23] followed by the massive expansion that occurred in welfare provision as well as the rise in living standards which contributed to the increasing levels of consumerism encouraged by the state-socialist regimes of the 1960s.[24]

This implicit understanding of the post-war period as one of egalitarian reforms has percolated into collective memory as well as into many popular critiques of Europe's current condition. In Britain, contemporary celebration of the National Health Service – so visible in the era of the COVID pandemic – has reinforced the image of the era of the Labour government elected in 1945 as a decisive moment of social reform against which the actions of all subsequent governments must inevitably pale. These perceptions, however, speak more to present dissatisfactions than to the reality of the social reforms implemented after 1945.[25] Elsewhere too, there has been a persistent tendency, both within historical writing and in broader public debate, to use the first decades of the post-war period as a template against which the inadequacies of

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[21] J. Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses ou la Révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Paris, 1979).

[22] H. Schelsky, *Wandlungen der deutschen Familie in der Gegenwart: Darstellung und Deutung einer empirisch-soziologischen Tatbestandsaufnahme* (Stuttgart, 1955). For a forceful demolition of this sociological literature, see H.-U. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, vol. 5: Bundesrepublik und DDR, 1949–1990* (Munich, 2008), pp. 110–9.

[23] The classic analysis is J. T. Gross, 'Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe', *East European Politics & Societies*, 3 (1989), 198–214. See also B. Abrams, 'The Second World War and the East European Revolution', *East European Politics & Societies*, 16 (2002), 623–64.

[24] See especially the essays in P. Bren and M. Neuberger (eds.), *Communism Unwrapped: Cultures of Consumption in Postwar Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 2012).

[25] For a recent historical critique of the myths around Britain's post-war Labour government, see D. Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History* (London, 2018), esp. pp. 217–8, 224–6, 236–44.

their contemporary societies – and governments – can be judged.[26] Such narratives should not, however, be accepted uncritically. Experts who propagated them such as Fourastié were not neutral observers, but were personally invested in the technocratic projects of social amelioration of the era and had their own reasons for claiming the success of the policies they had helped design. Above all, the crises around 1973 and the 'end of the boom' led to a sense of nostalgia for a past that seemed full of promise but had now seemingly evaporated.[27]

The reality was, as always, more complex than the myth. Though post-war governments in the west and east took substantial measures intended to achieve more egalitarian societies, there was no decisive forward march of social justice. Differentials of social class remained an enduring reality in post-war Europe, and were reinforced by the unequal distribution of the fruits of the welfare state. Social mobility was much more constrained than historians had long tended to assume; and, while social inequality did not increase, neither was it reduced considerably. Most notably, perhaps, poverty remained a widespread phenomenon in Europe, while many of the familiar ingredients of middle-class affluence – from ownership of fridges to TVs and cars – reached the majority of Europeans only by the mid-1960s, and for significant sectors of the population never materialised.[28] Above all, race and gender retained their distinctive power of stratification, and acquired an enhanced importance as they limited severely the access of many newly arrived citizens to the opportunities of education and stable employment. The unequal distribution of the fruits of the boom was perhaps most evident in the emergence, at the height of the *trente glorieuses*, of shantytowns in the *banlieues* on the outskirts of French cities, where the recently arrived migrants from France's former imperial territories were left languishing in desolate conditions as a result of repeated government failure to address the housing crisis.[29] The grim material reality of the lives of working-class migrants and so-called guest

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[26] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London, 1994), pp. 257–86, was influential in popularising the notion of the 'Golden Years'. See also, e.g., G. Eley, 'Corporatism and the Social Democratic Moment: The Postwar Settlement, 1945–1973', in D. Stone (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 37–59.

[27] R. Pawin, 'Retour sur les "Trente Glorieuses" et la périodisation du second XXe siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 60 (2013), 155–75.

[28] See, e.g., the special issue on 'Contesting Affluence' in *Contemporary British History* 22 (2008), 445–597; C. Reinecke, 'Localising the Social: The Rediscovery of Urban Poverty in Western European "Affluent Societies"', *Contemporary European History*, 24 (2015), 555–76.

[29] C. Reinecke, 'Die dunkle Seite des modernen Komforts: Zu einer Neubewertung der "glorreichen Nachkriegszeit" im (post)kolonialen Frankreich', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 42 (2016), 298–325. See also the essays in C. Pessis, S. Topçu, and C. Bonneuil (eds.), *Une autre histoire des 'Trente glorieuses': Modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d'après-guerre* (Paris, 2013).

workers across Western Europe contrasted markedly with the images popularised by contemporary advertisements promoting the newest fitted kitchen and the leisure opportunities generated by post-war affluence.[30]

Historians – more than social scientists – have been slow to digest the implications of these findings. History, in the overused phrase, is written by the winners; but, more tangibly, the history of social justice has on the whole been related by its beneficiaries. Historians, in Western and Eastern Europe after 1945, were among those who profited most directly from the expansion in access to state-funded structures of university education, public-sector employment, and the provision of public services.[31] Consequently, too, they have predominantly regarded social justice, along with an expanding range of personal and intellectual freedoms, as among the key defining features of advanced European societies.

These forms of implicit partisanship have been reinforced by the long-term narratives present in much modern historical writing. The emancipation of European societies from the aristocratic and clerical control of the *ancien régime* has merged with the struggles of emancipatory movements – notably, trade unions, socialist parties, and women's suffrage organisations – in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to forge an over-determined account of the democratic and egalitarian societies that emerged in Western Europe after the Second World War.[32] In adopting this approach, historians have been influenced, too, by their source materials. Social justice is most readily traced through the official archives, and more especially through the bureaucratic energy and resources invested by regimes of all political colours in projects of social reform. As a consequence, much of the writing on social justice has adopted a state-centred narrative, following the paper trail conserved in state archives.[33] This has not excluded attention to wider social forces, especially when the policies of regimes encountered resistances from sectional groups or

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[30] See, e.g., F. Cumoli, 'Exode rural et crises du logement dans l'Italie des années 1950–1970', *Le Mouvement Social*, 245 (2013), 59–69; S. Hacket, *Foreigners, Minorities and Integration: The Muslim Immigrant Experience in Britain and Germany* (Manchester, 2013).

[31] K. Vernon, 'Engagement, Estrangement or Divorce? The New Universities and Their Communities in the 1960s', *Contemporary British History*, 31 (2017), 501–23. See also the comment by Hans-Ulrich Wehler that the period from 1960 to 1980 was 'eine goldene Zeit für akademische Karrieren': Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, p. 381.

[32] G. Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (New York, 2002); S. Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York, 2006).

[33] This has been understandably particularly so of histories of the construction of new welfare policies during and immediately after the Second World War. See, for notable examples, J. Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (Oxford, 1977); P. V. Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914–1947* (Cambridge, 2002). For a corrective to state-centred approaches, see notably P. Baldwin, *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare State, 1875–1975* (Cambridge, 1990).

from the mass of the population. But all too often it has been the actions and 'ways of seeing' of state officials that have been the central focus of histories of social justice in both Eastern and Western Europe.[34] As a result, the history of social justice risks becoming trapped in a hall of mirrors that reflects the actions of the state and of other public institutions, while evading the more complex question of how these policies were shaped and constrained by the shifting patterns and values of European societies.

This volume probably does not evade these forms of bias, but its starting point lies in a shared belief among the contributors of the need for a more open-ended and plural history of social justice in twentieth-century Europe. Ownership of social justice, as we understand it, was almost always contested, between different political groups, but also between a wide range of social actors, each of which sought to advance their understandings of what it should mean in practice. The path to the implementation of policies was therefore rarely straight; and, especially within the complex decision-making structures that characterised both authoritarian and democratic regimes in twentieth-century Europe, they bore the imprint of many hands. Nor were these limited to those within structures of political power. Intellectuals, religious organisations, campaigning movements, and the attitudes – both real and perceived – of populations also played their part in the making of policies that were always partial and never complete.

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This also implies that social justice cannot be approached as a self-contained subject. It is striking how rarely social justice features as a subject in its own right in analyses of twentieth-century Europe.[35] One explanation for this lies in its amorphous nature; but, more substantially, it also reflects the way that understandings of social justice operate within cloistered disciplinary frontiers. As this volume demonstrates, historians approach the phenomenon in particular ways that are not shared by those who operate within the conceptual frameworks and forms of social knowledge specific to other disciplines, notably political science, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and social anthropology. When these different approaches have prompted interdisciplinary cross-pollination, historians have on the whole been notable by their

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[34] J. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT, 1998); P. Joyce, *The State of Freedom: A Social History of the British State since 1800* (Cambridge, 2013).

[35] Notable exceptions include P. Rosanvallon, *The Society of Equals* (Cambridge, MA, 2013), and S. Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA, 2018).

absence.[36] Consequently, approaches to social justice within other disciplines have often appeared overly ahistorical; while historians have taken refuge in a somewhat predictable tendency to evade issues of definition by focusing on empirical case studies.[37]

For historians, much of the explanation of this terminological elusiveness lies in the way in which concepts of a more just society were located at the confluence of other historical narratives. Four of these were of particular importance. The first, most obviously, was the rise of state power in twentieth-century Europe. The expansion in the remit of the state was, of course, a long-term process that in some significant ways reached back into the preceding decades, most notably in the area of education and in the concomitant centralisation of notions of national identity.[38] Yet the economic and human mobilisation demanded by the wars of the first half of the twentieth century, the pressures generated by mass politics, and the functional need for state regulation and coordination of more mobile and complex societies were all forces that drove the expansion of the actions of the state into ever more varied areas of public and private life. The impact of these policies was often fundamentally unequal or even oppressive, but it was rarely devoid of the ambition of bringing about beneficial social change. The provision of sewers and electricity, the expansion of education, and the repression of criminality escalated into a self-assumed responsibility on the part of state officials to address a broad range of social and economic ills. Government was no longer simply the guardian or protector of society, but the pro-active agent of change, implementing social reform through the intelligent tools of bureaucratic rule. Planning, the collection of statistical data, and the complex techniques of fiscal management and taxation were all part of the repertoire of methods deployed by the state and parastatal bureaucracies – which were national but also increasingly trans-national in scope – as they became the all-purpose

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[36] This plurality of approaches is well demonstrated by the journal *Social Justice Research*. It is noteworthy that when the journal was established in 1987, it sought to create a forum for interdisciplinary debate on social justice, but excluded history from the range of disciplines that were thought to have anything useful to say on the subject. This has remained so until today. See M. Lerner, 'Introductory Statement', *Social Justice Research*, 1 (1987), 1–3. Similarly, the recent and impressive *International Handbook of Social Justice*, despite recognising the importance of a historical approach, is noticeable for the absence of historians amongst its authors: M. Reisch (ed.), *Routledge International Handbook of Social Justice* (London, 2016).

[37] A parallel discussion is in many respects the recent controversy about whether 'neoliberalism' can be used as a meaningful analytical term. See 'Forum I: Neoliberalism as a Concept of Contemporary History?', *Journal of Modern European History*, 17 (2019), 381–411.

[38] The most influential but subsequently contested expression of this argument can be found in E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA, 1976).

problem-solvers of twentieth-century European societies.[39] As a consequence, blueprints for social justice lost their utopian edge and became the domain of professional and qualified experts. Social workers, public-health officials, and experts on childhood development, education, public housing, and a whole range of other specialist fields were the architects and engineers of policies designed to bring about effective and durable social reform.[40] The gradual ascendancy of such expert groups and their transition from relative marginalisation during the inter-war period into interlocutors and agents of the state was a process that occurred across Europe.[41] The net result was a strengthening of the influence of the state and a considerable expansion of the social control it could exercise over populations that became the objects of multiple projects of social amelioration.[42]

This advance of state power had a certain political neutrality. If it was most emphatic during the inter-war years in regimes of the left and right that set ambitious goals for the transformation of their societies, many of the same methods were imitated and modified by the very different regimes of Western Europe after the Second World War.[43] This adaptability indicates how social reform formed part of a second wider history: namely, the emergence of cultures of social improvement. The idea that lives, collectively and individually, could and should be made better became such a widespread assumption in

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[39] P. Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Post-War Era* (Princeton, NJ, 2010); P. Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford, 2013); E. Van der Vleuten, I. Anastasiadou, V. Lagendijk, and F. Schipper, 'Europe's System Builders: The Contested Shaping of Transnational Road, Electricity and Rail Networks', *Contemporary European History*, 16 (2007), 321–48.

[40] W. B. Newsome, 'The "Apartment Referendum" of 1959: Toward Participatory Architectural and Urban Planning in Postwar France', *French Historical Studies*, 28 (2005), 329–58; S. Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War England', *The English Historical Review*, 129 (2014), 362–87; S. Levsen, *Autorität und Demokratie: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Erziehungswandels in Westdeutschland und Frankreich, 1945–1975* (Göttingen, 2019).

[41] R. Šustrová, 'A Dilemma of Change and Cooperation: Labour and Social Policy in Bohemia and Moravia in the 1930s and 1940s', in S. Kott and K. K. Patel (eds.), *Nazism across Borders: The Social Policies of the Third Reich and Their Global Appeal* (London, 2018), pp. 105–38; Nord, *France's New Deal*.

[42] A good example of this is the re-introduction of the 'means test' in Britain in 1931 for those claiming unemployment benefits, which represented a mix of welfare policies coupled with measures meant to increase social control over the working class. See S. Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class, 1910–2010* (London, 2014), pp. 61–94.

[43] This continuity across the war period is a major theme of much recent work. See notably Nord, *France's New Deal*; K. K. Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, NJ, 2016); P. Romijn, *Der lange Krieg der Niederlande: Besatzung, Gewalt und Neuorientierung in den vierziger Jahren* (Göttingen, 2017). See also the classic essay on the continuity of the state by C. Pavone, 'La continuità dello Stato: Istituzioni e uomini', in E. Piscitelli et al. (eds.), *Italia 1945–48: Le origini della Repubblica* (Turin, 1974), pp. 137–289. For a pioneering exploration of how the Soviet Union fits within the broader, trans-ideological trend of the inter-war years, see S. Kotkin's seminal article 'Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture', *Kritika*, 2 (2001), 111–64.

European society across the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries that it is often difficult to perceive it. The manifestations of this mentality were, however, manifold. It was evident in campaigns for moral and social improvement, in the international humanitarianism of the age, in the activism of Catholic and other religious organisations at home and abroad, as well as in programmes of racial regeneration and social hygiene. Though their motives and ideological assumptions were diverse, the purposes were often convergent. Social organisations, political movements, and non-state actors, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, collaborated to counter the immediate threats of hunger, disease, and destitution, but also to achieve larger objectives of peace, the protection of women and children, and the promotion of a wide range of social rights. The formulae and institutions for delivering these forms of social justice were often imperfect, rooted in racial and gendered social assumptions that reinforced inequality at the same time as they addressed immediate needs. But this social activism rapidly expanded in scale and ambition in early and mid-twentieth-century Europe, to respond to the sufferings of the manifold victims of the wars, famines, epidemics, and economic crises that proliferated during the First World War and its aftermath.[44] This combination of public and private energies gathered momentum over subsequent decades. The structures of welfare provision introduced by governments after 1945 rested on the experience and personnel of a large number of social and confessional organisations within Europe, just as the expanding domains of humanitarian and development policies within European colonial territories, before and after formal decolonisation, traversed the interconnected domains of missionary activity, charity, and state policy.[45] The ambition of social improvement was thus a transcontinental process that cut through the Cold War divide and was visible across the divergent political regimes of Eastern and Western Europe.[46]

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[44] P. Houlihan, 'Renovating Christian Charity: Global Catholicism, the Save the Children Fund, and Humanitarianism during the First World War', *Past and Present*, 250 (2021), 203–41; M. Cox, *Hunger in War and Peace: Women and Children in Germany 1914–1924* (Oxford, 2019); A. Thompson 'Unravelling the Relationships between Humanitarianism, Human Rights, and Decolonization: Time for a Radical Rethink?', in M. Thomas and A. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 453–76.

[45] H. Ashford, 'The Red Cross and the Establishment of Maternal and Infant Welfare in the 1930s Gold Coast', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 47 (2019), 514–41; F. Cooper, 'Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept', in F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds.), *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 64–92; M. Hilton, 'Charity, Decolonization and Development: The Case of the Starehe Boys School, Nairobi', *Past and Present*, 233 (2016), 227–67. We are grateful to Kate Skinner for her insights on this point.

[46] See, e.g., L. Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley, 2002). For a broader comparative examination of this development during the twentieth century, see A. Weiner (ed.), *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford, CA, 2003).

It might seem self-evident that social justice was desired by those who were the victims of the most flagrant forms of inequality. In fact, the reality was more complex. Many of those who were the most immediate targets of policies of social reform – notably, slum dwellers, Romany populations, racial minorities, and impoverished rural communities – were often ambivalent in their response to measures of improvement, which imposed new forms of conformity and discipline alongside their rather uncertain benefits.[47] To present social justice as simply demand-led would therefore be misleading. However, it did relate to a third, wider history, namely, that of changing popular expectations of government. One of the shortcomings of a history of social justice that focuses on rulers is that it all too easily leaves out what people wanted or expected their rulers to do. Though obviously inflected by national and ideological differences, the expectations that people had of their rulers, and more especially of how they wanted them to behave, were largely similar, at least across much of Western and Northern Europe where populations had since the end of the nineteenth century come to accept the legitimacy of state power.[48] Initially, these expectations were limited to the provision of order and legality, combined with a certain economic and social stability. However, over the course of the middle decades of the twentieth century, they expanded to incorporate a wider range of benefits and services that citizens expected to receive in return for their obedience, their payment of taxes, and, in the case of young men and their families, their military service. This indicated a new social balance of power in which rulers had to take account of the interests and aspirations of citizens. This reconfiguration of social forces was in part the outcome of the gradual expansion of the franchise. But it also reflected a widely shared awareness among rulers, born out of the experiences of the mid-twentieth century, that sociopolitical stability – and indeed the very survival of their regimes – could be achieved only through policies that delivered tangible benefits to populations.

The closer relationship of populations with the state could encourage an individualist mentality of 'what is in it for me?' But the calculations that citizens made were often more than self-interested. In particular, their conceptions of what constituted good governance were shaped by the worldviews of the families and communities to which they belonged. These could be strongly influenced by the actions (and propaganda) of rulers, especially with regard to

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[47] M. Young and P. Wilmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London, 1957); C. Donert, *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge, 2017); M. Cohen, *Des familles invisibles: Les Algériens de France entre intégrations et discriminations (1945–1985)* (Paris, 2020). For an impressionistic account of the mixed popular responses to projects of urban modernisation, see D. Eribon, *Retour à Reims* (Paris, 2009).

[48] M. Conway and P. Romijn, 'Introduction', *Contemporary European History*, 13 (2004), 377–88.

more distant issues of national policy-making. But in the more local communities within which most people lived, attitudes to government were defined by a nexus of more socially embedded values. In particular, most citizens expected their rulers, whatever their political hue, to behave in a legal and predictable manner, to care for the victims of misfortune, and to protect the wider interests of the community.[49] To describe these values – and the durable culture of localism within European society that they embodied – as a form of social justice risks imposing too great a clarity on views that were generally more felt than explicit. But conceptions of social justice always had a resonance wider than the actions of rulers or the declarations of political elites. They also built on social assumptions of what was fair or moral that had been inherited from the past, but which were adapted and remade in response to the pressures imposed on communities, workplaces, and families by the vicissitudes of the twentieth century.[50]

In contrast to these collective value structures, the fourth – and last – wider influence on social justice was the more political domain of citizenship. The idea that individual Europeans were citizens of nation states possessed of concomitant duties and rights was the product of long-term evolutions in attitudes, and above all in political practices.[51] The enfranchisement of adult males, which (in a striking demonstration of the limits of contemporary notions of social justice) was extended in a number of European states to adult women only after the Second World War,[52] gave citizens the opportunity to pass judgement on their rulers through elections and the more occasional tool of referenda, albeit only in periodic and often rather limited ways. The emergence of a broader culture of citizenship was necessarily more gradual, and was constrained by the different levels of civic freedom possessed by the citizens of democratic states, compared with those of the Socialist regimes of east-central Europe or the dictatorships of Iberia. More pervasive, however, was the emergence of a shared culture of social citizenship. This had, most prominently, been captured in an essay published in 1950 by the British sociologist

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[49] M. Conway and P. Romijn (eds.), *The War for Legitimacy in Politics and Culture 1936–1946* (Oxford, 2008).

[50] The highly localised experience of occupation and liberation in much of Europe during the Second World War was often important in this respect. See, for representative examples, I. Origo, *War in Val d'Orcia: A Diary* (London, 1947); M. Koreman, *The Expectation of Justice: France 1944–46* (Durham, NC, 1999); N. Stargardt, 'Legitimacy through War?', in D. O. Pendas, M. Roseman, and R. F. Wetzell (eds.), *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* (Washington, DC, 2017), pp. 402–28.

[51] M. L. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); P. Nord, *The Republican Moment. Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), esp. pp. 1–14.

[52] S. Reynolds, 'Lateness, Amnesia and Unfinished Business: Gender and Democracy in Twentieth-Century Europe', *European History Quarterly*, 32 (2002), 85–109; M. Tambor, *The Lost Wave: Women and Democracy in Postwar Italy* (Oxford, 2014).

T. H. Marshall, who had argued that the shift towards the inclusion of social rights next to civil and political ones was one of the defining features of the twentieth century. The new category of social citizenship encompassed, in his characteristic prose, the 'whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society'.[53] This new conception of social rights contributed to an increasing sense amongst Europeans that the state had a duty to provide them with an acceptable standard of living as well as with solid protections against the risks of life. The definition of the citizen was individual, but also had a larger family dimension. For most Europeans across the twentieth century, citizenship was inseparable from the rights of themselves and of their families to have access to housing, health care, education, decent conditions of employment, and the modest security provided by welfare benefits and old-age pensions.[54]

This also rendered citizenship more inclusive. Though many aspects of political citizenship remained strikingly male until the latter decades of the century, social citizenship was a domain of female activism, through the modern archetype of the housewife as the manager of the household, conscious of her rights as a consumer and as a citizen.[55] Political parties were well aware of this new significance of women, and it was therefore no coincidence that women featured prominently as addressees in the election campaigns of the post-war era in Western Europe.[56] In state-socialist countries, women were also the focus of much of the political discourse of the era. Here too, many of the pre-existing gendered assumptions on the role of women as managers of the household and related notions of maternalism were carried over into the post-war period. The mass mobilisation of women for the labour force and their targeted recruitment into Communist parties at the end of the war, however, meant that substantial energies were devoted to presenting women as essential to the building of the new Socialist societies. This went hand in hand with an expansion of women's social rights. Though the reality for many

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[53] T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* (Cambridge, 1950), p. 11. Marshall's argument applied to Britain, but it can easily be transferred to other western European states. For a forceful demonstration of this, see M. Mann, 'Ruling Class Strategies and Citizenship', *Sociology*, 21 (1987), 339–54.

[54] P. Ginsborg, *Family Politics. Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival 1900–1950* (New Haven, CT, 2014); Nasiali, *Native to the Republic*.

[55] E. Carter, *How German Is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1997); R. J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge, 2011). See also the reflections in E. Gubin, 'Les femmes d'une guerre à l'autre: Réalités et représentations, 1918–1940', *Cahiers d'Histoire du Temps Présent*, 4 (1998), 249–81.

[56] R. G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley, 1996). See also Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age*, pp. 240–7.

women in Eastern Europe was the 'double burden' of having to participate in the labour market while still bearing the brunt of taking care of the household, this shift necessitated a new public discourse in which women and men were constructed as equal and entitled to the same rights. As a result, women assumed a much more assertive presence in public and political life, most notably at the local level. This, in turn, created increasing expectations amongst women that their rulers should deliver a social order in which a language of gender equality would emancipate itself from the formulas of constitutions and the mantra of party discourse and become a lived reality.[57]

The demand of citizens not merely to be recognised but also to be heard and listened to made itself felt in steadily more insistent ways in Europe, east and west, during the 1950s and 1960s: in demands for better housing, in strikes for better – and more equal – conditions of pay, and in campaigns for divorce and abortion rights, for greater civil rights for specific groups (such as the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland and recently arrived immigrant populations), and for better state provision for displaced people such as the *Vertriebene* in West Germany, the *pieds noirs* in France, or rural communities threatened by state policies of expropriation.[58] This social militancy was often local and sectional in its origins and goals, but it carried within it implicit larger messages about social justice, especially when these demands were incorporated into the mass mobilisations that occurred in the late 1960s in Prague and Paris, as well as in many other towns, factories, and universities across Europe.[59]

The consequence was a consistent undercurrent of social and civic protest in Europe across the final third of the twentieth century, in which local grievances and sectional campaigns merged with wider – even global – languages of social justice. In the late 1960s, the exploitation and simple harshness of working conditions in many workplaces, exacerbated by the impersonal nature of state authorities, fuelled a new repertoire of protest actions, which focused on demands for freedom and justice that were simultaneously individual and

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[57] F. de Haan, 'Women as the Motor of Modern Life: Women's Work in Europe West and East', in J. Regulska and B. G. Smith (eds.), *Women and Gender in Postwar Europe: From Cold War to European Union* (London, 2012), pp. 87–103. See also the special issue on 'Women, Work and Value in Post-War Europe' in *Contemporary European History*, 28 (2019), 449–511.

[58] M.-T. Coenen, *La grève des femmes de la F.N. en 1966* (Brussels, 1991); J. Clarke, 'Work, Consumption and Subjectivity in Postwar France: Moulinex and the Meanings of Domestic Appliances 1950s–70s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47 (2012), 838–59; R. Gildea and A. Tompkins, 'The Transnational in the Local: The Larzac Plateau as a Site of Transnational Activism since 1970', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50 (2015), 581–605; M. Boruta and J. C. Hansen (eds.), *Vertriebene and Pieds-Noirs in Postwar Germany and France: Comparative Perspectives* (Basingstoke, 2016).

[59] G.-R. Horn, *The Spirit of '68. Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (Oxford, 2007).

collective.[60] This shift from past models of political revolution and mass mobilisation gravitating primarily around questions of material inequality to one of rights and of differentness gathered pace over subsequent decades. The separatist feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s, but also those of immigrant groups, ethnic minorities, and of campaigners for the rights of gay and lesbian people, legitimised their demands through their right to be different, and to be respected as such. This changed, too, understandings of social justice. What had hitherto been primarily envisaged in terms of an inclusive language of integration became one of sectional rights, in which the measure of a regime of social justice was its acceptance of difference – and indeed its celebration – through the achievement of a consciously pluralist society. This found its expression in the replacement of a politics of material redistribution based on a universalist conception of society, which had been characteristic of the first decades of the post-war period, by a politics of recognition centred around the acceptance of group differences that came to dominate in the final decades of the century.[61]

This shift towards a language of rights also encouraged the concern with personal autonomy and individual responsibility that was increasingly ubiquitous in many spheres of European societies. Even within industry and business, there was a marked shift from the hierarchies and discipline of the past. Drawing on the new language of rights, business elites in the 1970s sought to justify the transition to a post-Fordist system of production by emphasising the individual freedom and flattening of professional and social hierarchies that would emerge through a break with the machine-based production lines and rigid welfare systems of the industrial era.[62] This was accompanied by the gradual retreat from collective forms of working-class organisation towards the establishment of a 'capitalism of singularity' in which 'the worker's productivity depended on his [*sic*] ability to mobilise his own resources and invest himself autonomously in his task'. Individual creativity, adaptability, and responsibility became the hallmarks of a new discourse of personal liberation and material advancement.[63]

The initial impulse behind such campaigns was often sectional or individual, but they also encouraged a more emphatically global language of human

[60] M. Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York, 2004); L. Bantigny, *1968: De grands soirs en petits matins* (Paris, 2018).

[61] N. Fraser, 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation', in N. Fraser and A. Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London, 2003), pp. 9–25.

[62] L. Boltanski and E. Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, rev. ed. (Paris, 2011).

[63] Rosanvallon, *Society of Equals*, pp. 218–21, quotes at p. 221.

rights.[64] This was evident in campaigns in support of political dissidents within the Soviet bloc, but also, most strikingly, in the new prominence that the Global South acquired in campaigns for social justice.[65] More long-standing campaigns in support of the collective rights of formerly colonised peoples of Africa and Asia to national self-determination merged with a much broader concern with the rights of women, the safeguarding of minorities, access to education, health care, and legal protection and political freedom across the post-colonial world.[66] But it also produced a wider preoccupation with what gradually became known as 'global justice' or 'global solidarity'. This found its expression in the expansion of movements in Europe seeking to redress the material inequities, exploitative economic structures, and larger political dependencies that, in their view, impeded the development of the Global South and perpetuated the power relations of the colonial era. For some, such as those involved in the 'fair trade' movement or in the boycotting of multi-national companies, these were problems that could be remedied within the existing capitalist order, such as by educating citizens to become ethical consumers. This, they hoped, would stimulate the growth of 'socially responsible' businesses at home, dislodge unequal trade relationships, and raise social standards in the Global South.[67] Yet for others, the enduring reality of global disparities pointed to the insoluble contradictions of late twentieth-century European societies. The anti-globalisation movements that emerged from the end of the 1980s were therefore the product of a long process by which notions of social and global justice amalgamated to the extent that they became indissoluble.[68]

The ways in which the languages and policies of social justice operated within and between this matrix of larger histories underscore the need for a history of social justice that is sensitive to the particularities of time and place. There were indeed certain continuities – perhaps most obviously the quasi-universal recognition of the responsibility of the state to provide for the most visible needs of the population – but it is the discontinuities that were more

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[64] S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, 2010); E. Davey, *Idealism beyond Borders: The French Revolutionary Left and the Rise of Humanitarianism, 1954–1988* (Cambridge, 2015).

[65] Q. Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham, NC, 2012); C. Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France, c. 1950–1976* (Cambridge, 2016).

[66] Moyn, *Not Enough*, pp. 171–2.

[67] T. Sasson, 'Milking the Third World? Humanitarianism, Capitalism, and the Moral Economy of the Nestlé Boycott', *American Historical Review*, 121 (2016), 1196–224; see also the special issue on 'Trajectories of Global Solidarity: Fair Trade Activism since the 1960s' in *Contemporary European History*, 8 (2019), 512–80.

[68] G. Curran, *21st Century Dissent: Anarchism, Anti-Globalization and Environmentalism* (Basingstoke, 2006).

evident: between regimes, eras, and national, confessional, and local communities. Social justice was never universal; and it took shape within particular national histories of state development that differed markedly between, most obviously, the republican model of France and the pillarised societies of the Low Countries.[69] Similarly, while the concept of the 'welfare state' resonated with the state-oriented cultures of Britain and of western Scandinavia, it was alien to the Catholic confessional cultures of areas of western Germany, Austria, and Italy, which favoured the provision of welfare, education, and health services through quasi-independent social organisations.[70] The ruptures between east and west in the post–1945 era were of course more marked still. Competition between the state-driven models of welfare provision in the east and the more plural and localised structures in the west formed part of a wider rivalry between models of social justice, rooted in conflicting priorities of social solidarity and individual self-reliance. The freedom that became during the Cold War such an integral element of the self-image of Western societies was contrasted against the notions of social equality and collective provision that became the defining feature of the socialist societies in the east. For the builders of these new socialist societies, universal social justice was a central goal, which was reflected in the resources devoted to new housing complexes, all-day nurseries, and the expansions in structures of education and health care, but also in the effort expended on encouraging a new socially oriented mentality within their populations. This was social justice that not only would exist in words, but would be made manifest through visual representation, physical environments, and the future-oriented worldview of those who inhabited them.[71] This was a project, moreover, that acquired greater prominence as the regimes of East-Central Europe hesitantly abandoned the repressive logics of Stalinism in favour of seeking novel means of legitimising their rule, through the social benefits afforded by state-socialist planning and provision.[72] Despite the emancipatory rhetoric that accompanied such schemes, these were, however, highly gendered projects. They fell short of the expectations of women to attain real equality and personal freedom, and did little to remedy deeply ingrained forms of gendered inequality. 'Welfare

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[69] Rosanvallon, *Society of Equals*.

[70] M. Conway, 'Legacies of Exile: The Exile Governments in London during the Second World War and the Politics of Post-War Europe', in M. Conway and J. Gotovitch (eds.), *Europe in Exile: European Exile Communities in Britain 1940–1945* (New York, 2001), pp. 255–74.

[71] T. Inglot, *Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919–2004* (Cambridge, 2008); K. Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–1956* (Ithaca, NY, 2013); M. Colla, 'Prussian Palimpsests: Historic Architecture and Urban Spaces in East Germany, 1945–1961', *Central European History*, 50 (2017), 184–217. See also the biographical account provided in M. Leo, *Red Love: the Story of an East German Family* (London, 2013).

[72] P. Kolář, *Der Poststalinismus: Ideologie und Utopie einer Epoche* (Cologne, 2016).

dictatorships'[73] were therefore less interested in ameliorating the position of women by devising solutions together with them than in providing them with solutions that were crafted primarily by men in an attempt to increase the participation of women in the workforce and so increase productivity.[74]

For all of their apparent stark differences, the conceptions of social justice in east and west, therefore, perhaps came to differ more in their external structures than in their inner conception. Once the shock of the early Stalinist years had passed, so policies of social justice in the east shifted from the imposition of universal models to negotiation with the organisations of civil society and local communities. That of course was also the case in Western Europe, once the initial post-war flurry of ambitious social-welfare reforms gave way to the incremental erosion of more obstinate forms of inequality, such as intergenerational poverty. In this way, the regimes of social justice in the west and east came closer together[75] prefiguring the convergence that occurred after the demise of the state-socialist regimes in 1989, and the shared participation of west and east in the European Union. Yet, unlike other areas of public policy-making that migrated towards the European level in the 1980s and 1990s, it was striking how social justice always remained primarily a matter of national policy-making. European institutions served as places of exchange between governmental experts and the representatives of social organisations; but the ways in which social justice was conceived and implemented remained rooted within more local cultures of state action, social negotiation, and societal norms.[76] When notions of social justice were taken up by the institutions of European integration, this was framed primarily in economistic terms that were markedly different from the redistributive language adopted at the nation-state level: economic cooperation, productivity, and growth were seen as the best solutions to the problems of social inequality and internal societal conflict. The measures instituted by the European Communities consequently centred on the concept of 'access justice', predicated on removing obstacles to the market, while seeking to create a dynamic European market citizen.[77]

This resilient diversity makes social justice a rich and properly historical subject. It demonstrates how the preoccupation with creating a more just

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[73] K. H. Jarausch, 'Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship', in K. H. Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, 1999), pp. 47–69.

[74] See Chapter 10 in this volume.

[75] W. Süss, 'Social Security, Social Inequality and the Welfare State in East and West Germany', in F. Bösch (ed.), *A History Shared and Divided: East and West Germany since the 1970s* (New York, 2018), pp. 191–238.

[76] K. K. Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 105–9.

[77] See Chapter 12 in this volume.

society was a durable but also continuously evolving focus of state policies, social campaigns, and political projects. Above all, it was an ambition that was always in the process of creation: it was never achieved, but neither was it entirely out of reach. As such, it is indicative of the spirit of restless ideological debate and societal reform that from the vantage point of the twenty-first century seems to be one of the principal characteristics of the European twentieth century between the First World War and the 1990s. Definitions of this period as an Age of Extremes or as a European Civil War emphasise how the intense conflicts of the era generated murderous cycles of military warfare, social violence, and ethnic and ideological wars.[78] But these conflicts formed part of a larger preoccupation with projects of social change. The present was always imperfect, and the priority was the definition of the future.[79] The means of achieving that change varied greatly between modest reforms and radical action, just as the visions of the future ranged from the reactionary to the revolutionary. However, beyond this diversity of means and ends, the preoccupation with dreams and projects of social justice was one of the defining characteristics of the spirit of the age.

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The conception and organisation of this volume engages with three vectors that lie at the heart of understanding the history of social justice in twentieth-century Europe. The first can be grouped under the heading of *temporalities*. It used to be easy to write the history of twentieth-century Europe by dividing it into discrete periods that matched the political upheavals and regime shifts of the century (1918–1939–1945–1973–1989). This certainty about periodisation has, however, fractured. Much recent historical work has been at pains to pull down the boundaries between different time periods and, instead, emphasises the significant continuities in ideas, attitudes, policies, people, and institutions as well as in social and economic structures across moments of regime change. This is especially so in the long-standing debate about 1945 as a European *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour), where it has become clear that notions of ruptures are more often than not myths that serve the self-interested agendas of new rulers and the broader society alike.[80] Above all, concepts of a *Stunde Null* – be it in

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[78] Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*; D. Diner, *Das Jahrhundert verstehen: Eine universalhistorische Deutung* (Munich, 1999); E. Traverso, *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War 1914–1945* (London, 2016).

[79] See the interesting reflections of Marcus Colla on the role of the future in state-socialist societies: M. Colla, 'The Politics of Time and State Identity in the German Democratic Republic', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 29 (2019), 223–51.

[80] H. Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA, 1991); R. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, 2001).

1918, 1945, or 1989 – have ultimately little to do with the complex realities of sociopolitical transitions, which always incorporate elements of the new and the old.[81] Yet, as the familiar frontiers of the century have been challenged, so have many of our assumptions about the dividing lines behind political regimes of radically different ideological persuasions. This has led to a reconsideration of what Wolfgang Schivelbusch has called the 'distant relations' between different regimes and to relativising the distance that in fact existed between them.[82]

Writing the history of social justice in twentieth-century Europe therefore raises fundamental questions about continuity and change, and about the way in which conceptions of social justice travelled across different political regimes, times, and places. Accordingly, this volume applies an open-ended approach that seeks to trace conceptions of social justice from whence they came and to wherever they went. Poking holes in established historiographical building bricks does not, however, mean simply demolishing them. Rather, as the debates about turning points in the twentieth century have also shown, there was undoubtedly much that did change at such junctures. The chapters in this volume consequently demonstrate the extent to which the familiar turning points of twentieth-century European history functioned rather like the poles in an imperfect slalom ski run: conceptions of social justice travelled across the century, moving themselves elegantly around the start and terminus gates, but often grazing the intermediate points in passing and sometimes fully colliding with them. Alongside this general pattern of the gradual evolution of notions of social justice, there were, of course, periods of acceleration. As Chapters 4 and 6 in this volume well demonstrate, the crises provoked by invasion and warfare often acted as stimuli to enact changes in social-welfare provision that would otherwise have had a more lengthy gestation, or perhaps would not have occurred in the same way at all.

These shifting conceptions of social justice across time prompts the question of whether any more long-term pattern is discernible. To explore this, one might think of the genealogy of conceptions of social justice in terms of a sequence of 'regimes' of social justice, to appropriate an influential formula that has been used productively within the field of the history of emotions.[83] This prompts a range of questions about the origins and evolution of such 'regimes', including the reasons why a particular regime of social justice came to dominate at a particular moment, the identity of the sociopolitical and

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[81] M. Conway, P. Lagrou, and H. Rousso (eds.), *Europe's Postwar Periods – 1989, 1945, 1918: Writing History Backwards* (London, 2019).

[82] W. Schivelbusch, *Entfernte Verwandtschaft: Faschismus, Nazionalsozialismus, New Deal, 1933–1939* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008). See also Patel, *The New Deal*.

[83] For the influential notion of emotional regimes, see W. M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001).

material dynamics and structures that led it to triumph and subsequently to collapse, and the ways in which elements of the pre-existing regime were transferred into the next era. Deploying the formula of a 'regime' risks, of course, imposing too great a uniformity and coherence onto what were often highly heterogenous amalgams that rarely conformed to the ideal-types that are so prominent in social-science writing on the subject.[84] Regimes of social justice were necessarily the result of complex compromises. Yet, as shown in Chapter 2, it is possible to approach the history of social justice in terms of three eras, in which different market-related conceptualisations of social justice came to the fore. This comprised a first period starting in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and gravitating around the 'social question'; a second period beginning in the 1920s and dominated by conceptions of social justice focused on the establishment and maintenance of a productive labour force as well as on the institution of insurance-based social-security systems; and, finally, a third period from the 1970s, marked by the expansion of a residualist notion of social justice understood as social rights, culminating in a redefinition of social justice as equality of opportunity and a concomitant focus on social investment as a means to inculcate an entrepreneurial mentality amongst the population.

In addition to these issues of temporality, the essays in this volume engage, second, with how notions of social justice were shaped by a particular place and community, that is, with their *spatiality*. Notions of social justice were intrinsically tied to the local, regional, and national contexts in which they were expressed. This is, in many respects, not surprising: for much of the twentieth century, the expectations of populations towards their rulers were formulated in primarily local or national terms. At the same time, rulers sought to respond to popular demands by devising policies that delivered tangible benefits to those defined as full members of the national community. In the age of mass politics, this was the group that mattered electorally, and for those in power it simply did not pay to heed calls for extending the remit of collective solidarity to those thought to be outside the nation. Migrants, as Chapter 8 in this volume well demonstrates, were the most obvious victims of structures of social justice that linked social rights to national citizenship. Since the late 1960s, efforts have been made to address these inequalities, but the tension between migration and social justice has proven to be a durable one. Over recent decades, ideologues on both the right and left have repeatedly construed migrants – and the forms of diversity they embody – as antithetical to the homogeneity necessary for the flowering of projects of social justice.

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[84] See, e.g., G. Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1990).

Social justice has been a subject – and a form of provision – over which the nation state has often tried to assert exclusive ownership. This is well demonstrated in the analysis in Chapter 5 of the welfare policies constructed by the authoritarian regimes of the mid-twentieth century with grand rhetoric and more modest achievements. However, popular notions of what was socially just were never entirely under state control. They often originated outside the structures of the state, within social and confessional communities, and local societies.[85] In particular, the definition of insiders and outsiders, as well as the internal frontiers between those deemed to be the deserving and the undeserving, reflected the enduring influence of socially rooted notions of a 'moral economy'. This is a concept that has been highly influential amongst historians of early modern Europe, but that has had a strikingly limited impact on our understanding of twentieth-century Europe.[86] Yet E. P. Thompson's exploration of the collective 'moral assumptions' of a community, their notions of 'legitimate and illegitimate practices', and more generally their views of 'social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community', offers a useful analytical framework for understanding the attitudes of Europeans in the twentieth century too.[87]

It is only in more recent decades that the framework within which social-justice claims are formulated has shifted to incorporate the international and supranational level. As Chapter 9 demonstrates, notions of positive peace, as they developed in the middle decades of the twentieth century, prompted a relocation of social justice from the national to the makings of a new global order. Moreover, the expansion in the powers and reach of the European Union since the final decades of the twentieth century has led to far-reaching hopes for the implementation of visions of a 'Social Europe'.[88] As shown in

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[85] See, e.g., the special issue on 'Urban Societies in Europe' in *Contemporary European History*, 24 (2015), 475–622; R. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: in Search of the German Occupation, 1940–1945* (London, 2002); L. Jerram, *Streetlife: The Untold History of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2011); R. Wakeman, *Modernizing the Provincial City: Toulouse, 1945–1975* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

[86] For a stimulating exception, see D. A. Gordon, 'L'économie morale des banlieusards: Aux origines de la "crise des transports" en France des années 1970?', *Vingtième Siècle*, 126 (2015), 119–31.

[87] E. P. Thompson 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), 79. For the triumph of the concept in the analysis of areas other than Europe, see the influential work by J. C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT, 1976). The neglect of the moral economies of the twentieth century is currently being remedied. See the stimulating articles in the dossier on the moral economy in *Humanity* 11 (2020), as well as the research projects conducted at the new International Max Planck Research School for Moral Economies, www.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/forschung/forschungsbereiche/geschichte-der-gefuehle/imprs-moral-economies.

[88] A. Bitumi, 'An Uplifting Tale of Europe: Jacques Delors and the Commitment to Social Europe', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 16 (2018), 203–21.

Chapter 12, since the 1970s the institutions of European integration made significant and often neglected inroads into the field of social policy by passing anti-discrimination legislation, establishing protections for workers and consumers, and implementing regulations guaranteeing a fair access to the market and expanding social inclusion. They remained wedded, however, to a conception of social justice understood as the dismantlement of obstacles to the market, and they only gradually retreated from this notion after the financial crisis of 2008 and the deep crisis of legitimacy it produced. The preponderance of the local and national in the domain of social justice was therefore a defining feature of the twentieth century and one that prompts the question of whether in fact a broader transnational European story of converging attitudes can be traced amidst the multiplicity of national and local experiences.[89] While this volume cannot provide a definitive answer to this question, it is striking how many of its chapters spill beyond the frameworks of the nation state. In particular, Chapter 3 on Catholic social justice and Chapter 6 on Czechoslovakia during the Nazi occupation and subsequent state-socialist era demonstrate how local and national cultures of social justice found ways of co-existing alongside the broader ambitions of these imperial projects. Conversely, the survival of regimes of social justice in Mediterranean Europe after the demise of the fascist and authoritarian structures in which they initially emerged, as well as the legacies of state-socialist conceptions of social justice in Central and Eastern Europe during the privatisations of the 1990s, explored in Chapter 11, show that the connections between the local and the national were more complex than a political chronology might suggest.

This raises the third set of fundamental questions, namely, the identity of those *actors and agencies* involved in driving the articulation and solidification of conceptions of social justice. If the authorship of structures and understandings of social justice was always more broadly shared than the machinations of elites, be they political, social, or intellectual, the frame of study has to be expanded to encompass the complex space between rulers and ruled. This contextual approach not only restores agency to those who were subjected to projects of social justice, but also seeks to complicate a narrative that sees populations as simply the consumers of forms of social provision devised and administered by others. This interactional nature of notions of social justice is well demonstrated by the case of the non-democratic regimes of Europe's twentieth century. Thus, the chapters in this volume showcase how even the most authoritarian regimes, from Fascist Italy to Salazar's Portugal and state-socialist Hungary, could not simply trample underfoot

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[89] M. Conway and K. K. Patel (eds.), *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century: Historical Approaches* (Basingstoke, 2010).

expectations of fairness and material amelioration coming from below. Instead, elites within these regimes were all too conscious of the ways in which their broader legitimacy depended on responding to such expectations. In the absence of other means of legitimisation, social justice was therefore a language that authoritarian rulers ignored at their peril, and at times felt more obliged to deploy than democratic rulers. To be sure, they rarely lived up to their ideological promises, and often used references to social justice for patently propagandistic purposes. Nor was there ever a real consensus within these regimes as to the meaning of social justice and the means to achieve it. Yet a consistent undercurrent in Europe's twentieth century was the way in which rulers felt the pressure to make decisive gestures clothed in a rhetoric of social progress to appease broader sectors of the population.

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In adopting this approach, we hope to encourage historians of twentieth-century Europe to take social justice seriously as a historical subject in its own right, rather than merely regarding it as one of the ingredients in other histories. Social justice, we argue, was one of the main sites of political and social contestation across the continent. It therefore needs to be put centre stage in any understanding of the twentieth century that seeks to bring together the actions of regimes but also the influence of civil society and the responses of populations. By taking its history seriously, a multiplicity of new perspectives open up that, as the chapters in this volume hope to demonstrate, challenge established assumptions about political regimes, social movements and organisations, state institutions, material structures, ideologies, gender relations, and the circulation of ideas and knowledge. In a broader sense, however, they also lead us to question our sense of the spatial, political, and social convergence of European nation states. A history of social justice therefore impinges on the viability of European history as a subject matter in itself, contributing to the larger question of whether Europe functions as a useful analytical category for understanding the vicissitudes of the twentieth century.[90] Above all, taking social justice seriously as a historical subject implies overcoming its prevalent politicisation by throwing overboard some of the normative weight that often accompanies it. Instead, it is necessary to accept that it was not owned by a single ideology or political grouping, and that tracing its history might sometimes lead us to places that we do not like.

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[90] On the viability of European history as a field and subject matter, see the ongoing debate on *Why Europe? Which Europe?* at europedebate.hypotheses.org.

This volume is emphatically not intended as a comprehensive survey of the genealogy of conceptions of social justice. Instead, our ambition is the more modest one of seeking to put the subject on the historical agenda by suggesting a conceptual shape that others might find useful when pursuing the archival work that the subject still necessitates. The book therefore includes both overview chapters that chart distinctive paths of social justice across longer time spans and more specific case studies that apply our approach to particular spatial and temporal contexts. The chapters thereby showcase the sheer diversity of the ways in which the quest for social justice was pursued in Europe. They encompass different spatial dimensions, reaching from the west to the east, from the south to the north, from the local to the national, and from the European to the global. They explore different types of political orders and ideologies: from interwar liberalism to authoritarian and fascist conceptions of social justice; from Catholic understandings to state-socialist notions; and from the democratic regimes in Western Europe to the post-Socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. And, finally, they explore a range of actors, groups, and institutions, including the top level of national politics and international organisations as well as the bottom-up actions of activists and social movements.

If a collective conclusion can be derived from these chapters, it is that the evolution of social justice in twentieth-century Europe was never linear or singular: social justice meant different things at different moments to different Europeans. The basic questions of why a particular regime of social justice came to predominate at a given moment, why it ended, and how it mutated into a new configuration of attitudes, language, and policies, however, carry within themselves implications that reach beyond the subject matter of this volume. Understanding the permutations of social justice is one of the ways in which we can make sense of the present we inhabit today. It therefore forms part of a wider quest amongst historians to write the history of the present.[91] But it also demonstrates the constructiveness and contingency of conceptions of social justice, and the way in which such notions grew out of the intricate interplay between rulers and ruled. In doing so, it highlights – to borrow again E. P. Thompson's phraseology – the extent to which 'the authorities were, in some measure, the prisoners of the people'.[92] Such an analysis of what one might describe as 'social justice in context' can give cause for a cautious degree of optimism. Whatever the predicaments and shortcomings of our contemporary

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[91] See the stimulating essays in A. Doering-Manteuffel, L. Raphael, and T. Schlemmer (eds.), *Vorgeschichte der Gegenwart: Dimensionen des Strukturbruchs nach dem Boom* (Göttingen, 2016).

[92] Thompson, 'Moral Economy of the English Crowd', 79.

attitudes towards social justice, its history demonstrates that such notions are never fixed, and are likely to change as a result of the interaction between political, social, and material forces. If anything, therefore, an analysis of these dynamics demonstrates the innate malleability of social justice, and might offer a useful starting point for reflecting on the possibilities as well as the limits of sociopolitical change in contemporary Europe.