will in my view be helpful to assess the legitimacy of these restrictions. The added value of these international and European instruments does not primarily relate to the issue of the recognition. It provides a tool to assess the justification of the many restrictions analysed in the general and national chapters.

Eva Hartmann and Poul Kjaer (eds)
The Evolution of Intermediary Institutions in Europe. From Corporatism to Governance,
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What keeps society 'integrated'? This issue is set to be one of the most sensitive of 21 century issues. Therefore, revised analytical tools are required to analyse the transformations currently affecting society. The ambitious goal of *The Evolution of Intermediary Institutions in Europe. From Corporatism to Governance* is to lay the foundations for a new theoretical framework able to deal with this challenge. In their edited volume, Eva Hartmann and Poul Kjaer bring together contributions from research carried out in the context of the collective research project funded by the European Research Council (ERC): 'Institutional transformation in European Political Economy - A socio-legal approach'.[1] Looking at the overlapping areas of 'macro-sociology and social theory, European political economy, European integration and governance studies, and the increasingly vibrant area of sociology of law and socio-legal studies' (p. 3), the volume (and the research) is of interest for an interdisciplinary academic community.

On the basis of these bodies of literature, Hartmann and Kjaer aim to explain the causes and consequences of the transition from corporatism to neo-corporatism and in turn to governance (in the European context). In this respect, their purpose – and the most interesting aspect of the book – is to mobilize *intermediary institutions* as the central concept of their theoretical framework.

In the book's introduction, Poul Kjaer defines intermediary institutions (p. 2) as interfaces strategically located between societal spheres. In order to integrate these spheres, intermediary institutions have the dual function of ensuring internal stabilization within the spheres and increasing their mutual compatibility. Intermediary institutions are thus expected to construct and enforce integrated societal frameworks by producing (legal) norms and expectations. This abstract definition deserves close reading as it encompasses the essence of the theoretical framework proposed by Hartmann and Kjaer. While not expressly stated, the concept of 'interface' seems to go beyond players traditionally seen as intermediary institutions, such as trade unions, and now includes stakeholders, resources and structures whose form depends on the societal spheres they intend to link together. The proliferation of councils, commissions and other working groups created at the EU level to aggregate various interests thus represents a manifestation of intermediary institutions among many others. However, the authors manifestly wish not to give any clear direction at

1 Other pieces of work can provide interesting insights on the project, for example, Kjaer PF (2014) Towards a Sociology of Intermediary Institutions: the role of law in corporatism, neo-corporatism and governance. In: Madsen M and Thornhill C *Law and the Formation of Modern Europe: Perspectives from the Historical sociology of law.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 117–141.

this introductory stage, instead letting the subsequent contributions explore the nature of intermediary institutions.

In continuation of this introduction, Poul Kjaer's first chapter allows readers to gain a better idea of the issues at stake in the book, choosing the concept of modernity as his contextual background. Modern society is characterized by the differentiation and increased specialization of societal spheres. Building on this context, corporatism, neo-corporatism and governance are forms of intermediary institutions with the function of shaping interfaces which allow exchanges between different societal spheres. Kjaer's original point of view is to understand these three types of intermediary institutions as independent social phenomena producing 'their own types of power and norms' (p. 16). According to him, corporatist institutions seek the holistic integration of society, neo-corporatist institutions pursue economic well-being, while governance relies on science-based argumentation (claiming neutrality and objectivity) to ensure the integration of different societal spheres.

This shift towards governance may seem a bit crude, in comparison to traditional views of intermediary institutions as emissaries between individuals and a public authority (Montesquieu's intermediary bodies). One strength of the book is therefore its provision of a conceptual framework able to explain the mutual stabilization of societal spheres from a single long-term perspective (from the mid-20th century onwards), with Kjaer positioning governance as a continuation of corporatism and neo-corporatism. Two dimensions illustrate this shift to governance: the decreasing state-centredness (deletion of the public-private distinction), and the rise of transnational political regimes (p. 22). These changes influence intermediary institutions' forms while still allowing them to achieve their dual function of stabilization and compatibility. Though it is not Kjaer's ambition to categorize these new institutions, he does mention comitology and the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as examples in the European context.

On the basis of these theoretical foundations, each chapter attempts to give flesh to the concept of intermediary institutions. Despite a few heterogeneous aspects linked to the difficulty of this type of format to take in contributions from a larger project, the editors achieve great consistency throughout the book. Broadly speaking, one can identify three kinds of insights that are worth distinguishing. The first one concerns those chapters providing a theoretical understanding of the history of intermediary institutions and the way interests are mediated. In this vein, Chapters 1 to 4 attempt to explain the shift from corporatism (since the mid-20th century until the post Second World War period) to neo-corporatism (post Second World War until the 1980s) and in turn to governance (from the 1980s onwards). Readers interested in interest intermediation in general or in industrial relations in particular will find there useful historical and explanatory perspectives.

The second group of contributions covers chapters with an empirical dimension: among them, the studies of EU competition policy (Chapter 5: Angela Wigger and Hubert Buch-Hansen) and EU social policy (Chapter 7: Eva Hartmann) demonstrate that the relationship between societal spheres via intermediary institutions is neither neutral nor equal, instead being driven by economic and neoliberal considerations. These conclusions are reflected in Bob Jessop's demonstration (Chapter 2) that even if all spheres are supposed to co-evolve independently in modern society, capitalist features make capitalism ecologically dominant (see Table 2.1, p. 41).

The third and last kind of insights considers legislation as the main driving force for understanding intermediary institutions, and thus as the main factor responsible for societal integration. Legislation is indeed an omnipresent communication channel in all societal spheres. For example, administrative law conditions all aspects of our daily lives (Chapter 10: Thompson), while international human rights law shapes the whole institutional structure of national political orders (Chapter 12: Thornhill). This plea for legislation as the key to understanding intermediary institutions constitutes a very interesting convergence point between political science, law and economics, a proposition put forward by Sabine Frerichs (Chapter 9, p. 171). She advocates a ‘new form of legal realism, which is empirically informed and normatively committed at the same time’ for analysing political decisions in the new era of governance (p. 159).

Altogether, these three perspectives attest to the relevance of Kjaer’s proposed theoretical framework. However, it also has some limits to transcend. A first challenge that needs to be taken into consideration is the ecological dominance of one or several spheres, impacting – strategically or not – the internal functioning of other spheres. In such circumstances, the stabilizing function of intermediary institutions is not achieved. The second challenge concerns the external compatibility between societal spheres. Gert Verschraegen (Chapter 6) shows how standardized indicators (such as the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS)) are taken into account in the design of European social policies. The aim is to allow comparisons between national systems in order to build ‘governable’ policies (p. 118). While not denying the useful aspects of such ‘governance by numbers’, Verschraegen warns against simplification and decontextualization that can ‘lead to a forced commensurability of the incommensurables’ (p. 119). These two limits will certainly have to be treated in the future development of the theoretical framework. Further research should aim at refining the dual function of intermediary institutions. This suggestion is based on the sociological approach recommended on several occasions throughout the contributions, such as the adoption of a bottom-up perspective to explore the nature of governance (Thompson p. 177).

To conclude, one should emphasize the richness of this book in terms of proposals. It succeeds in embedding governance in the continuity of corporatism and neo-corporatism, and provides analytical tools to comprehend it as an independent social phenomenon. Social scientists working on governance will therefore find food for thought in this book. It can also be used by those who work in a more policy-oriented way because it tends to reduce the vagueness sometimes associated with governance. Moreover, the authors’ ability to keep in line with the definition of intermediary institutions provided at the beginning is worth emphasizing. Gathering contributions based on such an abstract framework is a gamble. This book definitely pulls it off, with each chapter successful in clarifying in its own way the definition of intermediary institutions, in identifying some of their limits, and in setting a future research agenda. As this project is still ongoing,[2] we look forward to future outputs.

2 More information available on http://itepe.eu/