

**Editorial:**

## **Services, Modes of Governance and the State**

This June 2016 issue of STSS, although with no pre-intended thematic focus, has attracted three articles and a book review on governance and the relationship between the state and its citizens. By looking at issues as varied as police reform, business-state relationships and pension system in Croatia, our hope is to further stir a dialogue on the validity of neoliberal hypotheses that have recently come under increasing criticism. The review of the book *Polarising Development* by Pradella and Marois (2015) is a nice addition to these papers and enables us to engage more comprehensively in a discussion on possible alternatives and modes of governance to which we have recently contributed (Polese et al., 2016; Morris & Polese 2015).

The first paper by Pinkevich, Aleinikov and Osipov (2016) explores the specifics of conflict interaction between business and power in Russia to analyse the features of the institutional environment of this conflict. The author suggests that engagement with an analytical framework using the work of North, J. Wallis, B. Weingast, J. Nye may help to analyse the relationship between business and state actors to provide useful insight into business development in Russia. The author's analysis on power resources shows that this is an important factor in solving disputes between economic actors. However, it is suggested that there are ties between businesses and authorities in Russia, which cause a great deal of social distrust and negative attitudes towards both institutions.

The second article of this issue investigates the evasion of retirement insurance contributions in Croatia. Bejaković (2016) suggests that this shortfall can be regarded as evidence of weakness on the part of administrative structures but also of low or absent trust in the public pension system that brings people to prefer intergenerational solidarity. This is also fuelled by inconsistencies between what workers give and what they get in return, which is perceived as not proportionate to the contributions. After an overview of the reform and the main points of discontent it has provoked, the author provides some suggestions to address the issue.

The third article of this special section on services, governance and the state tackles the issue of police reform as viewed through a case study from Estonia. Suve, Selg and Sootla (2016) survey the evolution of policies and rules used to improve the performance of the police forces. They notice that, although Estonia has not deliberately used any (combination of) police models for developing its policies of safety and its police reforms since the country regained independence, its safety has improved considerably during the last couple of decades. By doing this, they survey the developments of the Estonian police in its philosophical, strategic, tactical and organisational dimensions over the period between 1991 and 2013. The conclusions can be seen as somehow controversial. On the one hand, they maintain that safety in Estonia has improved considerably. On the other one, the process shows internal discrepancies and inconsistencies. According to the authors, such discrepancies open the way to further studies regarding policy development in a situation where policy is not explicitly stated or where organisational reforms are seen not as merely 'simple' or 'complex' problems, but as 'wicked' problems.

The next article engages with an exploration of identity in Iran, which is even more important given the media attention that the country has received in the past months, and the subsequent need for a better understanding of the local context. Yesiltas (2016) explores the competing discourses around nation-building and their entanglement with democratization attempts. The author argues that be they reformist or conservative, successive governments in Iran have refused to recognise the multi-ethnic structure of Iranian society and the legitimate rights of the ethnic groups. As a

result, any further regime change would be unlikely to alter the social and political status of ethnic and religious minorities unless the ethnic movements and the pro-democracy opposition collaborate. Formation of a common discourse on the question of 'Iranianness' is the primary condition for this to be accomplished.

The final article of this issue exposes some methodological dilemmas faced by scholars exploring national identity and nationalism. Although Pawłusz and Seliverstova (2016) maintain that this can be applied to post-Soviet spaces, it is possible that their approach can be used well beyond that region. Their idea on methodological approaches used to explore national identity formation is that the 'everyday' should be taken into account. In their view, bottom-up interpretative approaches have been applied to other regions but not sufficiently to the post-Soviet one, where identity and nation-building studies are mostly dominated by top-down approaches. Starting from this hypothesis, the authors discuss the strengths and limitations of such an approach using two case studies: consumption and national identity in Ukraine and music and nation-building in Estonia.

Pradella and Marois' book review of *Polarising Development: Marxist Perspectives on Neoliberalism and its Alternatives* by Addis (2016) closes this issue. The book and its review are a welcomed contribution to this issue and, in general, the debate on neoliberalism and its limits, laying the foundation for a Marxist-inspired approach to the study of development and the (capitalist) economy. The book is concerned with debating radical alternative approaches to neoliberalism in view of the crisis that has been unfolding since 2008 and offers a section on 'Alternative Themes', dedicated to the analysis of capitalist development, its (potential) alternatives, and 'Alternative Cases', which analyses capitalist development in various regions of the world.

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