

and care is (arguably) to be compensated by the state rather than men.

The general message of the book seems to be that the emulation of the 'Danish model' should be the goal for all advanced societies. There seems to be no viable alternative to the adoption of the adult worker model: the lifetime involvement in full-time employment for women and men helps to eradicate child poverty, to foster fertility, to increase fathers' time investment in (the quality of) children, to secure the sustainability of the welfare state, and to decrease the risk of poverty in old age. While there is little doubt regarding these beneficial effects of dual-earner arrangements (and also of the beneficial effect of employment for women's independence), a weakness of the book is its rather unbalanced discussion of the societal implications of the full adoption of the dual-career model, in particular its complete negation of the potentially negative implications of parental full-time employment, that has led to the highest incidence of time stress and work-family conflict among mothers in the Nordic countries, for instance. This is related to the fact that the degree to which gender equality is already achieved in the Nordic countries is overstated. Nordic women's roles have not yet changed 'in revolutionary proportions' either. They continue to do the bulk of caring work, both paid as (public sector) employees as well as unpaid in the home, leading to very high total working hours—a key predictor of time stress and a negative evaluation of work-life balance—and a continued separation between women's and men's work (stratified labour markets).

Moreover, like most feminist writing, the book draws on research only from Western countries. The strong link between women's employment and their gender attitudes that is assumed by the author (p. 50), for instance, is based on research that has focused on the comparison of the classic three worlds of welfare. This link is

much less obvious in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where female employment has traditionally been high, but where attitudes regarding desirable gender roles nevertheless have remained rather traditional. Consideration of the post-communist countries could serve as an interesting point of comparison that would require a more precise definition of the notion of 'degree of completeness of the revolution' that the author uses to compare the situation in different countries. While in Scandinavia the gender equalisation of labour market participation has to some degree coincided with an equalisation of home production, this is much less the case in the post-communist countries. Their evaluation thus strongly depends on the relative weight put on female employment rates as an indicator of gender equality. Moreover, it is an open question whether the interesting research findings presented in this book regarding, for instance, the growing importance of assortative mating, the spectacular increase in childcare time (only) among more highly educated men, the lower survival rate of marriages among low-income couples, the increasingly positive association between women's employment and fertility, to name but a few, also hold in a similar fashion for Central and Eastern Europe or other parts of the world.

Nadia Steiber

European University Institute, Florence
nadia.steiber@eui.eu

Marta Kahancova: *One Company, Diverse Workplaces: The Social Construction of Employment Practices in Western and Eastern Europe*

London 2010: Palgrave, 263 pp.

There is little doubt that multinational companies are among the most influential, interesting and complex organisations in today's economy and society, and a privileged

field in which to observe processes of international convergence as well as socioeconomic domination. And one place where they are particularly influential is post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, where they constitute the bulk of investment and employment in manufacturing and in core services such as finance, telecommunications and retail.

So it is frustrating that in-depth studies of this institution's role in Central and Eastern Europe have been very slow to emerge, despite the very early intuition by Michael Burawoy, already before 1989, that East-West workplace comparisons could provide the best insights on the nature of western and eastern societies. There have been some books on local single-case studies of multinationals' subsidiaries (e.g. Elizabeth Dunn's 'Privatizing Poland') as well as a number of multiple case studies comparisons (e.g. Pollert's, Tholen's, Bluhm's, Contrepois et al.'s, and, if I am allowed, my own). But only now, with this book by Marta Kahancova, have we obtained an in-depth single multinational study, that covers both western and eastern European subsidiaries. Although unfortunately it includes no methodological detail, this is a deserving Central European response to the most important western books on single multinationals (Bélanger et al.'s *Being Local Worldwide* and Kristensen and Zeitlin's *Local Players in Global Games*).

Kahancova's book, an attentive re-elaboration of a doctoral thesis, portrays an anonymised, but easy to identify, large Dutch electronics firm and four of its plants in Belgium, France, Poland and Hungary. The author's theoretical aim is to reconcile micro-politics, actor-centred perspectives with institutionalist ones. Such an endeavour (which has been attempted along similar lines by scholars such as Morgan and Ferner) aims to strengthen the sociological critique of neoclassic economists' view of the multinational as an individual, rational actor simply moved by economic motives.

A multi-level comparison of a really existing multinational undermines such a view as naïve to the point of delusion: Kahancova's book reveals deeply differing workplaces, in the absence of a clear single rationality. Such differentiation is defined as 'embedding': a social process of local adaptation combining institutional constraints with local actors' social interactions.

What are these differences between the multinational's workplaces? Wage-setting is (logically) decentralised, even if the company pays everywhere a 10–20% premium above local averages. Employment flexibility is much higher in the Central Eastern than in the Western plants and is achieved through temporary agency work in Hungary, Belgium and France, but through temporary employment contracts in Poland (an obvious effect of local legislations). There are more complex and puzzling differences in work organisation, apparently not following any systematic logic. Employee motivation occurs through pay in the Western plants, but (imaginatively but not irrationally) through a combination of cultural tricks, overtime and cheap social fringe benefits reminiscent of state socialism in the East. Overall, this picture suggests that Electra (as the MNC is renamed), rather than uniformly diffuse a single model (as it could do, given its powerful hierarchy and the permissiveness of local environments, especially in Central Eastern Europe) has chosen to decentralise its employment practices in order to opportunistically utilise different local conditions.

However, the company is not just an opportunistic, profit-maximising unit. It also has 'corporate values' and complex network relations with stakeholders. And differences do not simply stem from national institutional settings: there seems to also be deep variation between different subsidiaries (plants) in each country.

Non-economic influences on corporate behaviour, such as trust, social relations,

values, become evident once the author enters the detail of interactions with local actors and with employee representatives. In Hungary, for instance, the company creatively engages with local labour market institutions. In both Poland and Hungary, it promotes a number of cultural and philanthropic activities, something the company has stopped doing in the West for budget reasons. Kahancová concludes that Electra is 'embedding' more in Central Eastern Europe than in the West, even if there is no obvious economic rationale for it.

Even more, the limits to the company 'rationality' as well as to institutional conditioning emerge in the area of industrial relations. Interestingly, there is no clear East-West divide, in spite of the institutional settings being more union-friendly in the West than in the East. Relations with the unions are cooperative in Belgium and Poland, but adversarial in France and Hungary. It is particularly striking that union involvement in Poland exceeds institutional requirements and local general practice. By applying a game-theoretical analysis of payoffs, Kahancová argues that such disparate outcomes may only derive from different preferences of different actors acting in situations of very limited information. There is no inherent rational superiority of any given industrial relations strategy: managers, and especially unionists, are left to their own beliefs, networks and personal experiences (e.g. a Hungarian unionist having suffered unfair treatment). Observing informal interactions at the micro-level are the only way to understand the social construction, from below, of industrial relations.

The book also asks why not just management, but also transnational union collaboration fails to lead to international convergence. The decentralised company structure, combined to a degree of competition between subsidiaries, but also to the lack of direct comparability between the productions of different plants, is not condu-

cive to strong transnational union collaboration. But in addition to that, Kahancová adds micro-level observation of social interactions in the European Works Council, indicating a lack of trust and profound communication obstacles between the Western and Eastern employee representatives. Again, a game-theoretical analysis is attempted to show the undetermined nature of the cooperation-competition dilemma between Western and Central Eastern European unions. At this point, Kahancová assumes, possibly over-stretching her anti-rationalism, that cooperation is more in the interest of eastern trade unions than in the Western ones, while all rational-choice approaches assume the opposite: it is the well-paid who don't want to be undercut by the low-paid.

In the conclusion, the author reaffirms her argument that employment practices in multinationals are, above all, actor-driven and socially constructed. But in the last pages she honestly admits the limitations of her work. Apart from the case not being representative, an analytical approach based on social interactions and micro-level observation is more descriptive than explanatory, and is therefore rather complex and not parsimonious. I would put it in other words: if the only way to understand multinationals' employment practices is to spend three years in fieldwork—as Kahancová has masterly done—in each of them, we should probably give up the task.

This book combines well with Nina Bandelj's *From Communists to Foreign Capitalists: The Social Foundations of Foreign Direct Investment in Postsocialist Europe* (2008) in providing a long-awaited economic sociology perspective on foreign capital in post-communist economies, capable to counteract the dominance of orthodox economic thought. Like in Bandelj's case, it is possible to take Kahancová's stress on social construction sceptically. For instance, the book makes much of the apparent self-less, non-economic nature of the multination-

al's involvement with local actors in Central Eastern Europe, and of its collaboration with the Polish trade union. But in the book we also discover that the Polish town has successfully obtained the status of Special Economic Zone, granting investors huge tax advantages; and we also discover that much of Electra's philanthropic activity is nothing less than donations they can deduct from tax; and that its collaboration with Hungarian labour market agencies is to solve labour shortage problems. Why then should activities that cost nothing but produce big saving be economically irrational? Similarly, the good relations with the Polish unions might have something to do with the fact that the union is the weakest of all plants (low membership, and 20% unemployment in the area) and appears to agree with anything the company proposes: this sounds more as self-interested paternalism than enlightened or generous social partnership.

The concept of 'social interaction', and even more that of 'values', will need more analytical 'unpacking' to become operational. This book offers some suggestions on the way to proceed, by defining some typical forms of social interactions. There are two ways this promising theoretical-analytical endeavour can be advanced in the future. One is producing a systematic social interactionist 'grammar' of social relations in multinational companies, in a way similar to what ethnomethodologists do, to detect constants and structures. The other way is to look more at power, a concept often mentioned, but rarely considered in depth, by Kahancova: power asymmetries indeed seem to be have major influences on Electra's decentralised practices, and political economy might help detecting why. In either case, I would pay more attention to specific forms of social relations, for instance gender relations. I could not find any detail in the book about the gender composition of Electra's workforces and management, but on p. 132 I

found this vivid description of social partnership in the Polish plant.

In the 2004 company festivity, the (female) union leader spontaneously danced with the subsidiary's Dutch general manager with mugs of beer in their hands. Other participants stopped dancing and were clapping their hands. Such practice would be unheard of in Brugge, Dreux or Székesfehérvár.

This detail suggests that gender relations in feminised plants (such as in electronics) may explain some differences from the more frequently studied automotive ones. Yet it also exemplified how much more fine-grained this exemplary description of a multinational is, in comparison with previous studies.

Guglielmo Meardi
University of Warwick
Guglielmo.Meardi@wbs.ac.uk

Barbara Einhorn: *Citizenship in an Enlarging Europe. From Dream to Awakening*

New York, NY, 2010: Palgrave Macmillan, 254 pp.

This book gives an informed account of how gendered difference and inequality has been produced, transformed, and challenged in the past twenty years in the countries belonging to the former 'state-socialist' part of Europe, including Russia and its western successor states.¹ Through the loosely defined and applied, yet attentively reflected conceptual lens of citizenship the study discusses developments in the areas of civil society and activism, media-representation, the labour market, social, family and population policy, nationalism, religion, and national as well as transnational governance, including gender mainstreaming and quota policies. While in this paperback edition the original introductory Chapter 1 is kept, there is also a new intro-