

INTERROGATIONS #5 with EOW comments
SOCIOLOGY 924
Session 6: Steinmetz: origins of the German Welfare State
October 9 2002

[1] Keedon Kwon

Since I am not familiar with the empirical facts this book is dealing with, I think I have to confine myself to talking about his theoretical arguments. His main theoretical argument is that the changes of the social policies in German cannot be explained by any single theory under consideration, but only by applying one of those theories to one particular period **[or to a particular policy domain in a given period; or to a particular level of state apparatuses; etc.]** and another to another and so on. This multiple causation is legitimate because the social structures evolve as times go by. Hence we have three or four theories explaining a particular outcome in a specific period: Piven and Cloward thesis of extraparliamentary collective disorder, social democratic theory, state-centered approach, and Marxist approach. However, I don't see why he could not explain the entire process of evolution of the social policies relying on either state-centered or Marxist approach. I think he could have been justified to go with single causation because I think both a statist and, especially, a Marxist can make a good and consistent case, respectively, for the changing outcomes of the social policies that he is concerned with here. In fact, he seems to rely on a Marxist discourse for the many main parts of his empirical arguments. For example, he argues that the German state sided with the industrialists whenever possible. He thinks that this fact disproves Marxist conceptions of the turn-of-the-19th-century German state as a feudal state. But he also seems to think that this fact gives a ground for rejecting any alternative Marxist theorization about the nature of such a state. In fact, he himself seems to provide an alternative Marxist explanation. What is a good strategy for theory-building? His argument about multiple causation reminded me of Burawoy's article about Trotsky and Skocpol. There, he argues that building and developing a theory is a process by which you apply your theory to empirical facts and revise it and add some new elements when you find anomalies. You abandon your theory when there are so many, big anomalies that your theory cannot possibly adjust to them. Otherwise, you have to continue to develop your theory. Steinmetz could have fared much better if he had been a Marxist maverick or stubborn statist. **[You are making an important argument here: is it possible to fully subsume the different mechanisms Steinmetz posits as being explanatory under a unified framework. Can statist mechanisms be subsumed under a broad-theoretical Marxist? What precisely would this subsumption take? How would one interpret – for example – table 7.4 as incorporating statism within Marxism?]**

[2] Matt Vidal – Memo #5

I found Steinmetz's historical work to be extremely interesting. However, I also found it to provide strong evidence for a Marxist theory of the state (pointing to some quite interesting reconstructions, which were not pursued) and I'm not quite sure what analytical leverage he gets from his insistence throughout on statist theories. It seemed to me that at every corner there was evidence that "the broad outlines of social policy were related to the factors central to ... class analytic approaches: capital accumulation, the social threat, and the organized presence of the working class" (p. 29). Yet, I didn't find compelling examples of why state autonomy should be theorized independently of structural dependence on the capitalist economy; only a bunch of statements of why Marxist theory was inadequate. I do not understand what state autonomy means when "the state could not violate the logic of industrial capitalism or the interests of capital 'in general'" (p. 138). As usual, I flesh this out by delving into the metatheoretical.

I'm not sure about his distinction between theory and explanation. **[One possibility for this contrast is: theory = abstract characterization of mechanisms to be deployed in explanations; explanation = the use of such theories to explain specific outcomes. This renders all theories necessarily monocausal insofar as there is an identification of specific theories with specific mechanisms. I suppose with this language one would use an expression like "theoretical framework" or "paradigm" if one had a**

broader theoretical structure which specified the interconnection between a range of autonomous/distinct mechanisms – i.e. something which stipulated a kind of mechanism-for-linking-mechanisms.] As I understand realism (and Bhaskar), to explain events we need to theorize mechanisms—i.e., mechanisms explain events, rather than explanation being a different process from theory. Mechanisms produce events so if we want to explain events we do so with social theories of causal mechanisms. Neither multiple determination of the concrete nor ontological depth (experiences, events, mechanisms) imply theoretical pluralism. **[well, it does imply theoretical pluralism if a theory = an account of a mechanism. Theoretical pluralism is then a commitment to their being multiple mechanisms each of which requires its own special theory. I have made argument of this sort when I say that I am not a Marxist-Feminist but a Marxist+feminist: i.e. I think Marxism theorizes class mechanisms and feminism theorizes gender mechanisms, but we do not have an overarching theory that stipulates a class-gender gestalt mechanism, or which gives as a general mechanism for assigning the place of class and gender in all concrete problems. Classical Marxism attempted this by having class-functional explanations assign the place of gender mechanisms – as part of the superstructure, for example. But if one is skeptical about such totalizing possibilities, then we have to admit that we do not have a comprehensive unified theory of the configuration of mechanisms, but just a theory of the specific mechanisms. Our empirical work then studies the interactions of these mechanisms in concrete explanatory problems. (To complicate this just a bit more: of course, we can always then say that for that more concrete problem we have indeed developed a “theory of the problem” which assigns the explanatory role of each mechanism. That is what developing a model for the specific problem at hand is. But still, this would not really be an abstract theory of the various mechanisms in general)]** He arrives at this strange formulation by collapsing mechanisms and theories. Indeed, in his exposition of why we need multiple theories, he repeatedly identifies a theory with a mechanism. This seems weird, and produces a theoretical interpretation which makes me sad. **[You are right – as my above comments indicate – that S identifies a theory with a mechanism. But it isn’t so obvious this is off base if you regard these mechanisms as genuinely distinct, with their own properties – like genes and environmental toxins being distinct mechanisms generating cancer. It is hard to imagine how one could produce a capital T theory of cancer that unified these, since each is so causally independent of the other. It isn’t logically impossible – one could imagine a gene which makes people have a taste for carcinogenic toxins, or something like that – but it isn’t very promising. So, positing two mechanisms as indeed distinct mechanisms comes close to saying that we need a theory of each, and at least makes it reasonable to imagine that we are unlikely to have a mega-theory that subsumed each under some mechanism-of-mechanisms.]**

"It is necessary to combine statist theory's emphasis on autonomous state goals and cultural dynamics internal to the state with Marxism's insistence on the causal impact of capitalist processes and class structures on the other levels of the social formation. I will argue that three general clusters of factors--fiscal, military, and cultural--account for the German state's particular orientation" (p. 74).

This is very concise thesis statement. But the three causal factors are all theorized in terms of structural dependence on capitalist production or, in the case of culture, a capitalist ethos. How does this not support the Marxist thesis of the capitalist state a la Przeworski (what the capitalist state must do) and Offe (what the capitalist state cannot do)? He admits that outcomes have a capitalist class character and then explains them in terms of structural dependence on capitalism combined with the pro-capitalist culture and ideology of civil servants. What leverage does statist theory give? **[I think the state capacity and state complexity theory does – possibly – postulate more fully distinct mechanisms]**

The target of the state as reducible to the capitalist class, or even capitalism is a straw person. Clearly, there are competing interests within the capitalist class as well as other emerging and dying (old agrarian) interests that are both involved in political economic struggle. Yet, in spite of all these competing interests, struggle within and among classes (both of which were recognized by Marx), we see from the analysis class structured outcomes and, more importantly, constraints on the range of options that come from the class structure (broadly conceived in terms of economic, political and cultural structures with a class character). It is extremely useful to theorize these processes in terms of messiness, fractured and contradictory processes, which include some room for the pursuit of autonomous non-capitalist interests within the state apparatuses. But unless we are preoccupied with the straw person, this all seems to validate

and deepen a very Marxist theorization of the state. **[I don't think you can really say that "messiness" validates the Marxist theorization of the state; it is just not inconsistent with it. The Marxist theory of the state leaves room for other autonomous causal processes to have effects, but it does not – I think - - specify their effectivity or the degree of messiness that will occur under given conditions of the Marxist-mechanisms, and therefore messiness per se is not a validation of Marxism.]** We have a number of class actors struggling for control over the state which, in the end, "systematically privileges industry." Of course bureaucrats have their own interests and of course they can pursue some of these in some times and places against the interests of dominant economic actors. But I just don't see why this can't be theorized within a contemporary Marxist framework and, given his repeated emphasis on the structural dependence of the state on capitalism and outcomes that systematically privilege industry, why it should require a separate theory from Marxism. His equation of particular mechanisms with particular theories is an unsatisfactory reason.

The Marxist model is at a level of abstraction which is meant to explain historical trajectories and the events and non-events that guide those trajectories, not particular policy struggles. **[here you are basically giving a sense in which you do need distinct theories: i.e. you need to introduce a theory of new mechanisms at lower levels of abstraction than at this higher level of abstraction, and there is nothing specifically Marxist about these mechanisms that enter the analysis only at these lower levels of abstraction. You are proposing something different from Steinmetz, since he doesn't pose this levels-of-abstraction problem, but you are also providing a rationale for the idea of "distinct theories for distinct mechanisms". The difference is that you are also positing a meta-rule for the relevance of these distinct theories: for explaining the overall trajectory of state practices, all you need is a class analytic theory of class-mechanisms; for explaining more concrete variations of policy and practice within that trajectory, you need to add a theory of other mechanisms.]** Clearly we observe some anomalies, but is it true that these cannot be accommodated by Marxist theory? Indeed, is the pursuit of non-capitalist interests within the state really damaging to Marxist theory? Or does it simply demonstrate the complexity of concrete class structures? Perhaps we could theorize civil servant positions as particular class locations with their own interests, not as class fractions or contradictory locations. Indeed, if the class-in-itself to class-for-itself model can be modified within the Marxist framework then the pursuit of varied interests is not so troubling. **[Of course: it is possible – as you suggest here – that even at the lower level of abstraction of Steinmetz's work it could be the case that really all that is going on is class mechanisms. What look like organization-analytic processes/mechanisms are just a distinct kind of class mechanism. This is possible, but it doesn't seem too plausible to me, and more than claims that gender relations are really just a disguised form of class relations is plausible.]** In any case, it seems to me that all of this can be theorized in Marxist terms, including relative autonomy—which is relative because it is limited **[That is not the meaning of "relative" in "relative autonomy" within the Poulantzian framework: relative autonomy means "autonomous with respect to manipulations by specific capitalist actors in order to better functionally serve the interests of Capital as a whole." This does not mean that autonomy is limited; it just means that the state is functionally nonautonomous + instrumentally somewhat autonomous]**—to strengthen the Marxist case, indeed, at the expense of the statist case, rather than combining them in a more or less ad hoc way. Thus, e.g., why not see the state as developing within the context of uneven and combined development (Trotsky, Anderson) generating a space of relative autonomy (Poulantzas) for struggle over competing interests subject to constraints which will depend on the class structure and balance of power in the class struggle? Indeed, the story here seems to be one of the state being the "executive of the bourgeoisie" **[A wee note: the Marx quote is NOT that the state = "the executive of the bourgeoisie"; it is that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie." The quote refers to a specific aspect of the state – the executive of the state – rather than to the state per se.]** by articulating the general interests of capitalist development (being and ideal collective capitalist) and accumulation vis -a-vis anti-capitalist interests and sectoral conflicts within the capitalist class. Though the state is clearly not "reducible to capitalism," and while it is autonomous from particular class- and class-fraction actors, I read his story as demonstrating quite clearly that the state in capitalist society is not autonomous from the capitalist economy.

That the state was driven to systematically pursue policies of the form A over policies of any other form means that it is not autonomous. Given sectoral conflicts within the capitalist class, and indeed, that each

individual capitalist wants monopoly for herself and competition for everyone else, what does it mean to be beholden to the capitalist class? It means to support and legislate policies of general interest to capitalists, which is to say, policies that while they may benefit one capitalist at the expense of another tend to benefit both at the expense of agriculture or labor. Clearly there may be some policies that benefit agriculture or (sectors of) labor against (sectors of) capital. At the level of individual policies, taken one by one, the state is clearly not 'beholden' to the interests of any class, given that there is some power on both sides of any social asymmetry. But at the level of the general tendency of state policies and their cumulative effects, it seems quite clear from his data that the state is articulating the general interests of capital against those of labor and agriculture. I think he is using extreme straw-person language to make the criteria such that the state couldn't possibly be anything other than autonomous from capital: can it's policies be "reduced" to or "derived" from capital? is it "beholden to the capitalist class"?

Are there no nuances in Marxist theory?

"The German state was comparatively immune to social pressures . . . [but] was strongly oriented toward industrial capitalism" due to structural constraints (p. 142).

How is the first part of this statement meaningful given the second? What was the state autonomous to do? Was it really autonomous from the capitalist economy, or simply from particular capitalists?

[3] Jing Sun

The question that I hope to be discussed is the comparative value of Steinmetz's research, i.e., whether his explanation of the imperial German welfare state is nomothetic or idiosyncratic in nature. Steinmetz claims that his research is grounded in theoretical pluralism, because no single causal factor can single-handedly explain the complex pattern of social welfare state. His argument on the four separate "paradigms of social regulation" encompasses both structural and cultural elements so as to provide an exhaustive picture of the welfare state in 19th century Germany. While traditional literature tends to focus more on the Bismarckian Worker Policy paradigm, i.e., to account for the rise of Germany welfare state predominantly from Bismarck's preempting attempt to stifle the budding Social Democratic Party, Steinmetz points out that social policy is multifaceted and has multiple origins: consideration of preventing the working class from taking the lead is definitely relevant, but there were other aspects of social policy that cannot be neatly explained along the line of class struggle. For example, the bureaucratization and professionalization of social work; or the social policies that worked through the socialist unions rather than bypassing them.

When combined together, the four separate paradigms of social regulation seem to provide an exhaustive account for the evolution of the imperial Germany welfare state. **[The four "paradigm" are different forms of policy, not different "accounts" or explanation of evolution. He proposes a range of mechanisms which explain the variations in these forms, but the forms themselves do not constitute explanations.]** However, one question that remains unanswered in Steinmetz's book is whether these four paradigms may also apply to other Western European welfare states. In any event, Germany was NOT the only welfare state in Europe. I wonder to what extent Steinmetz's four paradigm analysis is empirically grounded on the German uniqueness, and to what extent such analysis may also explain the rise and functioning of other European welfare states. It seems to me that Steinmetz has somehow refrained from making bolder claims about the comparative value of his research by repeatedly emphasizing the importance of contextualized interpretation. Yet, the composition of the four paradigms of social regulation is by no means idiosyncratically German. Hence, a promising avenue for future research may be to study the different mixes of the four paradigms in different contexts. **[These four forms of policy for regulating the social – with some variations of course – occurred throughout Europe, so the explanandum of Steinmetz's book appear quite broadly. It is a different question whether or not the specific explanations he proposes would also apply to other cases. His methodological stance would say that each case would have to be examined in its own right and that there is no inherent reason for the variables that explain variation within Germany would also do so – say – within France or across Europe.]**

[4] James Benson**Using the saliency of state features as a guide for choosing state theories**

Steinmetz advances realism as an appropriate metatheoretical orientation to study of the state. He advances several justifications for this orientation. In order of my own thinking on his thinking, I think he is saying the following... The state is a thing (in the Durkheimian sense of a thing), a concrete object of analysis, not an abstraction. Because the state is a very complex thing, single theories will not successfully explain its entirety. Therefore there is a need to take a theoretically pluralistic, or multivariate approach to its analysis. How do we decide which theories to use? We should employ the theories that describe the variables that are most salient during the time period of our inquiry. In other words, specific independent variables are more or less salient during different historical periods. So, we should be drawing upon theories that describe salient variables and mechanisms **[For Steinmetz variable = mechanisms, unless you mean that variables = measures of mechanisms]**, in relationship to the state for which we seek an explanation. Sometimes a single theory will be sufficient for an explanation. However, in most cases, achieving a comprehensive *explanation* will require that we employ multiple theories. **[This is a fair statement of Steinmetz's position so long as the word "salient" means "causally important" rather than something more subjective or discursive.]**

Steinmetz distinguishes the realist approach from the positivist approach. Through positivism, we look at the object of inquiry in order to see if it fits our theoretical construction. If it doesn't, we either discard or modify our theory. **[This is not exactly how Steinmetz would draw the contrast of realism vs positivism. In realism as well one modifies theories in light of anomalies. In his view the difference is that in positivism one does not accept the idea of "ontological depth" in the account of mechanisms – the triplet: mechanism/event/experience (or observation) – but rather seek regularities among experiences as the basis for generalizations.]** Through realism, we look at the object of inquiry, and focus on the salient features of the object (in this case the state). The salient features of the state will determine the perceptual categories and levels of abstraction that we employ in order to advance a comprehensive explanation of the state. I think that this issue of *saliency* is compelling. It provides a justification for taking a theoretically pluralistic approach that includes class analysis, organizational analysis, and microfoundational approaches. Let's talk about it.

[5] Sara Swider

Regulating the Social- George Steinmetz

I have four basic questions 1) I am not clear on the definition or concept of the "social" 2) I am not sure what is gained by his adding gender to his model 3) Not convinced of need to incorporate the concept of semi-autonomous state 4) I don't see how his examples leads to the concept of semi-autonomous state and/or not sure of the incompatibility of certain strands of Marxist theory and his blending of the two theoretical strands. Below is some explanatory and situational remarks for each question:

1) Defining the social:

Why does his definition of the social or the "welfare state" not include things such as education (I know this came later), roads, infrastructure, etc. My first point of confusion is in the limits put on the definition, for example why is education excluded? , Second, why the welfare state limited in definition to the programs that focus on the "welfare" or the "social" that consists of the non capitalist, wouldn't we also be justified in looking at "capitalist welfare" such as roads, military to some extent. In other words, Steinmetz suggest the social cannot be reduced to the individual or the state, but can we also say that the social cannot be reduced to a capitalists (or group of capitalist) or the economy? Finally, I do not see the programs that are encompassed by the welfare state as been strictly to benefit non-capitalists, or as strictly protecting or remedying the excesses of capital. For example, it seems that not only did these earlier forms of social welfare benefit and protect the working class and other non-capitalist, but they also played an important role in the reproduction of the labor force. Even today, we tend to view the state's role things like in

production of the roads, schools, jails, etc, as public goods, but really aren't they also, if not just, a welfare subsidy for capitalist. More starkly is the example of welfare policies of today in some states, which just seem to supplement minimum wages set below the subsistence level, a sort of state sponsored private industry. (alternative is forcing companies to pay subsistence level wages/benefits). **[All typologies of domains or levels or spheres always provoke definitional problems. It is usually a good idea to map the entire contrast-space and then situate the specific concept. So, in this case the "social" is being specified as distinct from**

- a) the state,
- b) the economy (which Steinmetz identifies with "civil society" in what is, I think, a distinctively Hegelian use of the term, in contrast to Gramscis, which is closer to Steinmetz's "social")
- c) the family

The "social" is therefore a locus of activity or practice not organized directly by these three spheres. This is the sense in which people spoke of the "social question" in the 19th century and "social work" in the 20th. It is not just public goods: roads and education insofar as they provide inputs to capitalist production would constitute a state intervention into the economy – the production of goods and services. But education, insofar as it forms and regulates social interactions and creates disciplined subjectivity, etc. would constitute part of the "social" (I think).]

2) I am not sure how gender theory and his use of gender analysis is adding to his analysis to the state and helping to answer his questions. **[Basically this is part of the "distinct mechanism" meta-theory: distinctively gendered mechanism explain the emergence of scientific social work and the specific problem of the regulation of the family. These, he argues, cannot be explained through class terms]**

3) In his chapter on the role of the state in Imperial Germany on social policy he argues against Marxist interpretation of the German State because he suggest that we cannot find mechanisms which produce state policies that is consistent with Marxism. More specifically he draws our attention to the following contradiction: the state personnel were Junkers, landed aristocrats, whose interests were with agriculture rather than industry, yet the polices of the state favored industry over agriculture.

He suggests that three autonomous goals of the state (1) dependency on financial resources 2) military needs of innovation/industry 3)ideological interpellation of state servants into ethos of capitalist industrialization led these policy makers to support or promote industrial capitalism.

My question is 1) since the state is going through a transitional phase into industrial capitalists, doesn't this cause problems with analysis. In the sense that, he sees the need to rely on multiple theories to describe the transition rather than homeostasis also the contradiction above could be explained through lagged affects of the transition, meaning that even if the state could be classified as an industrial capitalist state, the dominant capitalists had yet to solidify their position and role in the state. 2) My second question is that the contradiction above does seem to discredit instrumental Marxism, but I am not as clear on how it contradicts the more subtle forms of functional or structural Marxism, and therefore not clear on the need of including elements of the statist theories, or the "semi-autonomous state"

4) Schumpeter suggested that the state was limited in action due to dependency on taxes generated by the private economy. Offee suggests there are 4 constraints on the state, 1 prohibited from organizing production, 2)powerless without resources from taxation 3)must promote accumulation 4) any political group or party can will control over state power.

However, the state has always been limited in the sense that any organization depends on resources, and accumulating resources becomes a part of it's activity. So, this is not unique to a specific time period, however, the form or method of accumulation is different. **[True: the state is always limited by the need to extract resources. But it is not always limited by the need to extract resources in ways that are simultaneously consistent with the private appropriation of profits.]** Second, in this period, reliance on the "private economy" rather than "taxes" per say is the issue, because most states rely on individual taxes,

not corporate taxes, as the main form of funding. **[It may not matter whether the taxes are levied on individuals or on corporations, since the corporations pay a wage and at least some income taxes or individual taxes reappear as higher before-tax wages]** Therefore, this process requires the state to appease capitalists, or encourage capitalism to enhance the private economy, and at the same time the state must appease the population and constrain capitalists in order to assure 1) that surplus or profits are to some extent making its way to the masses, which in turn is appropriated by the state and 2) to maintain legitimacy (justification of existence and actions) among the groups other than capitalists.

I don't see how this action described above is autonomous, or explains the state's autonomy, it is still captive of the capitalist system in which it functions, and as a result is forced to act in contradictory manner. I am also not clear on why a functionalist Marxist approach would be incompatible with the "semiautonomous" state. **[I think the issue is simply whether there are autonomous causes of variation linked to semi-autonomy of the state, autonomous in the sense as producing distinct variations that cannot be explained by the class-dependency mechanisms.]**

[6] Matt Dimick

Steinmetz argues for a "semiautonomous" theory of the Prussian-German state in the nineteenth century, one that does not rely on any particular tradition, but borrows from several, including Marxist, state-centered, and feminist. Although Steinmetz' central concern is social policy of the German state during this period, his discussion of the German state and about what kind of state it was raised the most questions for me.

Steinmetz argues that a Marxist account of the German State is inadequate. He makes two points with which I agree. First, from a highly simplified point of view, one could look at the effects of state policies and conclude from them that the German state was "bourgeois." But this would not be an adequate account of the state because it would fail to specify the mechanisms by which capitalist interests became aligned with the goals of state managers. Such an argument begs the question why the state chose these particular policies, which is an important step in the explanatory process. Second, one cannot rely on a view that senior state managers were recruited from the bourgeois class in the German case (as one way of resolving the above problem) because it is simply empirically false.

One way of trying to resolve the above issue from a Marxist point of view is to argue that certain forms of the state can account for the objectives and interests of state managers. But Steinmetz raises more compelling, and thought-provoking issues on this point in his more detailed discussion of Marxist theories of the German state. First, if the German state *form* is feudal but serves capitalist interests, doesn't this undermine the structural account of state forms? Second, what accounts for such a lag, or disjuncture, between the start of a capitalist economy and the adoption of more genuinely capitalist state? Third, why should we try to attribute class/economic labels to state forms at all? Why not argue that there is nothing inherent about these institutional features and accept that they take on different class valences in different contexts? These are certainly compelling questions and they provoked several thoughts.

First, I believe accounts that stress different forms of the state make an adequate case that different state forms can serve different class interests. This seems to be the reason that they distinguish state power (or the state as a relation) from state form. One would say that a mismatch between the class relations the state supports and the state form may serve the dominant class interests, but not optimally. **[I think your point here is exactly right: the theory of state forms makes a specific prediction about what happens when there is a noncorrespondence, namely that certain aspects of the policy-producing process will be suboptimal for the reproduction of class relations]** It makes sense to me to talk about a series of policies (including enforcement of contracts, uniform systems of law, weights and measures, and host of other examples that Steinmetz cites) that may maintain or facilitate capitalist class relationships but that don't necessarily require a certain form of the state to administer. **[Some of these, in a sense, constitute aspects of formal properties of the state – such as "uniform systems of law" – and others may indeed require certain formal properties. The enforcement of capitalist contracts, for example, requires a certain kind of judiciary that was not found in the feudal state, and thus feudal states were not very effective in monitoring and enforcing contracts, adjudicating contract disputes, etc.]** For example, several state forms could enforce contracts between capitalists, even where one makes its policy through a monarchical administration and the other through a bourgeois parliament. **[it could be the case that there**

were variations in the policy-making process but still functionally-equivalent formal properties of the contract adjudication process.]

Second, if such an arrangement is not optimal, how can it persist for so long? In the English case, such an arrangement between capitalist class relations and a feudal state did not seem to persist long at all. Why such a long period in the German case? My thought on this was that the German feudal elites had an advantage in being a late-comer. For example, the English king presiding over a capitalist economy “in the lead” may have faced a situation where acting more predatory may not have seemed like such a risky move. In fact, the unprecedented nature of the situation may have been precisely what led the monarch to underestimate his position and precipitate a revolutionary crisis. The German monarch would have faced a different situation. First, the revolutionary “examples” of the English and French revolutions, I think, would dispose a German monarch to be quite conciliatory towards bourgeois interests. He could hang on for longer by avoiding the kinds of predatory actions for which the feudal state form has the capacity. (I suppose this would be a micro level, or plays of the game, explanation for the persistence of the feudal state form?) **[Very nice idea here: late-comers observe the disasters of early movers and act preemptively to preserve their rule, thus prolonging suboptimal institutions. Interesting point]** Second, with Britain and France rapidly developing, it was in any state’s interests to also follow a capitalist path for war-making and foreign policy reasons. This would again require a feudal state to accommodate bourgeois interests, simply for these feudal elites to retain power and protect themselves from domineering neighbors. This is a much more tricky assertion because as Steinmetz (as well as state-centered theorists) asserts, foreign-policy rationales as archetypical “state” interests and not class interests. Still, if it is capitalism (being more productive, and so forth) that gives states an edge in war making, does this make it an explanation in some “last instance” sense? **[There is obviously a very complex interconnection between capitalist causes and statist causes with respect to warmaking and geopolitics. I think the issue here – following Mann – would require distinguishing between the dynamics/motives for particular courses of action and the development of the capacity for pursuing those goals. The goals here do seem geopolitical/statist – not really capitalist (unless you really believe that militarism is mainly a result of the economic aspects of imperialism rather than empire-ism) whereas the capacity are deeply conditional on capitalist development. It is hard to assign a clear “last instance” in this cases.]** Thus, as a late developer, the feudal elites of the German state could learn and avoid the mistakes of other old regimes. Finally, it makes sense to me to say that the form of the German state was indeed changing during this period. Some examples Steinmetz mentions led me to believe that parliament became stronger as the nineteenth century progressed (contrary to Steinmetz, I would see the parliament, even with restricted suffrage, as a bourgeois state form, not a feudal one with a different class valence). **[I generally agree, although there were some forms of parliaments in France even in the 15th century, in the form of the *estates generals*].** Also, I would guess that a more bureaucratized administration, with hierarchical departments, careers, and fixed salaries, would reduce pressures on a feudal state form to become predatory. Thus, it would make sense to take about a partially feudal, partially bourgeois state, and this feature also might be an explanation why the German state in this form persisted as long as it did (I don’t want to belabor this point and ask how the German state transformed itself “from within” as Poulantzas asserts, and Steinmetz questions). **[Again: you are absolutely right here]**

Third, why should we speak of capitalist states or other class forms of states at all? One reason, as mentioned, seems to be that this is a way to explain how a state can be capitalist (or other class form) without relying on “effects only” or instrumentalist arguments. Furthermore, we may ask from a position opposite Steinmetz’ view whether it is the case that institutional forms take on different “class valences” in different contexts? Why do no developed capitalist economies exhibit all the kinds of law-making and law-enforcing institutions that existed during the middle ages? Why do states in developed capitalist countries, despite their differences, share so many similarities, especially when compared to other states in history? It is true that we observe *similar* institutional forms under different economic systems (bureaucracy being an example that comes to mind), but this is different than saying that *different* institutional forms may be suitable for different economic systems, so long as they take on the appropriate class valences, which seems to be the up-shot of Steinmetz’ argument (for example, that either “feudal” or “capitalist” state institutions are alternatively favorable for feudal or capitalist economies, depending on their “class valences”). **[It could, of course, be the case that certain formal elements of the state structure obtain their class character not by virtue of some attribute examined in isolation from other features of the state, but by virtue of the complex articulation of a given element with other elements. Thus, the “civil liberties” may be “bourgeois” and a fundamental feature of the capitalist state and yet also be**

present in a democratic socialist state. What makes it bourgeois may be the specific articulation of this element with other aspects of the state – like the form of the separation of public and private or the specific relationship of private property to the rule of law. A constitutional Monarchy in Britain may be a “bourgeois” form of the state even though monarchy per se is clearly not bourgeois.]

[7] Robyn Autry memo

Steinmetz makes the argument that a plurality of theoretical perspectives is necessary to understand the German state. He repeatedly argues that Marxist theories cannot explain the motivations and changes in social policies over time. Yet, his own analysis seems to support the notion that politicians' primary motivation and intention for policies was to strengthen the national economy or industrial capitalism. He even offers several examples of how the state was dependent on capital for financial resources, military resources, etc as a result of an ideological predisposition to the bourgeoisie. Much of his evidence seems very much in accord with Marxist claims that in capitalist society state agents, regardless of whether they come from an agrarian background or not, do not pursue policies that threaten capitalist production and accumulation. He writes that regardless of policy-makers' original class interests or objectives they took on an ideology supportive of capitalist development.

From the late 1840s on the social policies were designed to enhance industrial capitalism by undermining organized labor and molding a particular type of workforce, ie stable or mobile. Steinmetz writes that these policies were sometimes contrary to the wishes of particular firms or employer associations, but that does mean that the policies did not have the overall impact of fostering capitalist development. Perhaps, in certain situations the state was more concerned with the long-term stability or capitalism, rather than short-term gains. Also, Steinmetz writes that politicians were aware of their dependency on private capital, but that their efforts to lessen it, for example by amassing state assets for example, were insufficient. This dependency indicates that neither the state nor its policies were autonomous from capital, after all. Steinmetz writes that most of the state's autonomy was apparent in its foreign policy, but he does offer much evidence to support or develop this claim. **[I think the issue here is whether or not there are certain important forms of variation of the state that cannot be explained by the class-analytic mechanisms of Marxism, and therefore which require the invocation of other mechanisms. Some of the variations he posits – like the changes in the Eugenics ideologies of professional social workers – seem pretty distant from class-mechanisms, but other variations seem much more closely linked. Part of what needs sorting out is precisely how to think about the relevant types of variation and their connection to distinct types of mechanisms.]**

[8] César A. Rodríguez

I would like to raise for discussion a cluster of issues on Steinmetz's conception and use of theories of the state in his account of the rise of the welfare state in Imperial Germany. Both in Chapter One and in the more empirical sections of his book, Steinmetz advances an eclectic approach to theories of the state. In his view, “theoretical pluralism” is justified by the fact that while such theories are pitched at a high level of abstraction, states—and, in general, *explananda* that are of interest to the social sciences—are concrete phenomena that require accounts that are more fine-grained than any general theory can provide. Thus, rather than engaging in adjudicating on the merits of theories in general, Steinmetz pragmatically takes a bit of each of them to explain different state policies at different moments in history.

I found this eclectic solution rather unsatisfactory. For it raises several problems on different fronts:

1. Contrary to what Steinmetz argues based on Bhaskar's typology, I don't think that social theories in general and state theories in particular aim solely at explaining mechanisms as opposed to events. **[Your expression here – “explaining mechanisms as opposed to events” – is not quite right. Steinmetz argues that theories specify mechanisms as effect-generating processes: you postulate mechanisms to**

explain the effects. “Events”, then, are clusters of these effects, which are then observed or experienced. In a theory, then, mechanisms explain *potential* events; actual events are explained by combinations of mechanisms.] While it is true that singling out causal mechanisms is a key theoretical task, all theories attempt at making sense of concrete historical events. Marxist theories of the state, for example, are not merely efforts at highlighting the importance of class as a causal mechanism, but also — and crucially — at explaining actions taken by concrete capitalist states in concrete historical conjunctures. The same applies to the other theories examined by Steinmetz, be they social democracy, state-centered approaches or theories on the semi-autonomy of the state. Thus, an abstract theory is not simply a heuristic device, but a serious attempt at accounting for real events. If state-theory construction were reduced to singling out causal mechanisms without accounting for events —and the object of social research were only to explain specific phenomena without at the same time furthering theoretical knowledge— theory would become a rather unattractive enterprise. **[The claim that mechanisms explain events – which is correct – needs to be anchored in some account of the level of abstraction in which the event is described. I think what Steinmetz is meaning here is that concretely specified events – like the choice of one kind of policy vs another – cannot, in general, be explained by single mechanisms, and it is this sense that they cannot be accounted for by a single “theory”]**

2. One possible source of what I submit is a problematic use of theory in Steinmetz is that he tries to apply the most abstract and unqualified versions of the theories he considers, on the one hand, to the study of quite concrete historical phenomena —the rise of the welfare state in Imperial Germany—, on the other. Put differently, he seems to radicalize the dichotomy between theory and events by reconstructing abstract theories as monolithic conceptual apparatuses that do not allow for variations and combinations that would accommodate some of the events that he argues they cannot explain. For instance, social democratic theories would not necessarily deny the importance of state autonomy —and indeed would be willing to incorporate it as a relevant variable that affects the operation of its main independent variable, i.e., collective worker power. Similarly, structuralist Marxist theories of the state would not rule out state autonomy, but would locate it, as Offe does, within the overall constraints of the capitalist system. **[The expression “within the overall constraints of the capitalist system” is, of course, an extremely complicated idea, and where there are strong interactions between distinct causal mechanisms it is not so easy to firmly nail down the ways in which one occurs “within the constraints” of the other in a strongly asymmetrical manner. Sometimes this is tractable, but not always. In the gender mechanism problem for explaining certain features of the regulative policy of the capitalist state it isn’t obvious that regulating the social occurs within “the overall constraints of the gender structures of male domination” or “within the overall constraints of capitalism” or both. Gender constraints are not in any simple sense nested within capitalist constraints at any given historical moment. The same might be true of geopolitical processes viz-a-viz capitalism.]**

Instead of oversimplifying abstract theories and combining them pragmatically, one could imagine at least two alternative strategies:

2.1. One could choose a theory that is pitched at a level of abstraction more akin to that of one’s *explanandum*. In Steinmetz’s case, for instance, Mann’s theory of the modern state might do a better job at getting at the phenomena explaining the rise of the welfare state in Germany than the more abstract theories examined in the book. Given that Mann’s theory of the state is designed explicitly to account for variation between the relative salience of political, economic, military and ideological power, Steinmetz’s account of the succession of models of social policy in Germany could be made in terms of such variation —e.g., the salience of class in the creation of the poor relief system as opposed to the salience of ideological, economic and military factors in the creation of the Bismarckian system. **[The problem, of course, is that these four paradigms of social regulation all coexisted and overlapped, and were concentrated at different levels of the political system. It may be that the explanation of the variations across cities in the mix of these forms cannot be explained simply by an appropriately “concrete” Marxist theory, but would require a specific way of combining Marxist theoretical claims about class-centered mechanisms with other theoretical claims – eg about gender mechanisms]**

The advantage of this approach in theoretical terms would be that it would not give up the task of contributing to a theory of the state in general, which is what Steinmetz seems to do in focusing explicitly on the construction of a theory of the *Imperial German* state.

2.2. One could pick an abstract theory that seems to be particularly powerful and attempt to develop it to incorporate the anomalies that one encounters in empirical research. For instance, in Steinmetz

account semiautonomous state theory is quite robust. Indeed, as shown in Table 2.1. (p. 45) it explains *all* social policies enacted by the central state between 1850 and 1914. Given such considerable explanatory power, it would make sense to ask whether social policy at the local state level could also be explained by incorporating modifications into the semiautonomous state theory that are perfectly compatible with its main thrust.

It seems to me that this is a feasible task. For instance, such a theory does not rule out the possibility that under certain circumstances—i.e., when the constraints imposed by capital are strong relative to the capacities of the state—the state will behave like an agent of capital. The fact that the theory posits state autonomy and capitalist constraints as relevant variables does not imply that it does not apply when one of these two variables does not obtain. The anomaly, in other words, can be subsumed under the theory. This would explain, for instance, social policy at the local level in Germany between early 19th century and the 1890s, i.e., the period when local power was controlled by the local bourgeoisie—which, according to Steinmetz, cannot be explained by semiautonomous state theory. Similarly, instead of abandoning the latter and using social democratic theory instead to account for local social policy between 1890 and 1914, one could argue that whenever workers' parties are strong, the effect of immediate constraints of capital on the state as predicted by semiautonomous state theory is weaker—but not nonexistent. This could be done, I think, without compromising the core tenets of the theory.

[9] Amy Lang

Questions on Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social*

1. What are the implications of Steinmetz' argument that we should use different theories of the state to explain different state-historical moments? I first thought this was a marvelous intervention in the theories of the state literature, since it emphasized explaining historical variation over maintaining theoretical orthodoxy. But if different theories explain different historical moments (or crystallizations, to use one of Mann's favorite terms), we are left in a *theoretical* vacuum regarding the question of how states move from one moment to the next. (For example, Steinmetz give us historical details, but not a generalizable theory, about how municipal councils evolved from being dominated by bourgeois interests to being influenced by other administrative and political interests). **[But perhaps this is because there can be no "general theory" of that evolution since it all depends upon other, contingent properties of the process. That is: this evolution may not follow any law-like pattern – in some places bourgeois interests remain in strong control, in others they do not, and it depends upon the interaction with other mechanisms.]**

2. In Ch. 6, "Local Social Policy before 1890," Steinmetz argues that statist mechanisms mediated the effects of social disorder (unemployment, violent protest) on local policy. Of these, "[m]ost important were state officials' *interpretations* of demonstrations, recession, organized labor, the socialist threat, and the possibilities for cooperation with the SPD" (186, my emphasis). Steinmetz makes a good case for the existence of the four paradigmatic ways of thinking about social policy in Imperialist Germany. He also makes reference to the language used in the implementation of policies such as emergency works programs (Eg. he argues that emergency works programs emphasized particular categories such as "worker" over "pauper," p. 178). But I wonder whether there is a more direct way to include the evocation of particular discourses in his regression analyses. That is, there may be a discrepancy between the existence of a discourse that can furnish reasons for social policies prior to their enactment and a language with which to implement them, and the actual motivations of those involved in voting in municipal councils. Are local protest and unemployment rates adequate measures of middle-class fear and anxiety about the social realm? Context may affect the degree of anxiety with which local elites interpret demonstrations and unemployment rates. Steinmetz makes this point in his analysis of the recession year public employment programs. But what about the contexts surrounding the adoption of poor relief policies and the adoption of the Ghent system? Before the 1890s when the "poor relief" paradigm was in effect, Steinmetz writes that there is a close correspondence between social disruption and the enactment of poor relief measures by bourgeois-dominated municipal councils (although we don't get to see his data measuring this relationship). But as municipal councils and administrative agencies came to represent more diverse interests, the "anxiety" thesis presumably did not fully inform SPD agitation for social reform. What measure of municipal administrators' fear could we use to support the idea that the discourse of scientific social work (which was not so closely related to protest or unemployment) informed the implementation of

social policies? **[You raise a range of really interesting points here – about a) the varying contexts within which subjective states like fear and anxiety operate, and b) how do we measure/observe the relevant anxiety-context. I agree that it is far from obvious that it is local protests which define the context-of-anxiety as opposed to societal protests. I supposed for the quasi-corporatist strategies the local protests and local organization may matter more directly, since the policy directly requires cooperating with those local actors, but it is less obvious for the noncorporatist policies that local politicians anxieties are only roused by local events.]**

[10] Christine Overdeest

With respect to the micro, Weberian and Marxist approaches reviewed in the 1st three weeks of class, Steinmetz seems to me to take up a Weberian approach (but with a underlying concern for evaluating neo-Marxist questions about the role of social regulatory policy in mediating class relations). His Weberianism is evidenced I think in the fact that he looks for and finds a higher degree of variability in both the social sources and targets of social policy (class, party, union, gender, professional groups, moral order campaigns for cleanliness, eugenics). From a theoretic or meta-theoretic perspective, what is/are Steinmetz' take-home message/s? **[It is an interesting issue whether this argument is, in spite of its formal rhetoric, fundamentally a Marxist account within which certain Weberian-like themes are nested, or a Weberian-grounded framework for state theory. I personally think it is more the former, but it is worth discussing.]**

What mechanisms are important? It seems Steinmetz sees the efficacy of multifarious mechanisms of social change: disorderly social protest, corporatism, the professions... Is there a sense offered in the book of which is most effective?

[11] TERESA MELGAR

1. One of the issues that I found truly interesting in Steinmetz's work is his conception of how social policies came to be formulated by 19th century central and local state bodies. In his conception, social policies varied as a function, among others, of the way in which the "social question" was posed and the specific discourses which underpinned notions of poverty, disorder, etc. I also found his discussion on the role played by "social fear" in shaping the bourgeoisie and middle classes' response to the social question, and the rise of the German welfare state, extremely interesting:

Some questions / issues:

a) what was the role, if any, of conflict and heterogeneity in the evolution of these discourses and paradigms? Within the parameters of the four paradigms, for instance, could it have been conceivable that there were different levels by which their proponents accepted, believed and articulated the core values and notions underpinning these respective paradigms? Or were these generally held, at fairly uniform and somewhat homogenous levels by their respective proponents? Were there notable fissures or cracks in the bourgeoisie's articulation of these views that somehow prefigured their own different levels of openness to reforms at the local/municipal level? **[I don't know the historical record beyond what is in the book, but I suspect that these four paradigms are largely analytical reconstructions rather than, mainly, active cognitive types in the heads of the actors at the time. Certainly no one called the Ghent system "quasicorporatist regulation". But some of these proposals may have also constituted discursive types for the actors. That would be good to know.]**

b) what relationship, if any, existed between these different paradigms of social policy? Did the new paradigms necessarily arise from the womb of the old? More specifically, did the perceived shortcomings of one paradigm lead state agencies to experiment with new forms that, in turn, served as building blocks of another paradigm? **[I think in the texture of Steinmetz's account there are some indications of**

innovations growing out of dilemmas/limits of prior policy. This is certainly how the shift from poor relief to quasi-corporatist policy is portrayed. The scientific social welfare policies built around gender issues seem to come from somewhere else, not out of prior social regulation practices.]

c) while this may be outside the scope of Steinmetz work, I wonder: how did the supposed “target beneficiaries” respond to these “social policies.” For instance, did the poor and unemployed who were being “targeted” by certain policies under the rubric of a particular paradigm, eventually embrace the ethic underpinning such paradigm (e.g. making one’s self productive). Or did they try to benefit from such policies, yet at the same time, resist the ethic that was being inculcated? This is a phenomenon that has received a fair amount of interest in developing countries – i.e. the “interface” between a particular social policy or initiative and their supposed “beneficiaries,” and how such “interface” does not often emerge as seamless as predicted for a huge variety of reasons. Would anyone have any insights on this aspect?

[I don’t now of any specific research on this for this period. Certainly the implication of the Foucaultian stance of social regulation is that the targets do indeed get regulated, and this suggests some inculcation/acceptance of the regulatory ethic. But many people have also talked about resistance. I imagine that in Germany, as elsewhere, the take-up rates for the more intrusive regulations is fairly low.]

2. Steinmetz illustrates very well his proposition that the way the social policies which were conceived under the “poor relief” paradigm, among others, tended to reflect and reproduce the habitus and thinking of the capitalist class, and the imperatives of bringing about more people into the workforce. To my mind, this sensitizes us to the possibility that “reform” initiatives are not always neutral, that at some level, they bear the imprints, values, worldview and interests of their authors, or the discourses underpinning a particular paradigm of which that reform initiative is a part. This proposition seems to be easier to accept if we are talking about initiatives whose underlying discourses, such as those which underpinned the “poor relief” program in Germany, hew more closely to the conservative side. Thus, it offers an important starting point for a critique. But is this a proposition that would make sense as well, if we examine some of the more progressive alternatives or policies being articulated to address certain social or political problems? In the Philippines, for instance, at least one American scholar who has done fieldwork in a huge urban poor community, has claimed that our campaign for electoral reform (i.e. a campaign that aims to promote a “new” type of politics, i.e. one based on principles and not personalities, and which seeks to clean up the electoral system by, among other things, pushing for certain electoral reform laws and encouraging voters not to sell their votes – vote-buying and fraud, not to mention violence, are staple fare in Philippine elections) largely reflects middle class values, sensibilities and worldviews, and hence, may not resonate with how the poor appreciate elections and understand the act of voting. He also claims that it reflects a number of biases against the poor which the middle classes, from whom many of the leaders and constituencies of the campaign come from, may not even be conscious of. Consequently, the campaign may not be as effective as we would hope it to be. Instead, it may simply end up reinforcing these biases and further widening the class divide that has so riven up elections and other political struggles in our country. While I do not necessarily agree with some of his analyses, I find his thoughts on the issue worth reflecting on. **[I think there are two distinct issues here: a) a given reform proposal may reflect various aspects of the social position of the reformers – either cultural or material – and thus not simply be neutral technical solutions to a problem; and b) this fact may mean that the reform will be ineffective in accomplishing what the reformers want (since it will not correspond to the situation of the targets of the reforms). Now (a) could be true without (b) being true. The poor relief strategies may reflect the interests and values of elites rather than the needs and values of the poor, and still they could be effective in regulating the poor. Remember that in Steinmetz’s analysis the reformers were not primarily interested in meeting the needs of the poor but in containing their protests and threats of unrest.]**

Would it make sense to employ this type of analysis, -- the kind that Steinmetz himself conducted in his study-- vis-a-vis some of the policy proposals being advocated by progressives in the US? May I hear some thoughts from the class on this issue?

[12] Landy Sanchez

1. Steinmetz claims that neither Marxists nor state autonomy approaches can provide a complete and accurate explanation of the founding of social policy across time and state levels (local and central). One reason for that is the null or limited attention to the ideological process in the historical definition of the social question. In particular, he sustains that the emergence of paradigms of social regulation can not be reduced to logic of class interest or state personnel's goals. Thus, the way in which social problems are perceived impacts what policies are chosen and the characteristics of the programs. I found this idea really interesting, but I'm not totally convinced by how he develops it in his analysis. To my mind, in most parts of the book Steinmetz present the paradigms as a "look from the top" either from dominant social classes or state managers, a reaction to their own fears. There is little attention to how lower classes, or non-state agents appropriate, redefine and contest those notions and to what extent these actions reshape the social question (an exception is his analysis of class discourse in pp.142-144). **[This is a good point – and also how the discourses of the elites might themselves be shaped by the reactions from below. I suppose in the discussion of the Ghent system – the quasi-corporatist reforms – there is some discussion of how unions and the SPOD backed these measures and contributed to their formulation and diffusion. But still not much about the real reactions of people to the imposition of the range of reforms. I don't know if there is much data available on this.]**

2. In relation to the previous idea, I found some similarities between some explanations of social policy (particular poor relief and Bismarckian policy) and clientelism in Latin America. In the later, social policies appear as state actions which try to secure not just "votes", but also prevent disruptive actions of marginal social groups as well as prevent their effective organization in autonomous entities. But in this perspective the recipients of social actions are able to redefine the terms of social policy (who gets included in it, how much do they receive, and so on) by playing with some of the expectations and needs of state agents and by negotiating (either implicitly or explicitly) their support or "good" behavior. This exchange, at the end, reduces not just the autonomy of social actors but also of state actors, especially in changing policy criteria. Is it possible to make a parallelism with poor relief and Bismarckian policies? **[I have never seen anyone really discuss the possibility that Bismarckian social insurance had this clientelistic character. It is my sense that the central state initiatives were pretty bureaucratically administered, but perhaps the local versions – the quasi-corporatist mechanisms – did have a clientelistic base. The inclusion of the unions in the administration of the funds in the Ghent system smells like a clientelistic device.]**

3. A third question is about the interplay between local and central State. I think his historical explanation about the different central factors in choosing a given social policy is convincing, but to me it is not clear the connection between both arenas, particularly if we consider that this period also describes the constitution of the German nation-state. What were the disputes between both levels? Do these disputes compromise state capacity?

[13] Matt Nichter

In Ch.4, echoing the position of Blackburn and Eley in The Peculiarities of German History, Steinmetz criticizes the view that the Bismarckian state was a *Junkerstaat* bowing to the interests of a conservative landed class. He argues that the German regime acted quite consistently in the interests of industrial capitalists, despite resistance from landlords and despite the fact that many leading state officials (including Bismarck himself) were landlords or landlords' relatives. Blackburn and Eley claim – and I agree – that this supports the Marxist characterization of the German state as a *capitalist* state, as opposed to a feudal or quasi-feudal one (contra supporters of the Sonderweg thesis). Steinmetz demurs, since "if the state seemed to behave like a 'capitalist state', it did so for reasons unlike those suggested by Marxist theory." Unless he is equating Marxism with the crudest 'instrumentalist' view – i.e. that a state is 'capitalist' if and only if its staff is primarily drawn from the capitalist class – it is hard to know what to make of Steinmetz's statement.

Steinmetz is right to criticize functionalist Marxist positions that assume states will always serve capitalist interests; there is no magic 'mechanism' to guarantee this once we admit that the state personnel are not literally an 'executive committee of the bourgeoisie' **[see my comment on Matt Viudal's misquote of this famous quote: it is the executive of the state is a committee, not the state is the**

executive committee....] But the Marxist characterization of a particular state as ‘capitalist’, as I take it, is at core a claim about the limits of state autonomy. To call a state ‘capitalist’ implies that a) the state is structurally dependent on capital, and that deep crises will result if the state pursues policies antithetical to capitalist interests for sustained periods of time; and b) that the core institutions of that state are incompatible with the long-term development of other modes of production (feudalism, socialism) under its auspices, so these institutions must be radically changed. [I think b) was actually the more important claim in the classical Marxist tradition, but it isn’t germane here.] **[I think your characterization here is correct, but there are still two issues which may impute the usefulness of the Marxist stance:**

1. explaining what policies occur within these “limits of autonomy”, especially when for some kinds of policies, the *limits* in the limits of autonomy may be so broad as to do very little excluding. Marxists usually like to use the categories and mechanisms of Marxist state theory to explain what does happen not merely what cannot happen. Steinmetz might be interpreted as mainly claiming that these other theories – and the mechanisms which they theorize – are needed for this task.

2. the possibility of multiple, non-nested “limiting” processes. This is especially relevant for the gender mechanism issue, but it could also be the case for militarism. That is: one can also say that there are gender limits on state autonomy in the 19th century: when Patriarchy is fully intact (i.e. before it is eroded by the trajectory of structural changes in the 20th century) the state cannot engage in policies which transgress certain gender imposed limits even if those would be good for capital. The same could be said for militarism: because of the character of geopolitical competition rooted in military-dynamics – which are not reducible to economic imperialism but have autonomy – the state cannot transgress certain limits imposed by military mechanisms. So here’s the problem: if we have three limiting/exclusion processes – processes which constrain the autonomy of the state – on what basis do we claim that one of these defines overarching limits within which the others are nested? It just isn’t obvious that these are nested limits as opposed to complexly intersecting limits. (This is basically the same problem with claiming asymmetries to causal interactions in the sense of multiplicative processes. It is tough to really defend such asymmetry).]

To refute a), one must identify state policies that substantively diverged from the interests of capitalists and that were carried out without provoking major crises. **[But it may not be necessary to actually refute (a) if there are other autonomy-limiting processes that are non-nested within the class-limits.]** Some argue that the Nazi regime fits the bill; Bismarck’s regime certainly doesn’t. What are the ‘reasons’ the German state ‘seemed to behave like’ a capitalist state under Bismarck? Steinmetz says the state’s behavior flowed from its structural dependence on tax revenue from capitalists, private sources of military R&D and provisioning, and a pro-capitalist socialization of state cadres. In other words, the substantive goals of policy makers – whatever their motivations – broadly overlapped with the interests of capitalists. Steinmetz also points out, correctly, that the state was autonomous enough of capitalist influence to enact pro-capitalist policies that were opposed by some fractions of the capitalist class (and presumably to resist proposals from some fractions that were not in the overall interest of capitalists). I don’t see why this is damaging to the Marxist position.

[14] Pablo Mitnick

1. The causal role of a paradigm of social regulation.

In Steinmetz’s framework a paradigm of social regulation is a two-faced entity, with a real-material side — the practices that constitute a policy or a regulatory regime— and a theoretical-cognitive side — the theories that justify that policy and guide its design (see, for instance, p41). This is a rather straightforward and unproblematic extension of Kuhn’s notion of paradigm, which also involves a theoretical and a praxeological dimension. It is less clear, however, the causal role that a paradigm has in Steinmetz’s account. He discusses this issue explicitly:

“[One ambiguity in my approach] concerns the relationship between the regulatory paradigms and the causal mechanisms that are said to determine social policy. Asking where the new paradigms come from, one might suspect that they are determined by the very same forces that govern the new social policies. The social paradigms would then be

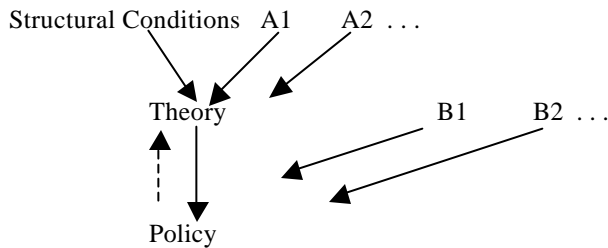
little more than conveyor belts for the more fundamental causal factors (or independent variables). . . . If policy paradigms were really no more than mediators with no independent effects of their own, they could safely be ignored. My response . . . is that the lay paradigms cannot be ignored without running the risk of reductionism. The reason is that social policies — like most other state interventions — are structurally underdetermined, regardless of a given state’s degree of autonomy or its determination by social factors. . . . the structural parameters of state politics cannot completely explain the content of state policy” (p53).

I find this argument puzzling. First, a social policy is a component of a paradigm, so it doesn’t make much sense to say that a new paradigm may not be determined by the same forces that determine a new social policy that is part of the former — it is logically necessary that this be the case. Second, let’s assume that this is just a sloppy written paragraph, and that when he says “paradigm” he is referring to the cognitive-theoretical side of a paradigm. **[I think that this is right: he is talking about models of state action which could encompass a fairly wide range of specific concrete policies. The “Ghent system” is a specific urban insurance policy; the paradigm is quasi-corporatism. These paradigms, then, are – I think – cognitively generative of policies, but not of a specific policy, more like paradigms impose limits on possible policies.]** Let’s call this component of a paradigm of social regulation “theory.” So what he would be arguing is that if there is a causal chain of the form

Structural conditions → Theory → Policy

(where the arrows indicate full causal determination), then we could safely ignore the theory, because it is “only” an intermediary cause. This is wrong. Even if we had a causal chain like that, it would still be important to identify the mechanism that connects the structural conditions with the policy (the fact that we know that there is a causal link between, let’s say, drinking a poison and dying does not make the intermediary mechanisms irrelevant . . .). Third, S argues that the reason why a theory is important is that the content of state policy is underdetermined by its structural conditions. **[The use of “underdetermined” in this context is usually a way of distinguishing between systematic structural causes and agency-centered causes, of which cognitive maps would be an instance. The theory would not explain 100% of the content either; it is just that it contributes to explaining agents strategies in a way that structural conditions don’t]** This is a misleading argument as well, because for it to cut any ice we should assume that the theory (unlike structural conditions) does explain completely the content of state policy — but we know not only that this is untenable but also that it conflicts with S’s arguments in other parts of his book.

I think there is a way of making sense of the relationship between structural conditions and the two components of a paradigm of social regulation in S’ framework, even if one rejects his way of formulating the issue — as I have done. Let’s assume that structural conditions (alone) determine both a distribution of possible theories and a distribution of possible policies. Now let’s assume that any theory (alone) also determines a distribution of possible policies, but that the range of possible policies is smaller than that determined by the structural conditions. **[Why do you make this assumption? The range of possible theories generated by a paradigm may be much larger than the range that are feasible under existing structural conditions. The paradigm limits need not be nested within the structural/material limits. It may be that the only actually possible policies lies in the intersection of these two limiting processes, but the paradigm limits need not be entirely within the structural ones]** Then, the fact that you know what theory developed given certain structural conditions improves your explanation of the actual content of the state policy, even when the relation between that theory and the policies is not deterministic. Or, putting it graphically (ignore the dotted arrow for the time being), you have a situation like this:



Is this interpretation compatible with S's arguments? In particular, is it compatible with the centrality he gives to the notion of paradigm. There is one reason to think it is not — if my interpretation were correct, paradigms would not be central in his story, but just unimportant by-products. Perhaps one way of solving this is by adding the causal relationship indicated by the dotted arrow. In addition, this would make sense of S's claim that “paradigms [i.e., their cognitive-theoretical components] simultaneously shaped social policies and resulted from them”. Unfortunately, we would still be in trouble to give any precise meaning to the second part of the above sentence: “and in a certain sense, the policy was the paradigm: a structure that exists only in its effects” (p144). This theatrical claim fits uneasily with both S's notion of paradigm and with the kernel of his causal story.

2. SPD membership and intercity comparisons.

When analyzing the patterns of poor-relief spending across cities, S finds that SPD membership is strongly and negatively associated to poor-relief expenditures per capita. To explain this apparent anomaly, he argues that “elites were willing to expand poor relief where it could be expected to diminish protest. But where social order was threatened by working-class and social democratic organizations, local elites' quest for social order was channeled in other directions ...” (p176). This is possible, although the evidence he presents is quite weak. Had he included in the right side of the regression an indicator of these other ways of channeling the quest for social order (for instance presence/absence of proto-corporatist policy), and had been the coefficient for this variable negative and SS, he would have had a good case. However, as far as I can tell, the only other quantitative evidence that is relevant is the following. First, his analysis of the patterns of provision of work for the unemployed across cities — here the coefficient for SPD membership is also negative and statistically significant (p.181). Second, his analysis of the presence of unemployment insurance across cities — here the coefficient, I assume, is either not statistically significant or negative — he has excluded it from the table (p210), and reports that he only included the variables that were SS in the expected direction at the $p < 0.5$. However, if S's argument were correct, we should expect here a positive, statistically significant coefficient.

One alternative explanation for the anomaly is that the causal relation goes in the other direction, i.e., that the fact that poor-relief spending is low (high) increases (decreases) SPD membership. This seems at least as possible as S's more complicated hypothesis.