Immerfall, Stefan & Göran Therborn (eds.)

*Handbook of European Societies: Social Transformations in the 21st Century,*

Immerfall and Therborn’s *Handbook of European Societies* discusses the massive change and transformation in Europe during the last century and echoes to the European Union as a social field to facilitate, analyse and study relating to divergent issues. Major focus of the book is on ‘European integration’ as semblance of transformation and the most ambitious development in world polity having far reaching socio-economic consequence. Social heterogeneity in the European Union is addressed by European integration mechanism with an aim to accelerate path and process of transformation. The book takes cognisance of shortcomings of certain societal trends such as multi-culturalism, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and diversity to reflect that earlier haven’t been systematically studied by sociologist in a comprehensive manner to highlight existing levels of social complexity vis-à-vis heterogeneity. Accordingly, editors of the book mention that the book is ‘set to rectify such neglect of societal development’. To depict and bring nuance in the transformation of the European Union to the forefront of sociological rigour, the editors have taken every effort to incorporate the notable contributions of thirtyfive scholars supported by Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB). Capacious analysis in the volume provides base to students of sociology in Europe and also to sociology of European integration. Because social life and relations in entire Europe have been described and analysed in the book, it provides a perspective on the European Union and considers it as an evolving social entity which also in a way gives condition for emergence of European society. Aspects discussed in twenty one chapters of the book along with introduction and conclusion are ‘association and community’, ‘bureaucracy and the state’, ‘cities’, ‘cleavages and political transformation’, ‘collective action’, ‘crime and justice’, ‘culture’, education’, ‘elites and power structure’, ‘identity’, ‘leisure and consumption in Europe’, ‘lifecourse’, ‘population’, religion and churches’, ‘sexuality and family formation’, ‘stratification and social mobility’, ‘transnationality’, ‘welfare state’, and ‘well-being and inequality’. Each chapter is well illustrated with a good number of figures and tables. The book is an amalgamation of important aspects normally of anthropo-sociological significance.

The introduction of the book highlights social transformations that emerged in the 21st century giving a different world-view to people of its earlier generation. Social trends during 1960, 1970, 1980 and even before that is being...
highlighted and editors refer to shift of ideology from Keynesian, Marxism, neo-liberal to ‘Thatcherite’ right. However, ‘rival frame of understanding of world’ existed without the European Union, because Europe and EEC failed to unify world order (p. 1). In post-paradigmatic world of Europe through ‘EU’ emerges a phenomenon of global and continental significance. The book acknowledges sociology of European integration has two main foci (i) serial consequence of integration process and vice versa (ii) social basis of political integration. Hence the *Handbook of European Societies* is pertinent to rectify neglect of societal development in Europe. The book answers to important questions like (a) how the European project is or has been socially anchored, (b) to explore how Europe is made through transnational interchange and (c) to find out how social change impinges upon political integration. Apart from these pertinent questions and issues of divergence and convergence of political and economic integration of Europe, three more queries such as ‘Europeanisation from below’, ‘Europeanisation from above’ and ‘Europe at large’ has been touched upon in each thematic chapter. One important theme highlighted in the book is European societal integration through civic engagement. It discusses, describes and compares a wide range of social and citizen participation. Other point discussed in the theme is social cohesion, type, scope and pattern of European voluntarism and country specific explanation of similarity and difference and trust-bonding European togetherness.

Another important aspect discussed in the book is development of public bureaucracy and its relationship with development of state. It mentions that linkage between bureaucracy and state has been more significant in contemporary time because of shift in orientation from ‘traditional night-watchman state toward contemporary welfare/warfare state’. Further in Europe though exist pressure for bureaucratic uniformity but problem lies with administrative tradition. It mentions de-bureaucratisation creates alternative conception of governance that are potentially inconsistent; making governance more difficult in these societies. The book also brings issues of cities and urban civilisation in Europe highlighting that those are created by cities-states (p. 59). The scholars describe European urbanisation and its linkage with history of Europe such as Athens, Greek, Rome, The Netherlands, England and France and while doing so they refer to contributions made by social scientists and geographers. The book adequately mentions that European spatial urbanisation patterns, flows and networks are very important not only in territorial place but also as a part of global regional network. One more important theme of the book is academic discussion on cleavage in contemporary Europe. While doing so it refers to post-communist counter which are considered to laboratory from where cleavage emerged, developed and overlapped. Likewise