large increases in the percentage of wage earners in low paid (less than 2/3 of the median wage) jobs and large increases in the 50-10 wage ratio. By contrast, in the Netherlands, there is very little increase in inequality of market income or disposable income. On the surface of it, labor market institutions are very similar: both are Coordinated Market Economies with the sectoral level wage bargaining. In both countries, there is a significant fall in union density between 1990 and 2015, from 31% to 18% in Germany and from 25% to 17% in the Netherlands. The difference is change in contract coverage: a substantial decline from 85% to 57% in Germany compared to stability in the Netherlands (fall from 81% to 79%). Underlying this difference is an institutional difference in how contract coverage is extended. In Germany, historically, employers' associations extended coverage to non-union members. Since 1995, they have failed to organize employers in private services and increasingly do not require their members to extend the terms of the negotiated contract. In the Netherlands, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment has been legally empowered to extend contracts negotiated by employers and unions since 1937 and has continued to do so (pp. 372, 379).

While I have criticized some features of the volume, overall, I found it extremely valuable in my on-going research on the causes of the increase in inequality in post-industrial economies. I strongly recommend it to any scholar interested in this important topic.

JOHN D. STEPHENS
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
jdsteph@unc.edu

Marcello Natili (2019), *The Politics of Minimum Income: Explaining path departure and policy departure in the age of austerity*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 318, £64.99, hbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279420000161

"Europe has to be 'Triple A' on social matters", Jean-Claude Juncker said when he became EU president. In 2017, European leaders solemnly put signatures to a European Pillar of Social Rights. Principle 14 of that Social Pillar states "Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services." Earlier, in 2010, the European Parliament had already passed a Resolution calling for adequate minimum incomes.

Needless to say, Minimum income schemes (MIS) are among the most important social protection institutions in modern welfare states. Marcello Natili plausibly claims that we still know relatively little about the dynamics of institutional change in this policy field. His book sets out to offer insight into the conditions under which and the political mechanisms through which minimum income schemes are introduced, expanded or retrenched.

Natili presents a comparative analysis of the policy trajectories of minimum income schemes in Italy and Spain between the mid-1980s and 2015. That is very useful because Italy and Spain were among the last countries in the old EU to institutionalize minimum income schemes. Before that they had only existed at the local level and not even everywhere. Italy now has a national scheme, Spain a diverse set of regional minimum income schemes. Although the two countries faced comparable pressures and institutional constraints, they experienced different developments. In short, Spain is a story of gradual expansion at the regional level. Italy's trajectory is more erratic and includes episodes of retrenchment.

The central narrative is about credit-claiming dynamics resulting "from the interaction of socio-political demand with political supply." That is a complicated way of saying that politics is a messy and sometimes erratic business that does not lend itself easily to grand, neat theories.

Natali struggles to explain the different paths taken in Spain and Italy. It is understandable that the author looks for an overarching account, as that is what academics are paid to do. (This book emerged from his doctorate). That is not to say it always works out.

There is much to like about this book. For a start, it is by and large well-written. The book starts with a nice and useful overview of competing theoretical accounts. (This is particularly useful for graduate students looking for concise introductions to theories of welfare state development.) It then delves into policy developments in Italy and Spain in considerable detail. It is clear that quite a bit of research went into this book. The book is absolutely packed with detailed references, interview material and other evidence. As if this is not enough *The Politics of Minimum Income* also looks, albeit more briefly, at reform processes in other countries that introduced MIS in the age of austerity (such as Portugal) and in countries that retrenched them during the same era (Austria and Denmark).

I am impressed by the effort that went into this book. It does the invaluable job of chronicling key episodes of welfare state development in Italy and Spain. Whether the theoretical contribution will be a lasting one remains to be seen. That is no criticism. The book just shows how inherently muddled and erratic political processes are. The book even provides a refreshing antidote to accounts that see the development of minimum income schemes in Italy and Spain as evidence of Europeanization. If Europe was a factor, it percolated through numerous layers of other political processes at the national and regional level. That, by the way, holds an important lesson. If we want a stronger Social Europe, we should perhaps not invest too much hope in "soft" coordination. Its impact essentially remains in the eye of the beholder. And this book demonstrates it.

IVE MARX
University of Antwerp
ive.marx@uantwerpen.be

Esther Dermott and Gill Main (eds) (2017), *Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK, Volume 1 – The Nature and Extent of the Problem*, Bristol: Policy Press, £25.99, pp. 280, pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279420000173

Glen Bramley and Nick Bailey (eds) (2017), *Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK, Volume 2 – The Dimensions of Disadvantage*, Bristol: Policy Press, £32.99, pp. 384, pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279420000173

Together, these two volumes showcase the great strengths of UK poverty research, but also reveal the chasm that has opened up between research (and the production of evidence) and the use of that evidence to guide policy in what many would consider to be the 'home' of poverty research. The 27 chapters contain a huge amount of detail on how poverty is conceived and measured, its incidence, causes and consequences, how it relates to social exclusion and other social ills and, as a by-product rather than an explicit focus, what needs to be done to address the problem. One fears, having read what has been happening under the UK's austerity policies, that the clear and consistent message that emerges throughout its many contributions will fall on deaf ears and have little impact – at least in the short-run.

The research was produced by the largest ever project of its type funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and these two books represent one of many channels of dissemination, including other focused books, special issues of academic journals,