

The combination of these international and domestic conditions, working proximately through domestic banks and property developers, “misallocated capital in Ireland on a grand scale” (p. 70). Overall, Ó Riain’s story is that “developmental and corporatist institutions were critical in promoting growth in the 1990s, but were derailed by the property bubble of the 2000s fueled by market liberalism and state boosterism” (p. 9).

The theoretical discussion that sets up this story is sophisticated and lucidly positioned vis-à-vis work on the nature of liberalism and markets, neoclassical economics, varieties of capitalism, developmental states, small states, welfare states, Marxism, corporatism, and European integration. At the core of Ó Riain’s account is a Polanyian semicritique of Polanyi, through which he summarizes the main gist of contemporary economic sociology very well (pp. 18–19). Polanyi suggested that markets are sociopolitical constructs, but then wrote of markets being progressively “disembedded” from society in the nineteenth century. An even more Polanyian perspective, arguably—one that treats markets as still more profoundly social—holds that even runaway liberalism and markets are socially embedded phenomena, and will be enduringly riddled with nonobvious social features and complexities. Remarking that liberal economies have generally been less completely theorized than others, much as “whiteness” long received little attention in studies of race (p. 11), Ó Riain argues that even liberal economies like Ireland’s remain embedded in local particularities.

Empirically, the book offers many different cuts into the Irish story, often based in clever uses of data. For example, Ó Riain directs our attention to evolutions in employment across industries to show that the 1990s boom had broad bases that were then eroded by misallocations to real estate and finance in the 2000s; to the size and destinations of private and publicly steered capital to show how the state encouraged the growing bubble; and to spatial contrasts between vacancy rates and new housing stock to show that construction became increasingly divorced from any measure of demand. In the most qualitative section, he investigates bank documents to show how unprecedented lending was rationalized (both internationally to Irish banks and from Irish banks to their customers).

Ó Riain’s ambition to trace a more complex and concrete account of the Irish political economy is empirically demanding, however, and ultimately, the book falls somewhat short of showing us the kinds of action evoked by its rich theoretical apparatus. The social underpinnings of liberalism consist of nuanced institutions and practices that we can see most directly in the ways that people act and talk, but *The Rise and Fall of Ireland’s Celtic Tiger* mostly remains at the level of broader discussions and data. In particular, the treatments of European-level developments and changing political coalitions feel like somewhat

glossy summaries. Ó Riain thus offers a magisterial conceptualization of Irish growth and collapse and many interesting and relevant slices of data to buttress it, but stops a bit short of showing his argument unfolding in action. Nonetheless, this book should be required reading for anyone interested in Ireland, Europe, or the industrialized world’s political economy more broadly, and especially for those who seek to understand both the sources and limits of the dominance of liberalism in the twenty-first century.

**Democracy Assistance from the Third Wave: Polish Engagement in Belarus and Ukraine.** By Paulina Pospieszna. Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press, 2014. 280p. \$27.95. doi:10.1017/S1537592715000973

— Nelli Babayan, *Freie Universität Berlin*

Democracy assistance or democracy promotion has been at the forefront of Western policies since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, as the “democratic enlargement” pursued by the Clinton administration came to substitute for the previous policy of Soviet containment, and even more during the administration of George W. Bush, democracy promotion became one of the major endeavors of U.S. foreign policy. To some extent as well, the European Union focused its attention on the democratization of its neighborhood through a string of targeted policies, the enlargement policy being also the most successful to date. Much has been written on EU and U.S. efforts at democracy assistance. Yet the scholarship is still in development regarding the efforts by the countries that not long ago were on the other end of democracy assistance. Paulina Pospieszna’s book makes a contribution toward filling this void through an empirically rich discussion of Polish democracy assistance to Belarus and Ukraine (for more on this topic, see Tsveta Petrova, *From Solidarity to Geopolitics: Support for Democracy among Postcommunist States*, 2014).

Postcommunist Poland was a recipient of EU democracy assistance within the enlargement policy, and its successful democratization guaranteed its accession to the Union. In addition to that, Pospieszna argues that Poland is an “ideal case” (p. xxii) for research on new democracy promoters, since through its Solidarity movement it has provided “a new political model of transition” (p. xxii). Moreover, its civil society was a major recipient of Western aid. These features and the willingness of the Polish political elite to “give back,” as documented through interviews by Pospieszna, make Poland especially well positioned in its own endeavors at democracy promotion. Pospieszna focuses on cross-border civil society support by Polish nongovernmental organizations. By posing a range of questions revolving around Polish democracy assistance, she aims to fill what she sees as a gap in the literature on democracy assistance and civil society.

Polish NGOs have received extensive funding by Western donors to implement projects in Belarus and Ukraine. This observation has generated the question of this book: How influential are these donors in shaping the democracy assistance of Poland and its NGOs? By “Western donors,” Pospieszna includes states such as the United States, intergovernmental organizations such as the EU, and private institutions such as the Soros Foundation. She starts from the premise that democracy assistance can be either political or developmental—that is, either focusing on political parties, civil society groups, and politically oriented NGOs or focusing on social and economic development. When addressing strategies of democracy assistance, she also groups them into “external project method,” supporting civil society, and “going local.” In the case of the external project method, the author brings up the U.S. Agency for International Development as an example, since the latter prefers to fund projects implemented by organizations that are external to local environments. She gives the example of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) as an organization that supports civil society, and the example of the Soros Foundation as a donor that funds local organizations.

In her conclusions, Pospieszna also argues that rarely do actors assisting democracy strictly abide by a single strategy. Polish NGOs established links with Western donors before the collapse of the communist regime and, having learned from their experiences of democratization, have employed a range of strategies adapted to the local realities of authoritarian Belarus and democratizing Ukraine. The author argues that these activities are very much informed by the democratic legacy of the Solidarity movement, and assistance to civil society stems from ideological reasons: to “break down the communist legacy and achieve the same transformation that Poland did” (p. 155). The analysis of the activities by Polish NGOs also leads the author to argue that a transnational network of geographically, culturally, and historically close states is likely to succeed in the diffusion of democracy. On the basis of her findings, Pospieszna suggests that instead of direct grants, Western donors should finance cross-border projects of regional NGOs.

Overall, *Democracy Assistance from the Third Wave* is a valuable and informative reference for anyone interested in the nuances of democracy assistance. Pospieszna’s analysis of Polish democracy assistance takes democracy promotion literature to another yet underresearched level: democracy assistance by young democracies, which became part of the third wave of democratization encompassing transitions from the 1970s and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She shows how a young democracy, enriched by its experiences of democratization and receiving democracy

assistance, may be better positioned to reach out to transitioning countries. Her study also paves the way for future research on new democracy promoters, their strategies, and their potential influence on the strategies of already established democracy promoters. Moreover, it is future research that will help address minor discrepancies regarding scope and conditions that are currently noticeable in the book.

In focusing on strategies of Polish NGOs, the author tends to overlook important scope factors and conditions. In terms of conditions, the author should acknowledge that actors involved in democracy assistance may base their actions on their strategic interests. Various state and nonstate actors can engage in democracy assistance. It stands to reason that their approaches and strategies would be constrained by their political and economic leverage, institutional constraints, and, not least, strategic interests. In terms of scope, her focus on the wide range of the activities of Polish NGOs also often blurs the dividing line between democracy assistance and development assistance. While this often happens in practice, it should be differentiated in research or at least mentioned in the book.

The book’s analysis is heavily informed by the approaches of Polish NGOs, rather than the analysis of democracy assistance outcomes in Belarus and Ukraine. Hence, the argument that cross-border projects should be financed. While well informed by the cases of Polish efforts in Belarus and Ukraine, the suggestion seems applicable only to donors with a limited breadth of geographical coverage and to recipient countries that have at least one democratic neighbor. This suggestion reveals the gap in the capacity of the book to generalize its arguments to a larger pool of democracy promoters and recipients.

Although the author justly criticizes the EU and the United States for often-rigid policies and facilitation of “grant-generating” NGOs, such criticism sometimes omits policy changes that happen in democracy assistance. For example, USAID, which according to Pospieszna provides funding to U.S. NGO contractors to work in third countries, has also extensively supported civil society and in some cases provided funding for local NGOs. She rightly mentions that the EU has not been at the forefront of civil society support; however, it has significantly adjusted its approach. The establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) in January 2013 (an institution largely inspired by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy), underlined the EU’s willingness to revisit its democracy assistance approach and pay closer attention to civil society. It may be too early (and in the case of this book also unnecessary) to evaluate the effectiveness of the EED, but this adjustment in EU democracy assistance should be noted, especially since Poland was at the forefront of many EU democracy promotion policies.