before, and their rapid expansion reduced the pressure for a ‘divide and pacify’ policy. Moreover, there already was an earlier retirement age than in Poland where it fell to an average of 59 for men in the early 1990s.

Vanhuysse has directed attention on to an important issue in social policy formation in east-central Europe in the early 1990s. However, a complete picture would require setting his argument in the context of other developments within those economies and, above all, it needs to be backed up with evidence on how policy decisions were taken. He provides a strong argument that elements of social policy served to reduce the potential for protest. It remains to be proven how far that explains the policy choices that were made.

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The coming of population ageing poses new challenges for industrial societies. As Tony Maltby points out in this volume, whereas the twentieth century was the century for the creation of ‘retirement,’ the twenty-first century will be one of changing work patterns that incorporate lifelong education, increased leisure, and the relative absence of retirement. This edited volume assembles research on the future for older workers, defined as those in the 50 plus age bracket. Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of ageing studies, the authors draw from several areas including economics, psychology, social policy, social gerontology, occupational health and sociology. The end result is a coherent set of essays bound by a common objective to explore the forthcoming challenges brought on by the need to extend working life beyond statutory retirement age.

The first chapter, written by the editors, provides an introduction to the international context surrounding older workers. It uncovers a situation in which, despite the general trends towards increased working among older workers, employment rates still fall short of EU targets in many countries – that is, the raising of the average employment rate of men and women aged 55–64 to 50%. The second chapter (Mike Danson) provides a more contextual focus on the debates surrounding the employment implications of an ageing population. Focusing initially on Scotland, but then exploring the impact of the demographic trends of Europe and beyond, he concludes that the improvement in employment activity levels for those over 50 will be a fundamental challenge in the near future. Chapters 3 (John Macnicol) and 4 (Bernard Casey) expand on international comparisons by reviewing experiences and trends in two very different world economies. Macnicol’s focus is first on the United States, where legislation outlawing age discrimination against older persons has been in place since the late 1960s, before going on to a detailed assessment of the possible implications of the introduction of the 2006 Employment Equality (Age) Regulations in Britain. Casey, on the other hand, considers the example of Japan, where employment rates for older people are high, to highlight the importance of national traditions and work cultures for debates on the employability of older workers. The subsequent chapter (Christina Beatty and Steve Fotherhill) questions whether there is work in the labour market for older workers. It presents a detailed analysis of regional variations in the availability of job opportunities across Great Britain, and concludes that job-creation policies are urgently needed to increase the number of older workers.

Chapter 6 (Sue Ward), takes on a gender perspective by exploring the difference between women’s and men’s attitudes towards pensions and financial planning, whilst also assessing the ways in which these differences may affect their attitudes towards remaining in work.
Advocating the rethinking of the concept of the ageing workforce, especially through the life-course perspective, Chapter 7 (Donald Hirsch) draws upon the findings of Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s Transitions After 50 programme to suggest two agendas for the future. First, the extension of the concept of ‘career’ from a neatly planned sequence of professional progression for well-educated workers to a way of thinking about lifetime job opportunities for everybody. Second, a change in approach to occupational well-being that addresses the underlying causes of stress and how other forms of ill health affect how we conduct our working lives. Chapters 8 (Amanda Griffiths) and 9 (Wendy Loretto et al.), present a detailed treatment of some of the routes to extending working lives. While the former examines the importance of occupational health in ensuring a healthy and active workforce across the life course, the latter profiles the current patterns of flexible working among the over-50s in Great Britain to conclude that opportunities for working flexibility are currently limited. The next two chapters make compulsory reading to academics in the field of labour studies and social gerontology. Chapter 10 (Tony Maltby) focuses on older workers who are outside the labour market, and reports on EU-funded action research to discuss the fundamental practical issues of getting older people back to work. It concludes that although the supply side of the employment equation is widely and formally supported through a number of measures, little localised or targeted support or advice exists for employers of the positive benefits of recruiting workers over 50 years of age and of the demographic imperatives for such transitions. Chapter 11 (Chris Phillipson) conducts a critical review of the options for extending working lives whilst also paying attention to the heterogeneity of circumstances, attitudes and desires of older workers, and posing the question of whether we should simply accept the extending working life agenda. The author asks readers to consider seriously that the assumption of living longer does not necessarily mean retiring later, and that many people may still want to embrace a ‘culture of retirement’ even if it means a ‘trade-off’ with a lower standard of living. The final chapter, authored by the editors, contain a detailed consideration of the future prospects for older workers whilst also documenting the roles of workers, employers and the government in extending working life.

The Future for Older Workers is an eminently readable and accessible book, and will be warmly welcomed by academics, students, policy makers and other professionals (such as training managers, HR professionals and trade unionists) and researchers interested in the coming of the ageing workforce. I found it extremely interesting, thought provoking and a comprehensively referenced text. The only hitch, of course, is its price. At £65.95, the book is surely out of reach for the undergraduate student, as well as scholars from low- and middle-income countries. This is lamentable as the publication is currently one of the best attempts to focus upon various measures taken by the state and employers to foster the employment of older workers. It would be a pity, given its price, to assign this book a place solely in libraries rather than on individuals’ bookshelves.

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In this study of the origins of age-related biases in contemporary social policy, Julia Lynch sets out to answer three interrelated questions that have thus far been inadequately explored. First, how do social policies in rich democracies differentially protect different age groups? Second, how does this ‘elderly/non-elderly’ public policy bias vary across the OECD welfare states?