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**“The sustainability of social policy processes: a cross-country
qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)”**

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“The sustainability of social policy processes: a cross-country qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)”

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Abstract: *This study examines systematically which configurations explain the outcome of social policy ‘equal and fair society’ and 6 variable conditions are election process, transparency, civil rights and political liberties, rule of law, executive policy capacity, executive accountability through comparative qualitative analysis (QCA). The results show the minimum configurations of key variable conditions to achieve the outcome.*

Key words: *Social policy, equal society, QCA method.*

1. Introduction

Social policy should be designed to work effectively in different environments. In some countries, social support, while expensive, often failed to reach the poor and disadvantaged ones even before the economic recession. The priority should now be to ensure that social policies are “crisis-proofed” – ready, in other words, to cope with negative side-impacts of the global economy. Increasingly, in the respective national settings, social spending and

investment will need to be better targeted to ensure they meet society' most pressing needs. Equally, social support systems will need to learn to operate with maximum efficiency, ensuring they are adapted to evolving labour markets and demographics while consuming as little as possible in terms of administrative and bureaucratic resources.

Meeting these challenges will be far from easy and, as the pain of the recession eases, there may be a temptation to put off reforms. That would be a mistake. Evidence of a decline in trust in governments since the crisis should serve as a warning of how quickly the social compact can fray (Fron, Immervoll, 2014). In response, governments should demonstrate that they can respond effectively to their societies' needs. They should also ensure that social policy contributes to developing the resilience of their citizens to cope with future crises.

In terms of the broader context, social policies have been widely implemented in the world. There is a diversity of social policy models as well as various typologies of social policies in different sectors such as social policy in education, health, family, pension, housing, social security, social inclusions etc, which together produce the well-known concept of welfare state (Hai DO, 2013). However, one should stress that social policy outcomes - equal and fair society vary very much in terms of modes of implementation and of designs. There is, in particular, a consensus amongst many scholars that policy rules are important to generate the (favorable, expected) policy outcomes.

According to Huck-ju Kwon (2013) "*welfare state is understood as a set of public institutions and policies that aim to provide social protection to citizens*". Therefore, in this contribution, we focus our research on the social policy rules and on the conditions which govern the policy process. This also implies that we need to analyze the configuration(s) of policy conditions related to socio-political institutions (Howlette, 2003). Therefore, our main research question is: which set(s) of socio-political institutions affect the quality of social policies? More

precisely, which combinations of policy conditions generate more favourable or more unfavourable outcomes of social policies?

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), which is geared towards systematic cross-case comparison, is an appropriate method to tackle this research question. Indeed, “from a small number of cases, the QCA method makes it possible to derive patterns (combinations of factors, or conditions) that link the cases” (see Ragin (1987) and Rihoux (2002, 2006, 2008, 2012), Varone et al (2006)). The QCA approach was chosen because this method allows a combination of case- and variable-based comparisons for the comparative analysis. The QCA approach allows to systematically compare a “small N” or “intermediate N” of cases. Specifically the csQCA technique, through its minimization procedures (see below), allows to systematically identify the core configurations of condition variables, which is a unique feature of that method. In the QCA approach, exploiting the epistemological case-based knowledge and logic of comparative method and causal mechanism allows the identification of more than one unique path to an outcome (equifinality). In other words: more than one combination of conditions may account for a given result or outcome; this is also useful for pluralist/participative analysis (Rihoux, 2006).

2. Case specification

We could have chosen to only focus on cases (countries) within the Asian context. However, we will consider a broader sample of countries. This will enable us to cover much more diversity in terms of institutional rules for social policy making, and to produce more general findings. In empirical terms, we can rely on good-quality data on social policies in OECD and EU states. This provides useful raw data, because many of these countries have been acting in the long term in the view of achieving sustainable social policy outcomes.

The quantitative and qualitative data originate from sustainable governance indicators in related politics-policy areas for sustainable development and they are scored on the basis of

official statistical sources, in particular those provided by the OECD and EU data sources (<https://data.oecd.org/>) and UN data (<http://data.un.org/DataMartInfo.aspx>).

Four stages of data consolidation were followed to ensure the valid and reliable data which were conducted by the SGI team (see <http://www.sgi-network.org>). For each SGI Survey, the individual countries are evaluated by two (or more) leading experts. The experts' questionnaire work is supported by eight coordinators under the supervision of the SGI Advisory Board (Daniel Schraad-Tischler). First, these data were collected in a multiphase process of survey and validation. Then, the raw data were reviewed and examined by experts. Third, the data were reviewed through first and second experts' evaluations and qualitative complements (texts), with an eye to achieving consistency of texts and scores by regional coordinators who determine the actual scores for all indicators in their country groups. In a fourth stage, there was a two-day regional-coordinator conference, at which the regional coordinators collectively discussed all qualitative assessments as well as all numerical ratings, and adjusted them if necessary. Such stages provide very robust and validated data. In order to ensure the comparability of quantitative and qualitative data, all quantitative indicators contained in the SGI indices were standardized through a process of linear transformation onto a scale ranging from 1 to 10. In addition, the SGI allows detailed retrieval of the original data as well as the results of the survey at each level of aggregation – from the highest aggregation level, at which the three indices are formed, down to the level of individual indicators. This allows users to engage more deeply with topics of personal interest, create country rankings for single indicators, apply their own aggregation rules and even create entirely new indicators. Thanks to this combination of quantitative indicators with qualitative expert assessments, the SGI itemized ranking results are accompanied by in-depth country reports on the 41 OECD and EU states examined. This combination of systematic

(numerical) scores and of in-depth country reports also comprising qualitative information is a very appropriate setting to apply the QCA method.

3. Model specification

There are various conceptions of social policy in the international literature. The perspective we adopt here follows the approach of the 'Social Charter' in the EU. Following this approach, social protection, education and training, tackling sex/gender discrimination and combating social exclusion, strengthening the economy, building 'social consensus', and the creation of a single market, are the most effective means of generating employment, maximizing well-being and equalizing growth rates. We also build upon the conception of welfare state explained by a shift from the universal welfare state from normative and political perspectives (Kwon H.J. 2001, 2005, 2016), and we also consider Powell and Hendricks J. (2009), about the corollaries of public policy on the welfare state: "(...) social welfare is customarily taken to mean statutory governmental intervention designed to provide supportive services and resources to those in need as well as making sense of welfare policies".

Further, we also adopt the perspective of a causal relationship between political institutions and policy outcomes (Persson T. & Tabellini G (2003). (2002-2003), Spiller T. P., Stein E. and Tommasi M. (2003); Besley T. and Case A. (2003); Fumagalli E. and Narciso G. (2012); Takeshi K. T. (2010). The impact of political institutions on policy outcomes has recently gained much attention in the literature. Many theoretical and empirical researches have shown how forms of government and electoral rules shape social policies; for instance Lizzeri et Persico (2001), Persson et Tabellini (1999, 2000), and Ferretti M, Maria G., Perotti R., and Rostagno M. (2002) analyze the impact of rules on social policies.

Based on these premises, we assume that the outcomes of social policies are shaped and influenced by configurations of public institutions, in particular in terms of democracy

capacity, government policy capacity and government responsibility, following the model developed below:

Outcome variable: Equal and fair society [EFs].

Our question is whether social policies contribute to a more equal and fair society? If social policies are well conceived and implemented, they will secure the participation for present and future generations to enhance sustainability, which ensures maintaining or increasing individuals' opportunities to act and live in accordance with their own values, and which thereby ensures a high degree of participation in society. Political, social and economic systems must be constituted in such a way that individuals are provided with substantive opportunities for self-realization. Ensuring broad-based social participation involves more than providing safeguards against classic risks such as illness, accidents, aging, disability and unemployment. Social policies should also be integrative in nature and empower members of the community to participate actively in public affairs. At the same time, these substantive opportunities for self-realization must be provided in equal measure to all members of society: No one should be systematically excluded from feeling safe, having good health and gainful employment, engaging in political participation, enjoying social relations, being able to participate in cultural life, and living in favorable environmental conditions. Seeking to enhance sustainability thus means ensuring the long-term viability of social-welfare systems. Assessing the performance of OECD and EU states with this in mind involves more than evaluating the extent to which society provides opportunities and enables participation. It also involves taking a close look at factors such as the sustainability of public financing and the potential for reform within existing systems. Sustainability-minded decision-making maintains and even expands opportunities for social participation for today's generations without compromising the opportunities afforded to future generations. The SGI's survey on the social policies category addresses the following questions: To what extent do the

country's education policies foster high-quality, inclusive and efficient education and training systems? To what extent do socio-political measures facilitate social inclusion, while effectively combating social exclusion and polarization? How successfully do policies secure quality, fairness and cost efficiency in the country's health care system? To what extent do family-policy measures make it easier to combine career and family? How successful are the country's pension policies in preventing old-age poverty while promoting intergenerational equity and fiscal sustainability? To what extent do the country's political measures foster the effective integration of migrants into society? How successful is the country in establishing secure living conditions for its citizens by combating crime and other security risks? And finally, looking to the international level: To what extent is the country engaged in efforts to combat global social inequalities, such as the promotion of fair global-trade structures and just participation opportunities within developing countries?

Following QCA conventions, the outcome variable **EFs** received the value=1 if the level of social policies contribute to a more equal and fair society is evaluated higher than the threshold; on the opposite, the outcome variable receives the value=0 if it falls below the threshold. There are strong theoretical and empirical reasons to place the threshold of the outcome in the range between 5.2 and 6.29. After a first series of empirical tests, examining the distribution of the country scores, we have chosen to place the threshold at 6.05, which enables us to differentiate quite clearly between lower and higher performing countries (see also Table 2). It is indeed a QCA good practice to consider the empirical distribution on a given variable, in order to place the threshold (Rihoux and De Meur 2009).

Defining condition variables

Condition 1: election process [ELPR].

There are some questions regarding the election process in SGI. The first one is: are voting and registration rights guaranteed? Everyone has equal opportunity to become a candidate for

election. This is measured by the registration of candidates and parties, which may be subject to restrictions only when in accordance with law and if deemed reasonably necessary in a democratic society. This includes protecting the interests of national security or public order, public health or morals, or protecting the rights and freedoms of others. The second one is: that to what extent do candidates and parties have fair access to the media and other means of communication? It is measured as follows: does every candidate for election and every political party have equal opportunity of access to the media and other means of communication, which allows them to present their political views and to communicate with the voters? Access to the media may not be restricted or refused on grounds of race, color, gender, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. The third question is: that to what extent do all citizens have the opportunity to exercise their right of participation in national elections? This measured by the fact that, in order to participate in national elections, every adult citizen must have the right to access an effective, impartial and non-discriminatory procedure for voting and voter registration. Voting rights also apply to convicts and citizens without a permanent residence in the country. No eligible citizen shall be denied the right to vote or disqualified from registration as a voter, otherwise than in accordance with objectively verifiable criteria prescribed by law, and provided that such measures are consistent with the State's obligations under international law. Every individual who is denied the right to vote or to be registered as a voter shall be entitled to appeal to a jurisdiction competent to review such decisions and to correct errors promptly and effectively. Every voter has the right of equal and effective access to a polling station or alternative voting method, including a feasible absentee voting option. The way in which voter registration is organized, the location of polling stations, and the date and time frame of voting do not constitute disincentives to voting for specific groups in society. The fourth question is: that to what extent is private and public party financing and electoral

campaign financing transparent, effectively monitored and in case of infringement of rules subject to proportionate and dissuasive sanction? This question refers to the obligations of the receiving entity (parties and entities connected with political parties) to keep proper books and accounts, to specify the nature and value of donations received and to publish accounts regularly. This question also includes an assessment of how effectively funding of political parties and electoral campaigns is supervised (monitored by an independent body such as an electoral or parliamentary commission, anti-corruption body, audit institution etc. with checking, investigative, sanction and regulatory powers) and of whether infringements are sanctioned (taking into account administrative, civil and criminal liability). The fifth question is: do citizens have the opportunity to take binding political decisions when they want to do so? This question examines whether citizens have the legal right to propose and take binding decisions on matters of importance to them, as well as the effective opportunity to act on this right. Forms of popular decision-making include popular initiatives and referendums conducted at different levels of government such as local or municipal, regional or state, national or federal government. Popular decision-making may be restricted to a few issues of interest or it may cover an extensive range of issues being of concern to citizens.

Following QCA conventions, the ELPR variable can receive the value=1 if it is higher than the threshold; on the opposite, this variable can receive the value=0 if it is fallen below the threshold. There is a very strong theoretical or empirical reason to locate the threshold between 6 and 7. Considering exploratory tests, we chose to place the threshold at 7, which also corresponds to a gap in the distribution, between scores of 6.8 and 7.2 (see Table 2).

Condition 2: Transparency measured by the level of information access [TRANS].

In order to measure this, the first SGI question is: that to what extent are the media independent from government? More precisely: to what extent is the media subject to government influence and the influence of actors associated with the government. This

question focuses both on media regulation and government intervention. The rules and practice of supervision need to guarantee sufficient independence for publicly owned media. Privately owned media should be subject to licensing and regulatory regimes that ensure independence from government. The second question is: to what extent are the media characterized by an ownership structure that ensures a pluralism of opinions? This question does not assume that the predominance of either private or public ownership guarantees a pluralism of opinions. Rather, the underlying assumption is that a diversified ownership structure is likely to best represent the views and positions existing in society. The third question is: to what extent can citizens obtain official information? To assess the accessibility of government information, the SGI experts examined (i) whether a freedom of information act (or equivalent legal regulations) exists, (ii) to what extent do the rules restrict access to information (e.g., exemptions, deadlines for responding to requests etc.) and justify these restrictions, and (iii) whether mechanisms for appeal and oversight exist to enforce citizens' right to access information (e.g., administrative review, court review, ombudsman, commission etc.).

Following QCA conventions, the **TRANS** variable can receive the value=1 if it is higher than the threshold; on the opposite, this variable can receive the value=0 if it falls below the threshold. There is a very strong theoretical or empirical reason to locate the threshold between 6.3 and 7. After exploratory tests and a careful examination of the empirical distribution on that condition, we placed the threshold at 6.5.

Condition 3: Civil rights and political liberties [CPRL].

The first question is: that to what extent does the state respect and protect civil rights and how effectively are citizens protected by courts against infringements of their rights? Civil rights contain and limit the exercise of state power by the rule of law. Independent courts guarantee legal protection of life, freedom and property as well as protection against illegitimate arrest,

exile, terror, torture or unjustifiable intervention into personal life, both on behalf of the state and on behalf of private and individual actors. Equal access to the law and equal treatment by the law are both basic civil rights and also necessities to enforce civil rights. The second question is: to what extent does the state concede and protect political liberties? Political liberties constitute an independent sphere of democracy and are a prerequisite of political and civil society. They aim at the possibility of the formulation, the presentation and the equal consideration of citizens' preferences and are embodied in the codification and unlimited validity of every individual's right to speak, think, assemble, organize, worship, or petition without government (or even private) interference or restraints.

Following QCA conventions, the **CRPL** variable can receive the value=1 if it is higher than the threshold; on the opposite, this variable can receive the value=0 if it falls below the threshold. There is a very strong theoretical or empirical reason to locate the threshold between 6.3 and 7.3. After exploratory tests and a careful examination of the empirical distribution on that condition, we placed the threshold at 7.

Condition 4: Rule of law [RULA].

The first question is: to what extent do government and administration act on the basis of and in accordance with legal provisions to provide legal certainty? This question assesses the extent to which executive actions are predictable. The second question is: to what extent do independent courts control whether government and administration act in conformity with the law? This question examines how well the courts can review actions taken and norms adopted by the executive. To provide effective control, courts need to pursue their own reasoning free from the influence of incumbent governments, powerful groups or individuals. This requires a differentiated organization of the legal system, including legal education, jurisprudence, regulated appointment of the judiciary, rational proceedings, professionalism, channels of appeal and court administration. The third question is: to what extent does the process of

appointing (supreme or constitutional court) justices guarantee the independence of the judiciary? This question regards supreme or constitutional courts' sufficient independence from political influence as a prerequisite of a functioning democratic system. The appointment process is a crucial factor which determines judiciary independence. The prospect of politically "neutral" justices increases accordingly with greater majority requirements and with the necessity of cooperation between involved bodies. A cooperative appointment process requires at least two involved democratically legitimized institutions. Their representative character gives them the legitimacy for autonomous nomination or elective powers. In an exclusive appointment process, a single body has the right to appoint justices irrespective of veto points; whereas in cooperative procedures with qualified majorities independence of the court is best secured. Also taken into account is whether the process is formally transparent and adequately covered by public media. If any country does not have a supreme or constitutional court, it is the appointment process of the appellate court that is responsible for citizens' appeals against decisions of the government that is evaluated. The fourth question is: that to what extent are public officeholders prevented from abusing their position for private interests? This question addresses how the state and society prevent public servants and politicians from accepting bribes by applying mechanisms to guarantee the integrity of officeholders: auditing of state spending; regulation of party financing; citizen and media access to information; accountability of officeholders including asset declarations, conflict of interest rules, codes of conduct; transparent public procurement systems; effective prosecution of corruption. Some data from the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of Transparency International is also used to answer that question.

Following QCA conventions, the **RULA** variable can receive the value=1 if it is higher than the threshold; on the opposite, this variable can receive the value=0 if it falls below the threshold. There is a very strong theoretical or empirical reason to locate the threshold

between 5.5 and 6.5. After exploratory tests and a careful examination of the empirical distribution on that condition, we placed the threshold at 6.09.

Condition 5: Executive policy capacity [EXPC].

The executive capacity focuses on the core activities of a government and examines the steering capabilities demonstrated by a political system's administrative apparatus. This includes strategic planning, inter-ministerial coordination, knowledge management, consultation and communication processes, as well as policy implementation and institutional learning capacity. To what extent does the government have strong steering capabilities? This includes evidence-based policy making, which is tapped by a question on RIA application as well as the quality and sustainability of the RIA process (if any). Societal consultation is tapped through a question on the extent to which the government consult with economic and social actors in the course of policy preparation. Policy communication also plays an important role in policy formulation; this is tapped by a question on how government coordinates policy communication to ensure that statements align with government strategy. Further, the effectiveness of policy implementation is measured by a question on: the government implement policies effectively? The policy adaptability aspect is met if the government cooperates with other states while adapting to new developments at home. The organizational reform aspect is met if government is able to monitor its own institutional arrangements, reforming them if necessary.

Following QCA conventions, the **EXPC** variable can receive the value=1 if it is higher than the threshold; on the opposite, this variable can receive the value=0 if it falls below the threshold. There is a very strong theoretical or empirical reason to locate the threshold between 5.4 and 6.2. After exploratory tests and a careful examination of the empirical distribution on that condition, we placed the threshold at 6.

Condition 6: Executive accountability [EXAC].

This condition focuses on the forms of interaction between a government and other stakeholders in the policymaking process, seeking to assess the extent to which participation and oversight competencies are produced and cultivated. If policies are to succeed in the long term and yield sustainable effects, governments clearly cannot afford to formulate and implement policies in isolation. The SGI team examines the extent to which other actors who perform essential functions in consolidating and mediating interests in a political system are able to participate in policymaking and monitor the process at each step along the way. The capacity to exercise this oversight function in part reflects the government's obligation to account for its actions to citizens, parliaments, the media, parties and interest groups. Moreover, executive accountability addresses the effectiveness of government communication, examining how well a government acquires and disseminates information, and the extent to which it involves and activates various elements of society in formulating and implementing policy. The SGI therefore includes a series of indicators assessing the extent to which governments consult entities such as special-interest groups early in legislative planning processes. That category also includes indicators that establish the extent to which the associations, citizens and legislatures possess participatory competences such as knowledge of politics, financial resources, etc. In short, this is about the checks and balances and participatory processes that can enhance the quality of political decision-making.

Following QCA conventions, the **EXAC** variable can receive the value=1 if it is higher than the threshold; on the opposite, this variable can receive the value=0 if it falls below the threshold. There is a very strong theoretical or empirical reason to locate the threshold between 5.4 and 5.9. After exploratory tests and a careful examination of the empirical distribution on that condition, we placed the threshold at 5.45.

Table 1 : Model specification

	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Coded</i>
<i>Outcome variable</i>	<i>Equal and fair society in social policies</i>	<i>EFs</i>
<i>Condition variables</i>	<i>Election process</i>	<i>ELPR</i>
	<i>Transparency measured by level of information access</i>	<i>TRANS</i>
	<i>Civil rights and political liberties</i>	<i>CRPL</i>
	<i>Rule of law</i>	<i>RULA</i>
	<i>Executive policy capacity</i>	<i>EXPC</i>
	<i>Executive accountability</i>	<i>EXAC</i>

Table 2 presents the raw data, with the outcome variable and the six condition variables – i.e. the data before the dichotomization procedure.

Table 2: Raw data table

Cases	ELPR	TRANS	CRPL	RULA	EXPC	EXAC	Outcomes
Australia	8.4	7	7.7	8.3	7.2	7.2	6.9
Austria	7.6	6.3	7.3	8.3	6.2	7	6.3
Belgium	7.4	7	7.3	7.8	5.7	7	6.3
Bulgaria	6.8	5.3	6.3	4.8	4.8	5.3	4.6
Canada	8.2	6.7	8.3	7.5	7.6	6.5	7.3
Chile	5.6	7	6.3	7.8	6.5	5.9	5.3
Croatia	6	5.3	5.7	5.5	4.6	5.1	5.1
Cyprus	5.8	6	7.7	6	3.1	4.7	5.7
Czech Rep.	8	8.3	7.3	6.8	5.1	6.7	6.6
Denmark	8.4	9	8.7	9.8	8.4	8.2	7.6
Estonia	7.6	9.3	8.7	7.5	6.4	6.4	7.1
Finland	8.8	10	9.3	8.3	8.6	8.1	7.8
France	7.8	6	7.7	6.3	6.6	5.4	6.7
Germany	8.8	8.3	8.7	8.8	6.9	7.5	6.9
Greece	7.2	7	6.7	7	4.3	5.5	4.5
Hungary	5.6	5	6	3.5	5.2	4.9	4.7
Iceland	7.6	6.7	9	7	6.3	7.1	7.3
Ireland	8.2	8.7	9	7.5	6.4	6.5	6.8
Israel	7.4	7.3	5.7	7.3	6.4	6.4	6.1
Italy	7.2	6.3	7.3	6.5	5.8	6.1	5.3
Japan	6.8	6.3	6.7	4.8	6.2	5.9	6
Latvia	7.6	8.7	8	8	7.4	5	5.3
Lithuania	8.4	8.3	8	7.8	7.1	5.5	6.5

Luxembourg	7.4	7.3	8.3	8	6.8	7.9	7.4
Malta	5.2	5	6.3	4.8	4.8	5.9	5.2
Mexico	6.8	6.3	5	5.5	6.5	5.8	4.5
Netherlands	7.2	7.7	8.7	7.3	6.3	6.6	7.1
New Zealand	8.2	7.3	9.3	9.5	8.2	6.7	7.8
Norway	7.8	9.7	9.3	9.3	8.1	8.6	7.6
Poland	8.8	8.3	8.3	8	7.2	6.2	6.1
Portugal	7.2	7	8.3	7.5	6.1	5.3	5.5
Romania	5.4	5	5.7	4.8	4.4	4.6	4.7
Slovakia	8.2	7.3	6.7	6	5.4	5.4	5.6
Slovenia	8.4	7	7.7	6.8	4.4	6.2	6.4
South Korea	6.6	4.7	5	6.3	6.7	5.6	6.2
Spain	6.8	6.3	7.7	7	6.3	6.3	5.9
Sweden	8.6	9.3	9.3	9.8	8.4	8.4	7.8
Switzerland	8.2	9.7	8.7	8.3	7.2	6.7	7
Turkey	5.2	5	4	4.8	6.1	5.2	4.5
UK	6.6	7.3	7.7	7.8	7.2	6.6	7.3
USA	7.8	9	8.7	8	7.6	7.2	6.5

(Source: Result of SGI's survey, see <http://www.sgi-network.org>)

3. QCA analysis of the models

The data are processed with the TOSMANA software, a specialized tool to analyze cross-case regularities in Small- and Intermediate-N Analysis. By means of Boolean minimization algorithms based on Boolean logic, dichotomized variables can be processed in a stepwise manner, which results in a formula (also named 'solution') explaining the outcome by a combination of condition variables (see Cronqvist (2005), Rihoux (2006, 2008, 2012), Rihoux and Ragin (2009)). We chose csQCA (crisp-set QCA) instead of mvQCA (multi-value QCA) or fsQCA (fuzzy-set QCA) because we are looking for major analytical contrasts (De Meur, Rihoux and Yamasaki 2009) and also strive to achieve strong parsimony through the analysis. The QCA 'truth table' (table of configurations) contains the six crisp-set (i.e., dichotomous) in causal conditions which were hypothesized as condition variables, and which together constitute configurations leading to the possible outcome, for the 41 country cases (OECD and EU countries) – see Table 3.

In terms of data analysis, across these country cases, the SGI survey data translated into Boolean variables (see above) will enable us to identify the expected multiple conjunctural forms of causality linking the 6 conditions and the outcome variable.

The csQCA procedure produces the minimal combinations of conditions for the outcome using the Quine-McCluskey Boolean minimization algorithm. The empirical configurations in the truth table were simplified, and those configurations that were theoretically possible but which were not empirically observed in 41 these cases (so-called ‘logical cases’) were also included in the minimization. The inclusion of logical cases enables us to generalize the explanatory patterns that are suggested by the observed cases. In the analysis, with six dichotomous causal conditions, there are theoretically $2^6 (2^k) = 64$ possible combinations of conditions.

In our first round of analyses, we faced the problem of the presence of two ‘contradictory configurations’ (some cases with the same condition values, but with different outcome values). The first contradictory configuration included Latvia, Lithuania and Poland; the second group contradictory configuration included Slovakia and Slovenia. In order to solve these contradictions, we chose to fine-tune the thresholds for the outcome and for some condition variables, also considering country-specific evidence; this is one of the csQCA good practises (Rihoux and De Meur 2009). This lead is to slightly modify the thresholds for the ELPR, RULA and EXPC conditions, which were found to generate the contradiction amongst these two groups of countries.

Minimization of “equal and fair society” outcome

In order to conduct the Boolean minimization, the TOSMANA software first produced the truth table (Table 3) with 18 configurations: 7 configurations with a [1] outcome, corresponding to 25 cases; and 11 configuration with a [0] outcome, corresponding to 16 cases. We can see in the truth table that, in spite of the simplification of the data through the

dichotomization process, quite a good level of empirical diversity is maintained. This will be very useful to obtain a stronger QCA, with more meaningful minimal formulas. We also note that the evidence is, on the whole, quite consistent with the theory, as most countries with a [0] outcome tend to also display a predominance of [0] conditions; and conversely: most countries with a [1] outcome tend to also display a predominance of [1] conditions.

**Table 3: Truth table of Boolean Configurations with six causal conditions
& ‘equal and fair society’ social policy outcome**

ID	ELPR	TRANS	CRPL	RULA	EXPC	EXAC	EFs
Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyprus	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Latvia, Portugal	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Turkey	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
France	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
Slovakia	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Greece	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
South Korea	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Mexico, Japan	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Malta	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Chile	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Italy	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Spain	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Israel	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
UK	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Austria	1	0	1	1	1	1	1

As recommended in QCA good practices (Rihoux - Ragin and de Meur, 2009, pp.33-66, Hai D.H. et al 2015), we run the minimization procedure twice and separately, first for the [1] configurations, and then for the [0] configurations; and we run these minimizations without and with the inclusion of logical remainders. We have chosen not to run necessity tests (i.e. computing consistency coefficients; Schneider and Wagemann 2012), because we do not

assume strong independent effect from single, separate conditions on the outcome. We have however checked for the potential existence of ‘trivial’ conditions, and did not identify any.

Minimizing value the [1] Configurations (Without Logical Remainders)

The TOSMANA software minimizes the [1] configurations without including non-observed cases (i.e. without logical remainders). After the Boolean minimization, we obtain the following minimal formula shown below:

$ELPR\{1\} * TRANS\{0\} * CRPL\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXPC\{1\} +$	$ELPR\{1\} * TRANS\{1\} * CRPL\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXAC\{1\} +$	$ELPR\{1\} * TRANS\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXPC\{1\} * EXAC\{1\} +$	$TRANS\{1\} * CRPL\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXPC\{1\} * EXAC\{1\} +$	$ELPR\{0\} * TRANS\{0\} * CRPL\{0\} * RULA\{1\} * EXPC\{1\} * EXAC\{1\}$
(France+ Austria)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Israel)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ UK)	(South Korea)

We choose to re-write it as follows (formula 1):

$$ELPR\{1\} * TRANS\{1\} * CRPL\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXAC\{1\} + ELPR\{1\} * TRANS\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXPC\{1\} * EXAC\{1\} + TRANS\{1\} * CRPL\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXPC\{1\} * EXAC\{1\} \rightarrow \text{‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy.}$$

We can reduce as follows (formula 2):

$$TRANS\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXAC\{1\} * [ELPR\{1\} * CRPL\{1\} + ELPR\{1\} * EXPC\{1\} + CRPL\{1\} * EXPC\{1\}] \rightarrow \text{‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy.}$$

In formula 1, we see that there are 17 countries gathering in three configurations, and we can see that the following contribute to the differences between the configurations: [Slovenia](#), [Czech Rep.](#), [Belgium](#), [Israel](#) and [UK](#).

Examining the reduced formula 2, we can see that all these 17 cases share three important conditions: $TRANS\{1\} * RULA\{1\} * EXAC\{1\}$. Thus, there is a difference of causal combinations among these countries. However, the formula is quite complex, so only a limited level of parsimony has been achieved. This being said, we can already identify some important conditions shared by the three alternative combinations: strong transparency measured by level of information access, strong rule of law, strong executive accountability may produce the positive outcome ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy. We also observe the importance of $RULA\{1\} * EXPC\{1\}$ in the case of [France](#), [Austria](#) and [South Korea](#). Note also that, in spite of the low value on TRANS in three cases, this still generates a positive outcome.

Minimizing value the [0] Configurations (Without Logical Remainders)

Secondly, TOSMANA software running with the same procedure, this time for the [0] configurations and also without including some non-observed cases (the logical remainders are excluded). The results are as follows:

ELPR{0} * TRANS{0} * CRPL{0} * RULA{0} +	ELPR{0} * TRANS{0} * RULA{0} * EXPC{0} * EXAC{0} +	ELPR{1} * TRANS{1} * CRPL{1} * RULA{1} * EXPC{1} * EXAC{0} +	ELPR{1} * TRANS{1} * CRPL{0} * RULA{0} * EXPC{0} * EXAC{0} +	ELPR{1} * TRANS{1} * CRPL{0} * RULA{1} * EXPC{0} * EXAC{1} +	ELPR{0} * TRANS{1} * CRPL{0} * RULA{1} * EXPC{1} * EXAC{1} +	ELPR{1} * TRANS{0} * CRPL{1} * RULA{1} * EXPC{0} * EXAC{1} +	ELPR{0} * TRANS{0} * CRPL{1} * RULA{1} * EXPC{1} * EXAC{1}
(Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria+ Turkey+ Mexico, Japan+ Malta)	(Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria+ Cyprus)	(Latvia, Portugal)	(Slovakia)	(Greece)	(Chile)	(Italy)	(Spain)

We chose two first terms. This enables us to re-write the formula as follows (formula 3):

$ELPR\{0\} * TRANS\{0\} * CRPL\{0\} * RULA\{0\} + ELPR\{0\} * TRANS\{0\} * RULA\{0\} * EXPC\{0\} * EXAC\{0\} \rightarrow$ negative outcome ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy.

We can reduce and obtain formula 4:

$ELPR\{0\} * TRANS\{0\} * RULA\{0\} [CRPL\{0\} + EXPC\{0\} * EXAC\{0\}] \rightarrow$ negative outcome ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy.

The formula is quite complex, which means that a only small level of parsimony has been achieved. However, we can observe that the countries of [Romania](#), [Hungary](#), [Croatia](#) and [Bulgaria](#) presented in formula 3 can be contrasted with [Turkey](#), [Mexico](#), [Japan](#), [Malta](#) and [Cyprus](#). We can also see that in 9 cases, there are three important conditions ($ELPR\{0\} * TRANS\{0\} * RULA\{0\}$) which seem to be associates to with the negative outcome. It means a weak election condition, combined with a weak transparency condition and a weak rule of law condition leads to the negative outcome of ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy. We also observe two cases ([Latvia and Portugal](#)) in which the weak condition of executive accountability is important for the generation of the negative outcome of ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy.

Minimizing value the [1] Configurations (With Logical Remainders)

To achieve more parsimony, it is necessary to run the TOSMANA to include non-observed cases, called “logical remainders”.¹ The logical remainders constitute a pool of potential cases that can be used by TOSMANA to produce a more parsimonious minimal formula. Including the non-observed cases enables one to express those 41 cases in a simpler way (Rihoux and

¹ We should add that, for all the csQCA tests which include such “logical remainders”, we systematically checked for “contradictory simplifying assumptions” (CSAs). If such CSAs were to be observed, it would be a problem which would need to be solved by further tests (Rihoux & Ragin 2009, 2010, Hai Do 2008; Vanderborght & Yamasaki 2004). Gladly, none of our tests have produced such CSAs – so, we can consider our minimal formulas (for the “1” and “0” outcomes, respectively) as being logically valid, and as being a solid starting point for interpretation.

De Meur, 2009, pp. 60-61). Running again the TOSMANA procedure, we obtain the following terms, in the form of four possible (partly) alternative solutions.

The first possible (partly) alternative solution:

ELPR ₁ TRANS ₀ EXPC ₁ +	ELPR ₁ CRPL ₀ EXPC ₁ +	TRANS ₀ CRPL ₀ RULA ₁ +	TRANS ₁ CRPL ₁ EXAC ₁
(France+ Austria)	(Israel)	(South Korea)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium+ UK)

The second possible (partly) alternative solution:

ELPR ₁ TRANS ₀ EXPC ₁ +	ELPR ₁ EXPC ₁ EXAC ₁ +	TRANS ₀ CRPL ₀ RULA ₁ +	TRANS ₁ CRPL ₁ EXAC ₁
(France+ Austria)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Israel+ Austria)	(South Korea)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium+ UK)

The third possible (partly) alternative solution:

ELPR ₁ TRANS ₀ EXAC ₀ +	ELPR ₁ EXPC ₁ EXAC ₁ +	TRANS ₀ CRPL ₀ RULA ₁ +	TRANS ₁ CRPL ₁ EXAC ₁
(France)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark,	(South Korea)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden,

	Sweden, Norway+ Israel+ Austria)		Norway+ Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium+ UK)
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The fourth possible (partly) alternative solution:

ELPR{1}EXPC{1}E XAC{1} +	TRANS{0}CRPL{0} RULA{1} +	TRANS{0}RULA{1} EXAC{0} +	TRANS{1}CRPL{1} EXAC{1}
(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Israel+ Austria)	(South Korea)	(France)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium+ UK)

In order to choose the most relevant solution among those four options, we need to exploit both theoretical and case-based knowledge.

In terms of theoretical knowledge, we can see that EXPC{1} & EXAC{1} & ELPR{1} are particularly important conditions for the [1] outcome “‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy”. First, EXPC (Executive policy capacity) includes strategic planning, inter-ministerial coordination, knowledge management, consultation and communication processes, as well as policy implementation and institutional learning capacity. Strong executive capacity hence plays a key role for the positive outcome of ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy. The evidence-based policy making under RIA application as well as the quality and sustainability of the RIA process with society consultation is particularly important.

Secondly, EXAC (Executive accountability) is a core condition in the policy making process, seeking to assess the extent to which participation and oversight competencies are produced and cultivated. This examines the extent to which other actors who perform essential functions in consolidating and mediating interests in a political system are able to participate

in policymaking and monitor the process at each step along the way, which influences the oversight function, and which in part reflects the government's obligation to account for its actions to citizens, parliaments, the media, parties and interest groups and the effectiveness of government communication, examining how well a government acquires and disseminates information, and the extent to which it involves and activates various elements of society in formulating and implementing policy.

Thirdly, ELPR (Election process) is related to core procedural democracy conditions including voting and registration rights, protecting the interests of national security or public order, public health or morals, or protecting the rights and freedoms of others, fair access to the media and other means of communication, opportunity for all citizens to exercise their right of participation in national elections, access to an effective, impartial and non-discriminatory procedure for voting and voter registration, private and public party financing, electoral campaign financing transparency, and the opportunity for citizens to take binding political decisions.

In terms of case-based knowledge, if we examine a specific group of cases ([Lithuania](#), [Poland](#), [Estonia](#), [Ireland](#), [Canada](#), [Netherlands](#), [Switzerland](#), [New Zealand](#), [Iceland](#), [Australia](#), [USA](#), [Germany](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Finland](#), [Denmark](#), [Sweden](#), [Norway](#), [Israel](#) and [Austria](#)), we can observe that the ELPR condition is important to generate the positive outcome 'equal and fair society' contribution of social policy, but this condition alone does not suffice: for the outcome 'equal and fair society' contribution of social policy' to occur, ELPR (strong election process) has to be combined with some other conditions such as EXPC{1} & EXAC{1} (strong executive policy capacity and strong executive accountability). Based on our case knowledge, we conclude that the configuration "ELPR{1}EXPC{1}EXAC{1}" is empirically more relevant, as well as ELPR as a particularly important individual condition influencing the outcome.

Also examining the cases, and considering the “simplifying assumptions” generated by TOSMANA, we observe that the conditions of TRANS₁CRPL₁EXAC₁ (cases: Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium and UK) can generate the outcome ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy. We can obtain a list of these simplifying assumptions from the TOSMANA software and lay them out in the report of the analysis – five of them were used as follows:

1. ELPR₁TRANS₀CRPL₀RULA₀EXPC₁EXAC₁
2. ELPR₁TRANS₀CRPL₀RULA₁EXPC₁EXAC₁
3. ELPR₁TRANS₀CRPL₁RULA₀EXPC₁EXAC₁
4. ELPR₁TRANS₁CRPL₀RULA₀EXPC₁EXAC₁
5. ELPR₁TRANS₁CRPL₁RULA₀EXPC₁EXAC₁

Based on this theory- and case-based reasoning, we are thus able to opt for the third solution:

ELPR ₁ TRANS ₀ EXAC ₀ +	ELPR ₁ EXPC ₁ EXAC ₁ +	TRANS ₀ CRPL ₀ RULA ₁ +	TRANS ₁ CRPL ₁ EXAC ₁
(France)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Israel+ Austria)	(South Korea)	(Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway+ Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium+ UK)

It consists of four terms, each one of which combines three conditions linked with the ‘1’ outcome value. We have therefore gained much more parsimony and analytical strength. We can read this solution as follows, not considering the specific cases of France and South Korea (see above): the positive outcome (‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy) is observed:

(1) in countries that combine the conditions [ELPR^{1}EXPC^{1}EXAC^{1}] of strong democratic election process, high executive policy capacity and high executive accountability (Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Israel and Austria) .

Or

(2) in countries that combine the conditions [TRANS^{1}CRPL^{1}EXAC^{1}] of good transparency (high level of information access), good civil rights and political liberties and high executive accountability (Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Slovenia, Czech Rep., Belgium and UK).

For the purpose of further interpretation, we choose to concentrate on one specific path which covers the largest number of cases, as follows (formula 5 – which is in fact one term within a formula):

ELPR^{1}EXPC^{1}EXAC^{1} (strong democratic election process and high executive capacity and high executive accountability) → ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy (Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, New Zealand, Iceland, Australia, USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Israel and Austria) .

Minimizing value the [0] Configurations (With Logical Remainders)

As we do not expect to find strong causal symmetry in social phenomena (Rihoux, de Meur 2009, 62-63), we obtain the following minimal formula which contains partly alternative terms:

RULA ^{0} +	TRANS ^{0} EXPC ^{0} +	TRANS ^{1} E XAC ^{0} +	CRPL ^{0} E XPC ^{0} +	ELPR ^{0} TRA NS ^{0} CRPL [{] 1} +	ELPR ^{0} TRA NS ^{1} CRPL ^{0} }
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(Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria+ Cyprus+ Turkey+ Slovakia+ Mexico, Japan+ Malta)	(Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria+ Cyprus+ Malta+ Italy)	(Latvia, Portugal+ Slovakia)	(Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria+ Slovakia+ Greece+ Malta)	(Cyprus+ Spain)	(Chile)
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It consists of six terms, each one of which combines two conditions (more frequently) or three conditions (for three specific cases) linked with the ‘0’ outcome value, with the exception of the RULA condition which, as a single condition, corresponds to the first term of the solution. The formula can be read as follows (if we do not consider the specific cases of Cyprus, Spain and Chile): the negative outcome (‘un-equal and un-fair society’ contribution of social policy) is observed:

(1) In countries that display the singular condition [RULA{0}], i.e. weak rule of law (Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Turkey, Slovakia, Mexico, Japan and Malta)

Or

(2) In countries that combine the conditions of [TRANS{0}EXPC{0}] i.e. weak transparency (weak level of information access) and weak executive policy capacity (Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta and Italy) ;

Or

(3) In countries that combine the conditions [CRPL{0}EXPC{0}] of weak civil rights and political liberties and weak executive policy capacity (Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Greece and Malta) ;

For further interpretation, we see un-equal and un-fair society’ contribution of social policies must choose to concentrate on one specific path which covers the largest number of cases, as follows (formula 6 – which is in fact one term within a formula):

Therefore: [TRANS{0}EXPC{0}] of weak transparency (weak level of information access) and weak executive policy capacity → ‘un-equal and un-fair society’ contribution of social policy.

Synthesis and further interpretation

Our core research question has been to try and identify the core combinations of policy conditions that generate more favourable or more unfavourable outcomes of social policies.

The csQCA analysis has enabled us to produce some core QCA solutions. Examining these solutions, is it possible to explain, more inductively and thus relating to some specific country examples, the contrasted social policy making processes in OECD and EU countries.

1/ We have observed some sort of symmetry for the following four condition variables: TRANS, RULA, EXPC, EXAC [“0” for the 0 outcome, and “1” for 1 outcome] in the minimal formulas. The EXPC condition (strong executive capacity), specifically, appears to be a particularly important condition for generating the [1] outcome “‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy”; conversely, the [0] outcome “‘un-equal and un-fair society’ of social policy” is also strongly linked to weak executive policy capacity. If we consider the sub-population of highly performing country cases concerned ([Lithuania](#), [Poland](#), [Estonia](#), [Ireland](#), [Canada](#), [Netherlands](#), [Switzerland](#), [New Zealand](#), [Iceland](#), [Australia](#), [USA](#), [Germany](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Finland](#), [Denmark](#), [Sweden](#), [Norway](#), [Israel](#), [Austria](#)), we observe that the score of these countries on the EXPC condition varies quite a lot; hence we choose to examine specifically the country with the highest score (Finland) and the lowest score (Lithuania).

The contrast is evidenced in Finnish case, the political institutions born to support the social policy performance while the Lithuanian political institutions did not support well the social policy performance, thus social policies have their own problems. In other words, the outcomes of social policies are not the products of the political process. We see that: In the Finnish case, with regards to executive capacity, strategic-planning processes are deeply

integrated into policy making, the Prime Minister's Office has broad policy-review capabilities and works closely with ministries. Inter-ministerial coordination is strong at all levels. RIAs use is systematic, with high quality. Interest organizations are regularly involved in the legislative process. Municipal governments must meet strict standards, institutional self-monitoring has been intensified, with the results made publicly available. The outcome is positive such as with a generally strong safety net; the education system is of high quality (though higher-education graduation rates are somewhat low) and there are strong redistributive policies; health care is generally good, with comparatively low costs; child-poverty rates are low, and women's employment rates high; the pension system prevents poverty, and ongoing reforms are addressing fiscal concerns.

In the case of Lithuania, we see: a significant institutional reform ability; regard to executive capacity, strategic planning is active and well institutionalized while the government office has been repeatedly reorganized, with policy-evaluation capabilities improved. Line ministries have considerable autonomy. Informal coordination is important, but subordinate to formal decision-making mechanisms. The outcome is rather positive with regard to social policies, but there are several weaknesses such as education quality, even though tertiary attainment is comparatively high. The share of women employed is high, but family policy is fragmented and focused on high-risk families. However, residents give poor ratings to the quality of the health care system and national spending on health is comparatively low and inefficient; child-poverty rates remain concerning, and child-care provision is insufficient.

On the other conditions, we see that strong executive capacity [EXPC] condition plays a key role for the [1] outcome 'equal and fair society' contribution of social policy in two further cases, [France](#) and [South Korea](#). Indeed, although the conditions TRANS and EXAC display a [0] value for France, and TRANS also a [0] value for South Korea, these two countries have generated a [1] outcome because of the strong condition of ELPR{1} (democracy election

process) for France and RULA{1} (strong rule of law) for South Korea. Hence, the democracy election process and strong rule of law appear to be important for these formulas, but yet they cannot independently produce or fully explain the outcome.

2/ Conversely, we can observe the interesting asymmetry of the following conditions ELPR, EXPC, EXAC that we see the conditions ELPR {0} and EXAC {0} did not appear to produce [0] outcome as expected., on the one hand, contribute to generating the [1] outcome in the minimal configuration in many countries. On the other hand, the [0] outcome could be produced by the combination of [TRANS{0}EXPC{0}], i.e. a combination of weak transparency (level of information access) and weak executive capacity.

3/The RULA{0} (low rule of law) plays an important role in the explanation of the [0] outcome ('un-equal and un-fair society' contribution of social policy) only, though there is also some level of symmetry for the [1] outcome. In formula 2, we could see that the outcome "equal and fair society' contribution of social policy" is produced by a combination of TRANS{1} * RULA{1} * EXAC{1} in some countries, as well RULA{1} * EXPC{1} in the case of [France](#), [Austria](#) and [South Korea](#). Regarding the [0] outcome, the combination of conditions [TRANS{0}EXPC{0}] is the key point: if the conditions "transparency" and "executive capacity" are weak, this is a necessary and sufficient combination that leads to an un-equal and un-fair society' of social policy (for quite a large set of countries: [Romania](#), [Hungary](#), [Croatia](#), [Bulgaria](#), [Cyprus](#), [Malta](#) and [Italy](#)). From our case knowledge, examining the Romania case, we can confirm that the combination of low transparency and low executive capacity has typically led to the [0] outcome. Indeed, with scarce resources, Romania falls into the bottom ranks internationally with respect to social policies. Poverty levels are the EU's highest, producing significant migration pressure. Income equality has declined since the crisis, but the Roma remain marginalized. Inadequate funding undermines quality in the universal public health care system. Bribes are solicited even for basic services.

Parental-leave benefits are generous; however, fertility rates are low and child-poverty rates high. Affordable child care is scarce. Pensions have been increased from a low level, but remain comparatively low. Sustainability remains a concern despite a rise in the retirement age, and low wages minimize inbound-immigration flows.

4. Conclusions

Our systematic comparative analysis of 41 OECD and EU countries, exploiting the configurational logic of QCA, reveals that the ‘equal and fair society’ contribution of social policy can be generated from the combination of a strong democracy election process, high executive capacity and high executive accountability. Further, civil rights, political liberties and access to information are all important, but they are not key conditions linking directly to the positive outcome. By contrast, it is interesting to observe the combination of weak transparency and weak executive capacity, which will lead to ‘un-equal and un-fair society’ contribution of social policies.

Coming back to the core research problem, our empirical analyses have provided strong evidence that the conditions – favourable or unfavourable – under which social policies are designed and implemented does have a strong impact, in different ways, on the contribution of those social policies toward a more equal and more society. In particular: if social policies are designed and implemented amidst a favourable combination of conditions (solid democracy election process, high executive capacity and high executive accountability), those social policies will better address the needs or rights of the ordinary people. Conversely, if social policies are designed and implemented in conditions of weak transparency and weak executive capacity, the needs or rights of the people cannot be satisfied.

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