According to the sociologists Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, modern societies have become increasingly preoccupied with the future and safety and have mobilized themselves in order to manage systematically what they have perceived as “risks” (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). This special section investigates how conceptions of risk evolved in Europe over the course of the twentieth century by focusing on the creation and evolution of social policy. The language of risk has, in the past twenty years, become a matter of course in conversations about social policy (Kemshall 2002). We seek to trace how “risk” has served as a heuristic tool for understanding and treating “social problems.” A key aim of this collection is to explore the character of social policy (in the broadest sense) as an instrument (or technology) that both constructs its own objects as the consequences of “risks” and generates new “risks” in the process (Lupton 2004: 33). In this way, social policy typifies the paradox of security: by attempting literally to making one “carefree,” or sē (without) curitās (care), acts of (social) security spur new insecurities about what remains unprotected (Hamilton 2013: 3–5, 25–26). Against this semantic and philological context, we suggest that social policy poses an inherent dilemma: in aiming to stabilize or improve the existing social order, it also acts as an agent of change. ¹ This characteristic of social policy is what makes particularly valuable studies that allow for comparisons across time, place, and types of political regime. By examining a range of cases from across Europe over the course of the twentieth century, this collection seeks to pose new questions about the role of the state; ideas about risk and security; and conceptions of the “social” in its various forms.

The essays in this special section derive from a conference held at the University of Sheffield in the summer of 2012 that brought together historians and sociologists from the United States, the United Kingdom, and continental Europe. We sought to share insights across disciplinary boundaries in order to understand better the diverse assumptions about and languages of risk and security that informed twentieth-century European social policy and, indeed, continue to echo into the twenty-first century. Europe in the twentieth century provides an ideal optic for exploring changing semantics of risk and their individual, social, and political consequences. Europe has not only been a locus of innovation in social policy, as evidenced by the early adoption of social insurance in the late nineteenth century and work-life balance policies at...
the end of the twentieth century, but it has also been a site of social engineering, exemplified by “moral reform” campaigns in the Weimar Republic and the “racial hygiene” projects carried out under National Socialism, as well as by the eugenics movements espoused by the Eugenics Society in the United Kingdom and by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal in Sweden. Not least, “Europe,” and continental Europe in particular, has often served as an ideal type for risk management through social policy (Pontusson 2005).

To be sure, Europe has witnessed a long evolution in thinking about risk, going back at least as early as fifteenth-century Italian policies for agricultural and transport insurance, and perhaps dating as early as late medieval accounting practices (Bernstein 1996: 41–44, 92–96). By the twentieth century, therefore, “risk” had already come to experience a complex history, with origins that lay primarily in commercial insurance and gambling rather than social policy. Moreover, various words have been used interchangeably for the concept of “risk” over the last several centuries, and continue to be employed into the present. Nonetheless, in its manifold formulations, from sixteenth-century insurance policies to twentieth-century hygiene laws, the idea has been understood as the potential future outcome—either positive or negative—of a conscious decision, for example, to set sail or to place a bet. In this respect, “risk” differed from “hazards,” “dangers,” and “misfortunes,” which were seen as unavoidable—even if concepts of risk have often been articulated using these alternative nomenclatures. In contrast to “dangers,” therefore, one could choose to put “security” measures in place against a risk, or not to take a risk at all. Risk was defined by agency. As the sociologist Niklas Luhmann notes, the idea of “risk” casts a shadow, creating “reflexive concepts” such as security and danger. Risk/security and risk/danger are “binary” distinctions that hinge on the presence or absence of decision making (Luhmann 1993: 11–14, 19–22). This semantics of risk expanded over the seventeenth century, with the rise of joint-stock exchanges, and flourished in the eighteenth century, with the growth of commercial life insurance (Bernstein 1996; Clark 1999).

By the late eighteenth century, a “probabilistic revolution” took hold across Europe, marking a paradigm shift in thinking about risk, as new governmental bureaucrats and others began calculating everything from population growth and suicide rates to the international exchange in grain (Hacking 1990; Krüger et al. 1987). Ideas about risk began to focus on domestic concerns related to national economies and, above all, a variety of “social questions” that became more pressing as the nineteenth century wore on (Eghigian 2000; Witt 2004). Michel Foucault and others have traced this conceptual shift, delineating a connection between the decline of mercantilism and the rise of a new understanding of “biopower” in the eighteenth century, in which the state, with the aid of a growing fleet of scientific, medical, and social-scientific experts, sought to manage its population in order to achieve economic and military security (Foucault 2009: 1–2, 60–76).

By the twentieth century, various social questions, from the declining birth rate across much of central and Western Europe to old-age poverty, were increasingly characterized as “risks,” with their management being a central feature of governmental
initiatives for maintaining social stability. On the one hand, increasing specialization in various fields, from industrial hygiene to economics, along with the significant expansion of governmental bureaucracies, meant that new territories for charting risk opened up for state intervention. World War I, which sparked the need for states to plan both their war economies and the social and economic reconstruction that would ensue following the end of military action, served to crystallize the importance of planning for the future based on the advice of experts in these areas (Lengwiler 2006; Moses 2012). On the other hand, from the late nineteenth century, international and transnational organizations such as the International Labor Organization began work on a collective project of mapping risk and determining possible, mostly state driven, solutions for managing it (Kott and Droux 2013). A constant strategy for risk management throughout this period was, suggests Foucault, an emphasis on governmental: a strategy of managing populations, whether through administrative bureaucracies or technologies of self-government (Foucault 2009).

Sociological debates on the “risk society” offer fresh insights into these histories of the social, its associated problems, and their potential solutions. There are two contexts in which this is particularly evident. Ulrich Beck’s notion of the “risk society” from 1986 and Niklas Luhmann’s 1991 sociological study of risk saw that understandings of “risk” were embedded in social processes and subject to institutional interventions at the levels of state and society. Beyond that, the work of Beck and Luhmann emphasized the interaction between individual behaviors and apperceptions of risk, on the one hand, and social structures and practices, on the other. In this vein, they helped to focus attention on the empirical analysis of that interaction by historicizing it. The concept of “risk society” posits a (real, material) epochal change from one form of modernity (“industrial modernity”) to another (“reflexive modernity”) (Beck 2000). Insofar as social policy in its historical-technical sense is a feature of industrial modernity (because the policy state, with or without the “social” label, is a feature of classical modernity), it is implicated in that change.

At the same time, Luhmann offered a new framework for understanding the dynamic of social policy—understood as a technology—by adapting contemporaneous approaches to environmental hazards and dangers. The risks Beck saw were predominantly of that nature, threats to health and safety like those of nuclear disaster or pandemic disease. He argued that their potentially catastrophic consequences combine with the intensified potential for their social amplification that is inherent in modern forms of communications media. As a consequence, Beck suggested that the risks associated with “reflexive modernity” generate a qualitatively new sense of individual endangerment, which calls for new ways of managing personal life in interaction with others (Pidgeon et al. 2003). Material threats, typically the unintended consequences of developments in science and technology, thereby generate new social formations. Here, Beck was building on a decade’s work on risks and hazards in social studies of technology (Brickman et al. 1985; Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). Luhmann brought this work full circle by pointing out that institutional systems and practices whose purpose is to eliminate or manage social problems have the same tendency as technological responses to the challenges of the natural and material world: they
generate new problems (Luhmann 1993: xii–xiii, 168). This can happen in a range of ways. Policy often operates by constructing its own object, identifying a “problem” where none had been perceived or articulated as such before. Policies may also have unintended negative consequences for the groups at which they are directed. And, policies may generate new needs or horizons of expectation, whose disappointment may pose a challenge to political order or that may—less perilously—come to be seen as priority objects of intervention in their own right.

This “autopoietic” process lies behind the second context in which “risk” has become and remains current in social policy studies: the concept of New Social Risks, which emerged in the late 1990s (Amigeon and Bonoli 2006). The term typically covered people who fell outside the historic provision for wage-earning male heads of household, and whose needs were both institutionally unmet (and difficult to meet) and growing: young people without work, the elderly, and working mothers. Typically read as an organic consequence of demographic change and technology-driven changes in the labor market, the growth and visibility of these new “risk groups” was an artifact of changing expectations about the shape and function of families and the ambivalent visions of their individual members as earners and participants in caring relationships. And these expectations and visions had been fostered by welfare, family, and gender equality policies.

In linking these diverse interventions in the historical and social-scientific literature on risk and social policy, we seek to move beyond simply historicizing “risk,” either by charting its transition from “classical modernity” to “postmodernity,” or by tracing its various genealogies in the context of twentieth-century Europe. Instead, through the lens of social policy, we aim to unpick the changing and historically contingent nature of the semantics of risk and security. In this respect, we are building on a rich and growing body of recent scholarship, by Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, Jonathan Levy, and others who have shed important historical light on understandings of risk and security as motivations for laws on strict liability, the creation of social insurance, and environmental legislation (Fressoz 2012; Le Roux 2011; Levy 2012; Mohun 2013). A significant aspect of our initiative is, therefore, historicizing the sociologists and other scholars whose own languages of risk continue to inform historical thinking about the past. For example, Martin Geyer’s contribution to this collection, on pension policy in West Germany since the 1970s, illuminates how sociologists and demographers came to chart the “risks” associated with population “gaps,” including the risks of future “gaps” in West Germany’s pension funds, in the face of declining birth rates. By casting a spotlight on historical complexity, including within the development of the social sciences, we reject a straightforward biopolitical narrative that posits the growth of a binary division between states and individuals, as objects and subjects, in the management of perceived “social” risks.2 In the same vein, we aim to overcome the simple historicist paradigm put forward by Luhmann, Beck, and Giddens that outlines

2. Even if that narrative allows for a degree of agency—through “technologies of the self”—among the object population. Characteristic here is Castel 1991; Ewald 1986; and Rose 1990.
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a linear process of modernization whereby “modernity,” in its various iterations, is characterized by risk and attempts to manage it.

We contend instead that the history of defining and managing “risk” through social policy has been more complicated, and in two ways. First, this history has been specific: context mattered, and it continued to matter over time. Following Reinhart Koselleck, we emphasize the role of semantics as an agent that structured knowledge and informed action (Koselleck 1985). It was not just the social, economic, or political context that mattered for discerning the nature of social problems, identifying solutions, and making decisions. Context also mattered because arguments about risk simultaneously reflected perceptions about the past (e.g., as shown in Geyer’s article [2015], the past under National Socialism) as well as perceptions of a possible (often perceived as probable) future that would stem from both the present and from that past. Thinking historically, in terms of a relational past/present/future, provided a form of “semiotic scaffolding” in which social-political arguments about risk and security were constructed and reformed over time (Hoffmeyer 2007). Second, this history of addressing risk and defining security in the name of the “social” has involved many actors and levels. In this collection, we highlight three: individuals, communities (including the family), and the state. We recognize, however, the numerous connections between these nodal points, as well as the important role of “expertise” of various kinds as a conduit of information.

With this dual perspective, the essays in this collection demonstrate that the risks that social policy sought to address in twentieth-century Europe were moving targets, defined and recast over time; based on specific knowledge and institutional structures; and drawing on precise cultural and social contexts. It is unsurprising, therefore, that diverse languages of “risk” can be traced in each of the contributions to this special section. As Mark Smith notes, for example, “in the USSR … the language of risk was seldom deployed explicitly,” while Kirsi Eräranta charts the conscious reference to “New Social Risks” in Finland at the end of the twentieth century (Smith 2015: 131; Eräranta 2015). For Martin Geyer’s demographers and sociologists in West Germany, “risk” was more often seen as an issue related to atomic energy and nuclear weapons, rather than a term specifically related to social policy. By contrast, Martin Lengwiler shows how Swiss and international actuaries, statisticians, and administrators in the 1920s through 1960s made explicit reference to “security,” as a corollary of “risk.” On the one hand, the emphasis reflected their concern with planning and expertise, for example, in the operation of new computers and punch card machines. On the other hand, the language of security and risk used in international and actuarial circles probably also reflected the long heritage of the concept in commercial and social insurance. Tellingly, these languages of risk and security did not always filter into national discourses. While “security” gained prominence in the United Kingdom as a hallmark of its universalist and consciously postwar welfare state, the idea of “social reform” was more prevalent in Adenauer’s West Germany, in part, as a cautious response to socialist welfare reforms across the Iron Curtain (Lengwiler 2015). Similarly, as Andreas Killen shows for Weimar and National Socialist Germany, “risk” was not necessarily cited by social hygienists, nor did it appear in the numerous
“enlightenment” films that were created to warn of perceived social ills. Nonetheless, the films stressed the probability of negative outcomes, such as mental illness and venereal disease, stemming from particular behaviors (Killen 2015).

As the contributions to this collection demonstrate, these diverse languages and understandings often targeted the actions of individuals as both the perpetrators and victims of social risks. For example, Martin Lengwiler traces how competing notions of security, largely inspired by transnational and international impulses from the interwar era, including the International Social Security Association, the International Labor Organization, and the commercial insurance industry, underpinned postwar European welfare states. Focusing on a case study of the VITA Life Insurance, Lengwiler demonstrates how different strands of this complex genealogy informed Swiss insurance policies, which emphasized the role of individuals in safeguarding their own health. By providing annual physicals, publishing magazines that offered health advice, and building fitness facilities in cities across Switzerland, VITA underscored the agency of individual policy holders and suggested their ability to make decisions that could prevent future illness (see also Bouk 2015). Similarly, Andreas Killen shows how “enlightenment” films such as The Inheritance operated according to a Foucauldian mode of liberal governmentality. Sitting uneasily in a realm between entertainment and education, the Inheritance was released in 1935 as part of a campaign overseen by the Nazi Office on Racial Policy in order to educate the public about Germany’s new sterilization law. Like other “enlightenment films,” it indoctrinated viewers, as individuals, to adopt “moral” behavioral norms. Killen’s essay therefore highlights the ways in which diverse approaches to risk—both top-down and bottom-up—proliferated under ostensibly “totalitarian” regimes. In a related vein, Mark Smith shows the important role of discourse about, and not just targeted action against, risk in Soviet social policy. Toward the end of Stalin’s reign, between 1945 and 1953, for example, “marginal social groups” became the “conspicuous targets of welfare officials.” By the mid-1950s, however, a moral panic had begun to target the problem of “freeloaders” benefitting from social policy. As Smith notes, “the Soviet moral hazard debate did not simply reflect the kind of unintended consequences of benefits policy that applied everywhere else; it also spoke to one of the central preoccupations of the whole Soviet project: the moral value of work, and especially the work of the industrial working class” (Smith 2015: 141).

The moral tension between individual needs and communal, as well as familial, obligations was not unique to the Soviet Union. It emerges as a key theme in twentieth-century European conceptions of risk and security in the social sphere. As Martin Geyer stresses, the idea of a “contract of solidarity between generations” underpinned West German debates about old-age pensions in the 1970s. The concept was not a novelty of the late twentieth century but endured across three political regimes, going back to the 1920s and later providing the principle behind the 1957 reform to West Germany’s pension law. As Geyer outlines, the 1957 law sought “to establish a fixed relationship between the income of the working and the nonworking population through individually accrued social entitlements, which were unequal but universally indexed to wages” (Geyer 2015: 44). The system was based on similar principles to
the Bismarckian social insurance policies of the nineteenth century, in that it pooled risks communally into a single pension pot. However, the West German pension law was not meant to cover one’s own risk during her lifetime. Instead, it was intended to operate in an environment of assured “social synchronicity,” with a predictable cohort of wage earners and retirees across generations (Geyer 2015). If the rhythm of income to pensions grew cacophonous, the onus was on individuals, not only to earn new pension contributions by working, but also to ensure that a sufficiently large working population would continue to exist. It was therefore left to individuals to solve the “birth gap” that began looming in Germany after 1973.

In this context, a possible pension shortfall became a moving target, and demographic predictions for West Germany’s future took on a new political salience. The fact that a proportion of West Germany’s population continued to grow from the 1970s, but consisted in part of recent immigrants from Turkey and Southeastern Europe, made the population debate even more heated. In this respect, West German discussions about addressing the risk of an aging population cast a spotlight on what was perceived as a new social risk: fears of “racial degeneration” amidst the invasion of a “foreign” population. In this respect, West Germany’s pension debates echoed those in neighboring France in the interwar period and continuing after decolonization, when welfare provision to Algerian immigrants, and especially to Algerian women, became the target of intense scrutiny (Lyons 2006, 2009). It also chimes with debates about pensions, work, and immigration that have increasingly come to haunt post-Maastricht Europe (Schierup et al. 2006). In West Germany, the question about the relationship between individuals and the community, and between generations, was further complicated by the uneven responsibility attributed to women. As Geyer shows, some argued that it was particularly attractive for women to work rather than to raise children, which proved a sticking point because German pension calculations were based on “future demographic changes, and thus indirectly on both biological reproductive and immigration levels” (Geyer 2015: 54). The “new governmentality” inherent in this system was not, however, unique to Germany. Like Lengwiler, Geyer shows that international organizations, in this case, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, played key roles in shaping domestic discussions about social risks and securing the future. In this way, German debate about the future of social security closely echoed a general trend away from predicting a global “population bomb” and toward highlighting aging as a new source of political anxiety (Leimgruber 2013).

The pronatalist aspect of these discussions reflected the ambivalent role of the family in sharing social risks and creating new forms of security. In the nineteenth century, social insurance hinged on the spreading of risk, yet it bypassed families and instead focused on the single wage earner, usually a male “breadwinner” working in industry. His dependents were indirect (and, upon his death, direct) beneficiaries of this arrangement. By the same token, therefore, social insurance removed the individuals who were the subject of insurance from relying on their families for security. In the twentieth century, “welfare” rather than social insurance, or the interwar neologism “social security,” addressed a gap that still remained largely uncovered in
state-sponsored social initiatives: provision that focused on mothers and children.\(^3\)

The shift in focus was evident already in the debates in Edwardian Britain and Wilhelmine Germany, for example, that lay emphasis on educating mothers in the care of infants (Lindner 2014). And, it gained momentum after World War I in movements for family allowances in Britain and France and maternity insurance in Italy, which later fed into Mussolini’s “Battle for Births” (Pedersen 1993; Quine 2002).

The eugenicist tone of the interwar debates dissipated after World War II, perhaps in response to the revelations of the Holocaust. Nonetheless, the family continued to sit uneasily after the war in the nexus connecting risk, security, and the social. In this context, the obligation to produce children that became so prominent in 1970s and 1980s West Germany was not necessarily an obligation to have a family. Instead, it was a responsibility toward another form of community: the economic kin of pensioners.

However, the family continued to be invoked after World War II as an *affective unit* to sell life insurance, as Lengwiler shows for Switzerland, or acknowledged as an object of desire in the construction of the question of “work-family reconciliation,” as outlined by Kirsi Eräranta for Finland. Eräranta traces debates about women’s labor and work-life balance in Finland over the course of the twentieth century. She shows the critical role of the social sciences in both constructing and recasting work-life balance as a social and political problem and guiding the design of policies that stood at the core of Finland’s welfare state. By taking a Foucauldian approach that emphasizes the role of discursive genealogies, Eräranta highlights the longevity of debates about balancing work and family life. She reveals that what has been labeled by policy makers and sociologists since the 1980s as a “new social risk” has rather stood at the core of social political debate in Finland since at least the 1930s, even if the emphasis on responsibilities toward work and family life, and the weighting attributed to women and men within those spheres, has shifted over time, following changing insights from psychology, economics, and sociology. As Eräranta demonstrates, debates revolved around two poles: the obligation to work in order to support one’s family, and the obligation to have a family in order to support society. The family became the focus of sociopolitical debate because it could be self-sustaining, preventing reliance on the state by sharing responsibilities such as child care among family members, but also because the family was seen as necessary to support the national economy, also in terms of population growth and well-being.

Eräranta’s contribution to this collection casts a spotlight on the ambiguous relationship between the individual, the family, and the *state* in twentieth-century European debates about “social risks.” It is difficult to encapsulate these ambiguities within typologies of welfare states. Family provision has often been associated with so-called conservative welfare states, typified by France and, to a certain extent, Germany. It has also been seen as a hallmark of their social-democratic “Nordic” counterparts (Esping-Anderson 1990). However, the precise constellation of and expected consequences from family provision differed greatly across national (and local)
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contexts, and over time. As Eräranta reminds us, even each “Nordic” state had a specific policy trajectory and specific national history that informed how it understood and attempted to manage social risks. While Finland’s late industrialization played a key role in shaping the nature of its family support, other factors, such as the influence of organized religion, proved decisive elsewhere, as was the case in neighboring Sweden (Morgan 2006). Not least, the creation and revision of social policy in each state hinged on national narratives and historical memory. This aspect was particularly significant for postwar West Germany. When assessing how to address the problem of population “gaps” amidst of the pension crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, policy makers were compelled to reflect on the new state’s National Socialist past—and its fractured present as the capitalist and Social and Christian Democratic counterpart to the German Democratic Republic. As Martin Geyer (2015) reveals, West German pension policy hinged on “visions of social and cultural synchronicity (“Gleichzeitigkeit”) within the bounded national space” (43). The notion clearly drew on earlier understandings of Volksgemeinschaft (people’s community) from National Socialism and from the Fordist management techniques that gained influence in the interwar years. Due to Germany’s “brown” past, however, addressing the population question directly proved heated, especially as debates turned to the question of immigration from Turkey (Geyer 2015).

Despite these ambivalences and variations, the state served as the focal point for addressing social risks in Europe throughout the twentieth century. Andreas Killen’s contribution to this collection is a sanguine reminder that state involvement in social policy was abundant already in the interwar period. By producing hygiene films that were shown on a mass scale, the state in Weimar and, later, in National Socialist Germany transcended traditional social insurance laws that focused on employers and male breadwinners. Similarly, Martin Lengwiler reveals how discourses within international organizations were instrumental for shaping national approaches to social provision, in which the nation-state was the fulcrum on which social security rested. However, Lengwiler emphasizes that the role of the state in addressing social risks was complex. For example, in Switzerland, the state played only an indirect role in carrying out social provision, typified by the Alpine country’s Three-Pillar welfare system that prioritized the purchase of annuities and private insurance, such as that offered by VITA Life. The diversity of these national experiences of addressing social risks deepens our understanding of the role of the state in providing social security in twentieth-century Europe. This perspective enables us to move beyond simple narratives about the birth of the welfare state as part of reconstruction efforts after World War II. In Switzerland and Germany, as elsewhere, multiple, contingent, and changing understandings of risk coursed through social policy over the twentieth century, with manifold consequences for the relationship between individuals, families, and the state.

The question of “moral hazard” cut across this web of relations, offering a shadow side to the heuristic of “social risk” that proved equally malleable. It resonated not only among actuaries at the commercial insurance firm VITA Life—in the form of failing to “get fit”—but also in Russia. As Mark Smith argues, animosity toward “freeloaders”
was founded on the “core rhetorical and legal foundation of Soviet welfare reform: the (problematic and complex) appeal to justice and social rights” (Smith 2015: 131). To a certain extent, for Russia, a focus on individuals—as freeloaders or as potential victims of social risks—intertwined with the Swiss insurance company’s emphasis on health and prosperity. In the Khrushchev era, social policy attempted to tackle living standards by encouraging individuals to “[save] up for a rainy day,” while paradoxically summoning “utopian aspirations [such] as communal lifestyles” (Smith 2015: 141, 134). The language of moral hazard surfaces, in different guises, in each of the contributions to this collection, thus revealing the commonalities of experience in grappling with social risks and attempting to ensure security. It can be found in West Germany’s pension debates, in which it often seemed a “matter of rational choice to abuse the system” (Geyer 2015: 46), and it appeared in Weimar and Nazi propaganda against behavior that might lead to “racial degeneration.” It also resounded in Finnish discussions about the appropriate role for mothers at home and in society. Across Europe over the twentieth century, therefore, discourse on moral hazard mirrored debates about the social.

By emphasizing contingency and change, we have attempted in this collection to encourage further reflection and research on risk and social policy. We have sought to move beyond historicizing “risk,” by tracking the discursive shift from “problem” or “danger” to “risk” (and into and out of “security”). Instead, by linking sociological work on risk with historical insights on social policy, we have aimed to offer a new perspective on pan-European readings of the relationship between collective and individual values and agency, on the one hand, and on relationships between past, present, and future, on the other. We have attempted to show that there is an abiding dialectic between the individual and the collective (the social) as principles in the conception of social policy. Even the nineteenth-century models of insurance-based provision for compensation for loss (of employment or capacity to work) featured an individualizing tendency (contributions were individual, and the individual laboring body was the unit of calculation or object of policy). Of course, while we often talk about “solidarity” in relation to classical social security schemes, insurance is a technology that promises to dissolve the individual into the collective of shared risk. However, it is rarely able to take its eye off person-specific risks.

The use of an explicit vocabulary of “risk” that emerged in the late twentieth century both makes apparent the presence of individuals in this story and reflects a self-conscious reorientation of policy toward placing responsibility for prophylaxis on the individual. It also draws attention to the element of individual choice (already embedded in the original senses of risk—taking a chance, choosing a course of action in awareness that it may fail). This illusion of choice has been associated with visions of individual self-fulfillment in the work of Giddens and others who have written on “reflexive modernity.” It also features in the notion of “new social risks,” insofar as they actually rest on the presumption that individuals consciously choose their own life course. The question of work-family reconciliation is an example of this dialectic: the need for “reconciliation” shifts from being a problem for society (neglected children
or even a “population gap”) to being a challenge or risk arising from women’s need for self-fulfillment.

In many ways, this dialectical paradigm linking individual choice and perceived social risks chimes with Foucault’s assessment of neoliberalism and the nature of governmentality in Europe after World War II. The rise of “privatized social policy,” typified by West Germany’s social market economy under Adenauer (Foucault 2008: 144–45), neatly encapsulates the doubly paradoxical nature of securing against risks in twentieth-century Europe. On the one hand, it relied on individuals to secure themselves in order to contribute to the collectivity, whether market based or familial. On the other hand, security could never be obtained in reality: it was an ideal type that legislation and market mechanisms could only attempt to enable. The chronological and geographical spread of the contributions to this collection reveals patterns and rhythms inherent in this dialectical aspect of “risk.” To a certain extent, this commonality of experience transcended state configurations and political philosophy, whether liberal capitalist, social democratic, or socialist, over the course of the century. Rather than witness the fall of “classical modernity” and the rise of its “reflexive” counterpart, the twentieth century witnessed “moving targets” of risk and the social, binding individuals, families, and states in a complex and unfinished (and interminable) project of security.

References