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This book is a critical contribution to the discussion on varieties of capitalism. In contrast to the mainstream VoC literature it does not have principal problems to map capitalist diversity and to understand institutional change. Its differentia specifica is the strict distinction between idealtypical and empirical varieties of capitalism and the presentation of the latter as open and relatively loosely ordered social systems (or system-like configurations). Systemness is required for competitiveness while openness, on the opposite side, stems from relatively autonomous parts (particularly companies), the possibility of equifunctional arrangements, uncertainty about functional solutions and contested goals of social development (e.g. competitiveness versus equality and environmental care). The book develops four ideal-typical varieties (liberal, statist, corporatist and meso-communitarian capitalism) and analyses the parallelism of path continuity and change but also the performances of empirical capitalisms in the contexts of globalization, Europeanization, social-structural individualization and the ideological dominance of neo-liberalism.

Uwe Becker is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Earlier publications include *Employment Miracles* (2005; ed. with H.Schwartz), *Europese Democratieën* (1999), *Kapitalistische Dynamik und Politisches Kräftespiel* (1986) as well as articles in relevant journals like *Socio-Economic Review*, *New Political Economy* and *Journal of European Social Policy*.

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