

# Foreword

**Heather Grabbe**

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How do policies and norms grow after being transplanted into another context? This volume surveys a variety of Central and East European experiences over a quarter-century of post-communist transition. Many of the policies were imports from the EU, which was the largest single foreign influence in the region during this period. The scale of the transfer was remarkable: thousands of pages of legislation and regulation, as well as models for the institutions to implement and enforce them.

The United States has never been able to boast having such a direct and immediate influence outside its borders through soft power. After 1989, the desire to move as quickly as possible away from state socialism and to become normal, Western, European countries motivated wholesale adoption of policy and institutional frameworks from abroad. EU models became especially attractive once membership became a possibility, and later their adoption became essential criteria for advancing in the accession process.

Viewed from 2017, the lack of competition from alternative models is striking. Russia was busy with its own transition, while the US generally supported the goal of moving Central and Eastern Europe towards EU membership. The years after 1989 also saw the peak of the unquestioned belief in liberalism – both political and economic – following the ‘end of history’ in terms of competing ideologies (Fukuyama 1992). This period was very different from the contemporary contestation of liberal norms in domestic politics by Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, US president Donald Trump’s ‘alternate facts’, or Russian criticism of ‘degenerate’ European values under titles such as ‘Eurosodom’.

The power of the EU’s appeal came from the combination of stability, prosperity, security, and the personal freedoms it seemed to offer. Open markets and open societies were extremely attractive to people who had lived under state socialism. The previous political and economic systems were thoroughly discredited, and the EU provided a successful alternative model, combined with a framework of support for the reforms to get there, and crowned with the achievement of joining a powerful and rich

regional club. This goal united people across the political spectrum and society, creating little political opposition until years after their countries had joined the EU.

However, the EU's agenda for Central and Eastern Europe was never intended to be a full plan for democracy and development. Rather, the enlargement policy was intended to ensure that potential members could meet the core requirements for EU membership, which are a much narrower set of goals focused on ensuring that the incomers could participate in a common market, a shared budget and policies, and a community of law. No wonder that so many of the detailed policies analysed in this volume fell on to stony ground, or were reshaped to local circumstances.

The EU's approach has been criticised as 'institutional monocropping', whereby uniform policies were applied without due regard to the economic, social or regional contexts on the receiving end – and in the absence of regional mechanisms to synchronise EU requirements and domestic demands (Bruszt 2015). In the sphere of regulation, one of the EU's most advanced areas of integration, it produced some extreme examples of 'monocultures' resulting from transnational harmonisation (Bronk and Jacoby 2016). Yet the case studies in this volume of areas of the transfer of mainly 'soft' EU law highlight the many ways in which policies were adapted by local actors to local circumstances, opportunities and cultures. Even if the EU prescribed monocultural models, that was not necessarily the result – especially in areas where it was less prescriptive and where implementation was intended to happen at regional or local level.

However, the EU was not neutral about the form of government that its transferred policies and norms were supposed to work within. What happened to the liberal democratic ideals that these laws, policies and institutions were supposed to support and be supported by? The Copenhagen conditions set for membership started with the requirement that a country must have achieved 'stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, human rights, rule of law, and respect for and protection of minorities' (European Council in Copenhagen 1993).

This condition worked with the second condition (on being a market economy that could cope with competition in the Single Market) and the third on adopting the body of EU law called the '*acquis communautaire*'. The third Copenhagen condition also included the goals of 'economic, monetary and political union'. Put together, these conditions promoted a particular vision of what it meant to be a European country. The transfer of policies was supposed to be part of a package deal of governance.

Parts of the package have since withered – no longer does any member have to join the monetary union as soon as it can meet the Maastricht criteria for public finances and currency. Other parts have fallen by the

wayside because history did not take the EU to the stated goal of political union; indeed, the decade following the eastward enlargements of 2004 and 2007 took European integration much further away from it. The failure of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 and the series of crises over the euro that started in 2008 and migration in 2015 increased the use of inter-governmental deals among the member states rather than political integration.

Nonetheless, the process of domestication of EU policies and models continued in Central and Eastern Europe during these years – even though it was no longer driven by accession conditionality (Sedelmeier 2012). The 2004 entrants' compliance with EU norms has been remarkably durable – even in Hungary, where the rhetoric at the top level of government became very anti-EU and anti-liberal after the return to power of Fidesz in 2010. Continued compliance cannot have happened only because of the threat of material sanctions such as infringement proceedings, which apply to all members, or the desire to avoid losing EU structural funds. It must also be the result of the transfer of norms through social learning and persuasion during the accession process (Epstein and Sedelmeier 2009). Yet, although the effects went deep into policies, laws and institutions, the limits of EU influence on political culture became evident after accession, when populist xenophobic politics emerged in several countries.

This volume provides valuable insights into how the political dynamics worked in local contexts. By showing the details of how policies and models have been translated, filtered, exploited, resisted and reshaped, the chapters give a picture of Europeanisation on the receiving end, enriching the literature on this extraordinary period in the history of Europe.

## REFERENCES

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