



The Europeanization of Public Policies: Introduction

Sabine Saurugger & Claudio M. Radaelli

To cite this article: Sabine Saurugger & Claudio M. Radaelli (2008) The Europeanization of Public Policies: Introduction, Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice, 10:3, 213-219, DOI: [10.1080/13876980802276847](https://doi.org/10.1080/13876980802276847)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13876980802276847>



Published online: 01 Sep 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1645



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 6 View citing articles [↗](#)

The Europeanization of Public Policies: Introduction

SABINE SAURUGGER* and CLAUDIO M. RADAELLI**

*Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Grenoble, France; **University of Exeter, UK

The European Union has influenced national public policies for more than five decades. The recent academic interest in the Europeanization of public policies, however, reveals processes and mechanisms that go beyond the change (or lack of it) brought about by the implementation of EU decisions at the domestic level. Although implementation is certainly one dimension of Europeanization, this concept is wider. It encompasses “processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies” (Radaelli 2003: 30; see also Green Cowles *et al.* 2001, Ladrech 1994, Börzel and Risse 2003, Lenschow 2006, Palier *et al.* 2007: 39). Whilst the definition of Europeanization is surely the object of a lively debate (Olsen 2002, Radaelli 2007), the present definition, on which this special issue is based, captures the whole life-cycle of public policy, with possible feedback effects between the national level and the EU, focusing on processes rather than outcomes. Thus, we have chosen it because it gives us a suitable framework for the comparative policy analysis of Europeanization.

Some authors have even questioned the notion of two distinct arenas by observing that “the [domestic and EU] levels are nothing but playing fields, where actors move between one and the other, and play with them” (Ravinet 2007: 24, our translation). Yet there are two playing fields in the end, not just one. Ravinet’s observation is nevertheless important because it draws attention to complex interaction effects, to actor-centred analysis, and to the strategic linkages between EU and domestic policy arenas (See also Sanchez Salgado and Woll 2007: 152). In a similar vein, Princen and

Sabine Saurugger, Professor of Politics, Institut d'Etudes Politiques of Grenoble, BP 48, 38040 Grenoble, Cedex 9, France. Email: sabine.saurugger@iep-grenoble.fr

Claudio M. Radaelli, Professor of Politics, Jean Monnet Chair in EU Policy Analysis; Director, Centre for European Governance, University of Exeter, Department of Politics, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ.

Correspondence Address: Claudio M. Radaelli, Department of Politics, Centre for European Governance, University of Exeter, EX4 4RJ, UK. Email: C.Radaelli@exeter.ac.uk

ISSN 1387-6988 Print/1572-5448 Online/08/030213-07

© 2008 The Editor, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*

DOI: 10.1080/13876980802276847

Rhinhard (2006) illustrate how policy experts and political actors interact in the course of actual policy setting. Individual actors without formal decision-making power can influence outputs in moving between the national and the European level. Contrary to top-down or bottom-up definitions which imply the existence of a perfectly linear transmission of public policies from one level to another, with – at best – some clearly identifiable obstacles on their way, this definition forces us to adopt a more nuanced approach and to be more explicit on the nature of the independent variables that are supposed to create domestic effects, such as the cleavage structures at the national level, power relations among actors or policy priorities decided at the European Union level.

As it is often the case, the Europeanization debate has already become quite specialized (Graziano and Vink 2007), possibly running the risk of over-theorizing before the empirical evidence has been sorted out and appraised – a feature common to several “-ization trends” in contemporary political science (Geddes 2003). With this special issue, we move in the opposite direction. Instead of contributing to the sophistication of the debate, our aim is to establish a dialogue between general comparative policy studies and European integration scholars, as Peters has convincingly argued (Peters 2005).¹ In this vein, three demanding mainstream comparative policy studies questions guide the contributions to this JCPA special issue: (1) What do Europeanization studies tell us about power, and more specifically the link between politics and policies? Susanne Schmidt discusses this question with regard to the use public and private actors can make of legal uncertainty, while Claudio Radaelli demonstrates the extent to which policy discourse developed at the European level influences politics, and thus power relations at the national level. (2) What are the lessons that can be drawn from empirical studies on Europeanization for classic middle-range concepts and theories of comparative policy analysis, such as policy learning and implementation analysis? In this respect, Nikos Zahariadis’ paper clearly mainstreams Europeanization research as he uses a central concept of comparative policy analysis, which is policy implementation, to explain the effectiveness and the democratic value of change. (3) Given the methodological problems in Europeanization research (Haverland 2005) such as case study selection, the small-*n* problem as well as the reciprocity problem,² this special JCPA issue investigates more precisely two aspects. While Carlos Mendez, Fiona Fishlade and Douglas Yuill develop a large scale research design including all European member states, Yannis Papadopoulos uses a control variable in his article to test the degree and the extent of Europeanization.

Europeanization is a process of power generation. No matter how complex the causal processes are, and no matter how much learning may be produced by the contacts between the national level and EU policies, these processes are bound to create power. Here we find current scholarship on Europeanization somewhat limited. While a number of publications address the question of power and influence in their studies concentrating on the liberalization of utilities (Héritier *et al.* 2001), environmental policy and road haulage (Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002), or, most recently the transposition, enforcement and application of EU labour law directives (Falkner *et al.* 2005), which develops precise typologies aiming at explaining differences in adapting to European pressure, the question of European integration influence at the national level is still at the centre of investigation. Thus, all too often, Europeanization is approached as a matter of the EU exercising adaptational pressure on the domestic

level, more specifically on the governments, public administration, and civil societies. So on one side of the equation we have the EU pressure, on the other the member states trying to keep their autonomy. If they surrender to pressure, domestic change is produced. But power dynamics are often richer than this zero-sum game. As classic theoretical policy analysis argues, power is expandable on all sides.

Indeed, a few recent publications have looked at Europeanization as “creative usages of Europe” and complex relations between “winners and losers” (Jacquot and Woll 2003, Thatcher 2004, Jabko 2006). Domestic actors draw on EU resources and, by using transformative strategies (including discourse), modify power relations. Thus, instead of a causal chain going down from the EU to the domestic level, we have multiple pathways through which the EU pressure is refracted, and in some cases rhetorically amplified if not construed.

Often this perspective on power ties in with a sociological perspective. The latter accounts for change by pointing at norm entrepreneurs and co-operative informal institutions that favour adaptation (Börzel and Risse 2003, Panke 2008). At the end of the Europeanization processes under examination, the result may be the hollowing out of the state. But the process can also increase the power of (a) some actors such as the core executive in relation to other domestic actors and/or (b) the overall power of the state in relation to the civil society and the EU itself (Grande 1996).

True, the discovery that European integration changes the power relations among EU institutions, the state, and civil society is not really new. However, by considering multiple feedback loops and complex causal relations, Europeanization research is in a good position to clarify the scope conditions on why, when, and how this happens. It also exposes the variability by policy areas. Susanne Schmidt’s research note on legal uncertainty in the Discourse section of this issue shows how most research in Europeanization studies looks mainly at the conditions for successful compliance with European secondary law. But power relations, and particularly the link between policies and politics, must concentrate not only on the material institutions but also on uncertainty to understand how actors use or do not use European integration to increase power.

Another central variable in Europeanization studies is discourse, understood as instrument or vector for Europeanization (Schmidt 2002). There is a group of studies arguing that domestic actors use the EU instrumentally, to provide, via discourse creation, legitimacy for choices already made at home (Kallestrup 2002). We should not underestimate the potential of discourse creation in terms of power creation (Roe 1994, Hay 2002). If it is true that EU ideas and policies can provide legitimacy for domestic policy change, this should not be underrated as “post-hoc justification” of change that was already under way. Legitimacy is an important dimension of power. Discourse used in a post-decisional mode such as framing is a component of policy change (Majone 1989, 2001, Börzel and Risse 2000). Sandra Lavenex (2001) illustrates the question of post-decisional framing in her analysis of the contradictions between domestic reforms and the Europeanization of refugee policies. Domestic actors use European rhetoric on the establishment of an “area of freedom, security and justice” to justify their own agenda at the national level. Domestic actors can refer to norms and ideas originally displayed in a post-decisional mode to entrap their opponents (Schimmelfennig 2001). Finally, we should consider testing the post-decisional legitimizing use of EU policies and commitments. In the current

climate, it is not at all certain that the EU can be used to produce more legitimacy at home – public opinion sentiments seem to go in the other direction. Hence policy makers may find it impossible to draw on the EU to generate legitimacy if the EU generates hostility and opposition instead.

We complete our remarks on power by looking at the debate on whether Europeanization produces more policy effects than politics effects. The first wave of studies tended to highlight policy effects, specifically domestic change induced by EU policies. Now that more work has been done, we see that the EU produces differential change, and that some domestic actors can cleverly avoid EU pressure. This may lead to a new conventional wisdom about the limits of Europeanization as a cause of domestic policy change. This may well be true. The point to stress, however, is that if domestic actors get around EU pressure and selectively import EU policies, someone will be empowered by these smart moves, and others will lose power. In turn, this leads to the proposition that when policy effects are minimized via domestic political action, we should control for politics effects related to power. Claudio Radaelli tackles one component of this question in this special issue. He explores learning in its political and policy dimensions. By looking at new modes of governance in the EU, he shows how the classic question “who gets what?” can be usefully re-calibrated to connect power and learning.

The second question is about the lessons for comparative policy analysis. One disappointing feature of early studies on the domestic impact of Europe was the implicit adoption of simplistic theories of implementation. Scholars seemed surprised to observe that EU policies were filtered by domestic actors and institutions, and that the end result was not convergence. However, this is absolutely conventional and even obvious in the light of any contemporary model of implementation. Consequently, Europeanization has not been able to inform the way we think about policy implementation and other important dimensions of policy theories. Rather, the situation is the opposite. Eventually, we see some valuable attempts to fertilize Europeanization research with the insights of sophisticated theories of implementation. In his contribution, Nikos Zahariadis allows for a dynamic interaction between these two bodies of literature. In looking at one specific aspect of Europeanization – programme implementation – Zahariadis shows how Europeanization’s success varies with ambiguity and complexity. Europeanization must be seen as a continuum from improved effectiveness to greater democratic accountability. The importance of his paper lies in the fact that he clearly links Europeanization and more generally European studies to general and public policy analysis.

The final question the contributions to this special issue addresses is the one on methods and research design. The main question is how to measure the causal role of the European factors in domestic changes. European studies has always been beleaguered by the small-*n* problem when dealing with quantitative methods. Qualitative research has faced the problem of going beyond the uniqueness of the EU and ad-hoc conceptualization.

Researchers working on Europeanization have proposed creative solutions, rooted in the best methodological advice for qualitative analysis (Brady and Collier 2004), thick description and process tracing (Haverland 2005, 2007). They have shown how longitudinal analysis can be used to combine the historical perspective with comparison of policies and countries (Saurugger 2005). Given that some EU policies

did not exist until 20 or 30 years ago, and that some countries joined the EU at different points in time, it is possible to rely on research designs with t_0 being the time before a policy came into existence (or a country joined the EU) and t_1 close to the present.

Large scale quantitative and qualitative studies, such as Carlos Mendez, Fiona Fishlade and Douglas Yuill's analysis of competition policy and regional aid in this issue, usefully flex theoretical muscles with the tricky problem of EU-level policies that impact on all EU member states simultaneously, by controlling for the ex-ante and the ex-post situation in each country.

There is also awareness that, in order to avoid the "uniqueness of the EU", one has to control for rival alternative hypotheses, such as globalization and domestic causes of change. The problem is that scholars, the editors of this special issue included, have not spent as much time in articulating the mechanisms and variables at work in rival alternative explanations as we have done for the mechanisms and variables of Europeanization. But good initial results have been presented, for example by using extra-EU cases as control variables (Levi Faur 2004). Yannis Papadopoulos presents a comparative study of two Swiss public policies – a strongly Europeanized sector of economic regulatory policy and a weakly Europeanized sector of social policy, considered as a test case. The article looks more precisely at the consequences of external shocks on domestic decision-making procedures, in particular consensual decision making. In considering not only the external (EU) influence on domestic policies but also the political developments taking place inside the Swiss political system, Papadopoulos offers a method to distinguish between rival alternative hypotheses.

These three questions – on (1) power, (2) mainstreaming Europeanization research with more general public policy questions and (3) methodological issues – are challenging not only for those working on Europeanization but for every scholar working on the interdependence between domestic policy systems and the international system. International and, more precisely, European public policy research addresses similar questions as does comparative public policy studies focusing on the national level. With this special JCPA issue, we continue in this vein and show the advantages of an approach conversant with comparative policy analysis and more generally political science.

Notes

1. For a more general approach to this question based on the argument that the growing number of transnational policy issues and the emergence of new conceptual tools call for increased comparative policy analysis see MacRae (1998) as well as Deleon and Resnick-Terry (1998).
2. Which refers to the influence of European integration on national policies and that of national actors on European integration taking place at the same time.

References

- Börzel, T. and Risse, T., 2000, When Europe hits home: Europeanization and domestic change. RSC no. 2000/56, EUI Working Paper.
- Börzel, T. and Risse T., 2003, Conceptualising the domestic impact of Europe, in: K. Featherstone and C. Radaelli (Eds) *The Politics of Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 55–78.

- Brady, H. E. and Collier, D. (Eds.), 2004, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).
- Deleon, P. and Resnick-Terry, P., 1998, Comparative policy analysis: déjà vu all over again. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, **1**(1), 9–22.
- Falkner G., Treib, O. and Hartlapp, M., 2005, *Complying with Europe. EU Harmonization and Soft Law in the Member States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Geddes, B., 2003, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press).
- Grande, E., 1996, The state and interest groups in a framework of multi-level decision-making: the case of the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*, **3**(3), 318–338.
- Graziano, P. and Vink, M., (Eds.), 2007, *Europeanization: New Research Agendas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).
- Green Cowles, M., Caporaso, J. and Risse, T. (Eds), 2001, *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Haverland, M., 2005, Does the EU cause domestic developments? The problem of case selection in Europeanization research. *European Integration Online Papers*, **9**(2) available at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2005-002a.htm> (accessed 30 June 2008).
- Haverland, M., 2007, Methodology, in: P. Graziano and M. Vink (Eds) *Europeanization. New Research Agendas* (Houndmills: Palgrave).
- Hay, C., 2002, *Political Analysis* (Hampshire: Palgrave).
- Héritier A., Kerwer, D., Knill, D., Teutsch, M. and Douillet, A.-C., 2001, *Differential Impact. European Impact on National Policymaking* (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield).
- Jabko, N., 2006, *Playing the Market. A Political Strategy for Uniting Europe, 1985–2005* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Jacquot, S. and Woll, C., 2003, Usage of European integration – Europeanization from a sociological perspective. *European Integration Online Papers (EIOP)*, **7**(12), available at <http://www.eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2003-012a.htm> (accessed 30 June 2008).
- Kallestrup, M., 2002, Europeanisation as a discourse: domestic policy legitimisation through the articulation of a “need for adaptation”. *Public Policy and Administration*, **17**(2), 110–124.
- Knill, C. and Lehmkuhl, D., 2002, Europeanizing domestic regulatory policies. *European Journal of Political Research*, **41**, 255–280.
- Ladrech, R., 1994, Europeanization of domestic politics and institutions: the case of France. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, **32**(1), 69–88.
- Lavenex S., 2001, The Europeanization of Refugee policies: normative challenges and institutional legacies. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, **39**(5), 851–874.
- Lenschow, A. 2006, “Europeanisation of public policy”, in: J. Richardson (Ed) *European Union. Power and Policy-Making* (Abingdon: Routledge), pp. 55–71.
- Levi-Faur, D., 2004, On the “net impact” of Europeanization: the EU’s telecom and electricity regimes between the global and the national. *Comparative Political Studies*, **37**(1), 3–29.
- MacRae, D., 1998, Cross national perspectives for aiding policy choice. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, **1**(1), 23–37.
- Majone, G., 1989, *Evidence, Argument and Persuasion in the Policy Process* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Majone, G., 2001, Ideas, interests and institutional change: the European Commission debates the delegation problem. Paper presented at the Conference on “Ideas, Discourse and European Integration” European Union Center at Harvard University, May 11–12.
- Olsen, J., 2002, The many faces of Europeanization, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, **40**(5), 921–952.
- Palier, B., Surel, Y., Mégie, A., Ravinet, P., Sanchez Salgado, R., Woll, C., Bruno, I., Jacquot, S., Mandin, L., Scheidhauer, C., Enos-Attali, S., Jönsson, A. and Sheppard, E., 2007, *L’Europe en action. L’eupéanisation dans une perspective comparée* (Paris: L’Harmattan).
- Panke D., 2008, The depth effect of Europeanization. Rationalist and constructivist venues to socialization. ECPR Joint Sessions, Panel 9 “Does European Integration Theory Need Sociology?”, April 11–16, Rennes.
- Peters Guy B., 2005, The problem with policy problems. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, **7**(4), 349–370.
- Princen, S. and Rhinard, M., 2006, Crashing and creeping: agenda setting dynamics in the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policies*, **13**(7), 1119–1132.

- Radaelli, C. M., 2003, The Europeanization of public policy, in: K. Featherstone and C. M. Radaelli (Eds) *The Politics of Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 27–56.
- Radaelli C., 2007, Europeanisation, in: M. Cini and A. Bourne (Eds) *Advances in European Studies* (Houndmills: Palgrave).
- Ravinet, P., 2007, *La genèse et l'institutionnalisation du processus de Bologne: Entre chemin de traverse et sentier de dépendance*. Doctoral dissertation, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, Ecole doctorale de Sciences-Po, Sociologie Politique et Politiques Publiques, Paris.
- Roe, E., 1994, *Narrative Policy Analysis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
- Sanchez-Salgado, R. and Woll, C., 2007, L'eupéanisation et les acteurs non-étatiques, in: B. Palier, Y. Surel, et al. (2007), *L'Europe en action. L'eupéanisation dans une perspective comparée* (Paris, L'Harmattan), pp. 145–191.
- Saurugger, S., 2005, Europeanization as a methodological challenge: the case of interest groups. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, 7(4), 291–312.
- Schimmelfennig, F., 2001, The community trap: liberal norms, rhetorical action, and the Eastern enlargement of the European Union. *International Organization*, 55, 47–80.
- Schmidt, V. A., 2002, Does discourse matter in the politics of welfare state adjustment? *Comparative Political Studies*, 35, 168–193.
- Thatcher M., 2004, Winners and losers in Europeanisation: reforming the national regulation of telecommunications. *West European Politics*, 27(2), 284–309.