

Geleitwort

The rise of European or European Union studies has long been considered by many to mark a hostile challenge to the discipline of Comparative Politics. If you can study the political system of the European Union as a whole, why bother to examine the domestic politics of individual member states, let alone more particular aspects relating to the sub-national level? Further, European studies have long been looked at with suspicion within the broader community of political science for their alleged lack of disciplinary identity and compromising methodological standards. Indeed, rather than being ‘inter-disciplinary’, many early contributions tended to display strong ‘non-disciplinary’ features with a conspicuous lack of both theory and methods.

The study by Katharina Crepaz, originally presented as a PhD dissertation in political science at the University of Innsbruck, provides an impressive, and important, example of a genuinely comparative inquiry into the societal complexity of the European Union, which is theoretically informed and brings to bear the benefits of sophisticated and state-of-the art political science methodology. The tightly organized book tells the fascinating story of four minority communities within the boundaries of the European Union, whose political fate has been, and continues to be, as different as their unique history. As Dr. Crepaz explains convincingly, membership to the European Union does matter – if, however, not in neat accordance with popular expectations about the impact of European integration on national and sub-national communities. ‘Europeanization’ is an immensely complex phenomenon that generates a wealth of both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ processes, yet even in the most deeply Europeanized member states it is the national governments that have the most immediate impact on the life of autochthonous minorities.

Given its major academic and political relevance, I warmly welcome this publication and wish it the wide readership it deserves.

Professor Ludger Helms,
Innsbruck, 9 September 2015



<http://www.springer.com/978-3-658-12115-0>

The Impact of Europeanization on Minority Communities

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2016, XI, 184 p., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-658-12115-0