**Building States without Society: European Union Enlargement and the Transfer of EU Social Policy to Poland and Hungary**
Beate Sissenich
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Social policy has been a crucial and at times controversial area for the European Union, yet it remains limited in scope and clout. EU social policy is not a major annoyance of a kind to alarm employers nor does it present labour unions with tantalizing opportunities for social change. It does not deal with redistribution politics and does not establish an EU-level welfare state. Important topics are left out. In the negotiations before the 2004 enlargement, the issues of mobility and the freedom of movement of persons—politically charged issues in view of the fears on the part of some older members of a significant influx of workers from new lower-wage EU states—were handled in a separate negotiating chapter.

The focus of Sissenich's book, which is based on her doctoral dissertation, is on the place of the social policy *acquis* in the accession negotiations of Poland and Hungary. The larger theoretical context takes us into the ways international organizations transfer their rules to new member-states, that is, on "an actor's active attempt to transmit its own practices to another context" (5). The author uses an impressive array of interview data, mostly based on the period 1999–2001 (with some EU interviews in 2005), with people in 32 EU and Polish and Hungarian government and non-governmental bodies. A central conclusion, that important social groups and non-state actors (NSAs) were largely left out of the process, is supported by a wealth of documentary, interview and survey data, and augmented by finely nuanced observations on both the negotiations themselves and the wider context of the underdeveloped nature of civil society in the CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) countries generally.

The key relationships here are, first, between EU players (particularly the commission and its Employment and Social Affairs Directorate General) and the main NSAs in Poland and and Hungary. These, as Sissenich demonstrates, did not serve as a catalyst for expanded domestic influence on the part of groups. There was widespread distinterest in EU social policy issues on the part of NSAs, and they had little information about EU law and practices. This was compounded by weaknesses on the part of groups generally in post-socialist societies, as well as by persisting divides, for example among Polish labour unions. Domestic stakeholders accordingly had "little input" (107) into membership preparations. Other, more indirect, links emerge from the network analysis. For example, EU bodies publicly criticized CEE governments as a means of pressuring them into reforms, and these criticisms were based in part on information obtained by the commission from domestic stakeholder groups. The far-reaching implications of low memberships in CEE voluntary organizations and low levels of trust in state bodies are pursued in chapter seven.

The second set of relationships comprises the links between EU actors and government bodies in the two countries. Because of the lack of participation by domestic employers and labour organizations, there was a "smooth process" (88) of transfer of existing EU rules into the Polish and Hungarian contexts, and a top-down process of rule adoption by these governments. Power based on conditionality was thus important. The commission was not only critical of lagging social policy harmonization and implementation of the kind it insisted was required before membership, it could in effect define the terms of entry for Poland and Hungary. It had at its disposal multiple instruments to push the process in desired directions (chapter three). Through the twinning mechanism (chapter six) the commission put member-state officials and experts inside Polish and Hungarian and other CEE government bodies to expedite

pre-membership changes. Interestingly, these officials at times resorted to their own embassies to bring pressure on their host governments when they ran into problems (149). Border effects were also at work, as Polish and Hungarian actors were largely separate from each other in their respective dealings with EU actors.

Thus there were limited prospects of NSAs' contributing to social dialogue, a key feature of EU social policy since the mid-1980s. There were consequences too for state capacity ("the state's ability to effectively implement political decisions by 'reaching into' and co-operating with society" [27]) and therefore for the emerging social policy frameworks of CEE states.

Sissenich's analysis highlights vividly the differences between the older EU states and the candidate countries. Both state capacity and effective civil society organizations were lacking in the latter. Commission officials complained of problems with administrative capacity in Poland and Hungary, such as politicization, the fragmentation of government bodies, inadequacies in budgetary practices and high rates of civil servant turnover (137). A telling indication of pre-2004 differences is the critique mounted by one Polish official in an interview with the author of the appropriateness of a politically impartial civil service in European post-socialist societies (149).

Although there were criticisms, particularly from Hungary, of slowness on the part of EU actors and mutterings about the option of seeking "alternatives," the responses of many CEE actors were still largely shaped by the impulses of the early 1990s. The grand goals then were EU membership as a path to employment, prosperity and democratic development, and NATO membership as a route to security. It is perhaps not surprising that the details of EU social policy directives had low priority even for those most directly affected by them. These rules required the tangible experience of court cases, transposition into national legal frameworks and political argument to bring them to life. The corresponding big picture on the EU-15 side was that citizens were "decidedly unenthusiastic" (70) about enlargement. It is puzzling, though, that the exposure of Polish and Hungarian organizations to their counterparts in the EU-15 countries, for example through the process of affiliation of unions by the European Trade Union Confederation, did not lead to more political entrepreneurship on their part.

ROBERT BOARDMAN *Dalhousie University*

**French Kiss : le rendez-vous de Stephen Harper avec le Québec**
Chantal Hébert
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Ce premier livre de la journaliste Chantal Hébert est la traduction de *French Kiss: Stephen Harper's Blind Date With Quebec*, qui est paru presque simultanément. Depuis quinze ans, Chantal Hébert rédige d'excellentes chroniques politiques pour des quotidiens comme le *Toronto Star* et *Le Devoir*; en outre, elle apparaît souvent à la télévision en tant que spécialiste de la politique fédérale. Il ne faudrait pas la confondre avec une autre Chantal Hébert, qui est spécialiste de l'histoire du théâtre burlesque québécois, à l'Université Laval, et qui a publié deux livres importants dans son domaine.

En bref, *French Kiss* tente entre autres de répondre à la question que beaucoup d'observateurs se posaient au lendemain de l'élection fédérale de janvier 2006 : «Comment expliquer la victoire du Parti conservateur et surtout sa percée inattendue au Québec?» Pour Chantal Hébert, plusieurs circonstances ont favorisé ce changement de gouvernement, mais on pourrait presque les réduire à deux faits : la débâcle du Parti libéral du Canada et l'effritement du soutien d'une partie des électeurs au Bloc