

***Building States without Society: European Union Enlargement and the Transfer of EU Social Policy to Poland and Hungary.*** By Beate Sissenich. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2007. xiv, 235 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. \$29.95, paper.

The eastern enlargement of the European Union (EU), which culminated in the accessions of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, has been the subject of a great deal of academic analysis. The extraordinary and protracted process, which (depending on the timeline one employs) unfolded over a period of up to fifteen years, has brought wholesale economic, political, and social change to “Yalta” Europe and has itself changed the dynamics of the EU’s approach to enlargement. Academic scholarship has also evolved in a comprehensive manner with everything from institutional adaptation to environmental policy and regional governance to parliamentary practice coming under the microscope. Beate Sissenich’s book treads familiar ground on the macro level by examining the fundamental nature of the EU’s conditionality demands and what impact these had on candidate states. Her unique contribution lies in the focus on the transfer of EU norms and rules in the social policy field and on two of the largest candidate states—Poland and Hungary. Sissenich begins her analysis by posing three key questions. First, how effective is EU “rule transfer” in the real world of asymmetrically structured EU candidate state relations? Second, what mechanisms drive and underpin the processes of rule transfer within the enlargement process? And, third, which actors really exercise influence at both the macro and meso level as EU candidate state relations deepen? Her finding that the accession process highlighted a significant gap between the formal legal transposition of EU rules and actual implementation by candidate states on the ground is not unique. What really impresses, however, is the rich empirical evidence she adduces from the Polish and Hungarian cases. Her methodological approach is based on the application of two unique data sets (outlined in some detail in two appendixes to the volume). The first data set consists of a broad set of networks among 32 social policy organizations, and the second derives from some 170 interviews conducted with national and EU officials, business leaders, and trade union representatives. Such a wide cross-section of data helps Sissenich build a convincing case for her core argument: that the 2004 enlargement was entirely driven by EU and candidate state elites with little opportunity for meaningful participation by actors outside the “negotiating box.” One might have thought that social policy would be more amenable to purposive and substantive network and community influence. Yet Sissenich’s startling conclusion is that “society has been strangely absent from EU social policy transfer in Poland and Hungary” (181). Social dialogue, she argues, remained inconsequential throughout the enlargement process as bureaucratic and political elites asserted their authority in the name of expediency and delivery of results. This is entirely consistent with the findings of other scholars at both the macro and meso levels of enlargement politics. Recent work on the role of national parliaments, for example, demonstrates that EU demands for effective transposition and implementation of legislation progressively disempowered parliamentarians in candidate states as executives took charge of the policy agenda in order to speed up negotiations and deliver on EU reform. Like other such studies, Sissenich concludes that EU conditionality worked—but only to a point. Formal legal rules were adopted but often implemented in suboptimal ways that reflected the ambiguity of EU rule structures, the lack of effective sanctioning instruments, and the large degree of “wobble room” that allowed candidate states to engage in leisurely or selective implementation. Transnational social learning networks similarly failed to produce any radical changes in state-society relations in either Hungary or Poland. And the absence of effective organized interests limited the ability to “sell” EU social policy rules to a domestic audience. Neither conditionality nor social learning produced a substantive internalization of rules, norms, and processes, at least in the short term. Thus we are left to conclude that, as Frank Schimmelfennig and others have argued, the enlargement process is characterized by instrumental or utilitarian rule adoption rather than normative suasion and robust internalization of EU norms. Sissenich’s volume also provides support for the Moravcsikian state-centric view of the European integration process, namely that state actors remain central to EU processes. This book makes a considerable contribution to enlargement scholarship, not least in fleshing out the complex patterns of local adaptation to and contestation of EU

norms and rules. It should be read by every serious student of enlargement politics and those interested in the evolution of social policy in Europe.

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***Market Dreams: Gender, Class, and Capitalism in the Czech Republic.*** By Elaine Weiner. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007. xi, 155 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. \$22.95, paper.

What happens when one type of social order and worldview (i.e., state socialism) is suddenly replaced by another (i.e., capitalism), and when the new order is so hegemonic, that it provides no space for a credible alternative vision (such as “market socialism”)? In what ways have Czechs adapted to the new capitalist marketplace, and how have they (re)constructed their identities in the newly (re)stratified social order? What gaps have emerged since 1990 between market rhetoric and market practice, between the dream of market capitalism promising a “radiant future” and actual lived experiences? Why has the Czech postcommunist transition to a market economy been relatively smooth and successful, without much social protest, given that the transition has produced both winners and losers?

The Czech-speaking North American sociologist Elaine Weiner attempts to answer some of these questions by a “gathering and retelling of stories” (37) through a discourse analysis of public and personal narratives about market capitalism. She draws on two sets of public data: randomly selected newspaper articles from major Czech dailies in the 1990s, and speeches and publications by the best-known Czech proponent of market capitalism, Václav Klaus, the current president of the Czech Republic. Weiner describes Klaus’s free market vision as resolutely optimistic and nationalistic, appealing (among other things) to the widely held notion of “golden Czech hands” (57), and offering market capitalism as the Czechs’ only hope for the future. The personal narratives are derived from qualitative interviews conducted between September 1999 and October 2000 with 26 managers and 48 factory workers living in Prague. All but one of the respondents were born between 1944 and 1965, which means that they belong to a generation that spent their childhood, adolescence, and part of their adulthood under the communist regime.

Both the public and the private narratives suggest an acute awareness of the rupture between the two social orders. For example, the female managers attribute their economic achievements in the new capitalist order to their success in unlearning their socialist ways, which for them meant replacing a reliance on state provision of work and welfare with individual qualities of self-reliance, personal responsibility, ambition, and, above all, an ability to take advantage of sudden new opportunities. In a similar vein, the factory workers, for whom capitalism’s promises remain unfulfilled, attributed their lack of success in visibly improving their lives to the shortcomings of their socialist upbringing. In fact, the lives of the factory workers were marked by both continuities and discontinuities. For the most part, they remained employed in the same jobs where they had spent most of their working lives, and their real incomes barely changed at all. Moreover, they lost access to subsidized children’s holiday camps and holiday resorts for workers. Their working conditions became less secure with the ever present prospect of the factory being closed down, mandatory and unpaid overtime, and more blatant practices of gender discrimination than under state socialism. One way they coped with the gap between capitalism’s optimistic promises and the unfulfilled reality was “to construe their suffering under capitalism as a prerequisite for future generations’ profit” (115).

Weiner also provides interesting data on the significant reconfiguration of the public/private divide under capitalism (for example, the invasion of work into women managers’ domestic space and the replacement of state socialism’s queues with capitalism’s bargain-hunting), and on the two main strategies women managers adopted to cope with domestic labor—by either delegating it to lower-class women or by re-negotiating who does what with their husbands and other family members.