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Governing Social Inclusion Europeanization through Policy Coordination

Kenneth A. Armstrong

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KENNETH A. ARMSTRONG

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GOVERNING SOCIAL INCLUSION

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

Kenneth A. Armstrong's timely book on governing social inclusion in the EU brings together three important themes in EU policy and scholarship. The first is that of governance, and more specifically some of the novel modes of multilevel governance which have emerged in the context of European integration. The second is that of Europeanization, a theme which includes the 'top-down' question of the impact of the EU on national law and policy, as well as the 'bottom-up' impact of national structures and institutions on the development and implementation of European law and policy. The third substantive theme is that of the creation and evolution of EU social inclusion policy, social inclusion being the name which is given to EU anti-poverty policy.

The book is a rich source of information both on the development at the European Union level of social inclusion policy, but also on the interaction between EU and domestic norms and institutions through a careful case study of the adaptation and reaction of the United Kingdom to the evolving EU policy.

It contains many useful and interesting insights into the nature and operation of EU governance, and a range of thoughtful and critical reflections on the extensive literature on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). Departing from some of the existing analyses, Armstrong cautions against easy assumptions about the relative effectiveness of 'hard' versus 'soft' law, or about the desirability in this field of harder rather than softer policy instruments. Instead, he advises that close attention be paid to the precise function (whether convergence, coordination, institutionalizing accountability, mobilizing and linking actors and policy-makers etc) of any given OMC process, and locates the weaknesses of the OMC on social inclusion in some of the failures of coordination within the policy, and in specific shortcomings in its institutional design, rather than in the absence of hard sanctions or 'stronger' legal rules. He also cautions against the assumption that the open method of coordination is a single coherent category, or policy mode, and takes care to distinguish the institutional mechanisms and instruments of the social inclusion OMC from those of other coordination processes.

This book is a thoughtful scholarly analysis of a complex and important area of EU policy. It is well informed by insights drawn from the political science literature while offering interesting reflections from a legal perspective

on these much-debated modes of governing. There is an interesting chapter questioning some of the received wisdom about the relationship between the EU's legally-privileged 'economic constitution' and its weaker social policy dimension, and a chapter examining whether the process and discourse of constitutionalism has anything to offer the development of EU social policy in general, and social inclusion policy in particular. Finally, the book suggests some interesting lessons to be learned from its analysis of a decade of EU social inclusion policy, and makes a number of concrete suggestions as to how the governance of EU anti-poverty policy could be improved. Overall, it is a rich and nuanced work which should be of interest to all those concerned with EU governance or social inclusion, and to academics and students of law as well as from the social and political sciences.

Paul Craig
Gráinne de Búrca

June 2010

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This book started life as a smaller project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust through its research fellowship scheme, to explore the potential for civil society actors in the UK to engage with a new technique of European Union governance called the ‘open method of coordination’ (OMC). Out of that initial research, the project grew and developed to become the study presented here which analyses the capacity of the OMC to ‘Europeanize’ domestic strategies and policies to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Many people and numerous organizations have contributed to the realization of this study. As the interviews undertaken for the project were done on a non-attributable basis, I simply wish to think the officials within the European Commission, the civil servants of the UK Government and devolved administrations, and the secretariats of EU-level and domestic social NGOs for giving of their time and experience so generously. I would also like to thank colleagues and friends at the School of Law, Queen Mary University of London for their support and encouragement. I have been incredibly fortunate to have been able to discuss the ideas presented in this study with colleagues at Queen Mary and elsewhere. In particular I wish to thank the following for their comments on, and for their intellectual engagement with, this research: Richard Ashcroft, Iain Begg, Nick Bernard, Gráinne de Búrca, Marise Cremona, Tamara Hervey, Claire Kilpatrick, Deborah Mabbett, Imelda Maher, Joanne Scott, David Trubek, Louise Trubek, and Jonathan Zeitlin. Aspects of this study have been presented as papers in too many places to mention, and again I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to develop the research in such stimulating intellectual environments.

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Finally, I am delighted that Paul Craig and Gráinne de Búrca were willing to include this book in their fantastic European law series for Oxford University Press. To the editorial team at Oxford University Press, as well as thanking them for their professionalism in taking this book from idea to manuscript to published work, I am also intensely appreciative of their patience. Trying to write on a subject that has been in a continual stage of

development was very challenging, not least in terms of knowing when to draw a line. The editorial team at Oxford University Press were willing to trust my judgment and to accept my promise that I would deliver to them the best book that I could write. As to the quality of that book, it is now for others to judge. Any errors are, of course, the responsibility of the author.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BEPG	Broad Economic Policy Guidelines
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EAPN	European Anti Poverty Network
EC	European Community
ECHP	European Community Household Panel
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EEC	European Economic Community
EES	European Employment Strategy
EMCO	Employment Policy Committee
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EPC	Economic Policy Committee
ESC	European Social Charter
EU	European Union
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NAPincl	National Action Plan on Inclusion
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NIB	National Implementation Bodies
NRP	National Reform Programme
NSR	National Strategy Reports
NTSN	New Targetting Social Need
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFA	Opportunity for All
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
PSA	Public Service Agreement
SDS	Sustainable Development Strategy
SPC	Social Protection Committee
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the Union
UK	United Kingdom

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