Markets and Moral Regulation

Cultural Change in the European Union

Does European integration influence national cultures and social policies? Is Europe's fabled cultural diversity diminishing? Paulette Kurzer examines these important and topical questions by comparing the Irish abortion ban, Finnish and Swedish drinking restrictions, and Dutch drug decriminalization. Employing a synthesis of constructivist and institutionalist theories, Kurzer demonstrates that domestic shifts in values and attitudes, spurred along by the impact of EC/EU market integration, are in fact bringing about a convergence in European morality norms. Alcohol control policies are being liberalized, the Irish abortion proscription is being redefined, and Dutch drug toleration is pushed into a more punitive direction. *Markets and Moral Regulation* argues that a crucial agency is European law and its role as a market regulator: as market forces invade these cultural and moral spheres, protective barriers disintegrate. The result is that cultural and social domains are increasingly exposed to the influence of market competition.

PAULETTE KURZER is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Arizona. Her recent publications include *Business and Banking: Political Change and European Integration in Western Europe* (1993).

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Preface

This book is about the impact of market integration and supranational institution-building on Europe's cultural diversity. Europe is known for its rich mélange of cultures and this diversity, many observers agree, impedes the task of building a genuine political union. I ask in this study whether cultural diversity is diminishing and, if so, how this process unfolds, and what the actual consequences will be for Europe. My findings indicate that member governments are experiencing a loss of national sovereignty in the cultural sphere and that external pressures result in an ever so slight convergence of different styles of thought and actions. But I also show that the actual pace of adaptation is extremely gradual and that the immediate effect on the European Union is modest. My case studies are alcohol control policy in Finland and Sweden, drug policy in the Netherlands, and abortion in Ireland. I selected these issue areas because each sheds light on the conviction and collective rules of the national polity and thus opens a window on to Dutch, Irish, Finnish, and Swedish culture. At their most basic, drug and alcohol policies are public measures to regulate the circulation of mind-altering substances in society. But the way in which governments define the challenge and the kinds of measures they pursue communicates how a national community assesses the risks of intoxication for the individual and society. In turn, that assessment is colored by specific legal, historical, social, and institutional factors and is embedded in a public discourse and narrative. Likewise, the Irish constitutional ban on abortion encapsulates the centrality of Catholic teaching in Irish politics, culture, and institutional structures.

In the 1990s, the national leadership in each country faced serious obstacles in trying to preserve current arrangements. Dutch drug policy has been pushed into a more punitive direction, Nordic alcohol control policy has liberalized, and Irish views on abortion have been softening. The timing and direction of change leave little doubt that regional integration carries some responsibility for the loss of autonomy to pursue a different kind of approach to drugs, alcohol, or

abortion. None the less, the idea that regional integration accounts for cultural homogenization is counter-intuitive because the European Union is extremely respectful of the cultural idiosyncrasies of its member states.

Collective rules and mass opinion are subject to Europeanization, but not because the European Union expects conformity and pursues a program of cultural homogenization. Rather, I contend that market integration diminishes cultural disparity. The four freedoms of the single market, which obviously constrain macro-economic autonomy, also limit the ability of central government to adhere to a set of moral choices and policy programs at odds with the rest of the European Union. Again, the reason for this is not because the European Union itself insists on broader conformity. Instead, the greatest constraint is the movement of people. The removal of borders produces negative externalities that make it costly to continue to insist on tackling universal predicaments such as substance abuse in a unique fashion. Consider how hard it is to take a tolerant approach to drug use when surrounding countries are still wedded to the idea of suppressing all drug use. Or, to take another example, how do Nordic authorities curb access to alcohol when Swedes and Finns can take a short ferry ride and stock up on cheap liquor? This book examines the dilemmas of wanting to be different in a globalizing or Europeanizing world.

The introductory chapter lays out the basic structure of the argument, followed by empirical analysis of the formation, operation, and adjustment to post-Maastricht Europe of national arrangements to govern socially sensitive activities. Reading the chapters may give the impression that I consider alcohol control policies, drug decriminalization, and abortion ban objectionable. The analysis in each chapter takes a critical tone in part to explore the underlying tensions and contradictions in the formulation and implementation of the policies or constitutional arrangements. Personally, however, I am of the opinion that in a multicultural world with multiple moralities and multiple lifestyles no size fits all. In fact, we can learn from the Nordic governance of drinking because it helps raise awareness of the potential risks of alcohol consumption. The Dutch harm reduction approach to drug usage is not the promised land, but it seems infinitely superior to the zero-tolerance policies pursued by the US federal government. And I have no opinion on the constitutional ban on abortion in Ireland. I do not feel it is appropriate to question the decisions of the Irish legislature.

This book turned out to be a far more massive project than I had anticipated. It would not have been possible to complete it without the

generous material and moral support provided by people and institutions too numerous to list. I would nevertheless like publicly to thank at least some friends, colleagues, and organizations for their time, goodwill, and expertise.

The library and documentation centers at the National Research and Development Center for Welfare and Health in Helsinki (STAKES), the National Institute for Consumer Research in Oslo (SIFA), the Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and other Drugs in Stockholm (CAN), and the Center for Drug Research at the University of Amsterdam (CEDRO) were indispensable and provided me with a congenial setting to gather the required materials for this project.

In addition, I am appreciative of the feedback and assistance of Caroline Sutton and Trygve Ugland in Norway. In Finland, while a guest at STAKES, I had the good fortune to meet Esa Österberg, Jussi Simpura, and Christoffer Tigerstedt. Thomas Rosenberg, editor of *Nordisk alkohol- & narkotikatidskrift*, faithfully sent me the latest issues of this journal without complaint. Officials at the Dutch Ministry of Public Health, Wellbeing, and Sport provided substantial background information. Many officials and academics, moreover, made time available to discuss the smaller details and larger picture of this research project. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to speak to them.

An early version of this argument was presented at the workshop on "Globalization, Europeanization, and Political Economy in Europe" organized by Steven Weber at the University of California, Berkeley. I thank all the participants at the workshop for their comments, especially Vanna Gonzales.

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Academic work is not easily separable from one's life. I am extremely fortunate to have a loving and supportive family. David Spiro, my husband, took care of the family during my trips abroad, and continues

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PAULETTE KURZER
Tucson, AZ