



## *Democratic Backsliding and Public Administration*

Liberal democracy is at risk. Its hallmark institutions – political pluralism, separation of powers, and rule of law – are coming under pressure, as authoritarian sentiment is growing around the globe. While liberal-democratic backsliding features prominently in social science scholarship, especially the branches concerned with political parties and political behavior, public administration research lags behind. However, without considering illiberal approaches towards the executive, efforts of actual and aspiring authoritarians remain only partly understood. State bureaucracies are, after all, important instruments of power. This timely and important volume addresses the administrative implications of liberal-democratic backsliding. It studies public administrations as objects and subjects in the context of illiberal dynamics. For this purpose, the volume brings together an international group of scholars to analyze authoritarian tendencies in several countries. The contributions combine theoretical with empirical work, providing the first comparative perspective on an overlooked aspect of one of the most important contemporary political trends.

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# Democratic Backsliding and Public Administration

How Populists in Government Transform  
State Bureaucracies

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## *Preface*

In 2018, Stefan and Michael began working on a paper about populism, backsliding, and public administration. They came across papers from Guy and Jon, as well as from Kutsal, that approached the topic from different angles. We decided to join forces and organize a workshop on the topic that was supported by the Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies and the new School of Transnational Governance of the European University Institute. This workshop took place on several cold, snowy days in late January 2019. The workshop brought together junior and senior colleagues from all over the discipline and from many parts of the world – and the discussions we had were both theoretically and empirically stimulating. This workshop, in the wonderful Capella of the Villa Schifanoia of the European University Institute, constituted the start of the intellectual journey that led to the present volume analyzing populists in government and how they attempt to transform their bureaucracies. We are indebted to all the participants of the Florence workshop, and we are happy that many of the original presentations have been transformed into chapters of the book. The process of moving from those papers to the current volume was longer and more taxing than any of us would have liked, but we believe it has definitely been worth the effort.

Apart from the financial support from the EUI, we are grateful for the encouragement given to us by Professor Brigid Laffan, director of the Robert Schuman Center, as well as by Professor Miguel Poiras Maduro, then director of the School of Transnational Governance. Other colleagues at the EUI, as well as at the German University of Administrative Sciences, Speyer, including Alix Weigel, Mia Saugman and Andrea Arendt, contributed to the success of the workshop. We are extremely grateful to Nora Wagner for invaluable help in managing the production of the volume, and to John Haslam from Cambridge University Press for his encouragement to engage in an edited volume.

We are also indebted to the reviewers who provided apt and useful comments on earlier drafts.

The topic of this book is one of great importance in contemporary democracies, and we hope that, at least in some small way, we are contributing to maintaining and improving democratic governance. The process of producing this volume has been a learning experience for us all, but also a highly gratifying personal experience of working with great colleagues.

Michael W. Bauer, B. Guy Peters, Jon Pierre, Kutsal Yesilkagit, and Stefan Becker.