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0521806674 - The European Commission and the Integration of Europe: Images of Governance

Liesbet Hooghe

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The European Commission and the Integration of Europe Images of Governance

What kind of European Union do top Commission officials want? Should the European Union be supranational or intergovernmental? Should it promote market liberalism or regulated capitalism? Should the Commission be Europe's government or its civil service? The book examines top officials' preferences on these questions through analysis of unique data from 137 interviews.

Understanding the forces that shape human preferences is the subject of intense debate. Hooghe demonstrates that the Commission has difficulty shaping its employees' preferences in the fluid multi-institutional context of the European Union. Top officials' preferences are better explained by experiences outside rather than inside the Commission: political party, country, and prior work leave deeper imprints than length of service, directorate-general, or cabinet. Preferences are also influenced more by internalized values than by self-interested career calculation. Hooghe's findings are surprising and will challenge a number of common assumptions about the workings and motives of the European Commission.

LIESBET HOOGHE is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her publications include editing *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-level Governance* (1996) and co-authoring *Multi-level Governance and European Integration* (with Gary Marks, 2001).

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Preface

The study of the European Union (EU) has vacillated between being a vanguard for theoretical innovation and a feast for area specialists. The turn of the century has been a time of connecting these two worlds.

This book on preferences in the European Commission is written for both generalists and EU area specialists. For EU students, I explore the beliefs of decision makers at the heart of Europe about who should govern, how, and over whom. These questions have structured political competition in Europe's national states over the past century and a half. They now shape EU politics. Scholars have begun to map contestation among public, parties, and private interests. But how do office holders in the European Union's central executive and administrative body, the European Commission, conceive of European integration? What kind of European Union do top Commission officials want? Should the European Union be supranational or intergovernmental? Should it promote market liberalism or regulated capitalism? Should the Commission be an executive principal or an administrative/managerial agent? Should it be a consociational or a Weberian organization?

Between 1995 and 1997, I set up camp in Brussels in order to ask these people what they think of the integration of Europe. These 137 interviews constitute the empirical bedrock of this book. The leadership of the Commission holds diverse, not unitary views. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I find that top officials are divided as sharply as national parties, governments, and national publics. I show that the Commission does not succeed in shaping its employees' preferences, and this has much to do with the multi-level character of decision-making in the European Union. To understand Commission preferences one must understand how authority is exercised in the European Union.

This book is also written for generalists. Comprehending the forces that shape human preferences is the subject of intense debate in political science. I follow others in distinguishing between two basic contending theories of human motivation: a sociological paradigm that stresses how values shape preferences, and an economic paradigm that emphasizes

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self-interested utility. Trying to combine utility maximization and socialization may appear as fruitless as attempting to unite water and fire. They seem just too different. Yet interests *and* values motivate human preferences. So how can one do justice to both logics? In this book, I try to go beyond abstract debate to examine how each of these explains – or fails to explain – preferences. In what political circumstances, I ask, do values and interests motivate preferences? I show that the role of values and interests is contextual. To understand how values and interests shape preferences one must understand the particular contexts that make one or the other salient.

In writing this book, I have incurred many debts. The seeds were sown in conversations with my friend Hussein Kassim back in 1993, when we were both regular fixtures in the Junior Common Room of Nuffield College, Oxford. Encouraged by our mentor Vincent Wright, we contrived the ambitious plan to study the interplay between bureaucratic politics and policy-making in the Commission, and that, we decided, would require an analysis of the Commission as bureaucracy in combination with case studies in a variety of policy sectors. But, as Nuffield sent us off into the academic world, professional pressures got the better of our joint ambitions.

Two seminal books – Robert Putnam’s classic *The Beliefs of Politicians* (1973) and Donald Searing’s more recently published *Westminster’s World* (1994) – persuaded me to listen intently to those who run the Commission. What began as an examination of a bureaucracy became a study of the preferences, beliefs, and roles of the people within. In the process, I gained not one but 137 collaborators: the top Commission officials who graciously parted with scarce time and frank insights during more than 180 hours of interviewing. This book would not have been possible without them. I thank them sincerely.

I received financial assistance from diverse sources. A Connaught grant from the University of Toronto (1994–5) provided seed money, and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded the lion’s share of travel, accommodation, transcription and coding of the interviews, and data analysis through two three-year grants (1996–9 and 1999–2002). A Jean Monnet Fellowship at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence (1996–7) allowed me to set aside precious time for research. The EUI provided a wonderful intellectual environment for soaking and poking in the data. This was the year that Yves Mény moved the Schuman Centre to the Convento, and I made extensive use of the new facilities, firing off letters, faxes, and phone calls to set up interviews in Brussels. As my friends at EUI will testify, my research activities provided essential intelligence on the robustness of the Convento’s

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secretarial infrastructure. After I left, administrative expenses dropped considerably!

Brussels became a second home during months of interviewing. I thank the Katholieke Universiteit of Brussels for use of their facilities. Huguette answered many a Commission phone call on my behalf, and she unfailingly and unflappably sent (and resent) faxes to all corners in Brussels. If I did not miss appointments, it is because of her.

Over the years, I have benefited enormously from conversations, comments, and criticisms by many a colleague and friend. I cannot possibly mention, or remember, every single person who deserves my gratitude, but here I would like to single out those who shaped this end product perhaps more than they care to take credit for: Sven Bislev, Jean Blondel, Tanja Börzel, Jim Caporaso, Jeff Checkel, Stefaan De Rynck, Guido Dierickx, Morten Egeberg, Claus-Dieter Ehlermann, Adrienne Héritier, Simon Hug, Brigid Laffan, Mikel Landabaso, Larry Leduc, Andrea Lenschow, David Lowery, Neil Nevitte, Johan Olsen, Edward Page, John Peterson, Eberhard Rhein, Thomas Risse, Bert Rockman, Gerald Schneider, Pascal Sciarini, Don Searing, Marco Steenbergen, and Bernard Steunenberg. I presented parts of this work at numerous occasions, but I owe particular thanks to my colleagues at the European University Institute, the University of Toronto, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am also grateful to Michelle Cloutier, Gina Cosentino, Oded Haklai, Mike Harvey, Joshua Heatley, Andrew Price-Smith, Antonio Torres-Ruiz, and more than thirty student-transcribers at UNC-Chapel Hill and Toronto for invaluable research assistance. John Haslam, my editor at Cambridge University Press, guided this manuscript efficiently through the last stages by prodding me discreetly, but firmly, to notch it up yet one more time – and quickly.

Gary Marks lived my dreams, hopes, and anxieties about this book from the beginning. He shared and shaped every thought, every problem, and every small victory. This book is as much ours as is our co-authored work. With one small difference: the responsibility for its shortcomings are mine, and mine alone.