

## **REVIEW: SCOTLAND IN EUROPE**

*Elisa Roller*

Amanda Sloat, **Scotland in Europe**, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002, pp. 264, ISBN 3-906766-97-7, £27.

Since 1997, there has been an overwhelming amount of literature dealing with UK devolution and, in particular, identifying the challenges faced by Scotland. This book contributes to this literature but also to research on the effects of Europeanization on the process of devolution. With over half of its workload originating in the European policy arena, and given the Scottish Executive's responsibility for implementing EU directives in devolved areas, Scotland's new devolved institutions will have to adjust to the growing Europeanization of the UK policy process. In this respect, this book analyzes Scottish elites' expectations on these questions. First, to what extent do elites believe that Scotland was, pre-devolution, already involved in determining the UK's bargaining position in the EU decision-making process and whether Scottish interests were adequately being represented by the UK government. In other words, would devolution really make a difference? The second question in the book focuses on the ways in which elites understand the operation of governance under the new constitutional arrangements. In using the case of Scotland, the author's starting point is that its small civil society and frequent interaction between actors has helped shape political debate and build a shared sense of purpose.

The book employs an actor-centred approach to explore why actors hold certain beliefs. It draws its approach from both multi-level governance (actor-centredness) and new institutionalism (actors' behaviour constrained by institutional norms). The author also argues that actors' perceptions are also shaped by personal experiences, in particular the degree of proximity to the devolution process. In Chapter 2, the author reiterates many of the claims

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made by multi-level governance, i.e. that collective decision-making is no longer monopolized by state executives and that political arenas are interconnected rather than nested. Nevertheless, the author recognizes some of multi-level governance's weaknesses. First, that the ability of sub-national authorities to influence the member-state's bargaining position on EU matters is by no means made clear. In this respect, multi-level governance tends to emphasize some levels of government (sub-national, supranational) while downplaying the significance of others (national). A second criticism is that multi-level governance does not explain the extent to which national governments continue to control access to the EU policy arena, i.e. their 'gatekeeper' role. The author also questions the effectiveness of the extra-state channels used by sub-national authorities to access the EU's decision-making arena. More generally, the author criticizes multi-level governance for confusing influence with participation and as a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach in understanding the role of sub-national authorities in European policy-making. Finally, the author argues that multi-level governance fails to examine the role of civil society, a dominant feature in Scottish politics.

In the second part of the chapter, the author draws on new institutionalism and its emphasis on the role of institutions to highlight how institutional rules can shape actors' views and behaviour. New institutionalism itself is criticized for its overemphasis on formal institutions by excluding informal institutions and other actors. The author also criticizes new institutionalism for failing to consider the extent to which actors' views are shaped by experiences outside their institutions. Nevertheless, new institutionalism's emphasis on the constraints by institutions on actors is taken a step further by the author's claim that actors can change political rules to devise more suitable ones. In the case of Scotland, for example, the author argues that the views of political actors have been shaped by the 'wearing of many hats'.

Finally, the author presents a typology which is then applied in subsequent chapters to help explain elite expectations about Scotland's role in Europe. The three actor types presented in the typology represent 'institutional' perspectives to understand how institutional norms shape actors' views. More specifically, the typology also illustrates how actors' views and expectations of devolution are shaped by the political level of their employment, the degree of involvement in the creation of the Scottish Parliament and their proximity to the devolution process.

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Chapter 3 provides a brief historical background of the demands for devolution with an overview of the relationship between Scottish institutions and the UK government. The second part of the chapter details the pre-devolution and devolution arrangements on the role of Scottish institutions in European policy-making. The author argues that the creation of these arrangements was very much shaped by a lack of formal institutional guidelines and that provisions in the Scotland Act were limited with the majority of details originating from non-legally binding working agreements. As such, the author claims that the ambiguities inherent in these arrangements created scope for individual interpretation, allowing actors to develop their own informal practices. As the author points out, these ambiguities could have contradictory implications. On the one hand, they could allow the UK government to curtail Scottish involvement in European policy-making while, on the other, they could lead to the Scottish Executive playing a more active role.

Chapters 4-6 provide the detail on each level of actors presented in the typology. Chapter 4 deals with Scottish civil society, the 'architects' of the devolution arrangements, Chapter 5 with Scottish officials, the 'builders', and Chapter 6 with the 'tenants' or Scottish politicians. All three groups of actors agreed that devolution would change the nature of Scottish participation but there was uncertainty across all three levels about whether the new institutions would exert more influence on European policy outcomes.

Overall, this book provides a thoughtful analysis of the expectations and aspirations of Scottish elites in setting up the devolved institutions. The study will be useful for future researchers to trace the development of elite attitudes towards devolution over time. The author has managed to draw on an impressive amount of primary sources, including interviews with key players, and legislative documents. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to use too many quotes and sources in the text, something which could have been remedied in the study's transformation from a PhD thesis to a monograph. In addition, it would have been useful to have some conclusions at the end of each chapter rather than the comparative analysis of the three empirical chapters presented in Chapter 7.

In sum, this book is an excellent study of elite expectations and perceptions at a distinct period of time (November 1998 - May 1999) in the run-up to the creation of the Scottish Parliament. The author tries to build on the different interpretations of governance and empirically, how 'governance' is understood

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in Scotland, by examining a key aspect of the Scottish devolved institutions' future legislative agenda – Scotland's role in Europe. One of the author's key conclusions is that Scotland's domestic view of governance has yet to fully incorporate the European dimension. However, the true test in the devolution settlement, as the author claims, particularly with regards to the autonomy of the Scottish parliament and the UK government's willingness to include Scotland in European decision-making, will occur when different parties hold power in Westminster and Edinburgh. Only then many of the institutional arrangements set up in the last few years will truly be put to the test.

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