Europeanisation, mesogovernments and ‘safety nets’

LUIS MORENO
Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), Madrid, Spain

Abstract. This article examines two processes: the adaptation of national systems of social protection to operate within a European framework and the decentralisation of ‘safety net’ policies at the meso-level in order to favour territorial subsidiarity and democratic accountability. It reviews the concepts and assumptions involved in welfare state research before moving on to reflect upon the so-called ‘European social model’. Decentralisation and a greater regional say in areas of policy making closer to citizens’ perceptions, such as the creation of ‘safety nets’, have often been linked to cultural or identity considerations. However, demands are also based on claims for policy innovation and more effective management, as illustrated by Spain’s devolution of welfare powers to the regions. This article concludes that in order to build up a macro-community based on trust in the ‘Old Continent’, more attention should be paid to the increasing role of medium-size layers of government.

Concepts and premises

Safety nets are bottom-lines of welfare provision which take many different forms. Public programmes of social assistance provided on a means-tested basis are basic elements of ‘safety nets’ which aim to guarantee that minimum vital needs are met and to facilitate civic integration. In many cases, these programmes are not a social security responsibility, although they may be linked to contributory social welfare and income maintenance schemes. The policies associated with ‘safety nets’ are often fragmented. Benefits and services are generally targeted on different groups without overall coherence (Eardley et al. 1996). Other intervening factors, such as support within the context of the family, community help or voluntary assistance provided by NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and third sector associations, also play a crucial role in defining ‘safety nets’.

An excessive focus on central government’s role in welfare provision has tended to overshadow the impact of other welfare providers which are not easily measured and assessed in quantitative terms. Studies of welfare development have often neglected the importance of the relationships between state, civil society, family and the individual in establishing safety nets, as well as in generating social cohesion and political legitimation. Indeed, welfare
state research has often concentrated on analysing national social spending rather than on institutions and organisational relations (Esping-Andersen 1993). However, sub-national tiers of government have been important innovators in the field of safety nets and have often been disregarded by social policy researchers (Alber 1995).

The concept of welfare ‘residualism’ is usually associated with the decline of the centralising command-and-control planning model. In parallel, a growth of institutional ‘stateness’, or state penetration of the welfare sphere (Flora 1986/1987), has also been noticeable in decentralised countries. The concept of ‘stateness’ includes the degree of autonomy of state officials in shaping and implementing public policies at all layers of government – central, regional and local. The traditional Jacobin doctrine that central government is the state is misleading.

With regard to Europeanisation, structures of governance at a supranational European level are developing through the formalisation of interactions between the 15 Member States of the European Union (EU). These interactions affect mainly actors and policy networks traditionally confined to operating in nation-state arenas. As a multi-level political framework, the European Union is a compound of diverse policy processes, and Europeanisation implies that national, regional and local policies are to be shaped by considerations beyond those that emerge in the domestic politics of the Member States.

The process of convergence in the ‘Old Continent’ is commonly referred to as ‘Europeanisation’. It affects economic, political and social domains, and takes place in countries sharing a somewhat common historical development and embracing values of democracy and human rights of an egalitarian nature. However, the concept is far from precise. It is subject to diverse understandings and interpretations. ‘Europeanisation’ is not a static concept, but a rather dynamic idea that finds expression in the gradual development of common European institutions (e.g., the Schengen Agreement, the European Court of Justice and the Euro).

A constitution of the United States of Europe cannot be regarded as the end result of the process of Europeanisation. The neo-functionalist school of thought has generally adopted the view that universal progress requires a kind of integration, equivalent to cultural assimilation, along the lines of the ‘melting-pot’ experience. An alternative view of non-homogenising integration puts the emphasis on the historical, psychological and social characteristics of a plural Europe. Pluralists envisage that European legislation can only succeed by taking into account both the history and the cultural diversity of the mosaic of peoples in the ‘Old Continent’.
The concept of decentralisation was enshrined in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty via the notion of subsidiarity. This provides for decisions to be taken supranationally only if local, regional or national levels cannot take them more effectively. In other words, the preferred locus for decision making is as decentralised and close to the citizen as possible. Political elites of the Member States, reluctant to further strengthen powers of European institutions, interpreted the subsidiarity principle as a safeguard of traditional national sovereignty and, consequently, of the powers of central government in Member States. They viewed the decentralised layer of government referred to under ‘subsidiarity’ as the nation state.

European countries with a decentralised or federal structure of government are keen to clarify the divisions of powers and responsibilities in the future multi-tier European Union. They seek workable schemes to enable German Länder, Italian Regioni, Spanish Comunidades Autónomas or the British devolved administrations to secure their own inputs at the European level, as well as to implement and manage EU decisions at sub-national level. Regional governments have shown resistance to encroachment from Brussels on sub-state political action. Consequently, and as a result of the Nice Summit of 2000, an agreement was reached on a new intergovernmental conference that would conclude with a new European Treaty in 2004. Regions and mesogovernments in the European Union expect the coming intergovernmental conference to reverse a trend to further re-centralisation not only across Europe, but also at the national level. Sub-state governments have found that the principle of subsidiarity has provided a renewed impulse for developing their executive roles and new opportunities for policy innovation. It also encourages intergovernmental cooperation on the assumption that national states will become less sovereign. To meet these challenges, the democratic institutionalisation of the European Union needs above all to acknowledge the diverse processes of state formation and nation-building of the constituent Member States.

The accommodation of cleavage structures forged in centuries of history, as described in Stein Rokkan’s macro-model of European political development, appeared to be a prerequisite for any political attempt to dismantle internal boundaries in a supra-national Europe (Flora et al. 1999). The development of a European supra-national welfare state and social policy is, therefore, unlikely in the near future. National and local cultures will continue to play a crucial role in peoples’ expectations, perceptions and values. This area of social policy-making is highly shaped by local cultures and lifestyles, and is less likely to be dealt with in a homogenous and centralised manner from a supra-national entity (Moreno 2001a).
Model or models of European social protection?

During the ‘Golden Age’ of welfare capitalism (1960–1975), West European systems of social protection were based upon the assumption of full employment and on the complementary role played by the family and, in particular, on women’s unpaid work within households (Lewis, 1993, 1997). A confluence of welfarism, Keynesianism, Taylorism and female segregation facilitated sustained economic growth and the spread of the ‘affluent worker’. However, the effects of the oil crises of 1973–1974 and 1978–1979 altered a scenario of prosperity and abundant, stable male employment.

In recent decades, globalization of the economy and industrial change have had wide-ranging effects on national labour markets. Yet there have also been deep structural changes following the ageing of population, the increasing participation of women in the formal labour market and the consequent adjustments of relationships within households – the main producers and distributors of welfare and well-being. In addition, fiscal crises and the erosion of the ideological consensus that gave way to the ‘Mid-century Compromise’ have also conditioned the re-casting of welfare states in Europe. According to Crouch (1999), this compromise involved a conciliation between a primary framework of property ownership and social rights in advanced industrial countries representative of welfare capitalism. This mutual concession enabled an institutionalisation of latent conflicts between capitalist inequalities and equalities derived from mass citizenship.

The ‘European social model’ is widely believed to distinguish most EU countries from systems with growing individualisation, such as the United States. However, and viewed from below, a European social model appears much more diverse – systems of social protection within the European Union are far from being identical and uniform (Ferrera 1996b). Any future scenario for an EU-wide involvement in social protection policies must take into account current peculiarities in different systems of welfare. This requires a succinct review of the diverse welfare arrangements and institutional configurations within the European Union. In order to provide one, we refer to the ‘regime approach’, which has established itself as a useful methodological tool for analysing the diversity of welfare systems in the European Union (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999).

The regime approach suggests that welfare systems are characterised by a particular constellation of economic, political and social arrangements. The approach has proved very persuasive in linking together a wide range of elements considered to influence welfare outcomes. However, in it fixed patterns of interaction are assumed to generate stronger forces for continuity than for change. As a consequence, it is implicitly assumed that each of the three types
of welfare state will tend to sustain the interests and arrangements that underpin it. The *corporatist Continental* welfare state is characterised by concerted action between employers and trade unions, and is financed by their contributions. Welfare policies by state institutions uphold this arrangement, which is organised through social insurance. There is a sharp distinction between labour market ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. The *liberal Anglo-Saxon* welfare state is shaped by its commitment to universality, financed by taxes and incorporates residual means-tested services and flat-rate benefits. It has shifted towards market principles, involving deregulation of the labour market, wage flexibility and stringency in social expenditure. The *social-democratic Nordic* welfare state seeks to combine egalitarian ideas with growth and full employment, and the minimisation of family dependence. It is financed by taxes, characterised by the principle of universality and favours the public provision of services rather than cash transfers.

To these three types of welfare regimes, can be added a fourth: a Southern European or Mediterranean category (Ferrera 1996a; Rhodes 1996; Moreno 2000). Table 1 outlines the nature of the Southern European model in relation to the other three. Whether the Mediterranean type of welfare state is simply a less advanced or less developed form of the ‘Continental’ social insurance model is a contentious question (Katrougalos 1996). Some have argued that it is a mere Latin rim, characterised by a rudimentary level of social provision and institutional development (Leibfried 1992; Gough 1996). In broad terms, similar social-demographic trends, macro-economic constraints and policy patterns can be observed in all four South European countries (Giner 1986; Morlino 1998; Castles 1998).

There has been a growing similarity in levels of public expenditure and organisational arrangements in welfare systems across the EU. As European labour markets adapt to global competition, welfare states have tended to converge. After the introduction of the Euro, the next steps towards Europeanisation will involve tax harmonisation and convergence in labour costs.

If a reduction in levels of coverage of welfare benefits, together with a hardening of the criteria of access and eligibility to welfare entitlements, is observable in Central and Northern Europe, trends in Southern Europe have run in a somewhat opposite direction. From a Continental-style contributory social security system, recent reforms in Mediterranean countries have pointed towards generalisation – and even universalisation – of benefits and services (e.g., education, health and non-contributory pensions). In Britain, welfare reforms have emphasised ‘workfare’ as a means of trying to avoid universal ‘dependent’ welfare. Such a course of action has implicitly adopted the philosophy of the contributory principle, although a transfer of
Table 1. Features of European welfare regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anglo-Saxon</th>
<th>Continental</th>
<th>Nordic</th>
<th>Mediterranean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Neo-corporatism</td>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
<td>Social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Individual choice</td>
<td>Income maintenance</td>
<td>Network public services</td>
<td>Resource optimisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>Payroll contributions</td>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Flat rate (low intensity)</td>
<td>Cash (high intensity)</td>
<td>Flat rate (high intensity)</td>
<td>Cash (low intensity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Residual public</td>
<td>Social partners</td>
<td>Comprehensive public</td>
<td>Family support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision</td>
<td>Public/quasi markets</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Public/centrally fixed</td>
<td>Mixed/decentralised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour market</td>
<td>De-regulation</td>
<td>Insiders/outsiders</td>
<td>High public employment</td>
<td>Big informal economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female polarisation</td>
<td>Part-time feminisation</td>
<td>Occupational specific</td>
<td>Ambivalent familialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Dependency culture</td>
<td>Insertion culture</td>
<td>Statist culture</td>
<td>Assistance culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
responsibilities from the public to the profit-making private sector is the underlying trend.

The factors affecting this observable trend towards growing similarity in social policy provision among European Member States include macrostructural constraints such as external social dumping, industrial relocation and financial globalisation. However, European institutional influences are also extremely important, particularly those related to European law and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice. Perhaps the most important of these relates to provisions concerning labour mobility.

Article 2 of the EC Treaty provided that the EC can legislate to harmonise national social security systems in order to secure the freedom of movement of workers. Accordingly, the impact of European law on social security matters is growing in importance and the provision has potentially far-reaching consequences. In recent years, social policy has been brought to the forefront of EU interests. The Social Charter on the right of workers, as well as the agreement on social policy of the Maastricht Treaty and its inclusion in the Amsterdam Treaty as a separate chapter on social policy, have meant significant steps towards ‘Social Europe’.

The 1998 decisions on the Kohll and the Decker cases constituted a turning point in the juridical concept of the relation between EU law and national health insurance laws. Mr Kohll, a Luxembourg citizen, had dental treatment for his daughter in Germany (Trier). Mr Decker, also a Luxembourg citizen, had sought reimbursement for spectacles he had purchased in Belgium. National social security administrations had already rejected both claims. Kohll and Decker appealed to the European Court of Justice. The Court ruled that, in the absence of EU harmonisation, each Member State could determine the conditions covering rights and obligations to be insured with a social security scheme as well as benefit entitlements. Nevertheless, and this was the crucial part of the Court’s decision, Member States must comply with European law when exercising their powers to organise their social security systems (Kötter 1999).

Whether the Kohll and Decker rulings will have a visible impact on an area of exclusively national competence remains to be seen. When considering the view that the financial implications of this ruling could undermine the balance of the national systems of social security, the Court was of the opinion that the reimbursement of costs at a flat rate, or in accordance with the tariff established in the country of origin, would have no effect on the financial equilibrium of the national social security system. The Court’s jurisprudence will weigh especially heavily in the process of building Social Europe. Until now, decisions and rulings by the Court have enjoyed an uncontested degree of legitimacy vis-à-vis national interests as defended by the governments of the
Member States. At the root of the Court’s influence lies the acceptance, not only that political life in Europe depends on the rule of law, but the conviction that all EU countries without exception embrace egalitarian human rights and values.

Mesogovernments and welfare development

Higher degrees of uncertainty for wide ranges of social groups – groups which used to be covered by social protection schemes and are now becoming increasingly vulnerable – are the result of recent social and economic change. In this context, safety nets have become focal points of attention with growing concern for them expressed in EU programmes to combat poverty and social exclusion. The EU Commission’s ‘Strategic Objectives’ for the period 2000–2005 envisage a reform of social protection based on solidarity that can remain fair, caring and inclusive in a climate of ‘cautious public spending’ (Commission of the European Communities 2000). The Commission considers new forms of European governance not to be the exclusive responsibility of European Union institutions. Moreover, neither national governments nor national parliaments are regarded as the sole actors in European governance. Instead, regional and local authorities are viewed as decisive emerging actors.

Bottom-up Europeanisation and top-down decentralisation have allowed a considerable extension of a type of European cosmopolitan localism and the increasing role of sub-state governments in the provision of community-centred policies (Moreno 1999). This is reflected in both societal interests, which are aimed at developing a sense of local community and at the same time participating in the global context (Strange 1995). In this respect, the role played by medium-size polities is acquiring relevance in most aspects of contemporary life. In Europe, the renewal of community life at the meso-level derives mainly from the combination of two main factors: a growing rejection of centralisation at the national level coupled with a strengthening of supranational politics, and a reinforcement of local identities and societal cultures with a territorial underpinning. This distinguishes community life in Europe from that of the United States (Etzioni 1993). In the United States, many of the communitarian experiences may be regarded as reactions to specific social cleavages and pressing social fractures (the criminalisation of social life), as instrumental means of socialisation in response to urban constriction (suburban isolationism) or as alternative lifestyles to dominant values (possessive individualism). Thus, North American communitarianism can be seen mainly as socially defensive.
In policy-making, mesogovernments are no longer dependent on the state-building programmes of rationalisation carried out during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Regionally based entrepreneurs, social leaders and members of the intelligentsia have adopted many of the initiatives and roles once reserved for ‘enlightened’ elites, who in the past held the reins of power at the centre of their nation states. Positions of influence are now more evenly distributed in central, meso-level and local institutions. The co-optation of regional elites by central government is no longer the exclusive route to a successful political career.

A reassertion of sub-state identities is acquiring major relevance within the supranational framework of Europeanisation. The effects of sub-state identities are no longer limited to distinctive patterns of party competition within a national context (e.g., CSU-Bavaria, CiU-Catalonia, Lega Nord-Northern Italy, SNP-Scotland). Social movements and industrialists of the ‘new economy’ have found a more flexible context for action at the regional level. Central state apparatuses are often clumsy and inefficient in dealing with bottom-up initiatives. Medium-size nation states (Denmark or Finland), stateless nations (Catalonia or Scotland), regions (Brussels or Veneto) and metropolitan areas (London or Berlin) are well equipped to innovate in a more integrated Europe. In particular, the desire on the part of medium-size communities to run their own affairs and to develop their potential outside the dirigiste control of central state institutions is especially important.

Claims for a greater regional say in areas of policy making which affect citizens most immediately are not only based on cultural or identity considerations, but also on considerations of better management of welfare programmes associated with the construction of safety nets. Deconcentration and decentralisation of social services have had a much larger impact than privatisation in Southern European. Minimum income guarantee programmes are important components in the development of these safety nets. Welfare reform in Spain offers a good illustration of the growing role of mesogovernments.

Spain’s devolution and the development of safety nets

In 1988, the Basque Government announced a regional Plan de Lucha contra la Pobreza (‘Programme against Poverty’). This innovative policy was imitated by the other 16 Spanish Comunidades Autónomas. By the end of the 1990s, all Spanish mesogovernments had regional minimum income guarantee programmes combining means-tested cash benefits with social inclusion programmes (primarily employment promotion and vocation training schemes).
Regional parliaments had passed legislation allowing Spanish mesogovernments to develop integrated networks of social services. These laws were based upon the constitutional principle which entitled them to request ‘devolved powers’. The framework for the new regional networks of social policy and welfare services gave responsibility for the bulk of service provision to local government. However, law-making powers, as well as planning and coordination with the private and voluntary sectors, would rest with regional executives and legislatures.

Networks of social services were considered by the Spanish regional laws as integrated public systems with unrestricted access for all citizens. Traditional public beneficence was ‘updated’ in order to avoid stigmatisation of the beneficiaries. The general aim shared by the Spanish mesogovernments was one of modernisation of social services by taking into account the needs of users, as well as their complaints and feedback. In order to rationalise and change the way new social services were provided, the idea of the ‘welfare mix’ was also embraced enthusiastically. Joint action with private and voluntary organisations has proved very effective in implementing programmes to combat poverty, and in the steady creation of safety nets. Non-profit and voluntary organisations, in particular, were incorporated into the general framework of social service provision, and many of them were subsidised by regional government (Moreno & Arriba 1999).

Welfare policies to combat social exclusion developed by the Spanish mesogovernments followed EU recommendations, some of which were put into practice by neighbouring France. First implemented in December 1988, the French RMI (Revenu Minimum d’Insertion) aimed at establishing a link between the receipt of the benefits and the objective of inclusion of beneficiaries in their communities of residence. The management of the programme was deconcentrated at the regional and local level. This policy was geared towards adapting the general objective of social inclusion to the characteristics of those local communities concerned.

In France, as in the case of the Spanish mesogovernments, minimum income guarantee programmes were designed as public instruments to ‘fill in the gaps’ in contributory social security systems. With the growth of unemployment in the 1980s and 1990s, the number of ‘new poor’ who had been employed in lame-duck or non-competitive industries increased as contributory unemployment benefits ran out. The new social assistance benefits were given to them less because they were former employees forced with permanent unemployment, and more because they were citizens entitled to minimum income for purposes of social inclusion. The expansion of social assistance programmes has meant an increasing economic burden for local authorities and regions, which runs somewhat contrary to general goals of
fiscal stringency at the national level. In many European countries, central treasuries finance regional budgets with block grants from general taxation. However, the key element to be considered in this respect is whether such grants are earmarked or general allocations.

Once again, the case of Spain illustrates the potential for policy innovation and rationalisation of costs when welfare safety net policies are a regional responsibility within a general framework of non-discrimination. Spanish mesogovernments have the final budgetary say in the running of new programmes, which they themselves have developed. This usually implies that budgetary priorities are set at levels consistent with those of services that have to be met by law. Certainly, the Basque Country and Navarre, with systems of fiscal quasi-independence (based on their ability to collect practically all taxes and transfer a previously agreed portion to the Spanish Treasury), have been able to fund more generously their programmes of minimum income guaranteed. Nevertheless, the ability to set political priorities in policy funding appears to be the most important explanation for a growing regional role in welfare policy. Mesogovernments have found new arenas in which to exercise their political legitimacy with the autonomous implementation of welfare programmes (Moreno 2001b). It remains to be seen whether these welfare programmes will continue to be a priority for Spanish mesogovernments. Up until now, the expansion of regional public expenditure has allowed the financing of safety net policies. Table 2 shows the territorial re-allocation of public spending in the last 20 years, with an impressive expansion of regional expenditure from 3 per cent of total spending in 1981 to 33 per cent in 2001.

The potential role for mesogovernments in the development of safety nets in Europe is large. They are well placed at an intermediate level to integrate social services and social assistance policies into a coherent network. The ever-present risk of exacerbating inter-regional inequalities in welfare provision will greatly depend on the political commitment shown by EU countries to make social cohesion a priority. In financial terms, differences in policy outcomes might be dependent upon the spending of the mesogovernments. The

Table 2. Territorial distribution of public expenditure in Spain (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: ¹ Beginning of the process of devolution; ² Government estimates.
Source: Spanish Ministry of Public Administrations (MAP 1997).
degree of financial autonomy for the design and implementation of welfare policies defines the capacities for policy innovation. In Spain, the fact that the Basque Government had sufficient resources was a key factor in the development of the minimum income guarantee programme after 1989. This in turn provoked a domino effect in the other Spanish regions, even though they did not have the same financial manoeuvrability. However, not wanting to be left behind, they were able to finance their programmes, although some regions have not been as generous as the Basque Country and Navarre.

Inter-regional inequalities, so it is argued, may be exacerbated by ‘welfare tourism’, initially analysed in the United States, as the poor and excluded move around in order to obtain more generous welfare benefits. This would initiate a vicious circle by penalising financially states and communities which make extra budgetary efforts to provide comprehensive and generous welfare programmes. However the argument does not seem to have the same degree of plausibility in Europe since the level of geographical mobility is much lower than in the United States, and social bonds, kin and networks of friends have a much greater influence in people’s attachment to their territorial contexts. In addition, cultural factors also deter welfare tourism – these include not only linguistic barriers and differences in customs and habits, but also greater chances for social inclusion. In fact, territorial identities at regional and local level can provide better means for inclusion for the excluded.

Further arguments supporting local and regional involvement in the creation of welfare safety nets concern the maximisation of available information for policy makers, and a better tailoring of inclusion programmes to local employment needs. Critics draw attention to the fact that excessive autonomy for richer regions would harm the poorer ones and could widen the gap between more developed and less developed regions, and thus fuel regional grievances. Yet better access of civil society to political decision making at the meso-level can be regarded as a way of strengthening accountability in a global order that challenges the quality of democracy in postindustrial societies.

Conclusion: Decentralisation and subsidiarity

When social policies are provided according to the principle of decentralisation and subsidiarity, new opportunities are opened up for policy innovation at the regional level. Mesogovernments and medium-size states are no longer dependent on state-centred welfare programmes or hierarchical forms of supra-national EU intervention. Subsidiarity favours the participation of sub-state government in running public policies, above all social welfare provision. At the same time, it encourages intergovernmental cooperation on the
assumption that the role of the nation-state would be less hierarchical than it had been in the past. Territorial identities, as sources of legitimacy, are intertwined and reflect citizens’ multiple attachments to the different institutional levels: municipalities, regions, nations, states and the European Union.

Regional systems of social protection and welfare safety nets conform to the view that an effective development of community care services creates more efficient welfare provision. It appears more suitable for monitoring means-tested programmes, and for optimising economies of scale. In addition, it provides institutions for democratic accountability at both meso and local levels. Democratic accountability and citizen involvement were given priority by Prodi’s Commission in a lengthy statement at the beginning of the millennium (Commission of the European Communities 2000). The vision of territorial subsidiarity and democratic accountability in the future governance of European is one of decentralisation of day-to-day programmes and tasks. The difficulties of implementing transnational policies from Brussels, particularly in the area of social policy and welfare development, were implicitly acknowledged. Furthermore, the agreement at the 2000 Nice Summit that a new EU treaty in 2004 should be based upon a new intergovernmental balance of powers seems to give support to the quest for more extensive decentralisation.

The building of a European community based on trust, and one which would dismantle internal frontiers, needs to be reoriented towards transferring more responsibilities to the regional layer of government. Europeanisation would thus grow into a meaningful system by incorporating existing cultural systems and collective identities at both national and sub-national levels. These interact in a differential and contingent manner and should be integrated – rather than assimilated – into a process of convergence. In this way, Europeanisation would avoid being seen as an exogenous process superimposed on the internal interaction of communities with longstanding cultures and histories.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the Spanish Secretary of State for Education and Universities (PR2002-0200) for financial support during the writing of this piece of research.

References


© European Consortium for Political Research 2003


© European Consortium for Political Research 2003

Address for correspondence: Luis Moreno, Unidad de Políticas Comparadas, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Calle Alfonso XII, 18, 28014 Madrid, Spain
E-mail: Lmorfer@iesam.csic.es