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Klaudijus Maniokas, ed., Lithuania's First Decade in the EU Transformation or Imitation?¹

For those who want to better grasp the political and socio-economic trajectory of Lithuania since its accession to the EU, this edited volume provides a wealth of information and insights. It touches upon a variety of themes ranging from the politicization of LGBT rights to Lithuania's bumpy road to the eurozone. While this constitutes an interesting and informative read, the book sometimes struggles to maintain theoretical and conceptual cohesion throughout all chapters.

As specified in the opening theoretical chapter by Klaudijus Maniokas, the volume sets three principal objectives. It seeks 1) to sketch a trajectory of Lithuania's development since 2004; 2) to determine the role of the EU in shaping the course of this trajectory and; 3) to analyse the extent to which Lithuania has developed, to use North, Wallis, and Weingast's (2009) terminology, an "open access social order." The transformation from limited to open access order serves as the principal macro-theoretical lens of the volume. However, the volume's theoretical section also draws heavily on Europeanization literature to conceptualize the nature of the EU's influence on national politics. The focus of the volume is exclusively on the downloading dynamics of Europeanization. While this combination of grand- and medium-range theories is intriguing, their interaction deserves closer critical attention. Does the European Union only limit or also open up domestic opportunities for patronage and corruption? Why do south European countries such as Greece or Italy show no progress towards attaining greater transparency—based on transparency indicators (CPI)—for years? Furthermore, given the limited temporal scope of this volume, is it reasonable to expect social order shifts in such a short period of time?

In line with the work's first objective, the second chapter—by Sabina Karmazinaitė, Klaudijus Maniokas and Darius Žeruolis—assesses Lithuania's performance according to a wide range of quantitative indicators linked to the country's national strategy paper, *Lithuania 2030*. These indicators include not only the typical international indices (e.g. World Governance Indicators), but also information on emigration flows, electricity and gas prices, the number of NGOs, and the differences between popular and elite perceptions of Lithuania's progress over the last decade. Based on this plethora of data, the authors of the chapter conclude that Lithuania has made noticeable progress in its economic convergence with richer European countries, but achieved little in terms of structural indicators (e.g. income equality). These results fell well short of popular expectations, which resulted in high emigration flows and the public's general scepticism.

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¹ Maniokas, K., ed., 2015. *Pirmasis Lietuvos dešimtmetis Europos Sąjungoje: transformacija ar imitacija?* [Lithuania's first decade in the European Union: Transformation or imitation?]. Vilnius: Vilnius University Press.

This causal linkage between EU membership-related expectations and emigration appears to be problematic. Given the fact that 2010 to 2011 figures are heavily skewed upwards by a newly introduced law requiring residents to pay mandatory health insurance fees, the highest emigration flows most likely occurred in 2004 and 2005. Thus, emigration during Lithuania's initial years as an EU member had little to do with membership expectations, which should have been projected further into the future.

The next chapter, by Vytautas Kuokštis, provides another bird's-eye view, this time of Lithuania's political economy. Kuokštis's findings are largely in line with the Maniokas and Žeruolis's previous assessment. On the one hand, these findings highlight evidence of rapid economic growth facilitated in part by EU structural funds. On the other hand, they point to the limited political will to implement painful structural reforms after Lithuania's EU accession.

In his unique contribution, a chapter on the development of Lithuania's welfare state, Liutauras Gudžinskas's engages the topic of Europeanization in a more systematic way. Gudžinskas presents a discourse analysis of the governments' annual reports to the parliament in order to determine whether more attention has been paid to social policy since EU membership. His findings do not support initial expectations, but do show clear links to partisan ideologies: left-leaning governments tended to pay more attention to social policy. In general, according to Gudžinskas, economic and energy security have become the dominant topics of discourse in Lithuania's public sphere. The economic crisis further emphasized these issues.

Although analysing Europeanization is a stated objective of this volume, the chapter on the Europeanization of public administration, by Vitalis Nakrošis and Sabina Bankauskaitė-Grigaliūnienė, is by far the most systematic and comprehensive in addressing this topic. The authors seek to determine to what extent and how the EU contributed to the agencification (proliferation of public agencies) and depoliticization of the public sector. Their results demonstrate that the EU has played a noticeable, but limited role in both processes. While the EU contributed to the proliferation of Lithuania's new public agencies, Europeanized agencies managed to maintain a degree of autonomy and avoid politicization. Thus, while the public sector as a whole remained highly vulnerable to political pressures and exhibited limited levels of professionalization, Europeanized agencies bucked this trend.

Next, the volume turns to the topic of Lithuania's entry into the eurozone. In this chapter, Vilpišauskas looks at Lithuania's monetary and fiscal policies since 2004 and identifies the reasons for Lithuania's adoption of the euro. Perceived economic benefits played the most important role in political elites' determination to adopt the euro followed by national security concerns. However, Lithuania's first attempt to adopt the euro (in 2007) was unsuccessful due to elites' lack of attention and understanding of how changes in fiscal policy related to the convergence criteria. In contrast, eight years later, both internal and external factors favoured Lithuania's entry. While this chapter provides interesting analysis and relates to the book's first objective, it feels detached from the initial theoretical discussions. How is Lithuania's adoption of the euro related to Europeanization debates? What does the failed attempt to change the commission's negative assessment indicate about Lithuania's uploading capabilities? Should Lithuania's accession to the eurozone be interpreted as yet another step towards open access

order in Lithuania? Answers to these and related questions would better integrate this chapter.

The book concludes with a case study of LGBT rights in Lithuania. Specifically, it looks at how and why this issue became increasingly politicized. Somewhat surprisingly, Liutauras Gudžinskas demonstrates that during EU accession negotiations surrounding LGBT-related issues generated little public attention and controversy in Lithuania. Growing politicization and polarization of LGBT issues came in 2008 with a new government, led by the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats party. Despite EU pressure, especially from the European Parliament, there is limited evidence of Europeanization in this policy area. While Lithuania has implemented some legal provisions against LGBT employment discrimination and provided guarantees of basic civil rights, the current political and popular climate is highly antagonistic toward the issue of LGBT rights. According to the author, there is little willingness to enact laws as practice and, at the same time, this is a great deal of political support for imposing further restrictions on the LGBT community. As in the case of public administration reforms, the role of the EU in influencing Lithuania's domestic political agenda appears to be quite limited.

The case studies of Lithuania presented in this volume demonstrates that the effects of Europeanization on Lithuania after its EU accession have been complex and uneven. As response modes to EU policies and demands, transformation and retrenchment are largely absent. Instead, the authors often observe absorption or partial accommodation. These baby steps must accumulate substantially before they can produce meaningful changes in Lithuania's social order. However, by that time, the causal structure becomes much more complex and the isolation of Europeanization factors even more challenging. But to quote T.S. Eliot, "If you aren't in over your head, how do you know how tall you are?"