



# The social face of the **Regulatory State**: Reforming public services in Europe

*Sandra Eckert*

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Capitalism in Europe is transformed as a result of liberalisation, privatisation and regulatory reform. Unravelling the state as service provider and employer has posed significant social policy challenges to the emerging regulatory state. The book confronts these challenges, and addresses questions concerning regulation and capitalism: How does the regulatory state protect consumers and employees? Do varieties of capitalism translate into varieties of social regulation?

The book examines the transformation of public services in different varieties of capitalism. It compares postal reform in France, Germany and the United Kingdom, takes stock of the postal reform movement in Europe and internationally, and discusses policy approaches in telecoms and electricity. It pays special attention to postal reform deadlock in liberal market economies, falling mail volumes as a driver of change, and a new wave of privatisation triggered by the European sovereign debt crisis.

The analysis reveals whether and how social policy goals have been addressed by means of regulation and redistribution. The findings show that redistributive policies form an integral part of regulatory reform, which makes it hard to compensate reform losers in a context of austerity policies. In their regulatory practice independent agencies integrate consumer protection as a core business, but are reluctant to tackle employment related issues. The delay of liberal regimes in reforming their postal sectors is explained by a limited capacity to accommodate social policy goals.

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