

“Why values? Whose values?”

A brief account of the ValEUR project

François Foret (ULB)

UCSIA/ CHAIR IN EUROPEAN VALUES
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iee ULB UNIVERSITÉ LIBRE DE BRUXELLES CEVIPOL

How "European values" unite and divide
Rule of law, identity and morality politics in the EU

Final Conference of the ValEUR project

21st November 2019
9:00am - 8:00pm

Cevipol/Institute for European Studies
Université libre de Bruxelles
Room Kant and Spaak
Av. F.D. Roosevelt, 39
1050 Brussels

Entrée libre
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Values: A mouse not easy to catch

- A **non-normative approach of values**:
Not in search for the good, the true or the ugly values, but who pulls the trigger of which values, for which purposes.
- Values are deeply **cultural** in a double sense. They are *mental representations* of what is worth being appreciated and not facts of nature; they are *collective representations* that cannot be reduced to individual opinions. They vary constantly across time and space
- **Focus on political values** = cultural representations enshrined in law, asserted by institutions and instrumentalized in practices and discourses of actors to compete for power, influence, resources and/or recognition

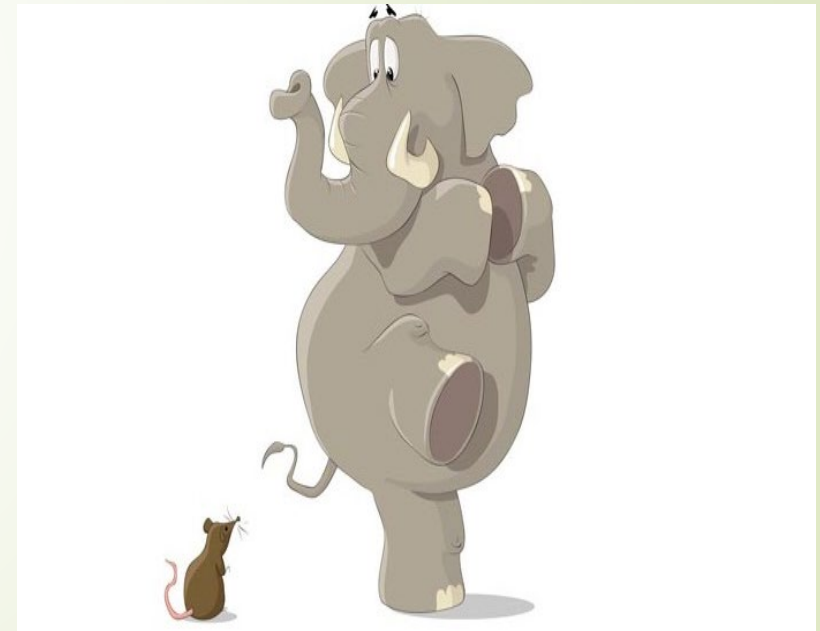


How to studies values at large and European values in particular

- **European Values (EV)** = cultural representations enshrined in treaties and asserted by European institutions in their discourses. Main focus on human dignity, rule of law and democracy
- **Where:** in social representations; political discourses; party manifestos; media and social networks; public policies...
- **Who:** no champion, no owner, many users, mainstream players and challengers
- **What:** values as open signifiers likely to backlash. Multiples meanings and counter-effects. *private*
- **Effects of EV:** diffuse, weak accountability and occurrences as instruments rather than ends
- **Values as gate-keepers:** between Self and Other; between unity- or dissent-making; between internal and external affairs; between market and law; between public and private spheres

European values: the mouse hiding the elephant in the room?

- Crises of values and values as answers to the crises
- EV as **proxy or substitute for something else**: identity, legitimacy, democracy...
- EV as go-between and compromise between two narratives: 'grand récit' of nation-building and justification by the outputs. Advantages: flexibility, modest ambition; market-friendly ethos;
- The example of human dignity as shortcut to Europeanness, with diverging interpretations
- references to values may have three incentives.
- 1/ a call to identity, memory and communicative resources in a *quest for legitimization* (**governing through values**)
- 2/ *necessity to deal with ethical issues calling for normative policy choices* (**governing values**)
- 3/ Values may *cause legal and political conflicts and challenge established balances of powers and regulation* (**governed by values**).



Values as *legitimization* (governing through values) and values as *issues* (governing values)

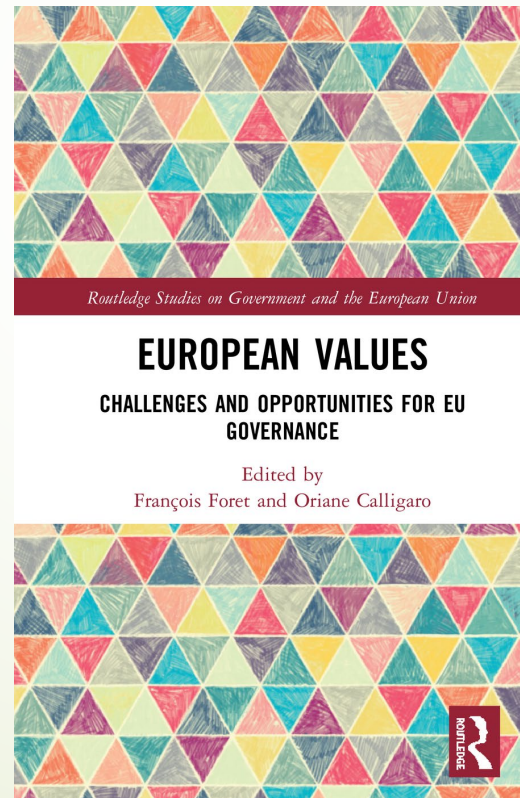


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The example of morality issues in the EU. A model of European morality politics (EMP)?

- *Case studies*: prostitution, surrogacy, abortion (with Fabio Bolsonar and Lucrecia Rubio Grundell)
- **Specific features of EMP:**
- organised around *European values* enshrined in the treaties rather than *religious values*
- predominance of *de-politicisation* patterns through the regulation of normative choices by experts, but expertise is not value-free...
- *regulatory inertia* due to impossible consensus? Frequently true, but not always. Policy shift towards abolitionism on prostitution as counter-example. Importance of soft law, circulation of best practices and jurisprudence of European judges **to alter the policy context rather than the substance of political choice**

“Values in Japan and Europe: a comparative historical, socio-cultural and political perspective”

François Foret (ULB), Airo Hino (Waseda University)



“Multifaceted Values in Multilevel Contexts”



**19 - 20 th
of September
2019**



**Building 3,
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Values in European and Japanese politics

Routledge, 2020

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