

## **Book Review:**

***The Politics of European Legal Research: Behind the Method*, Marija Bartl and Jessica C. Lawrence (eds)  
(Edward Elgar Publishing 2022, ISBN: 9781802201185)  
288 pp, £100,00.**

The first thing that strikes the reader of *The Politics of European Legal Research: Behind the Method* is the narrative of the structure. A mere glance at the contents page promises the reader that the discussion will be viewed through four perspectives: the politics of questions, the politics of answers, the politics of audiences, and the politics of the concept of law. Although the reader might be enticed by this grouping and expect an overarching chapter for each perspective, this expectation falls short. Nevertheless, the grouping of the discussion in the aforementioned four focal points and then delivering different perspectives under these focal points is a most welcome contribution to the recent method debates.

In the *Politics of Question*, Jessica C. Lawrence's chapter on 'Governmentality as reflexive method: excavating the politics of legal research' invites readers to find the politics behind their own methodological choices by exploring different ways in which legal research is impacted by pre-conceived framed narratives. Lyn K. L. Tjon Soei Len's chapter titled 'On politics and feminist legal method in legal academia' furthers the debate by engaging with struggles in using feminist methods in European legal research. Ruth Dukes' chapter on 'The politics of method in the field of labour law' highlights the political and normative impact of a shift in modern scholarship in conceptualising labour law from 'law of work' to 'labour market regulation'. Alessandra Arcuri's chapter on 'Boundary-work and dynamics of exclusion by law: international investment law as a case study' rounds up the *Politics of Questions* by exploring the exclusionary force of ideational boundary-setting.

In the *Politics of Answers*, Tommaso Pavone and Juan Mayoral's chapter on 'Statistics as if legality mattered: the two-front politics of empirical legal studies' provides a political history background of the rise of empirical studies. Julien Bois and Mark Dawson's chapter on 'Sociological institutionalism as a lens to study judicialization: a bridge between legal scholarship and political science' furthers the discussion by arguing that both traditional legal doctrinal and political science approaches to the study of European courts exclude important aspects of judicial practice in their analysis. Or Brook's chapter on 'Politics of coding: on systematic content analysis of legal text' argues that the dominance of the case-study method in legal practice and scholarship has created a tunnel vision of the legal world which does not adequately account for the messier day-to-day reality. Gareth Davies's chapter on 'Taming law: the risks of making doctrinal analysis the servant of empirical research' rounds

up the *Politics of Answers* by arguing that doctrinal scholars should not fall under the influence of empirical legal scholarship but remain true in their effort to theorise law in society.

In the *Politics of Audiences*, Irina Domurath's chapter on 'The politics of interdisciplinarity in law' introduces us to this perspective by asking which disciplines of law and lawyers have discussed interdisciplinarity in recent decades and how this choice of scientific debate has shaped the law itself. Marija Bartl and Candida Leone's chapter on 'The politics of legal education' explores the role of audiences in legal education. Joana Mendes's chapter on 'Comparative administrative law in the EU: the integration function and its limits' concludes the *Politics of Audiences* by exploring the role of comparative scholarship in the development of EU administrative law.

In the *Politics of the Concept of Law*, Christina Eckes's chapter on 'A timid defence of legal formalism' explores how questions of legal theory can also be arenas of political struggle, since they re-position law, legal scholarship or legal experts in relation to other groups, social problems or concerns. Poul F. Kjaer's chapter on 'How to study worlds: or why one should (not) care about methodology' furthers the debate by arguing that social sciences' method appeal as a tool for the study of social worlds has been undermined by its enhancement with positivist methodologies. Hans-W. Micklitz's chapter on 'The measuring of the law through EU politics' asks the question whether EU law today can qualify as law as we know it. Siniša Rodin's chapter on 'Telos of a method' rounds up the *Politics of the Concept of Law* by arguing from a relativist perspective that the neutrality of legal research can only be assessed from within the boundaries of a disciplinary tradition.

As the editors candidly disclose, this book is a product of the discussions and debates that occurred in 2018 and 2019. Therefore, it does not include the perspective on *politics of change* – a standpoint that could include recent shocks to the EU system, such as Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine. However, and more importantly, this book does provide a critical and complex analysis – cushioned between four perspectives – that creates space for controversy and passionate debate among EU scholars. Moreover, this book offers students, lecturers and practitioners an insight into the colourful and complex world of politics behind how we understand and (ab)use law.

Branka Marušić<sup>1</sup>  
Stockholm University

---

<sup>1</sup> Email: [branka.marusic@juridicum.su.se](mailto:branka.marusic@juridicum.su.se) (ORCID: 0000-0002-8332-6692). DOI: 10.3935/cyelp.18.2022.474.



This work is licensed under the *Creative Commons Attribution – Non-Commercial – No Derivatives 4.0 International License*.

**Suggested citation:** B Marušić, 'Book Review: *The Politics of European Legal Research: Behind the Method*, Marija Bartl and Jessica C Lawrence (eds) (Edward Elgar Publishing 2022)' (2022) 18 CYELP 205.