The Western Balkans in-between of Europeanization and Democratization

To What Extent is the EU a Democracy Promoter in the Western Balkans?

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to outline a research project on the role of the European Union as a democratization actor in the Western Balkans. This project sets to deconstruct the dichotomous relationship between Europeanization and democratization in the context of Western Balkan countries' accessions to the European Union.It asks how the European Union is conceived in the national political discourses of the Western Balkan countries and to what extent and how the established discursive representations of the EU and its norms have promoted democratization within the studied cases.

The analysis studies decentralization of the state's power along vertical and horizontal lines as an instance of democratization. The analytical focus is placed on discursive articulations of the European Union and its norms in various political debates on territorial and non-territorial de-concentration of the central state (including policy debates on (a) pluralization of decision-making (b) decentralization/territorial restructuringinthe Western Balkans.The analysis covers the period from 1999 to 2013.

This research positions itself within the Europeanization scholarship and adopts a poststructuralist reading of Europeanization. As such, it departs from the dominant neoinstitutionalist reading of Europeanization and the accompanying compliance-based analysis of Europeanization *qua* EU accession.[1]Poststructuralism is believed to open the analytical space for problematization of the actor, while not compromising the structuralist embedding of the Europeanization theorizing. In line with that, Europeanization is defined as a practice (process) of articulating the EU and EU norms in domestic (or

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[1]See Robert Ladrech, "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32, no. 1 (1994)., Simon Hix and Klaus H. Goetz, "Introduction: European Integration and National Political Systems," in Europeanized Politics? European Integration and National Political Systems, ed. Klaus H. Goetz and Simon Hix (London: Frank Cass, 2001)., Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "Europeanization: The Domestic Impact of European Union Politics," in Handbook of European Union Politics, ed. Knud Erik Jorgensen, Mark A. Pollack, and Ben Rosamond (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007). , ———, "When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change," *EUI Working Papers* 56(2000)., Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso, and Thomas Risse, eds., Transforming Europe : Europeanization and Domestic Change (Ithaca: Corrnel University Press 2001)., Kevin. Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli, eds., The Politics of Europeanization (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)., Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink, eds., Europeanization: New Research Agendas (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
For conditionality, see Heather Grabbe, The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization Through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)., Klaus H. Goetz, "Europeanisation in West and East: A Challenge to Institutional Theory," (unpublished work, 2002)., ———, "The New Member States and the EU: Responding to Europe," in Member States and the European Union, ed. Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)., Judith G Kelley, "International Actors on the Domestic Scene: Membership Conditionality and Socialization by International Institutions," International Organization 3, no. 58 (2004)., Christoph Knill and Andrea Lenschow, "Compliance, Competition and Communication: Different Approaches of European Governance and their Impact on National Institutions," JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 43, no. 3 (2005)., Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, eds., The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2005).

transnational) political spaces. Europeanization is understood as a dual process of concurrent reproduction of EU norms in the domestic policy process in line with EU norms and contestation (molding) of EU norms by the very policy process. The analytical focus is placed on deconstructing the link between mutually contesting articulations of EU norms and domestic policy outcomes, as well as establishing the meta-discourses upon which individual articulations of the European Union and its norms draw.

Europeanization in the Western Balkans has beenpredominantly studiedas a domestic effect of*acquis*-based conditionality.[2]This has been supplemented with studies of horizontal norm transfer in the context of political engagement of domestic actors with EU officials.[3]Some have defined the prospect of EU membership and membership conditionality as pivotal in causing an irreversible political shift towards democracy in the region.[4] Other research suggests that the impact of the European Union on democratization of the Western Balkan countries has been more modest, also because the context of the accession negotiations favours centralized over pluralist governance models.[5] Diversity in domestic responses to EU is observable within and across countries of the region. Also for that reason, it is of analytical bearing to analyse the role of domestic discourses in instigating (as opposed to only challenging/mediating) Europeanization.

This study does not adopt a prescribed content and essence of Europe and its norms. The meaning of Europe and its norms is understood as being reproduced and contested by domestic actors. This study further refrains from adopting a set definition of democracy and democratization. Democracy refers to the actors' convictionabout the organization of politics. This suggests that both Europe and democracy are defined as signifiers that gain different meanings within different discursive structures. Accordingly, the central research question is purposefully broad in a sense that it does not study the articulation of Europe in view of an established representation of democracy. The analysis is therefore not confined to a study of articulations of Europe in view of selected discourses such as the nation, the

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[2]Višnja Samardžija and Mladem Staničić, "Croatia on the Path Towards EU: Conditionality and Challenge of Negotiations " *Croatian International Relations Review* 4., Heather Field, "Awkward states: EU Enlargement and Slovakia, Croatia and Serbia," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 1, no. 1 (2000)., Danica Fink-Hafner, "Why Europeanization Moves at Different Paces: The Cases of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro," in *ECPR General Conference Section Contemporarz European Party Politics* (Pisa2007)., Dejan Jovic, "Croatia and the European Union: a Long Delayed Journey " *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006)., Damir Grubiša, "Anti-corruption Policy in Croatia: Benchmark for EU Accession," *Politička Misao* 47, no. 5 (2010).
[3]Ian Bache, "Europeanization and Multi-level governance: EU Cohesion Policy and Pre-accession Aid in Southeast Europe," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10, no. 1 (2010).
[4]Branko Caratan, "The European Union, South-Eastern Europe and the Europeanization of Croatia," *Politička misao* 46, no. 5 (2009).
[5]Ian Bache and Danijel Tomšić, "Europeanization and Nascent Multi-level Governance in Croatia," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10, no. 1 (2010).

state, the market, etcetera. Rather, to answer how and according to which rules particular understandings of Europe articulate particular understandings of democracy, this project adopts an inductive approach. Hypotheses about various meta-discourses that enable/restrain particular representations of Europe vis-à-vis democracy and about the policy effects of the established discursive representations of Europe are grounded in empirical data.[6]

This project sets to answer the following research questions:

1) How did governmental and oppositional discourses of the examined Western Balkan countries articulate the European Union with particular reference to democracy?

2) How can we understand the established representations of Europe and its norms?

3) How are the established representations of Europe and its norms translated into particular policy proposals on territorial and non-territorial de-concentration of the central-state?

Moreover, the established empirical research sets out to make a broader theoretical contribution to Europeanization research by answering the following:

1) What are the ideal-type representations of the Europe-democracy nexus and from which meta-discourses do they draw?

2) What perceptions of Europe are likely to inform Europeanization and how?

3) What is the link between discourse and policy-making?

The research offers a poststructuralist reading of Europeanization and is grounded in the following theoretical and empirical premises:

1) The European structure is not conceptualized as an apriority, but rather as a contested idea contingent upon the political process. Seeing that it is constructed differently within different policy discourses, we are to talk about many Europes as opposed to one hegemonic Europe.

2) The actor is intentional and plural. This opens space for an agency-focused analysis of Europeanization (while keeping in mind that this agency, while intentional, is structurally determined), with this agency possessing the capacity to concurrently articulate different and often conflicting meanings of one norm.

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[6]For alternative representation of the European Union in domestic discourses, see Petr Drulák, "Probably a Problem-Solving Regime, Perhaps a Rights-Based Union. European Integration in the Czech and Slovak Political Discourse," in *Questioning EU Enlargement: Europe in Search of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006)., Ole Waever, "Identity, Communities, and Foreign Policy Analysis: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory " in *European Integration and National Identity: a Challenge of the Nordic States*, ed. Lene Hansen and Ole Waever (London: Routledge 2002)., Lars Trägårdh, "Sweden and the EU: Welfare State Nationalism and the Spectre of 'Europe'," in *European Integration and National Identity : the Challenge of the Nordic states*, ed. Ole Wæver and Lene Hansen (London: Routledge, 2002)., Mats Braun, *Modernisation Unchallenged:The Czech Discourse on European Unity* (2009).

3) The Europeanization process is de facto articulation of EU norms in domestic/transnational political debates, which implies concurrent reproduction and contestation of discursively established meanings (identities). Hence, while being articulated in the domestic policy process, EU norms determine and are determined by this very process.

4) Territorial and non-territorial de-concentration of the state in the Western Balkans can be studied as a case of democratization.

5) Democratization in the Western Balkans can be explained as a case of Europeanization.

6) Various (also diverging) democratization patterns in view of the Western Balkan countries' accession to the European Union can be explained by various and competing articulations of Europe and its norms in domestic discourses.

The research sets out to contribute to the empirical and theoretical debate in the following way. On the empirical level, the research hopes to contribute to the understanding of the European Union as a democratization actor in the Western Balkans.On the theoretical level, the research responds to the overt structuralism of mainstream Europeanization theorizing. The established poststructuralist account of Europeanization problematizes the European structure as both structuring and contested. In turn, the domestic actor is problematized as being defined by the European structure, while at the same time being intentional and plural.

Theoretical Framework

What is Europeanization? How should we define it? How should we explain it? Should the scholarly work on Europeanization be primarily concerned with studying the effects of EU institutions on EU member states or should we examine Europeanization in light of a broader historical and geographical perspective? In answering these questions, this contribution adopts a critical reading of Europeanization research to consequently conclude that there are still things to be said about Europeanization in general and Europeanization *qua* EU accession in particular.

Beyond the all-inclusive and theoretically questionable usages of Europeanization as anything remotely related to Europe, one observes a very consistent scholarly effort to delimit the meaning of Europeanization as de facto the domestic impact of Europe and more specifically European integration. The (emerging) research program is therefore interested in changes in domestic political systems attributable to EU integration. The extension of the program to countries that are negotiating entry to the European Union is attributable to the accession package as this package establishes an institutional link between the European Union and the aspiring member states.

The tendency of tying Europeanization to European integration is not surprising. Consequent to the strengthening of the EU's institutional order, the European Union also became omnipresent in the member states' domestic politics. This, too, applies to candidate and applicant countries. In Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, harmonization with the EU has been facilitated by the hierarchical logics of governance by conditionality. In line with that, it was only sensible to turn the lenses and address the absorption of EU norms and rules in EU member states and membership candidates. In different words, the umbrella of the EU's institutional integration has presented the research interested in Europeanization with analytical parsimony and the prospect of maturation. At the same time, a rather reductionist top-down research model focusing on domestic convergence in response to the EU's normative and material pressures is favored over more complex operationalizations of Europeanization. Put differently, with Europe identified as a project of the EU's institutional integration, Europeanization is explained as a top-down transfer of these institutions driven by the EU's coercive and normative adoption pressures.

Yet, the hypothesis about a unidirectional transposition of the EU's institutional structure from the EU to domestic levels of member states and membership candidates/applicants leaves a number of pending issues unanswered. Empirical research has highlighted a lack of converging effects of EU policy models or normative structures on domestic institutions, policies, etc. Because of the specificities of domestic contexts, Europeanization is reflected in diverging institutional responses to EU incentives/pressures across the examined country and policy cases. Domestic actors, institutions, and discourses have a greater role in molding Europeanization than the more traditional research models are able to grasp. By way of defining EU norms as static variables entrenched within the EU's institutional order, the research presumes, rather than problematizes, the meaning of Europe within the Europeanization process. Why have the responses to Europe been so diametrically divergent in the South and the North? Why has the idea of political unity been interpreted differently in Paris, London, and Berlin? With direct reference to Europeanization in the accession context, why was accession conditionality developed if not in response to Central Europe's plea for EU membership? By the same token, how is one to explain changes in the Commission's strategy towards the acceding countries across time if one fails to problematize Europeanization as an interactive process? More importantly, what does the European Union and hence Europeanization mean for the applicant countries? When thinking about the European Union, do Serbia, Croatia, or Albania have in mind the *acquis* or is the EU a signifier for a wider set of processes including democratization, marketization, or westernization? Ultimately, can we

claim that there is or should be only one, hegemonic, reading of the European Union and Europeanization?

In view of the above, a novel generation of researchers seeks to establish more elaborative models that acknowledge domestic institutions, culture, power relations, or discourse and are consequently more representative of the situation on the ground. Also this research advocates greater adherence to cognitive and discursive variables in both the conceptualization and theorization of Europeanization. This project argues that current mainstream literature does not do justice to the complexity of Europeanization. By way of failing to treat EU norms as contested and consequently also constituted by a wider geographical and temporal context, the literature forecloses the research scope to some very pending empirical questions and it additionally exposes the research agenda to the fallacy of teleological and normative argumentation. In response, this text shall propose the European Union to be defined as a discursively constructed and disputed concept, which subsequently implies that also Europeanization is to be read in plural.

Accordingly, drawing from poststructuralist discourse theory, this project aims to conceptualize Europeanization as a contested and multidirectional process, articulated at multiple trajectories and through multiple velocities. Consequently, the established research framework is to leave questions of institutional norm transfer aside, while directing the analysis towards problems of social transformation by means of discursive interaction. As such, it aims to answer what Europeanization means for domestic actors, also those beyond the core-EU. This subsequently gives rise to the second question about the implications of the new member states' accession to the EU and for Europeanization as such.

Poststructuralism in the tradition of Laclau and Mouffe starts from the assumption that the social world is discursively constructed, consequently implying that all social phenomena, including politics, are to be interpreted via discursive analysis.[7] Hence, poststructuralism brings the concept of discursivity to political analysis, while drawing from dual metaphysical reasoning. First, while often rejected for its alleged overt idealism, poststructuralism does not deny the existence of physical reality, but sees the meaning of this reality to be discursively constructed. This means that social identities, while materially grounded, are constructed through language. Consequently, discourse is defined as a relational system that determines the meaning of social by way of regulating the formation of statements. Second, with identities resulting from contingent, discursive processes – and as such, not accounted for as pre-established givens – poststructuralism rejects the existence of structural totality as

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[7]Emesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Second Edition ed. (New York: Verso, 2001).

proposed by structuralist theorizing. This means that the structuring of the social is only temporary, with a given structure never succeeding in establishing its full totality. In consequence, poststructuralism opens the space for an analysis of structural change as endogenous to the social process.

Laclau and Mouffe describe the political process, more specifically political articulations within the political process, as central to both the reproduction and the contestation of one's identity and action and thereby also the social structure.[8] The actors are thus simultaneously being determined by and are determining social reality. As a result, poststructuralists take interest in how actors' practices articulate and contest the discourses that constitute social reality. What Laclau and Mouffe thus develop is an ontology of discursive construction of the social, which consequently inclines towards research models and methods embedded in post-positivist (non-causal) epistemology.

In line with the above, the following reading of Europeanization is established. First, the European structure is not conceptualized as an apriority, but rather as a contested idea contingent upon the political process. Seeing that it is constructed differently within different policy discourses, we are to talk about many Europes as opposed to one hegemonic Europe. Second, the poststructuralist actor is intentional and plural. This means that poststructuralism opens the space for an agency-focused analysis of Europeanization (while keeping in mind that this agency, while intentional, is structurally determined), with this agency possessing the capacity to concurrently articulate different and often conflicting meanings of one norm. Third, the Europeanization process is de facto articulation of EU norms in domestic/transnational political debates, which implies concurrent reproduction and contestation of discursively established meanings (identities). Hence, while being articulated in the domestic policy process, EU norms determine and are determined by this very process.

Operationalization

The proposed research methodology builds upon the discussed poststructuralist reading of Europeanization. Emphasis is placed on interpreting how the Europeanization process influences domestic discourses on democracy. Because Europeanization is identified with the practice of articulation –thus, a practice of establishing a relation among concepts such as that their meaning is mutually modified – the analysis sets to deconstruct the articulated links between democracy on the one hand and the European Union and EU norms on the other. This is to say that the European Union and EU norms are understood as discursive nodal points (DNPs); an instance of partially fixed meaning that is at the same time central to and contested within the given discursive formation that it defines.

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[8]Ibid.

Consequently, by linking democracy to the EU and EU norms (which, as nodal points, have different captions under different meta-discourses), the actors articulate different meanings to democracy within the same discursive space.A particular articulation of the EU (EU norms) produces a particular conception of democracy.

In view of that, discourse analysis is set to examine what the EU does to domestic conception of democracy. This is achieved by reconstructing the type of links between the EU and democracy with a goal of outlining the logic (meta-discourse) that stands behind these. I propose a three-step research framework. I first identify links between the EU (EU norms) and democracy that are articulated in the domestic policy debate. Drawing from the collected data, I categorize individual articulations of the EU and EU norms in mutually related categories as a second analytical step. The third step uses the established categories to examine the underlying narratives on which these categories are drawn. Altogether, the framework sets out to provide the reader with a structured view on how different discourses on democracy are produced in view of the Europeanization process. Additionally, it is to once more stress how the theoretical commitment to the contingency of social structures, and thereby to the contestability of EU norms, can add to the Europeanization research agenda.

The research is inductive to an extent that it utilizes the collected empirical data to construct a theoretical model of basic discourses (ideal-types) and related meta-discourses on the meaning of the European Union/EU norms that inform the Europeanization process. These ideal-types or basic discourses act as analytical tools (hypotheses) on how discourses are formed and how they are mutually related within a given policy debate. This allows for a systematic analysis of the interrelationship between different representations of the studied EU/democracy nexus within the policy debate.

Research Design

The poststructuralist reading of Europeanization is operationalized in a study of how the EU and its norms have resonated against democratization discourses of several Western Balkan countries. On the one hand, the theme of democratization is taken up as it stands central to the EU's identity and EU's activities in the Western Balkan region. On the other hand, democratization in some of the Western Balkan countries has been obstructed by not only the regular pitfalls of transition such as corruption or slow judiciary, but also by the dramatic restructuring of state borders following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the consequent war. After 1989, these countries were faced with the difficult task of reconciling the demand for sovereignty to be contained within the borders of the nation-states with the

integration into a post-sovereign entity. This struggle in conceptualizing democracy against the dual process of state consolidation and EU accession is therefore worth analyzing.

The research compares Albania, Serbia and Croatia. The three countries are selected as the most divergent political systems both in terms of the experience with EU accession and in terms of the legacy of democratic pluralism and decentralized governance.

1) Croatia has joined the EU in 2013, accession talks with Serbia began in 2013, whereas Albania remains a potential candidate to this day.

2) Croatia and Serbia were part of Yugoslavia, Albania has established an independent communist regime under Hoxha.

3) Croatia and Serbia have suffered secessionist wars, whereas Albania was affected only indirectly (by the migration of Kosovar Albanians to Albania).

4) The countries differ in the extent of administrative reforms and the efficiency of institutions, as well as in the extent of economic development and political stability.

The analysis focuses on the representation of the EU/democracy nexus in the political discourse of two policy areas; the institutionalization of the civil society's access to policy-making and decentralization/territorial restructuring. These policy areas are examined as territorial and non-territorial de-concentration of the state. In view of the institutional legacy of communism as well as the quest for national sovereignty throughout the 1990s, depowering of the central state is presumed to be the most problematic element of the democratization process.

The first policy debate concerns the institutionalization of pluralist modes of governance. Because democratization processes in the Western Balkans have coincided with state-building efforts (and in the case of Serbia and Croatia were accompanied by wars), the 1990s period has established an almost omnipotent central state. Attempts in contestation of the central state's power were often classified as anti-statist. In line with that, the debate on the civil society and the role of the civil society in the domestic policy process is noteworthy as it juxtaposes two competing visions of democracy. Whereas the European Union promotes active participation of public and private interest groups in policy-making (also as a brake on state powers), democracies of the Western Balkans were defined by weak public mobilization, the civil sector acting in support of the central state (or in isolation from the central state), and an increased proliferation of NGOs with limited access to policy-making. The project focuses on the contestation of pluralist democracy by the Albanian, Croatian, and Serbian political and policy discourse on civil society.

The second policy debate examines pluralization of powers along territorial lines. This includes debates on territorial restructuring such as regionalization and localization and on the consolidation of local/regional self-governance via decentralization. Also here, the European Union promotes/establishes a different model of power organization than envisioned by the domestic political systems. The accession *acquis*and the related financial instruments support the consolidation of subnational self-government. The European model puts forward the idea of a region as a unit of political power organization and economic development independent from the state. This is in opposition to the institutional legacy of the 1990s and the definition of subnational units as a *de facto* extended state. The project focuses on the contestation of pluralist democracy in the Albanian, Croatian, and Serbian political and policy discourses on territorial restructuring and decentralization.

The comparative element is adopted to establish a framework for the study of discursively produced norm change. The purpose of the comparison is to establish basic discourses (ideal-types) on the European Union that inform the Europeanization process, as expressed in the shifts in domestic perception of democracy in view of EU accession. This is achieved through the utilization of the constant comparative method of grounded theory (CCM). This method helps to systemize the empirical material and consequently also the process of theory generation, while remaining true to the flexibility of inductive scientific inquiry. The spoken off method of constant comparisons proposes concurrent coding and analyzing of data with the purpose of generating new theoretical knowledge. This means that the researcher concurrently categorizes through the data collection, analyzes (codes) the data through comparison of incidents, and produces theoretical conclusions through theoretical sampling (i.e. increasing diversity of one's sample for new information). More specifically, the CCM consists of four consecutive steps: 1) comparing incidents applicable to each category 2) integrating categories and their properties 3) delimiting the theory, and 4) writing the theory.

The discussed methodology is operationalized as follows. I first study Croatia. Particular focus is placed on legislative decisions that have defined non-territorial and territorial depowering of the state from 1999 to 2013. The chosen period is interesting as it coincides with post-Tudjman reforms and the intensification of accession talks with Brussels.

I use official governmental discourse as an access point to the debate. The official discourse – defined as discourse through which state action is legitimized – is believed to reflect also representations articulated by the wider public sphere. As such, it proves to be vital for the understanding of political and social relations of the given country. Accordingly, I utilize the official policy discourse to examine how the EU and EU norms are framed to produce (or stabilize) a particular discursive representation of

democracy. This means that I search for links between the EU/EU norms and democracy in texts produced by key political and executive authorities involved in the policy process on civil society/decentralization (territorial restructuring). This is followed by an analysis of oppositional discourses in the representations of oppositional political parties and the media. Accordingly, I focus on the wider political debate to assess the degree of stability of the official discourse – hence, to what extent is the official policy discourse hegemonic. This enables me to trace potential contestations of the hegemonic discourse via the rearticulated links between the EU/EU norms and democracy.

In line with the CCM, I proceed by coding the collected data from the Croatian case study into a list of different conjunctions of the EU and EU norms with democracy. This means that, while collecting the data, I group the given data based on how they mutually relate. I subsequently move to a higher level of abstraction via further codification of the data, which are consequently ordered into synthesizing categorizes based on different micro-frames of the EU (EU norms) and democracy. It is important to stress that the established categories are constructed in such a way to reflect both, the hegemonic representation of territoriality and its individual antagonistic contestations.

This being established, as a second step of the analysis, the data are extended to the Albanian and Serbian pluralizationdebates. Accordingly, the case studies are incorporated in a comparative manner to expand the diversity of the examined sample, and not to establish the representativeness of the prospective theoretical conclusions. This means that the micro-frame categories are to be elaborated on the data from the debates in Albanian/Serbia with a purpose of generating a higher level of theoretical abstraction. This strategy of juxtaposing tentative theoretical assumptions with novel data, also referred to as theoretical sampling, allows one to delimit more refined theoretical conclusions and prevents one from becoming overwhelmed by the extensiveness of the empirical material. As a rule, one stops collecting pertinent data once no new categories emerge.

Accordingly, in the remaining two case studies, next to the official governmental discourses, I examine the representations of the political opposition, the media, and the civil society in the period from 1999 until 2013.

The third analytical step (i.e. theory delimitation) employs the comparative element to generate hypotheses (assumptions) about the meaning of the European Union that inform the domestic reading of the European Union in relation to democracy. It is important to note that the given hypotheses are not a complete reinterpretation of a particular political stance, but are simplified to illustrate dominant constellations of the EU/territoriality nexus. Additionally, the link between the established hypotheses and end policy results is assessed.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined a novel research project on the role of domestic discourses in reproducing and contesting Europeanization. It has outlined a poststructuralist reading of Europeanization and the novel approach to studying the EU's role as a democratization actor in the Western Balkan region. My hope is to discuss potential theoretical/methodological flaws of the proposed approach, next to sharpening the project's empirical focus.

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