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Europeanization : A Poststructuralist Approach

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Europeanization

A Poststructuralist Approach

Senka Neuman Stanivuković



rijksuniversiteit
 groningen

Europeanization: a poststructuralist approach

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Europeanization

A Poststructuralist Approach

Senka Neuman Stanivuković

CPI
KONINKLIJKE
WÖHRMANN

Acknowledgments

It takes a village to write a PhD dissertation. When a dissertation is being written in four different countries, six cities and on multiple locations, then the process demands extensive logistical and emotional support next to the academic one. It is rather paradoxical that thesis writing – which is probably the loneliest activity apart from driving a truck (note that truck drivers at least get access to a TV) – involves so many people. An additional paradox is that so many people are willing to (voluntarily) help one towards a title, but it is only the student who enjoys all the perks and peevs of a life with a PhD suffix. The final paradox is that it took **us** (please note that my willingness to share ownership over the thesis extends to the collectivization of guilt and individualization of success) over six years to write approximately 200 pages of text. This amounts to 0,091 page or some 30 words per day (and then some dare to claim Academia to be unproductive). The final final paradox is that I am equally uncertain about the problems that this book was to answer now as I was six years ago. However, if we are to trust Zygmunt Bauman that in times of liquid modernity it becomes almost impossible to construct identities that endure over time and space, then an uncertain (confused?) researcher is precisely what the doctor prescribed. Put simply, because the World is a mess, we need to put more money into poststructuralist research.

Thus, in the spirit of the above, allow me to propose a few maxims about PhD research. First, PhD research is an absurd process in which one faces many contradictions, which prevent one from establishing absurd conclusions. Second, to finish your dissertation in time, you need to write more than 30 words of text a day. Third (and most important), it takes a well-organized, emotionally stable, altruistic, procrastinating, poststructuralist village to write a PhD dissertation. Whereas the universal validity of these claims can certainly be questioned (well, maybe with the exception of the second one), it is beyond doubt that the past few years were marked by fantastic personal and intellectual growth. Writing this dissertation would not have been possible (or half as much joyful) without the support of my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors.

To My Mentors

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Introduction

This dissertation begins from the hypothesis that the direction and extent of Europeanization depends on domestic perception of the European Union and its norms. To study the relationship between the perception of the European Union and domestic political and policy processes, I adopt Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist theory. In line with understanding the social structure as inherently discursive, and therefore structuring as well as relational, poststructuralism brings analytical attention to the actor while not slipping into ontological reductionism. In poststructuralism, what one says, thinks, and does is defined by a discourse, which is again altered by what one is saying, thinking, and doing.

Hence, a poststructuralist reading of Europeanization places the duality of the European discursive structure at the center of the research agenda; the European Union (EU) and its norms define domestic politics and policies, while being concurrently reproduced and contested by the very same. Such an approach shifts the ontological boundaries of Europeanization beyond the concept of compliance. A more complex interpretation of EU structure is introduced, which sees EU norms as inseparable from domestic perception and articulation of these norms. Thus, to answer the classic question of how EU integration and the European Union define domestic policies, politics, and polity, the established research model deconstructs the EU from its institutional base and consequently demands a more nuanced problematization of the actor. It redirects the empirical analysis towards interpreting the contested meanings of EU norms in the domestic setting. By referring to the Europeanization of domestic territoriality debates in EU candidate countries as the central empirical focus of this study, I ask how competing articulations of the EU and its norms (and the underlying meta-discourses on which these articulations draw) construct state territoriality in the given political and policy debates.

In this introduction to the overall thesis, I aim to situate the poststructuralist approach within the wider field of Europeanization theorizing. First, ontological questions surrounding the meaning and scope of Europeanization are discussed. Second, the theoretical and empirical research focus of the dissertation is introduced. While outlining poststructuralism as a means to escape the existing meta-theoretical constraints of the literature on Europeanization, I also examine the empirical relevance of the poststructuralist analysis. Further, methodological concerns in view of the two adopted case studies are addressed. The comparative study of the

Czech Republic's and Slovakian territoriality debates aims to bridge the gap between meta-theoretical and theoretical concerns and real-world problems. Therefore, the Czech and Slovak discourses are utilized to operationalize the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization in the form of an analytical model. A single case study of the Europeanization of the Croatian territoriality discourse is adopted to test the model's wider applicability. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the overall dissertation's structure, outlining the content of subsequent chapters.

The Meaning of Europeanization

What is Europeanization? How should we define it? How should we explain it? Should 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, I adopt a critical reading of Europeanization research to conclude that there are still things to be said about Europeanization in general and Europeanization in the EU accession context in particular.

Beyond the all-inclusive and theoretically questionable usage of Europeanization as anything remotely related to Europe, one observes a very consistent scholarly effort to delimit the meaning of Europeanization as the domestic impact of Europe and, more specifically, European integration.¹ Most research is focused on changes in domestic political systems attributable to EU integration. This research is extended to countries that are negotiating entry to the European Union through their accession package, as this package establishes an institutional link between the European Union and 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 has become omnipresent in the member states' domestic politics. This applies to candidate and applicant countries as well. In Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, harmonization with the EU has been facilitated by the hierarchical logics of governance by conditionality. It is sensible to look at the process from the other side, and address the absorption of EU norms and rules in EU member states and membership candidates. In other words, the umbrella of the EU's

¹ The most consistent examples are Johan P. Olsen, "Many Faces of Europeanization," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 5 (2002); Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli, *The Politics of Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink, eds., *Europeanization: New Research Agendas* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

institutional integration has conferred analytical parsimony and the prospect of maturation to Europeanization research. 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. With Europe fully identified with 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, membership candidates, and 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. Due to the specificities of domestic contexts, Europeanization is reflected in diverging institutional responses to EU incentives and pressures across the examined countries and policy cases.² Domestic actors, institutions, and discourses have a greater role in molding Europeanization than the more traditional research models have accounted for. As a result 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.

Thus, several questions must be raised. 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 do we explain changes in the Commission's strategy towards acceding countries across time if we fail 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, did the Czechs, Lithuanians, or Slovenes have in mind the *acquis*? Or was the EU a signifier for a wider set of processes including democratization, marketization, and westernization? Ultimately, can we claim that there exists or should exist only one, hegemonic, reading of the European Union and Europeanization?

In view of these questions, researchers now seek to establish more elaborative models that acknowledge domestic institutions, culture, power relations, and discourse. Consequently, these

² For a discussion, see *Ibid.*

models are more representative of the real situation on the ground.³ My research advocates greater adherence to cognitive and discursive variables in both the conceptualization and theorization of Europeanization.

In this dissertation, I shall argue that current mainstream literature does not do justice to the complexity of Europeanization. It is clear that EU norms define wider geographical and temporal contexts in which they resonate. By failing to treat EU norms as contested by these wider geographical and temporal contexts, the literature forecloses the research scope to some very pending empirical questions. It also exposes the research agenda to the fallacy of teleological and normative argumentation. In response, I propose the European Union should be defined as a discursively constructed and disputed concept, which subsequently implies that Europeanization should be read as plural.

Drawing from poststructuralist discourse theory, I conceptualize Europeanization as a contested and multidirectional process, articulated at multiple trajectories and through multiple velocities. I will leave questions of institutional norm transfer aside, and instead direct the analysis towards problems of social transformation by means of discursive interaction. I aim to answer what Europeanization means for domestic actors. This subsequently gives rise to the second question concerning the implications of new member states' accession to the EU for Europeanization.

Research Focus

This dissertation is organized around three main problems. First, I discuss the canon of literature concerning Europeanization, particularly on the accession context. I will assess the meta-theoretical foundations of Europeanization literature; primarily arguing that, by failing to problematize the ontological and subsequently also epistemological roots of Europeanization theorizing, the literature exposes itself to an EU-centric bias and a teleological account of social change. Following, I examine the implications for the way scholarship perceives Europeanization of countries that have yet to become EU members. In response, poststructuralist discourse theory is adopted to propose alternative ontological - explanations of the structure, agency, structure-agency relations, and social change. The second matter to be tackled within this dissertation is

³ See Claudio M. Radaelli, "Whither Europeanization? Concept Stretching and Substantive Change," *European Integration Online Papers* 4, no. 8 (2000); and Sophie Jacquot and Cornelia Woll, "Usage of European Integration – Europeanisation from a Sociological Perspective," *European Integration Online Papers* 7, no. 12 (2003).

how to construct another account of Europe as well as Europeanization in order to push the research agenda beyond its current limitations. The third problem to be considered is the relationship between theoretical considerations and the empirical question of Europe's impact on domestic territoriality discourses. More concretely, I ask what kind of empirical reality the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization creates.

State of the Art – Why Look at Second Order Questions?

Scholarship interested in Europeanization finds theoretical support almost exclusively in neoinstitutionalism, as established by Hall and Taylor.⁴ As a result, the European Union and EU institutions are defined as practically synonymous. Domestic change, as a primary subject of the Europeanization agenda, is explained largely through the rationalist and (thin)constructivist synthesis within institutionalist theorizing. I will argue that this unprecedented supremacy of neoinstitutionalism over alternative theoretical approaches brings a threefold implication for Europeanization as a research agenda: a strong bias towards structure-based explanations, consequent neglect of the agency, and analytical bracketing of institutional change. I will claim that the ontological roots of neoinstitutional thinking are particularly discriminatory against the understanding of the applicant and the candidate countries as active participants in the Europeanization process.

By subjecting Europeanization research to a systemic review based on meta-theoretical questions, I hope to shed light on the discipline's underlying assumptions about the nature of structure and agency, how they relate to each other, and arising questions about defining power and social change. Conclusions are drawn from a qualitative review of theoretically informed literature including, but not limited to, the work of Börzel and Risse, Cowles et al., Featherstone et al., and Graziano et al.⁵ The analysis will include theoretically grounded research on Europeanization in the context of EU accession, particularly that of Grabbe, Goetz, Kelley, Knill et al., and Schimmelfennig et al.⁶

⁴ Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies* 44, no. 5 (1996).

⁵ Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "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: Cornell University Press, 2001); Featherstone and Radaelli, eds., *The Politics of Europeanization*; and Graziano and Vink, eds. *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*.

⁶ 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); Klaus H. Goetz, "The New Member States and the EU:

Poststructural Discourse Theory - Beyond a Neoinstitutionalist Reading of the Europeanization Process

The second section of this dissertation will argue in favor of a more encompassing conceptualization of the Europeanization process than currently offered by mainstream scholarship. In response to the restrictiveness of the neoinstitutionalist take on Europeanization, this research subscribes to the anti-essentialist ontology of poststructural discourse theory. In principle, the central argument to be established is that in parallel to the spread of the EU to new political spaces (which is itself a highly contested phenomenon), Europeanization brings diversity to the understanding of the European Union and its norms in particular. What the EU is, and, more notably, what it represents, is no longer a matter endogenous to the EU's institutional integration as it shifts (also) eastward in response to the EU becoming an actor beyond its borders.

Poststructural discourse theory in the tradition of Derrida and Foucault, and as developed by political science in the works of Laclau and Mouffe, is believed to have significant analytical potential in providing the reader with more comprehensive answers to the underlying ontological questions attributable to Europeanization research.⁷ For this reason, I reinterpret the core metaphysical assumptions of Europeanization scholarship by adopting a poststructuralist reading of the nature of the EU structure, agency, and the Europeanization process. I hope to establish both a novel interpretation of the questions about the nature of the EU's structure and domestic agency, as well as a definition of change and the role of temporal and geographical variables in studying this change.

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," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43, no. 3 (2005); and Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, eds., *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978); Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Language and Politics*, ed. Michael J. Shapiro (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1985); and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 2001).

The *leitmotif* of poststructuralist thinking is a multi-layered understanding of discourse – discourse exists as both a structure of meaning and a process of articulation.⁸ An actor's identity is shaped and constrained by the discourse because the actor does not stand outside of it. At the same time, discursive totality is hypothetical, as the discursive structure is always subjected to a process of articulation. Therefore, poststructuralist discourse theory allows one to conceptualize (discursively produced) norms simultaneously as a structural force and as contested. This means that discourse, while constructing social meanings, should not be examined in isolation from the very process of articulation, or discursive practice. By discussing a discourse (what is being said) in relation to its meaning and context (to whom, where, when, and why something is said), I hope to explain structural change. This should enable me to rectify the structural bias of the current neoinstitutionalist reading of Europeanization. Ultimately, this means that domestic actors, by transmitting a norm from one discursive space to another, mold the very meaning of this norm. By discussing domestic agency within a broader social discourse, I hope to resolve the oversimplification of agency inherent to many intentionalist approaches. By linking discourse to the broader meta-discourse in which it is embedded, I will also move beyond the analysis of voluntary, actor-driven usage of EU norms at home.⁹

Within the scope of EU studies, poststructuralists have challenged traditional scholarship on European integration by discussing the European Union as a discursively established idea. Drawing from the notion of discourse as a multilayered structure, authors such as Neumann, Diez, and Wæver see Europe as an idea produced in domestic discourses. As such, the idea of 'Europe' is contingent upon individual understandings of concepts such as 'state' and 'nation'.¹⁰ The supranationalist and intergovernmentalist debate of the 1990s is challenged by way of explaining EU integration as interplay between structural forces of the European Union and national discursive struggles.¹¹ Poststructuralists argue that although discursively produced

⁸ See Ole Wæver, "Discursive Approaches," in *European Integration Theory*, ed. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 199.

⁹ On usage of the European Union in domestic policy process, see Jacquot and Woll, "Usage of European Integration – Europeanisation from a Sociological Perspective."

¹⁰ See Thomas Diez, "Europe as a Discursive Battleground," *Cooperation and Conflict* 36, no. 1 (2001); Iver B. Neumann, "European Identity, EU Expansion, and the Integration/Exclusion Nexus," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 23, no. 3 (1998); Iver B. Neumann, *The "East" in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); and Ole Wæver, "Three Competing Europes: German, French, Russian," *International Affairs* 66, no. 3 (1990).

¹¹ On the supranational/intergovernmental debate, see Ann P. Branch and Jakob C. Ohrgaard, "Trapped in the Supranational-Intergovernmental Dichotomy: A Response to Stone Sweet and Sandholtz," *Journal of European Public Policy* 6, no. 1 (1999).

structure determines the actor, structural change is seen as endogenous to the actor. By subjecting the debate on social change to a discursive twist, poststructuralists are able to escape the pitfall of determinism within structural theorizing, while not resorting to analytical individualism. Likewise, whether the *nature of the beast* is intergovernmental, supranational, or polycentric is secondary, as these readings of Europe are discursively constructed.¹² The EU's nature is not solely a reflection of a material reality *out there*, but primarily a discursively produced idea. This representation of Europe as a discursively produced idea enables authors such as Diez to outline the meaning of European governance by tracing contending national discourses on Europe.¹³

I hypothesize that the above-stated premises of poststructuralism also have theoretical utility when translated to the research agenda on Europeanization. First, the premise of the duality of discursive structures and the consequently derived argument of the context-dependent existence of social meanings suggests that the EU does not exist in a vacuum, but it is largely defined by its relationship with the outside world. Accordingly, one is to assume that the context of interaction between the EU and candidate countries results in a differential meaning of the EU as well as a multitude of Europeanization trajectories. In this vein, I shall speak in favor of a more encompassing conceptualization of Europeanization, which explains behavioral and cognitive transformation at the domestic level, and acknowledges that Europeanization does not take place in an institutional, social, and historical void. The study of the output of the Europeanization process consists of the domestic resonance of EU rules and norms, and the shifts within the Europeanization process. Second, the poststructuralist hypothesis about a discursive grounding of social meanings suggests that the EU, in addition to being a fusion of intergovernmental and supranational institutions, is also a contested idea. This in turn implies that the domestic impact of the EU is not confined to the transposition and diffusion of the EU's institutional structure, but can be whatever the domestic actors make of it (within the discursively confined context). Third, a poststructuralist understanding of space as contested challenges the entrenched divide between non-member and member states – between Europeanization proper and external Europeanization. This creates room for an agency-based analysis of external Europeanization, without the need to establish the capacity of the non-members to upload their

¹² Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Exploring the Nature of the Beast: International Relations Theory and Comparative Policy Analysis Meet the European Union," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996).

¹³ Diez, "Europe as a Discursive Battleground."

preferences on the EU decision-making level. In effect, Europeanization would become whatever the non-members make of it.

Further, I will discuss the Europeanization *problématique* in light of four theoretical propositions, which help in conceptualizing Europeanization beyond the existing constraints of neoinstitutionalist theorizing. First, the European Union is to be understood as a contested idea, defined through national discourses, including those of the non-member states. Second, Europeanization is to be defined as a discursive process forming the domestic actor. This, however, does not mean that Europeanization is necessarily a top-down process. Third, EU norms are to be established as structuring but fluid, meaning norms concurrently constitute and are constituted by actors. Fourth, domestic agency is to be understood as heterogeneous (plural) and active (inventive).

I shall reason in support of analytical models sensitive to the above-proposed reading of Europeanization as a contested and multidirectional process. Consistent with poststructural discourse theory, this research is interested in discursive contexts in which EU norms are embedded. I shall first and foremost look at the meaning EU norms are given in domestic policy debates; the primary research question being how EU norms are interpreted and framed by domestic actors in the domestic discursive space. Further, I will examine how these norms, while determining the domestic policy process, are changed once they resonate at home. The analysis will focus on: conceptualization and categorization of various articulations of the European Union and its norms in domestic debates; on the meta-narratives on which individual conceptualization of the EU and EU norms draw, and the rules according to which they are bound together; and on how these articulations define the given domestic policy debates.

Learning by Doing – Europeanization of the Regionalization Debate in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and Croatia as the Odd Case of Europeanization

While aligning with poststructuralism to generate a novel reading of ontological problems on the nature of structure and agency and their mutual relationship within Europeanization research, the final part of the dissertation turns to empirical data to deduct more analysis-friendly suggestions for resolving the concurrent processes of constitution by, and contestation of, EU norms within domestic discursive struggles. This means that poststructuralism is adopted to provide the theoretical background. More exact propositions about various conceptualizations of the EU and their impact at the domestic level are drawn from empirical data on the relationship between

various articulations of the EU and EU norms and territoriality in the Czech, Slovak, and Croatian debates on territorial reforms. This methodological structure is expected to provide a more detailed view on how, by whom, and which EU norms are diffused into domestic policy discourses and what happens to these norms once they are articulated at home.

The poststructuralist reading of Europeanization is operationalized in a study of how the EU and EU norms have resonated against territoriality discourses of several (then) applicants for EU membership. The theme of territoriality is examined, as it is central to both the institutional structure of the European Union and the EU's identity. It is hardly disputable that global processes, such as European integration, redefine state territoriality from national towards post-national.¹⁴ However, juxtaposed with an increasingly post-national understanding of territoriality within the EU, we have the post-communist countries. After 1989, these countries were faced with the difficult task of reconciling the demand for sovereignty contained within the borders of the nation-states with integration into a post-sovereign entity. This struggle in conceptualizing state territoriality against the process of EU accession is worth analyzing. The research at hand examines domestic resonance of Europe and EU norms, such as *Europe of the regions*, as discursive formations embedded in several (also opposing) discursive interpretations of statehood. Put differently, to answer the underlying questions of this thesis about the context-dependent meaning of Europe and the related role of the non-EU members in shaping the Europeanization process, I aim to explain how domestic actors have framed and interpreted Europe and EU norms in the debates on territorial reforms including regionalization and decentralization.

More specifically, the research compares the debate on territorial reform in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This comparison is used to build an analytical framework for the study of discursively produced norm change. Such empirical focus is selected in line with Mill's method of difference.¹⁵ In contrast to the relative homogeneity of external factors and institutional legacy

¹⁴ See discussion in Michael Burgess and Hans Vollaard, eds., *State Territoriality and European Integration* (London: Routledge, 2006); Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford, *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005): 85-86; and Jürgen Habermas, "Toward A Cosmopolitan Europe" *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 4 (2003).

¹⁵ The method of difference is not utilized as an overall methodological framework. Hence, the adopted method of case selection is not aimed at proving a causal link between domestic actors' discursive action and policy change, consequently rejecting the causality of alternative variables. Rather, while acknowledging causal complexities within the process of Europeanization and limitations of the proposed method to account for multiple causal interactions, I opt for the Czech Republic and Slovakian comparison only to highlight the importance of domestic debates while, for the purposes of this study, keeping alternative variables relatively fixed.

of territorial organization in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, what differs is the nature and extent of public debate on the question of regionalization. This allows me to examine domestic policy discourse while keeping alternative variables relatively fixed. The corpus consists of policy documents, parliamentary debates, party manuscripts, and available newspaper articles, in addition to sixteen semi-structured interviews. The established analytical framework is consequently applied to the ongoing debate about the territorial reform in Croatia, which is methodologically treated as a deviant case from the Czech and Slovak examples due to differences in both the domestic institutional experience with territoriality and the accession-driven Europeanization process. The Croatian case is utilized to establish the wider applicability of the created model. Similarly to the Czech and Slovak study, the data for Croatia is comprised of policy documents, parliamentary debates, party manuscripts, and available newspapers, in addition to thirty-six semi-structured interviews.

Structure of the Book

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 outline the theoretical framework adopted in this study. Chapter 1 first provides the reader with a systematic review of the Europeanization literature, with particular focus on works concerning Europeanization in the EU accession context, which is treated as a derivative of the broader Europeanization research agenda. The analysis addresses the meta-theoretical grounding of the Europeanization agenda. It subsequently studies how meta-theoretical choices have an impact on both the conceptual premises and empirical results of the literature. This being established, Chapter 2 discusses the Europeanization *problématique* in light of a wider debate on poststructuralist discourse theory. Poststructuralism offers an alternative reading of the meta-theoretical questions connected to Europeanization, and is therefore, a useful tool in resolving some of the pending dilemmas within the Europeanization research agenda in general, and studies of Europeanization in the accession context in particular.

While maneuvering within the margins of poststructuralist theorizing, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 (re)conceptualize Europeanization by drawing from empirical analysis. Chapter 3 engages with the issue of poststructuralist research design. The first part of the chapter establishes a research model by defending the analytical choices of the subsequent two empirical studies. The relationship between the given case studies of territorial reforms in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Croatia, and the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization is explored. Further, this chapter

explains the method of inducing broader hypotheses about how the EU is framed by domestic discourse and the here-derived propositions about Europeanization. The second part elaborates on the applied method of text analysis and the established corpus of the empirical material. Chapter 4 links the theoretical polemics on Europeanization with an empirical focus on political territoriality. The aim is to develop a comprehensive model of Europeanization in the accession context. A comparative study of Europe's resonance in domestic discourses on territorial reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is utilized to construct broader conclusions about the dynamics of Europeanization. This chapter concludes with a comprehensive analytical model providing a novel set of hypotheses about the contested discourses on Europe and related core meta-narratives that define accession-driven Europeanization. In Chapter 5, the derived analytical model is applied and assessed in view of the debate on territorial reforms in Croatia.

The dissertation's conclusion summarizes the key overall findings of this research, and offers a critical insight into the theoretical and methodological implications of the conducted analysis for Europeanization research. The benefit of poststructuralism for understanding the actor's role in Europeanization as well as for the understanding of Europeanization as a multidimensional and contested process is highlighted. Finally, I will outline possibilities for further research. This includes utilization of the poststructuralist research framework to analyze Europeanization of EU member states. Moreover, to close the analytical circle, it would be interesting to see to what extent, and how, Brussels reacts to these domestic articulations of Europe and its norms. The poststructuralist account of Europeanization established in this thesis opens the research agenda to a novel set of research questions about the role of the actor in molding the Europeanization process. This expansion of the research agenda in line with poststructuralism is important for theory and practice.

Chapter 1: Meta-theory, Neoinstitutionalism, and Europeanization

Introduction

Europeanization scholars seem uninterested in reconstructing the origins and formation of the European Union.¹⁶ The supranational polity character of the European Union is taken as an a priori fact. Consequently, this moves the analytical focus towards a novel set of research questions about ex post-facto developments within EU integration.¹⁷ Thus, the scholarship takes interest in the output side of EU integration, hoping to explain domestic effects of EU institutions.

Yet, by sidelining the question of *what the EU is* to the benefit of researching *what the EU does*, the literature becomes disconnected from, and unaware of, the ideological tradition in which it is embedded. Vink argues that Europeanization scholarship is absorbed with studying differences in domestic responses to EU integration and runs the risk of not seeing the bigger picture: "Perhaps one of the most obvious shortcomings of the research agenda of Europeanization, is its failure to relate to the traditional integration literature."¹⁸ Bache et al. take Vink's argument a step further and call for an improved awareness of meta-theoretical choices that support the Europeanization research.¹⁹

Therefore, it is valuable to examine the meta-theoretical assumptions that stand behind the conceptual and theoretical choices of mainstream Europeanization literature. This will provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the content of Europeanization theorizing, but also give insight into the limitations of existing knowledge. I assume that the rigidity of the literature in defining Europeanization has exposed this research to an EU-centric bias as well as

¹⁶ See discussion in Radaelli, "Whither Europeanization? Concept Stretching and Substantive Change," 5; Elsa Tulmets, "Revisiting Europeanisation: The Role of Social Actors in the EU Accession Process" in *Europeanisation. Social Actors and the Transfer of Models in EU-27*, eds. Sadrine Devaux and Imogen Sudbery (Prague: CEFRES 2009): 36; Ian Bache, Simon Bulmer, and Defne Gunay, "Europeanization: A Critical Realist Perspective," in *Research Design in European Studies. Establishing Causality in Europeanization*, eds. Theofanis Exadaktylos and Claudio M. Radaelli (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁷ On the difference between the ontological and post-ontological turns in EU studies, see James A. Caporaso, "The European Union and Forms of State: Westphalian, Regulatory or Post-Modern?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996).

¹⁸ Maarten P. Vink, "What is Europeanization? And Other Questions on a New Research Agenda," in *Second YEN Research Meeting on Europeanisation* (Milan: University of Bocconi, 2002): 14.

¹⁹ Ian Bache, Simon Bulmer, and Defne Gunay, "Metatheory and Europeanization Research: Let's Get Critical!" (2011).

teleological argumentation, which is especially problematic for the subfield interested in Europeanization in the EU accession context. By challenging the universality of the fundamental assumptions informing the Europeanization literature, I can transcend its current limitations and open the research agenda for currently unexplored problems.

In this chapter, I conduct a systematic literature review on ontological and epistemological grounds to establish the meta-theoretical framework behind the canon on Europeanization research. I draw from a qualitative analysis of the field based on a specific set of research questions.²⁰ These research questions are divided between those delineating the literature's view on the nature of the studied social and political reality (ontology), and those studying the literature's position regarding how we can explain this social and political reality (epistemology). Concerning ontology, I want to know where the traditional literature stands with regard to the holist versus individualist and the material versus idealist debates. The questions are formulated to outline the literature's position on the nature of structure, agency, and the relationship between these two. The chapter sets to answer the following:

- (a) What is understood as the structure and what as the agency within the Europeanization process? How does the literature conceptualize the European Union and the member and the non-member states?
- (b) What is Europeanization? What is the relationship between the EU and the domestic level?
- (c) What is the relationship between Europeanization and the wider historical and territorial context in which it takes place?

Once this is established, I turn to epistemological considerations by studying whether the literature uses positivism to explain, as opposed to post-positivism to understand, the world out there. In light of the apparent primacy of positivist epistemology within the Europeanization research agenda, the research questions used in this analysis are constructed around the issue of causality.²¹ I am interested in how existing analytical models first formulate and then

²⁰ For obvious reasons, only theoretically informed studies are considered. For a discussion on systematic review methodology in social sciences, see Mark Petticrew and Helen Roberts, *Systematic Reviews in the Social Sciences* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

²¹ On the link between positivism and causal methodology within the Europeanization research, see Theofanis Exadaktylos and Claudio M. Radaelli, eds., *Research Design in European Studies. Establishing Causality in Europeanization* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

operationalize causality. This means that the ensuing text primarily focuses on the debate between top-down and bottom-up research models. The following questions are asked:

- (a) What are the core research questions?
- (b) What is the independent variable?
- (c) What is the dependent variable?
- (d) What are the mediating variables?
- (e) How is causality defined?

Part 1 of this chapter discusses the conceptual and theoretical choices of the Europeanization research agenda in light of the meta-theoretical assumptions in which the field is embedded. Upon outlining the meta-theoretical core of Europeanization research, Part 2 turns to a critical assessment of these findings. I discuss the challenges and highlight what is missing from the research agenda. The established conclusions are discussed in light of Europeanization in the EU accession context as a derivative of a broader Europeanization polemic in Part 3. Together, this chapter will provide the foundation for a dialogue between the mainstream literature and more critical scholarship, as a critical reading of Europeanization is the focus of the following chapter.

On the Meta-theory of Europeanization

Olsen describes Europeanization as ambiguous with regard to ontology, seeing that change occurs because of “a multitude of co-evolving, parallel and not necessarily tightly-coupled processes.”²² Thus, broadly defined, the Europeanization process is argued to result from a dialectical interplay between the structure and the agency in a given social context. This means that as a concept, Europeanization has the potential to transcend the structure versus agency dichotomy. However, the relatively unquestioned cohabitation of Europeanization research and neoinstitutionalism has allied the literature with the structuralist ontological camp. Once the polemics move from conceptual debates towards questions of operationalization and research design, the scholarship almost exclusively adopts neoinstitutionalism – specifically, a combination of sociological, historical, and rational choice institutionalism – for theoretical

²² Johan P. Olsen, "Europeanization and Nation-State Dynamics," in *The Future of the Nation State: Essays on Cultural Pluralism and Political Integration*, eds. Sverker Gustavsson and Leif Lewin (Stockholm: Nerenius and Santerus Publishers, 1996): 271.

backing.²³ To varying degrees, all three versions of neoinstitutionalism are structural in the sense that they see institutions as autonomous from, and having causal power over, political and social agency.²⁴ Hay points out that structuralist tendencies are an ordering principle of neoinstitutionalist thinking: “the term ‘institutionalism’ itself implies such a certain structuralism. For if institutions are structures then institutionalism is a form of structuralism.”²⁵ While united in the idea that institutions do matter in forming actors’ preferences and behaviors, a dialogue between sociological institutionalism (SI), historical institutionalism (HI), and rational choice institutionalism (RCI), offers a cross-paradigmatic reading of both the content of these institutions and the mechanisms through which they produce change.

By considering the EU as a highly institutionalized polity, neoinstitutionalists argue that the EU’s institutional structure – broadly defined as a framework of mutually understood principles, norms, rules, and procedures – is more pivotal to EU integration than the question of whether this context is intergovernmental or supranational.²⁶ Europeanization scholars elaborate on this when claiming that EU institutions not only matter at the EU level, but also at home. The neoinstitutionalist theoretical framework provides a good starting point in refining the discussion from a general observation that Europe matters in domestic politics towards a more parsimonious account of *how* exactly EU institutions matter.²⁷ By aligning with neoinstitutionalism, the

²³ See discussion in Maarten P. Vink and Paolo Graziano, "Challenges of a New Research Agenda," in *Europeanization: New Research Agendas* eds. Maarten P. Vink and Paolo Graziano (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 13. For illustration, see Tanja A. Börzel, "Europeanization and Territorial Institutional Change: Towards Cooperative Regionalism?," in *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, eds. Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso, and Thomas Risse (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Jeffrey T. Checkel, "The Europeanization of Citizenship," in *Transforming Europe* eds. Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso, and Thomas Risse (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Christoph Knill and Dirk Lehmkuhl, "The National Impact of EU Regulatory Policy: Three Europeanization Mechanisms," *European Journal of Political Research* 41, no. 2 (2002).

²⁴ See Kent R. Weaver and Bert A. Rockman, eds., *Do Institutions Matter?: Government Capabilities in the United States and Abroad* (Washington, D.C: The Brookings Institution, 1993); Ellen M. Immergut, "The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism," *Politics and Society* 26, no. 1 (1998); and Morten Egeberg, "An Organisational Approach to European Integration: Outline of a Complementary Perspective," *European Journal of Political Research* 43, no. 2 (2004).

²⁵ Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002): 105.

²⁶ For a detailed analysis, see Joseph Jupille and James Caporaso, "Institutionalism and the European Union: Beyond International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999); Joseph Jupille, James Caporaso, and Jeffery T. Checkel, "Integrating Institutions: Rationalism, Constructivism, and the Study of the European Union," *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 7 (2003); and Mark A. Pollack, "The New Institutionalism and European Integration," in *European Integration Theory* eds. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²⁷ See discussion in Simon Bulmer, "Theorizing Europeanization," in *Europeanization. New Research Agendas*, eds. Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 49 and Kevin Featherstone and

Europeanization program abandons a holistic reading of Europeanization as a *laissez-faire* term explaining a range of phenomena linked to Europe, and instead demarcates Europeanization as a domestic reaction to the EU's institutionalization.²⁸ In effect, the Europeanization program renounces its initial post-ontological reasoning and becomes structuralist in orientation.

It is somewhat logical for a research platform interested in the effects of EU integration to align itself with a structural rather than an individualist ontology. Because of the ontological eclecticism in conceptualizing institutions in conjunction with a structuralist account of how these institutions constrain or enable policy choices, the conceptual framework offered by neoinstitutionalism is an adequate tool in gauging the process of domestic adaptation to Europe.²⁹ The very focus on the extent to which the EU determines the member and non-member states implies that Europeanizationists see the EU as not reducible to the interests and interactions of the individual actors.³⁰ Hay is thus correct to establish that all process-focused research programs, hence –izations, are inevitably structuralist in nature.³¹

I argue that such ontological exclusivism is likely to hinder Europeanization research, by failing to account for not only the macro-level linkages between EU institutions and power, but also micro-level interactions of the actors within the institutional context. Such a meta-theoretical reading of the Europeanization process suggests that EU institutions exist in a vacuum, undisturbed by the broader ideational context, which makes these institutions possible. At the same time, by bracketing the intentionality of the agency from the analytical scope, Europeanization ignores the intersubjective nature of institutions. It advocates the logics of teleological and largely irreversible progression over time. In view of this, while taking into consideration the ontological eclecticism of neoinstitutionalism regarding the material versus

George Kazamias, "Introduction," in *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery*, eds. Kevin Featherstone and George Kazamias (London: Frank Cass, 2001): 7.

²⁸ For divergent usages of Europeanization, compare the anthropological approach of Borneman and Fowler to the historical research of Kohn and the sociological reading of Europeanization by Delanty and Rumford or Joppke. John Borneman and Nick Fowler, "Europeanization," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997); Delanty and Rumford, *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization*; Christian Joppke, "Toward a New Sociology of the State: On Roger Brubaker's 'Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany'," *European Journal of Sociology* 36, no. 1 (1995); and Hans Kohn, "The Europeanization of the Orient," *Political Science Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (1937). For variances of this definition, see a discussion of the conceptual debate within the Europeanization literature in Claudio M. Radaelli and Romain Pasquier, "Conceptual Issues," in *Europeanization. New Research Agendas*, eds. Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

²⁹ See discussion in Olsen, "Europeanization and Nation-State Dynamics."

³⁰ On the cross-level analytical focus as a common denominator between neoinstitutionalism and Europeanization, see Jupille and Caporaso, "Institutionalism and the European Union: Beyond International Relations and Comparative Politics," 438-39.

³¹ Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*: 102-03.

ideational debate, this research will primarily focus on the agent-structure problem in the neoinstitutionalist analysis, and the resulting question of social change.³² I will provide arguments that the existing limitations of the Europeanization agenda are deductible to the ontological premises of neoinstitutionalism, while suggesting, somewhat contradictorily, that mainstream literature suffers from a structural bias by not being structural enough. For a summary of key neoinstitutionalist assumptions, see Table 1: *The Three New Institutionalisms* on page 22.

Sociological Institutionalism

From a meta-theoretical stance, sociological institutionalism is categorized within an ideational-structuralist social ontology. SI hopes to answer how institutions (defined as norms, cognitive frames, and meaning systems) determine an actor's identity as well as their preferences and actions in line with the *logic of appropriateness*.³³ This school of thought argues that a political system is a configuration of formal and informal institutions that define the setting within which political processes take place. Therefore, the actor's behavior is determined by the process of socialization within their particular institutional context. More specifically, the actor behaves in line with their role, identity, and membership in a group, which has itself been constructed by a specific institutional setting. The actor, being embedded in a social collectivity, does what they see as appropriate in specific situations.³⁴

Out of the three sub-branches of neoinstitutionalism, SI offers the thickest reading of institutions. Consequently, it also provides the most structural understanding of the agency-structure relationship, as institutions constrain, but also construct, the actor. Institutions determine

³² See for instance Alexander E. Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (1987); Alexander E. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Walter Carlsnaes, "The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1992); and Harry D. Gould, "What is at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate," in *International Relations in a Constructed World*, eds. Vendulka Kubáľková, Nicholar Onuf, and Paul Kover (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998). For a critical reading of the problem, see Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Aporia: A Critical Exploration of the Agent-Structure Problematique in International Relations Theory," *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997).

³³ See Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio, eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Within EU studies, see Risse-Kappen, "Exploring the Nature of the Beast: International Relations Theory and Comparative Policy Analysis Meet the European Union."; Jeffery T. Checkel, "Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change," *International Organization* 55, no. 3. (2001); and Jeffrey Lewis, "Institutional Environments and Everyday EU Decision Making," *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 1-2 (2003).

³⁴ James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The Logic of Appropriateness," in *Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, eds. Michael Moran, Martin Rein, and Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008): 690.

the actor by establishing what one should do (normative sociological institutionalism) and what one can imagine oneself doing in a given context (cognitive sociological institutionalism).³⁵ This means that the actor is rational and purposeful; however, as rationality is socially constructed, they are rational only within the given institutional context within which they operate. The actor is conceptualized as endogenous to a given institutional environment, which establishes that institutions are viewed as static macro-patterns disconnected from the agency. As a result, SI is capable of explaining institutional stickiness, but has trouble accounting for social change, which is largely accredited to an external shock rather than a process of the actor's interaction within a given institutional setting. By conceptualizing institutions (once created) as static and thus given, SI ignores the actor's political action within a given institutional context; from the social institutionalist viewpoint, endogenous change is not only difficult, but also remains a hypothetical.³⁶

Historical Institutionalism

While remaining within the parameters of structuralist ontology, historical institutionalism is more attentive to the institutional change *problématique*, as it adds the variable of time to the actor-structure relationship.³⁷ HI takes interest in explaining the process of the institution's construction, endurance, and adaptation vis-à-vis the process of institutionally constructed and continuous interaction among a group of actors. HI examines the path-dependency of an actor's behavior, hence, how institutional choices at present are limited by a set of institutional choices made in the past. Limitations are imposed as certain decisions become locked-in, thus constraining one's future policy options by means of eliminating alternative solutions. A more sociological explanation is that certain trajectories are habitualized by actors and consequently reinforced, which in turn makes altering from an established path-dependency costly. To define

³⁵ On a debate between the normative and cognitive turn within sociological institutionalism, see Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 948-49.

³⁶ See Elisabeth S. Clemens and James M. Cook, "Politics and Institutionalism: Explaining Durability and Change," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999); James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "Elaborating the "New Institutionalism"," *Center for European Studies* (2005): 9; and Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 954.

³⁷ See Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999); Colin Hay and Daniel Wincott, "Structure, Agency and Historical Institutionalism," *Political Studies* 46, no. 5 (1998); and Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth, eds., *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Within EU studies, see Paul Pierson, "The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutional Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 29, no. 2 (1996) and Fritz W. Scharpf, "The Joint-Decision Trap. Lessons from German Federalism and European Integration," *Public Administration* 66, no. 3 (1988).

the relationship between institutions and political processes, HI takes into account that institutions, while being themselves products of social interaction, structure political action and outcomes over a given time; the preferences of institutions and actors are contingent upon each other.³⁸

HI is presented as a middle-ground theoretical approach between the materialist and ideational reading of institutions, while also being ontologically distinct due to its aforementioned interest in the temporality of social processes.³⁹ Consequently, this school gives a broad definition of institutions as a set of informal and regularized practices with rule-like qualities that structure the process of the actor's interaction.⁴⁰ HI is less focused on whether institutions cause political outcomes by altering the actor's strategic calculation or cognition; rather, what it sees as relevant is that these institutions become sticky over time, making it difficult for the actor to default from a particular behavioral pattern. However, if institutions are simultaneously constructed by the agency and also constraining the agency's action, then the question becomes *who is this agency* and, more importantly, *how can we explain structural change and persistence?*

By accrediting the actor with some degree of free will, and at the same time acknowledging the causal impact of institutions on social processes, HI scholarship has the potential to open the neoinstitutionalist debate towards a more conceptual understanding of social change. However, despite researchers taking notice of this problem, a paradigm shift is still highly unlikely as historical institutionalists offer an overly deterministic reading of institutional change. If change is to happen, it will stem from a set of exogenously given critical junctures – crises or shifts in socio-economic constellations.⁴¹ The genesis of institutional structures is rarely problematized as endogenous to the institutional process.⁴²

³⁸ Elizabeth Sanders, "Historical Institutionalism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* ed. Robert E. Goodwin (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006): 39.

³⁹ Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 937.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 938.

⁴¹ Paul Pierson, "The Limits of Design: Explaining Institutional Origins and Change," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 13, no. 4 (2000): 490-91 and Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth, *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*: 9.

⁴² See discussion in Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 953. For an overview of literature see Sanders, "Historical Institutionalism," 43-50.

Rational Choice Institutionalism

Out of the three sub-branches of neoinstitutionalism, rational choice institutionalism gives the thinnest understanding of institutions. However, this does not exempt this approach from a structuralist bias in dealing with the structure-agency relationship.⁴³ RCI conceptualizes institutions as being in equilibrium with actors' preferences, constructed by the actors for the purpose of maximizing relative gains and minimizing costs of political interactions.⁴⁴ As such, institutions operate as either incentive structures or veto-points that constrain the actor's behavior. In turn, political actors are depicted as rational with fixed preferences. The actor's behavior is based on a cost-benefit calculation with the goal of preference-maximization and is driven by the *logic of consequentialism*.⁴⁵ As a result, political interaction is described as a set of collective action dilemmas, determined by the institutions structuring this collective action. In other words, institutions structure the process of interaction either by affecting the actor's choices or by providing information and mechanisms that reduce the uncertainty associated with certain behaviors.⁴⁶

Although RCI accredits the actor with a degree of autonomy when portraying the actor as free to choose certain policy options over others, this theoretical approach sways back to structuralism when claiming that the actor is free to opt for the sole rational option within a given context. By presuming, as opposed to problematizing, the actor's preference, and subsequently the indeterminacy of social processes, RCI brackets the agency from the analysis. Hay sees this conflation of choice with structural determinism to be concurrently paradoxical and inherent to rational choice theorizing.⁴⁷ Like the other institutionalist approaches, RCI faces difficulties in theorizing endogenous change. Provided that the established institutional structure is in equilibrium with the actor's preferences, there is little incentive for one to deviate from the

⁴³ See Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Rational Choice Institutionalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, eds. R. A. W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert A. Rockman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Elinor Ostrom, "Rational Choice Theory and Institutional Analysis: Toward Complementarity," *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991); and Barry R. Weingast, "Political Institutions: Rational Choice Perspectives," in *A New Handbook of Political Science*, eds. Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). With EU studies, see Pollack, "The New Institutionalism and European Integration."

⁴⁴ Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 953.

⁴⁵ See James G. March, *A Premier on Decision Making. How Decisions Happen* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

⁴⁶ Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 945.

⁴⁷ Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* : 104. See also George Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990): 40 and James Fearon and Alexander Wendt, "Rationalism vs. Constructivism: A Skeptical View," in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse-Kappen, and Beth A. Simmons (London: SAGE Publications, 2002).

behavior determined by the given institutional structure. In effect, any change within the self-enforcing structure must be exogenously caused.⁴⁸

Table 1: *The Three New Institutionalisms*

	Sociological Institutionalism (SI)	Historical Institutionalism (HI)	Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI)
Research focus	Normative determinism - effects of normative institutions on identity of the actor	Historic determinism - effects of institutions over time	Rational determinism - effects of institutions on behaviors and interests of the actor
Institutions	Norms, cognitive frames, meaning systems	Rules and regulations as sticky, persistent over time	Narrow rules / exogenous constraints
Agency	Constituted by the institutional structure	Constrained by the locked-in institutional choices	Independent agency, constrained by its rationality
Social process	Socialization, logic of appropriateness	Path-dependency	Cost-benefit calculation, logic of consequentialism
Approach to change	Institutional persistence via cultural norms	Institutional persistence via path-dependency	Institutional persistence via fixed preferences of the actor
Explanation of change	External shock	External shock	External shock

Limitations of the Neoinstitutionalist Ontology in View of Europeanization Research

Despite a considerable degree of heterogeneity among the individual directions of neoinstitutionalist theorizing, the literature shares the dual ontological premise of conceptualizing social structures as rules and conventions internalized within an institutional order of political systems, and a belief in the structuring capacity of these institutions in relation to the actor. I argue the neoinstitutionalist conceptual framework instigates the following ontological reasoning within the Europeanization research agenda. First, concerning the structure, the neoinstitutionalist embedding exposes the Europeanization research agenda to a reductionist tendency to *fixate* the meaning of Europe within the norms and rules of the EU. Second, based on a presupposed

⁴⁸ Avner Greif and David D. Laitin, "A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004): 633 and Mark A. Pollack, "The New Institutionalism and EC Governance: The Promise and Limits of Institutional Analysis," *Governance* 9, no. 4 (1996).

institutional link between the EU structure and domestic actors, the empirical pull of potential agents is reduced to the member states and the soon-to-be member states. Third, the agent-structure relationship is projected as overly deterministic, with the agency having very little causal say on the Europeanization process. This implies a unidirectional conceptualization of social processes, where EU rules and norms, and therefore also Europeanization, remain unaffected by a causal interplay of the structure and the agency embedded in a wider spatiotemporal context. Fourth, the EU's causal power is set in the EU's institutional structures. This means that the EU's power (influence) is channeled via formal and informal institutions such that these institutions either constrain the actions or transform the cognition of member, quasi-member, and applicant/candidate countries. However, this tells us little about the background power conditions that make these particular institutions possible. I shall further justify the validity of these findings in view of the mainstream conceptual work on Europeanization and the theoretically informed studies of Europeanization in the EU accession context. For a summary of key ontological assumptions informing Europeanization research, see Table 2: *Ontology of Europeanization* on page 33.

Interpreting the Structure: The Meaning of Europe in Europeanization Scholarship

By analyzing how Europeanization scholarship conceptualizes structure, one actually inquires about the meaning of Europe within the concept of Europeanization. By defining Europeanization as domestic adaptation to Europe, the literature implies that the context in which the Europeanization process acquires meaning and materializes itself is, *ex vi termini*, European. Note that this position is shared among historical, sociological, and politological conceptualizations of Europeanization. Soysal defines Europeanization as the transnationalization of the post-national understanding of human rights and citizenship, while Ladrech defines it as domestic adaptation of EU institutions.⁴⁹ Still, both authors imply the existence of a European structure that is distinct from global phenomena and individual European nation states. As Europeanization is claimed not to replicate globalization or domestication, most of the conceptual debate is focused on defining Europe.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994) and Robert Ladrech, "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32, no. 1 (1994).

⁵⁰ For a discussion on the relationship between Europeanization and domestication, see Jupille and Caporaso, "Institutionalism and the European Union: Beyond International Relations and Comparative Politics." For

Within the debate on the meaning of Europe, institutionalism offers a reductionist conceptualization of the European structure as a set of formal and informal rules and practices attributable to the process of EU integration. In line with that, mainstream scholarship confines the meaning of Europe to the EU's institutional structure and processes.⁵¹ Combined with the above-discussed pluralist utilization of material and ideational ontologies, the content of EU structure is confined to material and ideational institutions of the European Union.⁵² The European structure is identified as a set of rules, procedures, policies, and norms that are either consolidated within the *acquis* or internalized in the collective identity of the member states.⁵³

It is plausible for a research field that maneuvers within the margins of institutionalist theorizing to lock-in the meaning of Europe with the EU. One can hardly dispute that the European Union is the most institutionally complex instance of supranational integration within Europe.⁵⁴ In view of that, Ladrech justifies this EU-focused reading of the Europeanization process by way of highlighting the superiority of the European Union's institutional structure over alternative organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE):

There are two main differences between the membership in the European Union and these other institutional organizations. First, the degree of intensity of interaction, and second, an expectation to download and implement agreed policies that has gone so far as to make the judicial systems of the countries involved co-enforcers with the EU.⁵⁵

Europeanization and globalization, see Helen Wallace, "Europeanisation and Globalisation: Complementary or Contradictory Trends?" *New Political Economy* 5, no. 3 (2000).

⁵¹ Admittedly, Vink et al. adopt a broader classification of Europe to include other regional institutions such as the Council of Europe (CoE) or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Nevertheless, such an understanding of Europe is primarily conceptual, with the research agenda being predominantly monopolized by an EU-centric reading of Europeanization. Vink and Graziano, "Challenges of a New Research Agenda," 12.

⁵² See Pollack, "The New Institutionalism and EC Governance: The Promise and Limits of Institutional Analysis."; Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel, "Integrating Institutions: Rationalism, Constructivism, and the Study of the European Union."; and Gerard Schnieder and Mark Aspinwall, *The Rules of Integration: Institutional Approaches to the Study of Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

⁵³ See Featherstone and Radaelli, *The Politics of Europeanization*: 11; Cowles, Caporaso, and Risse, *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*: 3-4; Claudio M. Radaelli, "Europeanization, Policy Learning and New Modes of Governance," *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis* 10, no. 3 (2008): 239; and Peter Mair, "The Europeanization Dimension," *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 2 (2004).

⁵⁴ See Kassim's analysis of the extent and complexity of institutional arrangements attached to the EU's political system. Hussein Kassim, "Meeting the Demands of EU Membership: The Europeanization of National Administrative Systems," in *The Politics of Europeanization*, eds. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵⁵ Robert Ladrech, *Europeanization and National Politics* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 20.

Scholarship interested in Europeanization beyond EU member states defends the preponderance of an EU-centered analysis over a more encompassing reading of Europe by highlighting the vast influence of rules and norms attached to EU membership on reforming domestic institutions in the acceding countries. Schimmelfennig et al. state that despite a variety of international organizations being involved in the political and economic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the impact has been most obvious in the case of the EU.⁵⁶ The desire of candidate and applicant countries to join the EU in conjunction with the EU's adjustment pressures arising from the accession conditionality provide the EU's institutions with unprecedented influence on the non-member states. For this reason, scholarly debate is largely framed around the role of the EU's membership conditionality (comprising the *acquis*, in addition to a wider set of economic and political rules to be implemented) in transforming the soon-to-be member states.⁵⁷

This monopolization of the European structure by EU integration is problematic, albeit feasible if approached from the viewpoint of institutional analysis. Notwithstanding the ongoing proliferation of legislation with a made-in-Brussels prefix, to reduce the scope of the European political, economic, and cultural space to roughly 80,000 pages of legal text agreed upon and internalized by the EU member states, deflates the theoretical and analytical importance of the field.⁵⁸ The wide scholarly consensus about treating the European institutional structure as an archetype for Europe exposes Europeanization research to a dual fallacy. First, on a macro-level, by excluding processes linked to Europe *writ large* from the research scope, the scholarship conceptualizes domestic adaptation to EU institutions as taking place in a vacuum, and disregards the link between Europeanization (read as EU-ization) and the broader spatiotemporal context in which it takes place.⁵⁹ In consequence, we remain largely unaware that EU-ization is happening in conjunction with, or parallel to, for example NATO-ization, OSCE-ization, or domestication.

⁵⁶ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*: 1.

⁵⁷ See Ibid.; Grabbe, *The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization Through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe*; Frank Schimmelfennig, Stefan Engert, and Heiko Knobel, *International Socialization in Europe: European Organizations, Political Conditionality and Democratic Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Višnja Samardžija and Mladem Staničić, "Croatia on the Path Towards EU: Conditionality and Challenge of Negotiations," *Croatian International Relations Review* 10, no. 36/37 (2004); and Othon Anastasakis, "The EU's Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans: Towards a More Pragmatic Approach," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 8, no. 4 (2008).

⁵⁸ On EU-centricity of European studies, see Jaap de Wilde, "The Poverty of EU-Centrism," paper presented at the *Sixth Pan-European IR conference of the ECPR/SGIR* (Torino, 2007).

⁵⁹ EU-ization was coined by Wallace to differentiate between EU-based change and responses to a wider set of transnational regimes in Europe. Wallace, "Europeanisation and Globalisation: Complementary or Contradictory Trends?"

Featherstone, for instance, writes about the uneasy relationship between the EU and domestic institutional structures, which remain unproblematic by the canon scholarship.⁶⁰ Second, on a micro-level, even if maneuvering within the margins of an EU-based conceptualization of a European structure, by equating the EU with EU institutions, we prevent the research field from analyzing whether, and to what extent, the meaning of the European Union is determined by actors exogenous to the *EU proper*. Because countries that are not EU member states have limited access to the EU's decision-making process, external Europeanization is defined as an EU-led, unidirectional transposition of one institutional order, principally defined by Western Europe, to the new territories. A broader process in which the EU is redefined by its binary relationship with the non-EU is consequently sidelined from the analytical scope.

The rigidity of the concept stemming from the neoinstitutionalist analysis has direct consequences on how we see Europeanization in the context of EU accession. In view of the interplay of various external institutional pressures (the EU, OSCE, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe (CoE), and NATO) and the associated density of domestic processes (democratization, marketization, westernization, and de-sovietization) that took place in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe in the aftermath of the fall of communism, to distinguish between EU-ization and Europeanization is more than a semantic concern. Nevertheless, there is a widespread scholarly disregard for the complexity of Europeanization in the context of accession. The mainstream literature paraphrases the neoinstitutionalist slogan 'institutions matter' into 'EU institutions matter', and goes on to study domestic responses to these institutions. Most of the research is interested in when, how, and to what extent the EU impacts policies, polity, and politics of non-member states. Schimmelfennig et al. ask under what conditions the EU impacts the candidate countries.⁶¹ Hughes et al. study the Europeanizing effect of the EU accession conditionality.⁶² While attaching greater analytical importance to the mediating role of the actor, Bauer et al. still restrain

⁶⁰ Kevin Featherstone and Dimistris Papadimitriou, *The Limits of Europeanization. Reform Capacity and Policy Conflict in Greece* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 28.

⁶¹ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*. See also Paul Kubicek, *The European Union and Democratization* (London: Routledge, 2003) and Kelley, "International Actors on the Domestic Scene: Membership Conditionality and Socialization by International Institutions."

⁶² James Hughes, Gwendolyn Sasse, and Clair Gordon, *Europeanization and Regionalization in the EU's Enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe: The Myth of Conditionality* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). See also Grabbe, *The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization Through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe* and Geoffrey Pridham, "The European Union's Democratic Conditionality and Domestic Politics in Slovakia: The Mečiar and Dzurinda Governments Compared," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 2 (2002).

themselves to the question of the extent to which the EU's regulatory policies cause domestic change in wider Europe.⁶³ These analytical constructions prejudge the meaning of Europe within the Europeanization process and consequently expose the field to unjust monopolization of the European political, and particularly institutional, space by the EU.

Interpreting the Actor: The Meaning of Domestic in Europeanization Scholarship

Before proceeding to an in-depth discussion on the agency-structure dynamics as conceptualized in the Europeanization polemics, it is important to look at the link between neoinstitutionalism and the problem of a reductionist definition of the actor within the Europeanization process. When Ladrech defines Europeanization as change within a member state whose motivating logic is tied to an EU policy or policy-making process, in addition to hypothesizing one particular European structure, he also makes explicit assumptions about the nature of the actor within the Europeanization process.⁶⁴ To be precise, mainstream scholarship defines the actor by measuring the degree of vertical and horizontal participation within the EU's institutional structure:

the status of a 'member state' of the EU reflects a level of participation – vertically with EU supranational institutions and horizontally with other member states, through EU institutions or on a bi- or multilateral basis – such that we could conceptualize the nature of the EU 'member state' as a condition of embedded interaction in which boundaries are permeable depending upon the specific linkage that is in question.⁶⁵

Hand in hand with an EU-centric reading of the European structure is an EU-centric reading of the actor. By reducing Europeanization to the question of institutional transfer within the EU, neoinstitutionalism not only excludes certain European countries from the analytical scope of the Europeanization agenda, but also fabricates a putative divide between various regional clusters within Europe. These regional clusters are primarily based on the degree of experience with the EU's institutional core.⁶⁶ This triggers a paradoxical situation where countries standing outside of

⁶³ Michael W. Bauer, Christopher Knill, and Diana Pitschel, "Differential Europeanization in Eastern Europe: The Impact of Diverse EU Regulatory Governance Patterns," *Journal of European Integration* 29, no. 4 (2007).

⁶⁴ Ladrech, *Europeanization and National Politics*: 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*,: 20-21. For similar accounts of the actor, see Claudio M. Radaelli, "The Europeanization of Public Policy," in *The Politics of Europeanization*, eds. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe," in *The Politics of Europeanization*, eds. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁶⁶ Note that alternative ordering principles such as spatial proximity to Brussels as well as historical, linguistic, and cultural characteristics of the given groupings of countries are also relevant to this matter, albeit largely as supportive

the *core EU* are treated as different, but the same. The literature suggests the logics of *Europeanization West* differs from the logics of, for instance, *Europeanization South, East, or Southeast*. At the same time, studies of Europeanization in Southern, Eastern, or Southeastern Europe draw almost exclusively from neoinstitutionalist theory and the accompanying research models are grounded in empirical data on the Western core of the EU.⁶⁷

The limitations of an EU-centric reading of the actor within the Europeanization literature are best exemplified in the context of Europeanization outside the borders of EU member states. Particularly, the event of the EU's Eastern enlargement has largely de-monopolized the Europeanization field away from its sole focus on the EU proper (the member states) and the quasi-EU (non-members such as Switzerland or Norway) to also include countries not yet eligible for EU membership (applicants and candidate countries).⁶⁸ Schimmelfennig et al. justify their decision to expand the scope of Europeanization studies to countries of Central and Eastern Europe by stressing the existence of solid institutional ties (such as trade, association agreements, and subsequently also membership conditionality) between the EU and Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs).⁶⁹ These institutional ties are claimed to have substituted for actual EU membership by enabling unprecedented influence and also diffusion of EU institutions and policies in the region.⁷⁰

This line of reasoning leaves the literature concerned with countries that share a weaker institutional link to the EU in a theoretical limbo. If there is no Europeanization beyond the transfer of the *acquis communautaire* and *acquis politique*, how do we classify the flourishing scholarship on Europeanization in the EU's wider neighborhood and non-European countries and regions? Börzel applies the institutionalist framework to a comparative study of *Eastern Europeanization* in Central Europe and *Neighborhood Europeanization* in the European Neighborhood countries (ENCs) to conclude that, in view of the differences in consistency and

variables. On the relationship between geographical and functional characteristics in clustering the European space, see Klaus H. Goetz, "Territory," in *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*, eds. Maarten P. Vink and Paolo Graziano (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 75.

⁶⁸ See Per Lægread, Runolfur Smari Steinthorsson, and Baldur Thorhallsson, "Europeanization of Central Government Administration in the Nordic States," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 42, no. 2 (2004) and Pascal Sciarini, Alex Fischer, and Sarah Nicolet, "How Europe Hits Home: Evidence from the Swiss Case," *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 3 (2004).

⁶⁹ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*: 1-3.

⁷⁰ Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Candidate Countries and Conditionality," in *Europeanization New Research Agendas*, eds. Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 88.

the extent of the EU's conditionality, the EU's transformative power was significantly lower in the latter case.⁷¹ Yet again, research on the normative power of Europe conceptualizes the EU as an ideational actor in global politics even in cases where the institutional links are relatively detached.⁷² Further research on the EU's impact on various regional integration projects, including those in neighboring regions, as well as integration efforts in fairly geographically distant areas, presents a theoretical challenge for the institutionalist turn within Europeanization studies.⁷³

Whereas the question of an institutional link can be partially bypassed by swapping 'Europeanization as institutionalization' for 'Europeanization as norm diffusion', which operates even in the absence of direct pressures and incentives for compliance, what remains problematic is the implied clusterization of actors based on their functional proximity to the EU's institutional structure.⁷⁴ *Europeanization East* is claimed to be different from *Europeanization West*, while being assessed according to the same theoretical and methodological benchmarks. Under the pretext of accession negotiations, the literature hypothesizes the domestic level in *Europeanization East* to be passive and unitary. This leaves the actor under-problematized. First, the scholarship maintains that the institutional context established primarily around conditionality results in unprecedented power asymmetry. Accessing countries become conforming absorbers of the *acquis*, with very limited possibility to shape either the content of EU rules and norms or the direction of the Europeanization process. Stripped of the possibility of active involvement in EU integration (what is often portrayed as the uploading segment of Europeanization), candidate states are treated as submissive takers of the EU's demands for domestic change. Héritier describes *Europeanization East* as a one-way street, as opposed to *Europeanization West*, which

⁷¹ Tanja A. Börzel, "The Transformative Power of Europe Reloaded: The Limits of External Europeanization," *KFG Working Paper Series* (2010): 21.

⁷² See Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002); Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford, "Normative Power: The European Practice of Region Building and the Case of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)," (2004); and Sibylle Scheipers and Daniela Sicurelli, "Normative Power Europe: A Credible Utopia?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45, no. 2 (2007).

⁷³ See Thomas Christiansen, Fabio Petito, and Ben Tonra, "Fuzzy Politics Around Fuzzy Borders: The European Union's 'Near Abroad,'" *Cooperation and Conflict* 35, no. 4 (2000); Thomas Diez, "The Paradoxes of Europe's Borders," *Comparative European Politics* 4, no. 2/3 (2006); Federica Bicchì, "'Our Size Fits All': Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2 (2006); and Jean B. Grugel, "New Regionalism and Modes of Governance – Comparing US and EU Strategies in Latin America," *European Journal of International Relations* 10, no. 4 (2004).

⁷⁴ See Bicchì, "'Our Size Fits All': Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean."; and Tanja A. Börzel, Yasemin Pamuk, and Andreas Stahn, "The European Union and the Promotion of Good Governance in its Near Abroad. One Size Fits All?," (Hamburg: SUB Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, 2009).

runs in both directions.⁷⁵ This disharmony in the uploading and downloading of norms and interests is argued to make the EU's transformative impact in *Europeanization East* less susceptible to domestic bottom-up efforts, and therefore, wider in scope and often deeper in content.⁷⁶ Second, because accession negotiations are largely maintained by the central state, which assumes the role of a gatekeeper in communication with the Commission, the literature tends to neglect the position of extra-institutional and societal actors in determining or mediating the Europeanization process.⁷⁷ This effectively sidelines questions concerning the transnational and horizontal involvement of intrastate actors in the EU's political space from the analytical scope of *Europeanization East*. For this reason, the majority of the research focuses on establishing whether and what kind of impact the EU has on candidate countries. Scholars give analytical primacy to deconstructing the nature (direct or unintended) and the intensity (hard or soft) of the EU's impact at the expense of deconstructing the role of the domestic actor within the process.⁷⁸

Albeit important, I see the categorization between *Europeanization West* and *East* as relevant only within the framework of the institutional analysis. I also see it as analytically restrictive. Whereas one finds little objection to the claim that the political activities of Berlin are causally more important to the process of EU policy-making than those of Prague in the early 2000s or Zagreb in the 2010s, a corresponding statement that Berlin is therefore also better able to mitigate Europeanization only stands if we see Europeanization as a process maneuvering between the bottom-up creation of EU institutions as a set of new norms, rules, and practices, as well as a matching top-down impact of these institutions on the member-states (and some quasi-

⁷⁵ Adrienne Heritier, "Europeanization Research East and West: A Comparative Assessment," in *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005): 207.

⁷⁶ For variances of this argumentation, see *Ibid.*; Ladrech, *Europeanization and National Politics*; and Klaus H. Goetz, "Europeanisation in West and East: A Challenge to Institutional Theory," *ARENA Working Papers* (2003).

⁷⁷ For an exception, see Sadrine Devaux and Imogen Sudbery, eds., *Europeanisation. Social Actors and the Transfer of Models in EU-27* (Prague: CEFRES, 2009).

⁷⁸ Some studies take into account the mediating role of the domestic level. See Martin Brusis, "Between EU Requirements, Competitive Politics, and National Traditions: Re-Creating Regions in the Accession Countries of Central and Eastern Europe," in *Regions and Regionalism in Europe*, ed. Michael Keating (Cheltenham: An Elgar Reference Collection, 2004); Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*; and Milada Anna Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

member states).⁷⁹ Such a hypothesis has less validity if one theorizes Europeanization beyond the binary relationship between the institutionalization of the EU's political space and transposition of these institutions domestically. The obvious problem is that the dichotomy between *Europeanization West* as a two-way process underpinned by EU membership and *Europeanization East* as a top-down process underpinned by accession conditionality is entrenched in scholarly understanding of Europeanization to such an extent that most researchers fail to ask questions that would cut across this divide. In turn, the problem of actor-driven Europeanization in the context of *Europeanization East* is rarely explored.⁸⁰ Mainstream literature argues that what Belgrade, Ankara, or pre-accession Zagreb and Prague think about Europe, the EU, or EU norms has limited causal impact on what Europe, the EU, and EU norms are, and is therefore relatively extraneous to the Europeanization process.⁸¹

On the Structural Bias within Europeanization Research – Linking Ontology and Research Models

The previous sections suggest that a neoinstitutionalist theoretical framework guides Europeanization research towards particular ontological claims about the structure and the actor. By deconstructing how Europeanization research approaches the ontological debate on the agency-structure relationship, I further argue that the problems discussed thus far are attributable to a teleological bias intrinsic to neoinstitutionalism's structural ontology. Contrary to some authors, I propose that the overrepresentation of the EU's causal power and the corresponding under-problematization of the domestic level are not mendable by reconceptualizing Europeanization or by introducing improved methodological strategies to evaluate causality between EU incentives and domestic responses to these incentives.⁸² In teleological thinking

⁷⁹ On differences between top-down and bottom-up Europeanization, see Tanja A. Börzel, "Pace-Setting, Foot-Dragging, and Fence-Sitting: Member State Responses to Europeanization," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002).

⁸⁰ For illustration, see Tanja A. Börzel and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "The EU Dimension in European Politics," in *Developments in European Politics*, eds. Paul M. Heywood et al. (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Heather Grabbe, "Europeanization Goes East: Power and Uncertainty in the EU Accession Process," in *The Politics of Europeanization*, eds. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*. For an exception, see Devaux and Sudbery, *Europeanisation. Social Actors and the Transfer of Models in EU-27*.

⁸¹ Note that the domestic level is conceptualized as a mediating variable. I come back to this problem when discussing the question of research design later in this Chapter.

⁸² For a discussion of methodology in Europeanization literature, see Sabine Saurugger, "Europeanization as a Methodological Challenge: The Case of Interest Groups," *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis* 7, no. 4 (2005); Markus Haverland, "Methodological Issues in Europeanisation Research: the 'No Variation' Problem," paper

about social processes, domestic actors comply with a singular and predetermined image of a European structure, inherent to neoinstitutionalist theory. This more agency-centered approach to Europeanization asks for a paradigm shift, and would consequently trigger a more complex conceptualization of causality, in which the existence of the structure and the agency is relational and dialectical.⁸³ This section proceeds with a discussion on the link between structural ontology and research design within Europeanization literature, with particular focus on the question of continuity and discontinuity of the EU structure in view of the Europeanization process.

The observed failure of the literature to problematize structural fluidity and a corresponding degree of voluntarism of the agency stems from neoinstitutionalist theorizing, which sees the structure as ontologically prior to, and generative of, the actor's behavior and identity.⁸⁴ It arises from my previous discussion on the ontological roots of neoinstitutionalism that all three derivatives of this paradigm (and ipso facto the Europeanization literature) attribute political outcomes to structural forces. This attribution, results in bracketing structural change and analytical marginalization of the actor and agency. Neoinstitutionalism gives a monist explanation of structure-agency relations, where causal power is attributed to social structures (SI), institutional path-dependencies (HI), and material opportunity structures (RCI), leaving the agency deprived of the power of autonomous action. As a result, Europeanization is reduced to a linear reproduction of one institutional setting from the supranational to the national level, mediated by domestic formal and informal institutions and veto players.⁸⁵ When structure is ontologically independent from agency, and therefore static, it becomes redundant to study the agency.

EU norms and rules are operationalized as explanatory variables and domestic actors as something to be explained. The central research question that informs Europeanization literature

presented at the *Europeanisation: Challenges of a New Research Agenda* conference (Marburg, 2003); and Markus Haverland, "Methodology" in *Europeanization. New Research Agendas*, eds. Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁸³ On the duality of structure and agency, see the structuration theory developed by Giddens and the strategic-relational approach by Bob Jessop. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984) and Bob Jessop, *State Power: A Strategic Relational Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸⁴ On the agency-structure debate, see Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* and Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory."

⁸⁵ Note that the other side of the coin, the role of domestic players in constituting the EU's institutional setting, is tackled by integration theories. Such a two-level game approach to EU integration (also visible in a scholarly distinction between the institutional uploading and downloading), says little about the contested nature of EU institutions within the process of domestic adaptation to these institutions.

is to what extent and how the EU influences domestic policies, politics, and polity.⁸⁶ This is consequently adopted by Europeanization scholarship in the context of EU accession, which primarily examines the extent and nature of the EU's impact on candidate countries, and the variables accounting for variance in this impact across states and issue-areas.⁸⁷ Analytical focus is placed on domestic reaction to structural constraints and opportunities stemming from EU integration, but in line with a structuralist reading of the agency. This means that scholarship presumes causality to be structural, as opposed to relational, with limited attention given to the question of the extent to which the actor determines the course of the Europeanization process. Conducting a critical analysis of the Europeanization scholarship, Bache et al. establish that the preponderance of literature places the research focus on "a downward implementation of EU constraints, however based on rather structuralist accounts of agency, without enough attention paid to ideologies, identities, discourses of those actors who agree with being constrained."⁸⁸

Table 2: *Ontology of Europeanization*

Ontological questions	Structure	Agency	Structure-agency relationship	Europeanization
Key ontological assumptions	EU institutions	EU member states and quasi-member states	Structural determinism	Institutional transfer within the EU

On the Limits of Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches to Europeanization

Examined from the viewpoint of the literature's meta-theoretical and theoretical choices, the ongoing debate whether Europeanization moves in a *top-down* or a *bottom-up* direction is relatively unsubstantiated; neither of the arising analytical models are fit to account for EU rules and norms as moving targets in view of the agency's capacity to determine the meaning of these rules and norms somewhat independently from the structure. With mainstream literature almost categorically refusing to look beyond the theoretical assumptions of neoinstitutionalism, most of

⁸⁶ See Börzel and Risse, "Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe."

⁸⁷ For a more detailed discussion, see Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Europeanisation in New Member and Candidate States," *Living Reviews in European Governance* 6, no. 1 (2011): 8-10.

⁸⁸ Bache, Bulmer, and Gunay, "Metatheory and Europeanization Research: Let's Get Critical!": 14.

the intellectual progress achieved within Europeanization theorizing concerns unpacking the direction of the EU's causality over the domestic level.⁸⁹ The scholarship is divided over whether the EU's causal impact is unidirectional (linear) and pressure-driven (first generation), or multifaceted (second generation).⁹⁰ For a summary overview of the research design in the Europeanization literature, see Table 3: *Research Design in Europeanization Studies* on page 39. Note that on account of the extensive adoption pressures arising from the accession conditionality, the literature on Europeanization in the EU accession context aligns itself almost exclusively with first generation literature.

First generation theorizing on Europeanization provides a linear and top-down explanation of the EU-national nexus in the context of European integration. By conceptualizing Europeanization as domestic change (on policy, political, and polity levels) caused by EU integration, the literature places analytical emphasis on the output side of the EU's governance structure; it asks to what extent and under what conditions the EU's institutional pressures cause domestic change.⁹¹ Such an approach has given rise to a top-down research design that starts with EU integration as an independent variable and controls the degree of *misfit* between the EU and its member states to consequently explain the extent of domestic change as a combination of EU

⁸⁹ For exceptions to the neoinstitutionalist dominance in Europeanization scholarship, see Jacquot and Woll, "Usage of European Integration – Europeanisation from a Sociological Perspective." and Darren McCauley, "Bottom-Up Europeanization Exposed: Social Movement Theory and Non-state Actors in France," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, no. 5 (2011).

⁹⁰ For first generation scholarship, see Cowles, Caporaso, and Risse, *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*; Alec Stone Sweet, Neil Fligstein, and Wayne Standholtz, "The Institutionalization of European Space," in *The Institutionalization of Europe*, eds. Alec Stone Sweet, Wayne Standholtz, and Neil Fligstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Ladrech, "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France."; Adrienne Heritier and Christoph Knill, "Differential Responses to European Policies: A Comparison," in *The European Union Impact on National Policymaking*, eds. Adrienne Heritier et al. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001); and Börzel and Risse, "When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change." For second generation scholarship, see Featherstone and Radaelli, *The Politics of Europeanization*; Kevin Featherstone and George Kazamias, "Introduction: Southern Europe and the Process of 'Europeanization'," *South European Society and Politics* 5, no. 2 (2000); Claudio M. Radaelli, "Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?," *European Integration Online Papers* 8, no. 16 (2004); and Vivien A. Schmidt and Claudio M. Radaelli, "Europeanization, Discourse and Policy Change: Mapping the New Research Agenda," paper presented at the ECPR *Joint Session of Workshops* (Turin, 2002).

⁹¹ For derivatives of this definition, see Ladrech, "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France."; Simon Hix and Klaus H. Goetz, "Introduction: European Integration and National Political Systems," in *Europeanized Politics? European Integration and National Political Systems*, eds. Klaus H. Goetz and Simon Hix (London: Frank Cass, 2001); and Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "Europeanization: The Domestic Impact of European Union Politics," in *Handbook of European Union Politics*, eds. Knud Erik Jorgensen, Mark A. Pollack, and Ben Rosamond (London: SAGE Publications, 2007).

pressures and domestic mediating variables.⁹² Simply put, dependent upon the units of analysis, the independent variable is limited to the EU's institutional structure. Subsequently, accession-based Europeanization literature operationalizes the independent variable in strategies and mechanisms employed by the EU to exert influence over candidate countries, such as membership conditionality and elite socialization with EU norms.⁹³ The dependent variable (inertia, absorption, accommodation, or transformation) is confined to the extent of domestic change in response to EU pressures.⁹⁴ Most accession-based Europeanization studies distinguish whether or not influence has occurred, and whether this influence was weak or strong.⁹⁵ A lack of convergence across examined countries and policy-areas is attributed to the mediating role of domestic institutions and agents, and variance in the EU's institutional pressure in the case of accession-based Europeanization. This model hypothesizes the existence of a clear, vertical chain of command between EU pressures for change and domestic responses to these pressures. This perspective on the Europeanization process implies a multidimensional (gravitating between rational and ideational factors), but linear causation that moves in a *straight downward direction* from the supranational EU to the domestic level. In claiming the EU structure causes domestic change by way of shaping the actor's behavior and preference, the literature inclines towards unidirectional (structural) causality. However, as this causality is seen as static, it is independent from both the wider spatiotemporal context in which the structure is embedded, as well as the agency.

That such a take on the EU's causality over the domestic level exposes the research to both an EU-centric and a structural bias is relatively evident and noted by a more progressive turn within Europeanization studies.⁹⁶ As for EU-centrism, criticism is directed at overestimating the

⁹² See the *goodness of fit* model introduced by Börzel and Risse, "Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe." For the bottom-up model, see Radaelli, "The Europeanization of Public Policy." Note that although a linear understanding of Europeanization does not necessitate a top-down research design as a rule, the vast majority of first generation scholarship gives priority to this model over alternatives.

⁹³ See discussion in Sedelmeier, "Europeanisation in New Member and Candidate States," 9-10.

⁹⁴ See discussion in Börzel and Risse, "Europeanization: The Domestic Impact of European Union Politics."

⁹⁵ Sedelmeier, "Europeanisation in New Member and Candidate States," 8.

⁹⁶ See for instance Schmidt and Radaelli, "Europeanization, Discourse and Policy Change: Mapping the New Research Agenda."; Featherstone and Papadimitriou, *The Limits of Europeanization. Reform Capacity and Policy Conflict in Greece*; and Featherstone and Kazamias, "Introduction." For critical reviews of the *goodness of fit* model, see Heritier and Knill, "Differential Responses to European Policies: A Comparison."; Ellen Mastenbroek and Mendeljtje van Keulen, "Beyond the Goodness of Fit: A Preference-based Account of Europeanization," in *European Research Reloaded: Cooperation and Integration among Europeanized States*, eds. Ronald Holzhaecker and Markus Haverland (Springer, 2006); and Markus Haverland, "National Adaptation to European Integration: The Importance of Institutional Veto Points," *Journal of European Public Policy* 20, no. 10 (2000).

causal importance of EU-side variables compared to alternative domestic and international factors.⁹⁷ Given that the Europeanization process is reduced to a sui generis framework of EU-domestic interaction, in which a specific set of domestic variables is hypothesized to react to a specific set of EU pressures, the literature is overly reductionist. As the literature brackets alternative causal linkages from the analytical framework, there is a strong bias towards EU-level explanations even in cases where the EU acted as a catalyst, as opposed to a facilitator of, domestic change.⁹⁸ The model neglects that EU stimuli and pressures are often attributable to broader European or universalistic structural contexts.

With regard to the structural bias, criticism is mostly directed at the presumed hierarchical relationship between the EU and the domestic level.⁹⁹ In response, Featherstone and Kazamias argue "Europeanization via the structures of the EU entails more than a passive response to external pressures."¹⁰⁰ In other words, structural causality moves not only in a top-down direction, but can also be horizontal and actor-driven.¹⁰¹ In view of more complex causal patterns explaining the EU-domestic nexus, the top-down approach is accused of marginalizing the actor's ability to somewhat independently engage in the Europeanization process.

Contrary to treating Europeanization as a fixed solution in search of a problem, second generation scholarship (which took off in 2004 following Radaelli's article "Europeanisation: Solution or problem?" published in the *European Integration Online Papers*) unpacks the Europeanization process. This opens the research to a more complex and pluralist account of Europeanization, albeit only conceptually. Authors including Featherstone and Kazamias, Radaelli and Saurruger, and Schmidt and Radaelli stress causal complexity between EU institutions and domestic actors.¹⁰² As a result, the scholarship promises to move the conceptual boundaries established by the unidirectional view on Europeanization and consequently resolve

⁹⁷ Note that in view of the preponderance of conditionality-based analysis, EU-centrism in the context of accession Europeanization reads as de facto *conditionality-centrism*.

⁹⁸ See the discussion in Martin Brusis, "The Instrumental Use of European Union Conditionality: Regionalization in the Czech Republic and Slovakia," *East European Politics and Societies* 19, no. 2 (2005).

⁹⁹ This is even more emphasized in accession-driven Europeanization research, seeing that conditionality provides for a clear, vertical chain of command between EU pressures and domestic responses.

¹⁰⁰ Featherstone and Kazamias, "Introduction: Southern Europe and the Process of 'Europeanization'," 1.

¹⁰¹ See Ibid.; Featherstone and Papadimitriou, *The Limits of Europeanization. Reform Capacity and Policy Conflict in Greece*.

¹⁰² Radaelli, "Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?"; Featherstone and Kazamias, "Introduction: Southern Europe and the Process of 'Europeanization'"; Sabine Saurruger and Claudio M Radaelli, "The Europeanization of Public Policies: Introduction," *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis* 10, no. 3 (2008); and Vivien A. Schmidt and Claudio M. Radaelli, "Policy Change and Discourse in Europe: Conceptual and Methodological Issues," *West European Politics* 27, no. 2 (2004).

the agenda from the above-discussed analytical pitfalls. Radaelli argues the research potential of the agenda is greater if Europeanization is operationalized as something to be explained and not something that explains.¹⁰³ He sees Europeanization as a complex process irreducible to one causal pattern of change; Europeanization includes the construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of rules and norms, which are first defined at the EU level and subsequently incorporated into the logics of domestic political systems.¹⁰⁴ In summary, second generation literature argues that diffusion of the EU's institutional model is not only top-down, but can move in a horizontal, two-way, and bottom-up direction.¹⁰⁵

One of the proposed solutions to the analytical challenge of capturing the multifaceted causal patterns is a bottom-up-down analytical design.¹⁰⁶ This approach is more open-ended in comparison to the *goodness of fit* model as it starts with domestic change and process-traces the causes of this change over time. The domestic level is analyzed both *ex ante* (t1) and *ex post* (t2). Causes of subsequently established shifts are process-traced by comparing domestic policy choices to structures with the closest proximity to these choices. If change is relatable to an EU factor, the analysis focuses on the Europeanization process while controlling for alternative domestic and international variables.¹⁰⁷ By bringing EU-based and alternative international and domestic causal variables into one research framework, the model claims to relieve Europeanization studies from a bias towards EU-level explanations. The model is better fit to evaluate to what extent the EU matters relative to alternative factors. Moreover, the bottom-up-

¹⁰³ Radaelli, "Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?," 2.

¹⁰⁴ Radaelli, "The Europeanization of Public Policy," 30.

¹⁰⁵ For horizontal Europeanization, see Kerry Howell, "Developing Conceptualizations of Europeanization: A Study of Financial Services," *Political Science Association* 24, no. 1 (2004); James S. Mosher and David M. Trubek, "Alternative Approaches to Governance in the EU: EU Social Policy and the European Employment Strategy," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003); Michael Brüggemann and Katharina Kleinen-von Königslöw, "'Let's Talk about Europe' Why Europeanization Shows a Different Face in Different Newspapers" *European Journal of Communication* 24, no. 1 (2009); and Isabelle Bruno, Sophie Jacquot, and Lou Mandin, "Europeanization through its Instrumentation: Benchmarking, Mainstreaming and the Open Method of Co-ordination ... Toolbox or Pandora's Box?," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 4 (2006). For two-way Europeanization, see Tanja A. Börzel, "Shaping and Taking EU Policies: Member State Responses to Europeanization," *Queen's Papers on Europeanization*, no. 2 (2003). For bottom-up Europeanization, see Morten Kallestrup, "Europeanisation as a Discourse: Domestic Policy Legitimation through the Articulation of a 'Need for Adaptation'," *Public Policy and Administration* 17, no. 2 (2002); Jacquot and Woll, "Usage of European Integration – Europeanisation from a Sociological Perspective."; and Schmidt and Radaelli, "Policy Change and Discourse in Europe: Conceptual and Methodological Issues."

¹⁰⁶ For alternative research designs within second-generation scholarship see for instance the *discourse analysis model* in Schmidt and Radaelli, "Europeanization, Discourse and Policy Change: Mapping the New Research Agenda."

¹⁰⁷ See Richard F. Elmore, "Backward Mapping: Implementation Research and Policy Decision," *Political Science Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (1980).

down approach does not make any a priori assumptions about the nature of Europeanization, allowing for the ability to process-trace the extent and dynamics of the EU's causal impact.

Despite transcending the shadow of hierarchy (or, in the case of accession-based Europeanization, the shadow of conditionality) that is inherent to the unidirectional understanding of Europeanization, the second generation of research is still unable to transcend the shadow of structuralism. Considering that, with certain exceptions, the literature remains aligned to institutionalist theorizing, the shift between first and second generation scholarship challenges the direction of, as opposed to the nature of, causality linked to the Europeanization process. Given that second generation researchers also fail to problematize EU norms as flexible, and consequently the meaning of EU norms as dependent upon the agency, domestic forces are again conceptualized as a mediating variable. To illustrate, Featherstone and Kazamias argue “the mode of reaction of the different states highlights not only the importance they attach to Europe, but also their understanding of what ‘Europe’ is.”¹⁰⁸ Even here the claimed duality between the structure and the agency remains hypothetical, as the authors build upon a neoinstitutionalist identification of the actor as ‘structured’ as opposed to ‘structuring’.

In essence, the relational nature of Europeanization based on the mutually constitutive qualities of the structure and the agency is sidelined from the analytical design of both first and second generation scholarship. Although the suggested problematizations of Europeanization allow for more nuanced balancing between structural and individualist approaches, more attention should be paid to the actor's ability to mold the Europeanization process by reconceptualizing EU norms.

¹⁰⁸ Featherstone and Kazamias, "Introduction: Southern Europe and the Process of 'Europeanization'," 17.

Table 3: *Research Design in Europeanization Studies*

	Research focus	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Causality
First generation	How European Union policies and politics affect domestic level – Europeanization as national adaptation to EU institutions	<i>Goodness of fit</i> between the EU and the domestic level	National politics and policy-making	Unidirectional/structural
Second generation	How European Union policies and politics affect domestic level – Europeanization as a two-way process of polity-building	EU’s institutional structure	Actors’ interests and self-perception	Both (multi)-directional/structural

Conclusion: Europeanization – A Research Agenda in Search of a Paradigm Shift

Drawing from a systematic literature review based on meta-theoretical considerations, this chapter inquired into the ontological and epistemological roots of Europeanization scholarship. Inquiry into the meta-theoretical grounding of the Europeanization research agenda established the basis for a dialogue between Europeanization à la neoinstitutionalism and more critical theorizing, which would offer a different picture of the Europe-state nexus and of Europeanization as such. By establishing *what there is* within the Europeanization research agenda, I have attempted to see *what is missing* from it.

My central argument is that mainstream Europeanization scholarship, while working in conjunction with a neoinstitutional theoretical framework, adopts a particular meta-theoretical reading of reality that reduces the Europeanization process to a transfer of the EU’s institutional structure to the domestic system of the member, quasi-member, applicant, and candidate states. In other words, Europeanization research is vulnerable to EU-centric and teleological argumentation. This proves to be especially unfavorable to our understanding of Europeanization

beyond the borders of EU member states. Additionally problematic is the literature's analytical bracketing of the agency. This bracketing triggers the bracketing of the process in which Europe is defining its external space, while the external space concurrently redefines Europe.

Europeanization scholarship, of which I do not claim to provide an exhaustive account, has been analyzed in line with a set of synthesizing questions. What is the literature's understanding of the nature of structure and agency, and furthermore, what is their mutual relationship? What is the meaning of Europeanization and the relationship between the EU and the member states? And finally, what is the relationship between Europeanization and the wider historical and territorial context in which it takes place?

First, what is understood as the structure and what as the agency within the Europeanization process? How does the literature conceptualize the European Union and the member and non-member states? I have argued that the adopted neoinstitutionalist theoretical embedding offers an EU-centric reading of structure and agency. The European structure is constrained to the EU's institutional setting. Given that the European Union is more than what is contained within the EU's institutional structure, such an approach is relatively restrictive. I further proposed that the neoinstitutionalist framework gives a reductionist reading of the actor based on the extent of their institutional engagement with the European Union. Consequently, the actor is confined to the EU member states (more rarely sub-states and non-states), quasi-member states, and applicant and candidates for EU membership.

Second, what is the relationship between the structure and the agency? More concretely, how does the literature conceptualize the dynamics between the EU and the domestic level? I have argued that neoinstitutionalism exposes Europeanization literature to a bias towards structural accounts of Europeanization and consequent under-problematization of the agency. It is suggested that this structural bias, inherent to neoinstitutionalism, adds a degree of teleological argumentation in evaluating domestic change in response to EU stimuli. By treating the structure as ontologically prior to the actor, the literature is unfit to conceptualize institutional change as endogenous to an institutional process. This means that the EU structure is operationalized as finite and exogenous to the process of Europeanization. If the EU structure is not problematized as a moving target, Europeanization is in essence reduced to a constant reproduction (although, on account of mediating factors, not homogenization) of the same institutional order from the EU to the domestic level.

Third, what is the relationship between Europeanization and the wider historical and territorial context in which it takes place? Here, I returned to the problem of structuralism and neoinstitutionalist theoretical embedding. Because the European structure is conceptualized as a given, the literature remains largely unaware of the background conditions which make this structure possible.

Next, I turned to epistemological considerations. My analysis focused on questions of research design and how mainstream literature constructs causality between the European Union and the domestic level. The outlined meta-theoretical and theoretical choices have particular consequences on how Europeanization is operationalized in research design. In view of the literature's ontological foundations, I conclude that the constructed causality between the European structure and the domestic agency is a simplified one. Further, it ignores the broader geographic and temporal context in which Europeanization operates. Notwithstanding the conceptual advancements achieved by second generation scholars, the mainstream literature establishes causality as the power of EU institutions to provoke domestic change by means of constraining and constructing domestic behavior and cognition. Therefore, I conclude that the literature is overly structural as it fails to conceptualize EU institutions as contingent upon the structure-agency interaction in the Europeanization process. Put simply, the literature considers the EU to be what *EU institutions are*, and not what the agency thinks the *EU is*. At the same time, I criticize the present model for not being structural enough as it fails to problematize the underlying discourses which make the EU structure what it is.

This chapter also illustrated that the neoinstitutionalist theoretical embedding, and the ensuing EU-centric and structural conceptualization of causality, reduce Europeanization beyond EU member states to a study of domestic compliance with accession conditionality. Several problems were identified. First, Europeanization is conceptualized as a unidirectional transfer of the EU's institutional order to candidate and applicant countries. Second, the domestic level is portrayed as a passive downloader of EU conditionality, with very limited ability to mitigate the effects of the Europeanization process. Third, the EU structure is problematized as fixed, and therefore independent from EU-domestic interaction that is embedded in a wider international or domestic context. In view of causal complexities that identify the EU's relationship with third countries, this line of reasoning proves to be very limiting. Due to the discussed problem of an EU-centric analysis with teleological tendencies stemming from the literature's theoretical

choices, I argue that moving away from these fallacies necessitates a paradigm shift.¹⁰⁹

To conclude, the maturation of Europeanization scholarship has opened the research to a novel set of analytical considerations on meta-theoretical grounds. The debate has largely focused on conceptual considerations and questions of research design. The majority of the intellectual progress that has been achieved concerns demarcating the direction of causality in the EU-domestic nexus. However, pluralization of scholarship on theoretical grounds remains lacking.

The observed shift from Europeanization as a top-down outcome of EU integration towards a problematization of Europeanization as a multidirectional process has relieved some of the initial rigidity of the model. This has allowed for the EU's rules and norms via multiple channels and directions to be included within the conceptual scope of Europeanization. Besides speaking more directly to the realities of political interactions arising from the European Union's heterarchical model of governance, the second generation literature has also pointed to the necessity of greater problematization of the actor within the given research framework. An increasingly blurring border between the supranational and national levels of governance directs the analysis towards horizontal and bottom-up directions of the Europeanization process.

Consequently, it is important to inquire about the role of the actors (EU-level, domestic, and transnational) in not only mitigating, but often instigating the very process of Europeanization. In light of the observed evolutionary approach to concept formation, which somewhat contradicts Sartori's demand for internal conceptual coherence, the research agenda leaves room for further conceptual shifts within Europeanization scholarship, both in terms of the studied research questions and the incorporation (rather than the exclusion) of competing research claims into the given analytical framework.¹¹⁰ Bearing in mind the symbiotic relationship between concept formation and theory building, in which concepts become de facto theories on a small scale, it is surprising that conceptual shifts did not occur in parallel with, or more daringly, as a result of, corresponding shifts in the applied theoretical approach.¹¹¹ Despite

¹⁰⁹ Very telling are novel approaches to bottom-up Europeanization, which construct a more agency-centered analytical framework by drawing from a different theoretical pool, Social Movement Theory in particular. See McCauley, "Bottom-Up Europeanization Exposed: Social Movement Theory and Non-state Actors in France."; Jacquot and Woll, "Usage of European Integration – Europeanisation from a Sociological Perspective."; and Donatella della Porta and Manuela Caiani, "Europeanization From Below? Social Movements and Europe," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2007).

¹¹⁰ On problems related to conceptual stretching, see Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *The American Political Science Review* 64, no. 4 (1970); and John Gerring, "What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences," *Polity* 31, no. 3 (1999).

¹¹¹ For a discussion on the relationship between concept formation and theory, see *Ibid.*

acting to consolidate Europeanization as a research agenda, the undisputed cohabitation of Europeanization and neoinstitutionalism (with particular accent placed on its rational choice and sociological derivatives) is problematic.

On a more abstract conceptual level, Europeanization does not make any claims about the primacy of the ideational versus materialist and structural versus individualist ontological accounts of the world. However, by adopting neoinstitutionalism's structuralist ontology, it becomes closed off to more agency-centered theorizing. Considering this inconsistency in conceptual and theoretical approaches to Europeanization, the sole focus on neoinstitutionalism in past scholarship results in an unnecessary rigidity. I argue that despite a growing number of theoretically-aware articles and studies on Europeanization, by remaining encompassed within the neoinstitutionalist research framework, Europeanization scholarship is still under-theorized.

Chapter 2: A Poststructural Reading of Europeanization

Introduction

Chapter 1 argued in support of a paradigm shift to rid the mainstream scholarship on Europeanization of its theoretical and analytical limitations. Such a shift refers particularly to an ontological move towards an ideational realm of theorizing, which recognizes that, besides being a material entity constrained by its institutions and territory, the European Union is primarily a meaning system that is both structured and changing. Poststructuralism offers an alternative reading of Europeanization. It transcends the structure-agency debate and moves towards a systemic understanding of the contingency of social structures in view of the existence of competing meaning systems. It is better able to explain the maintenance of non-isomorphic readings of phenomena within the same structure, and consequently, structural change with respect to competing readings of social reality. Poststructuralism brings back process-based change to structural theorizing. I hypothesize a poststructuralist reading of Europeanization is best to explain to what extent and how Europe and EU norms are reproduced and reconstructed via Europeanization.

Thus, while positioning this research within the Europeanization research agenda, I diverge from the scholarly canon by taking interest in the relationship between the perception of the European Union and domestic political and policy processes. This implies a shift in the adopted theoretical account of Europeanization. In this chapter I will develop a meta-theoretical account of Europeanization, drawing from poststructuralist discourse theory in the tradition of Foucault and Derrida and as introduced to political science in the works of Laclau and Mouffe.¹¹² In establishing the implications of poststructuralism for an understanding of Europeanization, this chapter looks into the ontological and epistemological foundation of poststructuralism. I use the same questions that guided the discussion on neoinstitutionalism vis-à-vis Europeanization in Chapter 1. As a result, this chapter aims to answer the following questions:

- (a) What is the poststructuralist reading of the structure in Europeanization?
- (b) What is the poststructuralist reading of the agency and the agency's role in Europeanization?
- (c) What is Europeanization? What kind of change is produced by Europeanization?

¹¹² On the philosophical roots of discourse theory, see Ernesto Laclau, "Philosophical Roots of Discourse Theory," (2003).

- (d) What is the role of geographical and temporal variables in the Europeanization process?

Part 1 provides a synopsis of discursive theorizing with particular focus placed on poststructuralism. Part 2 discusses poststructuralist discourse theory in direct connection to Europeanization, and will offer a novel outlook on the structure-agent dichotomy and their mutual relationship.

Discourse Matters – Discursive Approaches to EU Studies

Before turning to the utility of poststructuralism for grasping the Europeanization process, it is important to discuss the underlying assumptions of discourse theory in view of its meta-theoretical embedding. To be specific, the aim of the ensuing text is to familiarize the reader with the principal ontological and epistemological premises and consequent theoretical contours informing this thesis. Given the relative heterogeneity of discursive approaches – for the ontological debate on different interpretations of discourse or for the epistemological discussions on the possibility of developing an explanatory analytical framework focused on language and social meanings – it is relevant to delimit the approach adopted in this dissertation from alternative discursive studies.¹¹³ By delineating the core concepts of discursive theorizing (the meaning of discourse, the discourse-identity nexus, the process of articulations, and discursive nodal points in particular) the chapter at hand will position this thesis within the poststructuralist camp while at the same time setting the thesis apart from some discursive approaches already adopted within EU studies.¹¹⁴

On Meta-Theory

The principal thread permeating the poststructuralist school of thought is that discourse (roughly defined as political and social structures that regulate the formation of statements) constructs the social world by attaching meaning and significance to it, and that, given the inherent instability of discourses, meanings are also inherently unstable. For that reason, it is essential to untangle how

¹¹³ On differences between individual discursive approaches, compare the more materially grounded approach to discourses in Fairclough's critical discourse theory with poststructuralism and more structural readings of discourse in the works of Saussure. See Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Longman, 1995); and Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Peter Owen, 1960). On the difference between positivist and post-positivist approaches in discursive analysis, see Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002): 149-74.

¹¹⁴ On discursive approaches within EU studies, see Wæver, "Discursive Approaches."

these meaning systems, which determine social reality, are being confirmed and also contested by social practice. Žižek illustrates this fluidity of social reality in an analysis of such terms as democracy, state, justice, peace, or freedom. These terms acquire different meanings under the ideological space of communism (which Žižek refers to as a master-signifier) than they would if formed by, for instance, the master-signifier liberal democracy. For example, in contrast to the more mainstream understandings of ‘freedom’ as personal freedom or the ‘state’ in its Westphalian form, Žižek suggests that communism defines ‘freedom’ as an end to the bourgeois formal freedom (de facto a form of slavery), and ‘state’ as a means of the ruling elites to suppress the working class.¹¹⁵ Equally interesting is the communist reading of ‘war’ as inherent to class society and ‘peace’ as a result of a social revolution.

Poststructuralism makes two central meta-theoretical claims that open the analytical space of EU studies towards the analysis of Europe not as a fact, but as a discursively constructed fact – instead of one Europe, there are many competing *Europes*. First, this theory cuts across the dichotomy between the material and ideational reality. Poststructuralists argue that material reality exists, but it is discursively constructed.¹¹⁶ While not denying the existence of the external world of objects, the argument is that non-discursive elements are *subjectified* through discourse.¹¹⁷ This implies that the material world becomes meaningful only in discursive structures, which are, recursively, also grounded in a material world. Seeing that objects are discursively constructed, with discourses at the same time being contingent upon the material essence, there is no differentiation between ideational and materialist behavior in social relations. Laclau and Mouffe thus reject the hypothesis of discourse being only one designated segment of the social realm:

Our analysis rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. It affirms: a) that every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence; and b) that any distinction between what are usually called the linguistic and behavioral aspects of a social practice, is either an incorrect distinction or ought to find its place as a differentiation within the social production of meaning, which is

¹¹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989): 102.

¹¹⁶ Note that here, poststructuralism departs from Fairclough’s critical discourse theory; in contrast to a poststructuralist understanding of reality as discursively grounded, Fairclough acknowledges the existence of non-discursive social structures. See Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*.

¹¹⁷ For a critical reading of the poststructuralist conceptualization of discursive and non-discursive elements, see Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 1999): 90.

structured under the form of discursive totalities.¹¹⁸

Poststructuralism has often been accused of radical idealism and relativism by way of projecting an omnipotent *idea* (subject) and, consequently, giving a reductionist definition of the object as fully dependent upon the subject. However, Torfing suggests that the theory of discourse starts with the assumption of *radical incompleteness*.¹¹⁹ Rather than accrediting the object with a pre-given meaning independent of the subject (realism) or claiming an omnipotent subject producing the object (idealism), poststructuralism suggests the reality results from a complex interaction of an incomplete object and an incomplete subject. To use Laclau and Mouffe's analogy, a building-stone exists autonomously from our thought, but is unable to constitute itself as an object outside of a discursive structure. At the same time, the very material properties of a building-stone are part of a discourse, making this discourse also materially grounded – *one cannot build a house with just words*. Because of this constant state of incompleteness between the discursive and the non-discursive, discourses (as meaning-formations) are inherently unstable and open to restructuring:

The objective world is structured in relational sequences which do not necessarily have a finalistic sense and which, in most cases, do not actually require any meaning at all: it is sufficient that certain regularities establish differential positions for us to be able to speak of a discursive formation.¹²⁰

This leads to the second ontological problem of the relationship between structure and agency, and the question of structural change. Here, the scholarship adopts the position of *linguistic structurationism* by adding a language component to what Giddens refers to as a theory of structuration.¹²¹ Giddens' central assumption, also adhered to by Foucault, is that structure and agency are dependent upon each other and that this dependency is internal in character, making

¹¹⁸ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*: 107.

¹¹⁹ For critical accounts of poststructuralist discourse theory, see Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997) and Norman Geras, "Post-Marxism," *New Left Review*, no. 163 (1987). In response, see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, "Post-Marxism without Apologies," *New Left Review*, no. 163 (1987) and Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse*: 45-48.

¹²⁰ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*: 109.

¹²¹ The term structurationism was coined by Diez. See Thomas Diez, "Speaking 'Europe': The Politics of Integration Discourse," *Journal of European Public Policy* 6, no. 4 (1999): 603; Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*; and as it is translated to International Relations studies by Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*.

the structure and the agency mutually constitutive.¹²² Stemming from this, the *duality of structure theorem* implies that structure and agency are ontologically intertwined; social structures are both a medium for, and a result of, actors' practices, which they are simultaneously recursively organizing: "the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction."¹²³ The process in which this happens is *structuration*, defined as the structuring of social relations across time and space, by virtue of the duality of structure.¹²⁴ Giddens moves the focus away from simple causal linkages between elements of social systems. He is not concerned with whether the social context causes the agency or vice-versa. Instead, the focal point shifts towards a macro-level dynamic reproduction of structures over time consequent to the action of social actors.¹²⁵ Structural persistence and change occur through the process of social interaction within a system over time and space, with this process of interaction being at the same time defined by the very structure.

Ultimately, Giddens makes a dual shift away from ontological determinism of structural theorizing; he moves from the structuralist tendency of reducing social systems to their underlying structures. He accomplishes this by providing a more complex understanding of the structure as structural properties that are recursively implicated in the reproduction of various praxis-forms within social systems, and by accrediting the agency with a degree of voluntarism

¹²² See Foucault, "The Order of Discourse." For a discussion, see Ernesto Laclau, "Discourse," in *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, eds. Robert Goodin, Philip Pettit, and Thomas Pogge (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) and Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. To say that the relationship between the two elements is mutually constitutive means to imply that the two elements make each other possible; one element is essential for the existence of the other and vice-versa. See discussion in Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*: 83-88. By stressing the contingency of discursive structures in view of the articulation process, poststructuralism departs from the linguistic structuralism of Saussure. See Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*. For a poststructuralist critique, see Laclau, "Discourse."

¹²³ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*: 374. For a more detailed discussion, see *Ibid.*: 297-304.

¹²⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979): 376.

¹²⁵ Giddens understands the structure as a "recursively organized sets of rules and resources, is out of time and space, save in its instantiations and co-ordination as memory traces, and is marked by an 'absence of the subject'." He thus distances himself from a more traditional conceptualization of structure as a context of actors' interactions. Referring to this macro-micro duality in Giddens' conceptualization of the structure, Layder concludes the following: "In Giddens' theory, structure does not mean anything like the same thing as it does in conventional approaches (like structural functionalism). In orthodox usage 'structure' tends to refer to the institutional features of society as opposed to the micro features of face-to-face interaction. Very often, this meaning is not distinguished from that which attaches to the term 'system', and thus the two are typically thought to refer to pretty much the same thing – the visible patterning of social relationships in society. For Giddens, 'system' refers to these latter aspects which have traditionally been thought of as institutionalized or 'macro' features." For Giddens' take on structure, see: Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*: 25 and Derek Layder, *Understanding Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2005): 170-71.

vis-à-vis the structure by depicting social actors as knowledgeably and reflexively self-monitoring.¹²⁶

Nonetheless, structuration theory remains contested for eventually giving in to structuralism by way of conceptualizing structure as a fully constituted, objective whole, and for its methodological bracketing of structural duality in favor of either the structure or the agency. In view of such criticism, Ashley suggests that Giddens, in the end, is unable to reconcile the dichotomy between the continuity of internalized structures and the contingency of history because he problematizes agency-based historical change as subordinate to structural continuity.¹²⁷ The agency is conceptualized in opposition to, and as a supplement of, as opposed to being an integral part of, structural continuity. Agency is therefore defined as ontologically secondary to the structure. Concerning the latter point of criticism, other authors have noted the unoperationability of the *duality of structure* theorem, which is consequently being replaced by analytical dualism.¹²⁸ In fact, Giddens suggests that it is impossible to analytically capture structure-agency and agency-structure dynamics simultaneously.¹²⁹ This exposes the research to a novel set of fabricated bracketing between structure-based and agency-based processes, which structuration theory tries to avoid in the first place. Consequent to these limitations, the poststructuralist turn within EU studies breaks away from Wendt's (and thus Giddens-based) constructivism and moves closer to a reading of the structure-agency problem in the tradition of Foucault, and thereby also Laclau and Mouffe. As Wæver states:

To achieve a shift towards more fully respecting the contingent, self-producing meaning-systems of different actors [addressing the problems of the Wendtian perspective] and also to break away with the ideational problems of constructivism, the approach easily turns more poststructuralist.¹³⁰

Thus, how does poststructuralism differ in reading the agency-structure problem from structuration theory? Poststructuralism and structuration theory meet in the argument of

¹²⁶ Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*: 55-75.

¹²⁷ Richard K. Ashley, "Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War," in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics (Issues in World Politics)*, eds. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington Books, 1989): 276-77.

¹²⁸ See, for instance, Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*: 118-21.

¹²⁹ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*: 288-93.

¹³⁰ Ole Wæver, "Identity, Communities, and Foreign Policy Analysis: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory" in *European Integration and National Identity: A Challenge of the Nordic States*, eds. Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver (London: Routledge, 2002): 22.

ontological duality of the structure and the action. Poststructuralism transcends the structural determinism of structuralists by hypothesizing a never fully accomplished hegemonic character of discursive structures vis-à-vis the actor. This stands in opposition to the structuralist concept of complete production and reproduction of social structures through social processes. On one side of the continuum is the structure, which is incomplete and thus inherently contested. On the other side stands the actor, whose identity is constructed in relation to the (incomplete) structure, and who, therefore, also is never fully determined by the very structure. This implies the following conceptualization of the relationship between discourses and actors. First, subjects acquire meaning only through discursive structures, which are historically specific. Second, these discursive structures exist by way of being constructed and reconstructed through the practice of articulation. Third, even though the structure constitutes the actor by determining the actor's identity and behavior, poststructuralism recognizes a degree of voluntarism of the actor by means of accrediting them with consciousness. The actor is equipped with the possibility of strategic action vis-à-vis the discourse, which may consequently trigger discursive change.

The existence of the structural discontinuity notwithstanding, the structure's capacity to determine the actor is explained through the concept of *structural dislocation*. A state of full hegemony is solely hypothetical – any social meaning (identity) is determined by excluding its constitutive outside, which in turn threatens to subvert (dislocate) structural totality. Despite the relative elasticity of discourses, there will always be events unexplainable by the given discursive structure, which is in turn disturbed (dislocated) and subjected to re-articulation in view of the newly emerging hegemonic projects. This means that the actor is never able to fully express their identity vis-à-vis the structure, which makes the actor partially self-determined within this *constitutive lack* revealed by the process of dislocation. Faced with the ongoing challenge of reconciling competing identities, the actor is always somewhat plural, thus de facto schizophrenic. The behavior of the political elites in Eastern Europe after the demise of communism provides a good illustration. Faced with the dislocation of one identity, state officials found themselves *free* to choose from a new set of competing identities found in nationalism, liberalism, or stalinism.¹³¹ Somewhat similarly, one observes a reconceptualization (amounting to almost complete disappearance) of Europe's *third way* social democracy in view of the collapse

¹³¹ Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse*: 150.

of the Cold War communism-capitalism bipolarity.

Aiming to transcend the ontological dichotomy between materialism and idealism, and also voluntarism and determinism, poststructuralism adopts an *anti-essentialist ontology*; to cite Torfing: "We can develop the characterization of discourse theory by highlighting its relationalist, contextual, and ultimately historicist view of identity formation."¹³² Albeit progressive from an ontological viewpoint, such a depiction of the *world out there* presents a challenge for empirically oriented research. More specifically, poststructuralism is arduous for an empirically oriented research embedded in the positivist tradition, and consequently interested in establishing causal relations between independent and dependent variables. How is one to trace causal complexities attributable to a recursive process in which social practices reproduce and contest discourses that in parallel constitute social realities?

Poststructuralism resorts to ontological dualism by claiming that while there is a material world out there autonomous from our cognition, this world is given meaning only once subjected to our cognition. By analogy, the world that is not our creation exists, while the *truth* that is not our creation does not exist; thus, the truth is conditioned by a discursive truth regime.¹³³ The poststructuralist *non-foundationalist* conception of the world, where the *truth* is not attributable to an externally existing reality (God, nature, Reason), but is contained within the discourse (meaning that there is no assumed distinction between the object and the subject), finds greater affiliation with the postpositivist tendency to interpret than the positivist tendency to explain. This prompts poststructuralists to question the utility of *scientific approaches* aimed at producing *true knowledge* by unpacking the causal relationship between different elements of reality:

Discourse theory adopts and even radicalizes the postpositivist critique of epistemology. Hence, it claims that there are no extra-discursive facts, rules of method, or criteria for establishing that can guarantee the production of true knowledge. There is no such thing as brute facts, but only theoretically informed and culturally shaped descriptions of a discursively constructed reality.¹³⁴

¹³² Jacob Torfing, "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges," in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, eds. David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 14.

¹³³ See the discussion on contingency in Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 1-22.

¹³⁴ Torfing, "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges,": 27.

This line of reasoning has pushed some poststructuralists towards an anti-epistemological dismissal of methods and methodology, and has in turn opened poststructuralism to criticism about lapsing into self-indulgent theoreticism with general disregard for the question of research design, and for empirical reality as such.¹³⁵

In line with this criticism, a group of scholars are concerned with explaining domestic foreign policy towards Europe by analyzing the construction of domestic discourse on Europe vis-à-vis discourses on state and nation; the result is the foreign policy theory of layered discursive structure.¹³⁶ Of similar importance is Diez' operationalization of poststructuralist theorizing in a study of the construction of European governance in member states' domestic discourses.¹³⁷ These studies illustrate that, although absent of causal epistemology, poststructuralist discourse theory is capable of stimulating a clearly demarcated research agenda that speaks directly to some very pending political problems, external Europeanization included. In view of positivism's loosened grip over methodology, which is in turn no longer confined to establishing falsifiable hypotheses about causalities between the independent and the dependent variable, one is able to theorize the process through which identities and policies are linked in a non-causal manner.¹³⁸

From Meta to Method – Outlining the Central Thread of Poststructuralist Thought

Maneuvering within the meta-theoretical framework, which places emphasis on a discursive and intersubjective character of the social world, poststructuralism in the style of Laclau and Mouffe has moved EU scholarship beyond the constraints of the traditional ideational versus material and structural versus individualist dichotomies of mainstream approaches. It has provided researchers with theoretical instruments aimed at problematizing the discursive construction and reconstruction of reality. This has resulted in an innovative reading of the EU-domestic nexus with the research objective focused on the understanding of the discursive context, which enables

¹³⁵ For a discussion on methodology in discursive theories, see Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London: Routledge, 2006); Jennifer Milliken, "Discourse Study: Bringing Rigor to Critical Theory," in *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, eds. Knud Erik Jørgensen and Karin M. Fierke (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2001); Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999); and Wæver, "Discursive Approaches."

¹³⁶ Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver, eds., *European Integration and National Identity: A Challenge of the Nordic States* (London: Routledge, 2002) and Ole Wæver, "European Integration and Security: Analysing French and German Discourses on State, Nation, and Europe," in *Discourse Theory in European Politics Identity, Policy and Governance*, eds. David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹³⁷ Diez, "Europe as a Discursive Battleground."

¹³⁸ See discussion in Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*: 20-25.

and constrains the given social structures. Upon discussing the core assumptions of poststructuralist thought and its resonance within EU studies, I turn to justifying the possible utility of poststructuralist theorizing within the Europeanization program.

The principal metaphysical hypothesis of poststructuralism, established in line with the anti-essentialist ontological stance, is that social meanings are discursively defined – poststructuralism reads the identity-action nexus through the prism of a discursively-grounded social reality. The core premise is that discourse constructs the social meaning (identity) of the material world, with this identity being un-fixed in view of the discursive process. Discourse is conceptualized as ontologically productive and relationally structured. This means that poststructuralism adopts a thick understanding of discourse as a relational system that regulates the formation of statements:

a discourse may refer to a specific group of texts, but it also refers to the social practices to which those texts are linked. The linguistic and behavioral aspects of social practices form a complex and inextricably connected whole that is a discourse. These discursive practices that construct a discourse may include writing, speaking, and practices often considered to be “behavioral”, which are embedded in institutions.¹³⁹

Essentially, our statements, thoughts, and actions are contingent upon relatively sedimented discourses, which are constantly modified by our very statements, thoughts, and actions.

Based on the assumption about the contingency of discursively constructed identity, poststructuralism enhances EU studies with a *theoretical toolkit* for the analysis of structural endurance and structural change as endogenous to the social process. The central idea is that history is neither essentially deterministic nor inherently chaotic, but is a product of hegemonic struggles taking place against a particular historical terrain:

¹³⁹ Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Sovereignty and the Nation: Constructing the Boundaries of National Identity," in *State Sovereignty as a Social Construct*, eds. Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 126. For variances of this definition see Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse*: 300; Ole Wæver, "Discursive Approaches," 199; Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986); and David Howarth and Yannis Stavrakakis, "Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis," in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies, and Social Change*, eds. David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval, and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). Methodologically, discourses are operationalized as sources of understanding: "an ensemble of cognitive schemes, conceptual articulations, rhetorical strategies, pictures and images, symbolic actions (rituals), and structures (architectures), enunciative modalities, and narrative flows and rhythms, having the capacity to shape and reshape the meaning of reality." Torfing, "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges," 14.

Discourse theory does not see history as a result of the dialectical unfolding of a basic contradiction, or the progressive realization of a certain telos. Rather, history is marked by radical discontinuity, where one discursive formation is dislocated and breaks down and a new discursive formation is constructed through intense political struggle that reorganizes the social order around an external hegemonic principle.¹⁴⁰

Although the actor's identity is shaped and constrained by discourse, this does not convey that discourse implies the existence and continuous reproduction of one, hegemonic structure. The poststructuralist camp within EU studies has been critical of thin variances of constructivist approaches for their incapacity to theorize change beyond it being problematized as a historical narrative, and for their consequent analytical focus on structural endurance. In view of the persistence of a structural bias within constructivist theorizing, Wæver describes it as a non-change theory: "typically, there is no constructivist suggestion for likely change, but a very strong theory of non-change, which stands well until change happens and it can then explain the firmness of the new status quo."¹⁴¹

Consequently, poststructuralists deny the existence of an a priori given (for instance, rules and norms contained by the EU's institutional structure), and focus on deconstructing discursive practices, which make these norms possible. In line with this new ontological reading of the agency-structure problem, which rejects the monism of both structural and individualist ontologies, but also the *hidden* structural determinism of structuration theory, poststructuralism defines discourses as de facto results of political decisions. They are neither determined by structural pressures emanating from socioeconomic infrastructures nor are they a result of the dialectical unfolding of reason. Torfing adds that these political decisions are not conscious decisions in the fashion of rational-choice theorizing, but stem from an endless series of actions undertaken by political agents aimed at subverting a *hegemonic discourse*.¹⁴² The imminent question is how one escapes the fallacy of a circular argument in which the actor is standing within the structure, while simultaneously having the capacity of autonomous action vis-à-vis this very same structure.

To avoid circular argumentation, Laclau and Mouffe develop what can be summarized as a five-step theoretical framework on the ontology of discursive construction. As the first step,

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.,: 23.

¹⁴¹ Wæver, "Identity, Communities, and Foreign Policy Analysis: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory,": 22.

¹⁴² Torfing, "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges,": 15.

poststructuralism adopts Derrida's concept on the *undecidability of the social* to establish an inherently decentered character of discursive structures, consequently rejecting both the possibility of absolute fixity and absolute un-fixity:

From deconstruction, the notion of undecidability has been crucial. If, as shown in the work of Derrida, undecidables permeate the field which had previously been seen as governed by structural determination, one can see hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain.¹⁴³

Whereas the discursive character of social meanings implies a structuring tendency (a tendency of the discourse to fix meaning around a closed structure – *points de caption (nodal points)*), this can be achieved only partially because discourses, while trying to achieve stability, are inherently instable:

If we accept [...] that a discursive totality never exists in the form of a simply given and delimited positivity, the relational logic will be incomplete and pierced by contingency. The transition from the 'elements' to the 'moments' is never entirely fulfilled. A no man's-land thus emerges, making the articulatory practice possible. In this case, there is no social identity fully protected from a discursive exterior that deforms it and prevents it becoming fully sutured.¹⁴⁴

By introducing discursivity to one's reading of social reality, the first step allows us to assume the possibility of structural change against the background of structural determinism.

The second step, drawing from the theorem on duality of hegemony and social antagonism within the process of discursive identity construction, enables one to grasp how semi-fixed meanings are constructed. The process of discursive construction of social meaning is defined as an inherent struggle for hegemonization in view of the concurrent production of social antagonism, which in turn subverts the very hegemonization process. Starting from the premise that discourse can produce and reproduce identities, poststructuralists suggest that the process of articulation, by which social meanings are produced and reproduced, is based on a juxtaposition

¹⁴³ Derrida adopts the concept of structural undecidability of the social, subsequently employed by Laclau and Mouffe in political theory, to question the determinist ontology, thus, the possibility of totalitarization of social life. This does not mean that social meaning has no grounding – that it is in a constant state of chaotic flux, but rather that this grounding is open to destabilization. Consequently, all attempts to fully enclose social identities are only provisional. See the discussion in Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (New York: Verso, 1990): 25-30 and Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*: xi.

¹⁴⁴ Discursive nodal points (DNP) are defined as instances of partially fixed meanings that bind together various discourses into a discursive formation. *Ibid.*: 110-11.

of a privileged *signifier* and a devalued one.¹⁴⁵ This results in one's identity being constructed in relation to a double negation; thus, while accrediting a meaning to an object, one concurrently negates the alternative meanings and objects that are identified with those alternative meanings. The process of articulation entails both, *the logics of metaphorical unity* through linking discursive elements into a single discursive formation (condensation), and *the logics of metonymic unity* through linking discursive elements into a single discursive formation with the sole common denominator being their exclusion from the discursive formation in the making (displacement).¹⁴⁶ Put differently, discursive unity is achieved by, but also denied by, social antagonism; the construction of the *Self* through the exclusion of the threatening *Otherness* stabilizes the discourse, while at the same time preventing its full closure.¹⁴⁷ Because the very stabilization of discourse implies the construction of the threatening otherness as an antipode of, and thus irreconcilable with the discourse at hand, discursive totality remains hypothetical. An excellent example is the analysis of the construction of the meaning of Europe as the Occident in the mirror of the Orient and the unsustainability of it in view of the post-Cold War fusion of the East with the West. Delanty states:

Until 1989 the identity of Europe, as the West, was secured by the supposed communist threat, but since the disappearance of the old imagined enemy there has been a concerted attempt to construct a new bogey with which European identity can reorient itself in a multi-polar world. Instead of the old poles of opposition of West versus East, the new polarity is that of North versus South. In this

¹⁴⁵ Articulation is a process of forming or changing relations among various discursive elements within a certain *discursive formation*; thus, the process of forming and changing the identity of elements or concepts referred to in the formation. Discursive formation stems from articulation of a variety of discourses into a relatively unified form. Torfing gives liberal democracy as an example of discursive formation, because it consists of a variety of different discourses that have been articulated in and through hegemonic practice. Hegemonic practice is defined as an attempt to articulate a discourse, which is to bring moral, intellectual, or political leadership. Communism can be another example of discursive formation, as can Europe. Signifier is the sound, image, or expression that conveys certain content. One differentiates between *floating signifiers* (those which are over-floated with meaning because they are being articulated differently in different discourses) and *empty signifiers* (those emptied of any precise content). An empty signifier capable of fixing meaning is a *nodal point*. For illustration, one can return to the example of different readings of democracy. Democracy is an empty signifier; it is emptied of any meaning as it can mean anything or nothing under the nodal point Communism and Liberal Democracy. Concepts such as class struggle, exploitation, and bourgeois democracy are identified as floating signifiers. Communism, although characterized by intrinsic emptiness on its own, also has a capacity of structuring the above-discussed floating signifiers into one paradigmatic reading of democracy. The same nodal point quality is found in concepts such as God, Nation, State, Party, Class, Europe, the European Union and so forth. See Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse*: 298, 300.

¹⁴⁶ See the discussion on the process of displacement in Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*: 45-52.

¹⁴⁷ Torfing, "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges," 15.

transformation the 'East' has not disappeared; it has just shifted southwards to include Islam and the Third World.¹⁴⁸

The third step establishes that discursive struggle may result in either the repositioning of an older discourse or the creation of a new hegemonic discourse. With the struggles about what and what not to include in hegemonic discourses being central to the process of policy-making and the political life, the possibility of a fully locked-in identity is being subverted either by a redefinition of the orthodox discourse (the extension of meanings within one discursive space) or installation of a new hegemonic discourse. Therefore, discourses tend to be flexible, as is also nicely illustrated in the example on the meaning of the Occident in view of the post-Cold War dynamics. This means that the frontier that divides the *Self* from the *Other* is open to political discussion or struggle. Considering the political context against which policy-making takes place, one is to witness the institutionalization of a norm, which may carry pluralistic and even antagonistic interpretations. The poststructuralist critique of a unitary, transparent, and pre-defined subject in view of the discursive process within which each subject is constructed and reconstructed is defined as more than a theoretical position. It is also essential for conceptualizing social complexities and plurality. In place of simple *Self* versus *Other* dichotomies (such as the opposition between friend and enemy, East and West, or democracy and totalitarianism), poststructuralism discusses democratic antagonism, which allows for the coexistence of several opposing discourses.¹⁴⁹ Within an order that provides for a variety of binary-isms within one discursive space, structural change is accredited to a political decision, rather than an external shock.¹⁵⁰

Given the relative flexibility of hegemonic discourses, the fourth step argues that change occurs in view of dislocation; the orthodox discourse becomes *dislocated* when confronted with an event that it cannot explain, represent, or accommodate in other ways. Although most discourses have the capacity to subsume a number of novel events under one structural order,

¹⁴⁸ Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe, Idea, Identity, Reality* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995): 130.

¹⁴⁹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*: 166-67.

¹⁵⁰ See Mouffe's discussion on the possibility of democratic revolution within a liberal democracy in Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993). For a similar argument, see the work on deliberative democracy in John S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). As empirical examples, one can look at the emergence of social movements as a novel force within the political space, which tends to add novel binary-isms to *old discourses*. Probably the best example is the extension of the people versus state dichotomy, which has been expanded by the emergence of organized interest groups and the extension of the national versus supranational dichotomy by the transnationalization of the activities of these groups.

they are also finite as they will eventually face events that, they are unfit to accommodate. The source of dislocation can be found in the very existence of social antagonism. Laclau suggests that every identity is dislocated in so far as it depends on the outside, which both enables and contests this very identity.¹⁵¹ He sees the quality of dislocation as a permanent phenomenon defining the partiality and contingency of structures, as there will always be something that a discourse is unfit to integrate.¹⁵² This allows for a hegemonic struggle, which results in either re-articulation of the old discourses or the emergence of new hegemonic discourses around a novel set of discursive nodal points. Change is attributable to the process of hegemonic struggle.

The fifth and final assumption problematizes the position of the intentional subject (the agency) within the discursive process. Laclau and Mouffe conceptualize the subject (the actor) as endogenous to the discursive structure, while at the same time standing outside of the given discourse in view of the actor's capacity of somewhat independent articulation: "The hegemonic subject, as the subject of any articulatory practice, must be partially exterior to what it articulates – otherwise, there would not be any articulation at all."¹⁵³ This exteriority is not conceptualized in line with the ontological dichotomy between the structure and the agency, but is instead confined within the already discussed dualism of hegemony and social antagonism in view of the disruptive force of dislocation. With social structures being inherently divided between the hegemonizing *Self* and the antagonistic *Other*, the subject also appears as an inherently *split subject*. Seeing that the recurrent dislocation of the structure prevents the structure from reaching its full closure, the subject, while being endogenous to the structure, will never be fully determined by it. The *split subject* may identify with many alternative articulations, which may trigger a re-conceptualization of a new hegemonic discourse coupled with new antagonism. This creates space for the problematization of the agency's intentionality. To go back to the already quoted example of an apparatchik from eastern Europe *choosing* to identify with nationalism, liberalism, or stalinism in the aftermath of communism, their choice was not completely random. The agency does not stand outside the process of dislocation or the arising process of hegemonic struggle.

The utilization of poststructuralist positions in the domain of International Relations and EU studies has helped to transcend the fabricated dichotomy between the material and ideational,

¹⁵¹ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*: 39.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*,: 41-44.

¹⁵³ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*: 135.

but also the limitations stemming from the notion of a pre-social intrinsic state identity as presented by some moderate constructivists.¹⁵⁴ By way of challenging the core ontological assumptions of *mainstream theorizing*, poststructuralism has opened the EU-focused research towards the idea of a contingent formation of social phenomena, where neither social structures nor the interests of individuals are treated as ontological priors. Following the hypothesis of identity constituting the *world out there* through discourse, while also being contingent upon it, EU scholarship took interest in deconstructing *Europe* and *European norms* as discursive constructions constitutive of, but also contingent upon, the policy-process. The contingency of the meaning of Europe in view of the domestic policy process has been adopted by foreign policy analysts who examine the constitutive significance of articulating one particular identity of Europe in the domestic foreign policy debate. Wæver establishes that the research focus of this group of scholars is placed on analyzing how foreign policy, and thereby European policy, is based on diverse conceptualizations of Europe, and how these conceptualizations in turn are made possible by different articulations of such concepts as state and nation.¹⁵⁵

Taking poststructuralism directly into the realm of EU integration theorizing, Diez studies the idea of legitimate European governance as a *normative idea* contingent upon a discursively constructed *image* of Europe:

There are two features of discourses that are important for the argument to follow. For one, the statements that a discourse consists of, produce an *object*, and they do so by following specific rules. With respect of the EU, I will call the object a certain “image” of Europe, whereas the rules are criteria of legitimate European governance.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ See Ole Wæver, "The Rise and Fall of the Inter-Paradigm Debate," in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, eds. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996); Alexander Wendt, "On Constitution and Causation in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 5 (1998); and Jeffery T. Checkel, "Constructivism and EU Politics," in *Handbook of European Union Politics*, eds. Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack, and Ben Rosamond (London: SAGE Publications, 2007). See the poststructuralist critique of Wendt in Erik Ringmar, "Alexander Wendt: A Social Scientist Struggling with History," in *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?*, eds. Iver B. Neumann and Ole Wæver (London: Routledge, 1997) and Maja Zehfuss, "Constructivism and Identity," *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 3 (2001).

¹⁵⁵ Wæver, "Discursive Approaches," 205.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Diez, "Governance as a Matter of Discourse. Discursive Nodal Points in the British Debate over Europe," in *Biennial Convention on the European Community Studies Association (ECSA) - Dynamic of Decision-Making in the European Union* (Seattle, 1997): 4.

By claiming that Europe is actually what domestic actors talk about, Diez not only transcends the *nature of the beast* debate, but he also develops an analytical framework for the application of discursive analysis to questions related to EU integration. To be precise, Diez adopts the poststructuralist hypothesis of partial fixity of social meaning in discursive nodal points through the process of articulation, in which the actor is both constituted by, and acting autonomously from, the structuring discourse. He then applies this hypothesis to the earlier-mentioned study of the construction of the idea of legitimate European governance in the British debate.¹⁵⁷ His principal aim is to deconstruct various discourses on European governance and establish how these are determined by the meta-narratives from which they draw, and rules according to which, these meta-narratives are joined together. The analysis looks at the political process of articulating European governance as a discursive nodal point, while taking into consideration the meta-context within which this process resonates.¹⁵⁸ As a result, Diez brings about a dual caveat to the studies of EU integration; a conceptualization of *Europe* as a product of discursive struggle, and a conceptualization of this *Europe* being contingent upon both the political debate at home and that taking place in the transnational space.

Towards a Discursive Reading of Europeanization

The analytical framework grounded in poststructuralism responds to the problems stemming from a neoinstitutionalist reading of the Europeanization process – the under-problematization of the structure and analytical bracketing of the agency.¹⁵⁹ My principle claim is that a poststructuralist take on Europeanization contributes to the research agenda in a twofold fashion. First, in lieu of conceptualizing EU norms as static givens, poststructuralism understands norms as contingent upon a discursive context within which they resonate. Thus, the analytical focus shifts from the EU structure as *something that explains* towards EU structure as a variable *to be explained*.¹⁶⁰ Second, although constitutive to the actor, norms in poststructuralist thought are also contested by

¹⁵⁷ See Diez, "Europe as a Discursive Battleground." and Diez, "Governance as a Matter of Discourse. Discursive Nodal Points in the British Debate over Europe." For further application see Mats Braun, "Talking Europe – the Dilemma of Sovereignty and Modernization," *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 4 (2008).

¹⁵⁸ Diez draws substantially from the Copenhagen School, in particular the study on the conceptualization of Europe in domestic foreign policy discourses. However, in contrast to the layered-structure framework, as introduced by Hansen et al., by focusing on discursive nodal points, Diez reconciles the tension between the intentional actor-based process of articulation and the structured context in which this articulation takes place.

¹⁵⁹ See Chapter I of this thesis.

¹⁶⁰ Here, I paraphrase Radaelli's dictum that Europeanization ought not to be problematized as a variable that explains, but as a process to be explained. I set out to stress EU norms as an additional variable constructed within the Europeanization process. Radaelli, "Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?"

the actor through the discursive process (articulation). Whereas a neoinstitutionalist actor is reduced to a passive reproducer of one structure, poststructuralism accredits the actor with a degree of intentionality. A poststructuralist reading of Europeanization may transform the modus operandi of Europeanization research away from studying how EU institutions cause domestic change towards a novel set of research questions interested in how EU norms are transforming, and are concurrently being transformed by, the domestic policy process. The remainder of this chapter reconstructs the Europeanization process from the stance of a poststructuralist discourse analysis by providing a new reading of the pending questions about the meaning and nature of Europeanization.

Explaining the EU-Domestic-Europeanization Nexus

While remaining within the conceptual margins of Europeanization as a response to European integration, poststructuralism opens the research agenda to analytical models which are able to grasp the Europeanization process as dialectic interplay between the structure and the agency in a given discursive context. The suggested research design abandons the positivists' strive for causal analysis, which in reality confines the EU-domestic nexus to a cause and effect relationship. The EU's institutional structure is defined as an independent variable, and domestic change in response to the EU is the dependent variable.¹⁶¹ In line with the ontological reading of the social as a discursive construction, poststructuralism shifts the analytical focus away from the extent to which the EU's material and ideational structure causes domestic change. Instead, focus is placed on the deconstruction of structuring discourses (meta-frames), which articulate particular constructions of meaning to norms inferred in the EU's institutional order within the domestic policy process. EU norms (conceptualized as discursive nodal points) are being produced and reproduced via deliberate discursive practices of the actor, who is being partially constrained by the discursive context within which they operate. With both the structure and the agency conceptualized as endogenous to, and contingent upon, the discursive process (as opposed to standing outside of it), the associated research model problematizes how these structural forces are constructed within the domestic policy debate before studying their relationship to particular political outcomes. The meaning of Europe within Europeanization is thus open to deliberation:

¹⁶¹ For a detailed overview, see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

“poststructuralists conceptualize identity and policy as ontologically inseparable and this inseparability is enacted through discourse.”¹⁶²

A simplified interpretation of the poststructuralist take on Europeanization suggests that: Europe and EU rules and norms are discursively constructed and contested concepts within the domestic policy debate; the agency comprises of intentionally acting actors that frame EU norms within the domestic policy process; and that Europeanization is a discursive practice of articulating EU norms domestically, which results in either reproducing or reconceptualizing these very norms. As a result, Europeanization research faces the dual task of first, interpreting the meaning of EU norms in domestic policy processes, and second, identifying how and by whom these various interpretations have been mobilized in view of particular political outcomes. In the sections that follow, I examine these hypotheses in closer detail.

EU Structure as an Essentially Contested Idea

Diez explains the poststructuralist interpretation of the EU through the dictum “the EU is the EU is the EU, is it?” to consequently conclude that the EU is not simply the EU, but it is constructed differently in different discourses.¹⁶³ In contrast to an essentialist reading of the EU and EU norms as something confined to a given institutional order, poststructuralism sees the EU as a fluid and contested concept, which ought to be read in plural. This means that the EU and the accompanying norms do not stand independently from discourses, which enable them. These discourses are contextually grounded as products of power struggles in a given time and space. Poststructuralism detaches the European structure from the constraints of its material manifestation in the EU’s institutional structure – from the *acquis* – and moves it into the sphere of discursivity. This is not to say that EU norms are treated as freely floating; they are still materially grounded.¹⁶⁴ In essence, the meaning of EU norms is a product of a strategic discursive practice of self-confirmation via the exclusion of the counter-self, or the threatening *Other*.¹⁶⁵ This production of multiple readings of EU norms is not completely random, but follows certain pre-given rules defined by the context of discursive interaction, or the actors’ mutual positioning,

¹⁶² Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*: 24.

¹⁶³ Diez, "Governance as a Matter of Discourse. Discursive Nodal Points in the British Debate over Europe," 3.

¹⁶⁴ See discussion on poststructuralist meta-theory on page 45-52.

¹⁶⁵ See for instance Neumann’s utilization of identity as a relational phenomenon in the study of European identity formation in the context of EU accession. Neumann analyzes the construction of Central European identity in the Czech, Polish, and Hungarian discourse and what this consequently means for the concept of European identity. Neumann, "European Identity, EU Expansion, and the Integration/Exclusion Nexus."

existing institutionalized routines, and changing contexts.¹⁶⁶ In addition to studying the text – *what is being said* – one is to also contextualize the discourse by way of answering *who said what, to whom, where, and when*.

Expressed in poststructuralist jargon, EU norms are defined as discursive nodal points – products of articulation in an attempt to fixate several discourses into a unified whole.¹⁶⁷ This suggests that both the EU and its norms, such as multilevel governance or non-discrimination, have the same ontological status as terms like nation, state, or democracy as they acquire different meanings within different discursive formations (meta-narratives or underlying discourses). Equally to democracy being read differently when attached to the meta-narrative of *Liberalism* and *Communism*, the EU is accredited with a different meaning when *quilted* through meta-narratives of post-Westphalian and Westphalian sovereignty.¹⁶⁸

Domestic Actors as Inventive and Plural

Concurrently to drawing the analytical interest towards the *problématique* of constructing the structure, poststructuralism has the potential to integrate theories of agency to Europeanization research. The poststructuralist anti-essentialist ontology and consequent relational conceptualization of the agency-structure dichotomy creates space for the analysis of social agents in bringing about change in the structure, which concurrently constitutes them. Admittedly, with the agency theorized as endogenous to the discursive structure, which it reproduces (but also contests), this introduction takes the form of a side-door entrance rather than a grand entrance.¹⁶⁹

Social agents, and their identities and interests, are parts of a discourse. Poststructuralism rejects ontological intentionalism in the sense of actors standing and constructing the discourse from the *outside*. However, in view of the previously discussed inherent *undecidability* of the social, the practice of articulation does not suggest the reproduction of one hegemonic structure

¹⁶⁶ Maarten A. Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 275.

¹⁶⁷ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*: 113.

¹⁶⁸ See Diez, "Europe as a Discursive Battleground." and Braun, "Talking Europe – the Dilemma of Sovereignty and Modernization."

¹⁶⁹ This means that a poststructuralist reading of Europeanization differs substantially from the emerging *bottom-up* approaches to Europeanization, which focus on intentional *mobilization* of domestic societal actors in response to EU integration. Such research is predominantly grounded in the social movement theory. See McCauley, "Bottom-Up Europeanization Exposed: Social Movement Theory and Non-State Actors in France."

per se, but may also mean (or lead to) a continuous redefinition of social and political spaces.¹⁷⁰ This implies a degree of intentionality on the side of the actor. The argument about the intentionality of the social agency goes back to the hypothesis of the subject being inherently a *split subject* and not fully reducible to the discourse within which it resonates. As a result, some articulatory practices will stand well within the margins of given hegemonic discourses, and the agency can deliberately opt for an alternative articulation in view of the persistence of discursive plurality within a given context. The actor has the *option* of either disintegrating from their identity or re-installing it.

Besides hypothesizing the social actor as intentional given that they have the capacity to deliberately articulate, poststructuralism also sees this actor's identity and intentions as plural. Against the background of a hegemonic struggle, the actor may identify with many, and often opposing, elements simultaneously. Rather than suggesting an actor will articulate the same argument through the policy-process, we can assume they will draw from different discourses in constructing the meaning of a norm. This may consequently result in the coexistence of mutually incompatible and even contradictory conceptions of a single norm within one political space.

Such an understanding of the agency relieves the Europeanization agenda from its initial analytical adherence to the process of downward implementation of the EU's rules and norms. Now researchers can address problems of reconstructing discourses and identities of the actors, which make the implementation possible in the first place. To understand how and why the EU structure constitutes the agency, one first needs to understand the political practice that constitutes the structure; and for this, the problematization of the agency is indispensable.

Europeanization as Articulation of EU Norms (at Home)

In view of the above, Europeanization can be subsumed to a practice (process) of articulating the EU and EU norms in domestic (or transnational) political spaces. Here, articulation is defined as "a practice that establishes a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" – that is, a practice of changing the meaning (identity) of elements referred to within a discursive formation. Under this meaning of articulation, Europeanization denotes a dual process of concurrent construction of the domestic policy process in line with EU norms and contestation (molding) of EU norms by the very same policy

¹⁷⁰ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*: 144.

process.¹⁷¹ As such, Europeanization differs from passive downloading of EU norms into the domestic political space (occasionally mitigated by domestic mediating forces) as suggested by the neoinstitutionalist camp, but it also differs from pro-active (voluntary) *usage* of the EU structure as suggested by the emerging bottom-up view on Europeanization grouped around social movement scholarship.

Continuing my plea for a theory of Europeanization whose ontological flexibility positions norm contestation *a pari* with norm compliance, the ensuing step is to develop an analytical framework through which this norm compliance and norm contestation should be analyzed. I suggest that a relational understanding of social norms (or social meanings *writ large*), as suggested by poststructuralists, enables the study of concurrent norm reproduction and contestation. Specifically, the suggested research design, based on discourse analysis, conceptualizes norms as discursive nodal points, which, when articulated, are being attached and re-attached to certain meta-narratives (hegemonic discourses) via condensation (based on *the logics of metaphorical unity*) and displacement (*the logics of metonymic unity*). As the first step of discursive analysis, one reconstructs how EU norms are being framed within the domestic political debate and from which meta-narratives they draw. As the second step, one must *unpack* the relationship between the policy and discourse, with policies conceptualized as an integral part of the discursive process, rather than as an extra-discursive phenomenon.¹⁷²

The operationalization of poststructuralist anti-essentialist ontology and non-causal epistemology in political science *à la* Laclau and Mouffe implies the following line of thought. First, EU norms, as social structures, are defined as discursive; they are not social pre-givens, but are shaped by the discourse. Second, this discursivity of the social also implies its inherent *undecidability*; social structures are never fully fixated and never fully un-fixated. Consequently, the meaning of EU norms is not fully enclosed within one hegemonic discourse, but is fluid. Third, the process of discursive construction of identity (social meanings) implies the concurrent

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*; 105.

¹⁷² Diez argues against such analytical strategies where discourse is positioned as an independent variable having the potential of causing policy outcomes, which are consequently treated as extra-discursive. Such reasoning exposes the research to a structuralist bias as there is no systemic link between the discursive practice (policy-statements) back to discourse. Again, the research has larger utility in explaining continuity than change. See Diez' critique of the application of poststructuralism in the foreign policy analysis as introduced by Hansen et al. in Diez, "Europe as a Discursive Battleground," 13-15. On discourse as a causal variable in policy-analysis see Schmidt and Radaelli, "Europeanisation, Discourse and Policy Change: Mapping the New Research Agenda."; Wæver, "Identity, Communities, and Foreign Policy Analysis: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory."; and Hansen and Wæver, *European Integration and National Identity: A Challenge of the Nordic States*.

attempts for hegemonization of social meaning by one discursive formation and the production of social antagonism (*Otherness*), which renders the possibility of full hegemony. In essence, by way of articulating a norm in a particular meta-discourse – saying what the norm at hand is – one is simultaneously producing antagonistic discourses, which define what this norm is not. The meaning of social norms is therefore dual, comprising of the *Self* and the *negative-Self*, or the *Other*. To say that the EU's political order is based on a post-Westphalian understanding of sovereignty simultaneously implies that the EU is not Westphalian, which then implies that it is not solely an instrument for pursuing national interests and so forth.¹⁷³ Fourth, the very existence of the *Other*, as an alternative to the *Self*, makes the discursive structure open to *dislocation* (contestation), which may result in the reconceptualization of the old discourse or the creation of a novel hegemonizing discourse. This process of contestation is agency-based, although this agency is not fully autonomous from the discursive structure that defines it. I suggest that by articulating EU norms in domestic policy debates, one disrupts the relationship between the orthodox meta-narrative and the norm, consequently opening the very norm to the process of contestation, which may result in the reestablishment of the old meaning based on *condensation* or the production of new meanings around a novel set of meta-narratives based on *displacement*. Whereas the prior suggests a linking and consequent accommodation of the new *text* within the elements of the old meta-narrative (note that discourses are rather flexible), the latter suggests a dislocation from the old narrative by way of associating the norm to competing meta-narratives. In view of the plurality of the actor, these processes may occur in parallel. Ultimately, such a theoretical framework is fit to grasp the possibility of change in absence of extra-discursive shocks, and the coexistence of different and often contradictory interpretations of norms (and stemming policies) within one discursive space. As a result, one establishes that a singular reading of both the EU and the Europeanization process is misguided. Many parallel *Europeanizations* produce plural interpretations of Europe (hence, *Europes*).

¹⁷³ Žižek explains this duality of Self and Other (or hegemony and social antagonism) in an analogy to a joke from Lubitsch's *Ninotchka*. Upon ordering a coffee without cream, the main protagonist is told the café is out of cream and only has milk, thus would they be satisfied with coffee without milk instead. As coffee without cream is not the same as coffee without milk, this is an absolutely satisfactory response. In essence, what you do not get is part of the identity of what you do get. "Live Debate - Slavoj Žižek," (Intelligence Squared - the World of Debate, 2011).

Is Europeanization Really a Process with No Genesis? Structural Change in View of the Wider Spatiotemporal Context

In Chapter 1 I argued that neoinstitutionalist theorizing exposes Europeanization studies to a dual fallacy. First, a structural bias and the consequent inability to problematize endogenous change implies a certain *finalité* of the EU project as it continuously reproduces one social structure to new political spaces, be it within or outside the EU borders. I claimed that such an approach is particularly unfavorable towards the non-members, who, exempt from participating in EU integration, are portrayed as having very little to no say in the construction of EU norms. This reduces the role of domestic actors from the non-member states to relatively passively downloading the *acquis*. My second point concerned the EU-centricity of mainstream Europeanization theorizing in the sense of understanding EU norms as given, thereby cut-off from the wider spatial and historical context in which they are situated. This goes back to the claim of structural ontology producing theories of continuity rather than change. Neoinstitutionalism is unable to acknowledge that what the EU is today is largely connected to the EU's historical development in relation to the outside world. Consequently, many of the norms accredited with a 'made-in-the-EU' stamp are both a result of the EU's self-identification in opposition to the *Other* and a self-projection of the *Other's* view on what the EU is. In addition, many of these norms are essentially global rather than contained within the EU's institutional structure.

Poststructuralism starts from a different ontological position in problematizing social meaning as relational and contested in view of a discursive process. Consequently, structural change is seen as integral to the process of structural reproduction. Since Europeanization is seen as a dual process of concurrent norm reproduction and contestation, the ensuing *change* is also dual. This change comprises the reorientation of the domestic policy debate to accommodate EU norms, and the reproduction or reinterpretation of EU norms consequent to these being articulated in the domestic policy process. When mapping change, the likely research models need to look beyond simple causation in problematizing the tripartite relationship between discourse, social norms, and social process. The aim of discursive analysis is to untangle the discursive process as action determined by the social and historical context, and action through which actors are changing this very context.

By conceptualizing the EU and EU norms as contingent upon the discursive process, and consequently restraining the analysis from making any a priori assumptions about the meaning of the EU and the ensuing norms, a discursive reading of Europeanization also rids the research agenda from the EU-centric bias. This does not imply poststructuralist analysis changes the modus operandi of Europeanization in terms of discussing other instances of European integration such as NATO or the Council of Europe (although such a progression is certainly welcomed).¹⁷⁴ Rather, by defining the EU as *whatever the domestic actors say of it within a given context*, analysis grounded in poststructuralist thought is more attentive to the spatiotemporal context that enables this particular *reading* of EU norms in the first place.¹⁷⁵ Essentially, rather than discussing whether Europeanization refers to EU-ization or to a domestic response to European regional integration *writ large*, it is more meaningful to focus on how Europeanization is constructed by the relevant policy discourses. Such an analytical design challenges the mainstream narrative of European culture as something extra-discursive and endogenous to the EU's institutional order (and thus, a conglomerate of identities of Western European states). In return, poststructuralism opens the analytical space towards the understanding of Europeanization as a relational and continuously reconstituted process. Poststructuralism acknowledges Europeanization as a process constructed through the EU's relationship with the *outside world*. With the European structure being contested across time and space, EU-centric claims about the endogenousness of the Europeanization process to the EU's institutional order have limited standing. A non-EU centric perspective offers an alternative in which Europeanization is a process of ideational diffusion and contestation based on ideas of different origins.¹⁷⁶

Conclusion – Closing In on the Agency-Structure Gap within Europeanization Research

This chapter has answered the call for a paradigm shift in the analysis of Europeanization. In response to the teleological and EU-centrist argumentation inherent to a neoinstitutionalist

¹⁷⁴ I see this as a methodological choice (partially supported by a neoinstitutionalist bias). Additionally, there is little guarantee that a swap between the EU and NATO, with the theoretical framework remaining constant, would not trigger a comparable swap between EU-centrism and NATO-centrism. For the neoinstitutional preference of EU-based analysis, see Chapter 1 on page 15-22.

¹⁷⁵ Note that, in view of its anti-essentialist ontological position, this is a very simplified explanation of the poststructuralist reading of the EU.

¹⁷⁶ For a critique of the ahistoricism of Europeanization research, see Trine Flockhart, "Europeanization or EU-ization? The Transfer of European Norms across Time and Space," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 48, no. 4 (2010).

reading of Europeanization, poststructuralism was adopted for its anti-essentialist approach to answering what is being studied (ontology) and its non-foundationalist (hence, non-causal) answer to what and how we can study it (epistemology). With the established shift being primarily meta-theoretical and then theoretical, poststructuralism draws a different picture of Europeanization to the one offered by neoinstitutionalism. The ensuing research model, by calling attention to questions of spatiotemporal specificity of social structures, in addition to structural contingency in view of the agency, pushes the analysis beyond the constraints of the neoinstitutionalist canon.

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. Hence, poststructuralism brings the concept of discursivity to political analysis, while drawing from dual metaphysical reasoning. Often rejected for its alleged overt idealism, poststructuralism does not deny the existence of a physical reality, but instead sees the meaning of this reality to be discursively constructed. Social identities, while materially grounded, are constructed through language. Discourse is therefore defined as a relational system that determines the meaning of social by regulating the formation of statements. Additionally, 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 proposed by structuralist theorizing. The structuring of the social is only temporary, with a given structure never succeeding in establishing its full totality. Poststructuralism allows 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. The actors are 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 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.

Following this theory, the introduction to this chapter inquired into the poststructuralist ontological reading of Europeanization through a set of questions. How does poststructuralism

define the structure in Europeanization? How does poststructuralism define the agency and the agency's role in Europeanization? What is Europeanization? What kind of change is produced by Europeanization? And finally, what is the role of geographical and temporal variables in the Europeanization process? Answers to these questions were established throughout the chapter. 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 should talk about many Europes as opposed to one hegemonic Europe. Second, the poststructuralist actor is intentional and plural. Poststructuralism allows 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 and transnational political debates, which implies concurrent reproduction and contestation of discursively established meanings (identities). While being articulated in the domestic policy process, EU norms determine and are determined by this very process. Fourth, the chapter established that the proposed theoretical framework rids Europeanization theorizing of the *institutionalist bias* (manifested in teleology and EU-centricity), as it can problematize structural change in view of the wider spatiotemporal context.

Chapter 3: Discourse as Data – Methodology of Discourse Analysis

Introduction

This chapter draws from the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization as established in Chapter 2 and discusses concrete questions of methodology and research design. I address how poststructuralism's meta-theoretical and theoretical considerations can be applied to the underlying question of this thesis about the relationship between domestic perceptions of the European Union and domestic political and policy processes.

Poststructuralist epistemology argues that a researcher cannot study the social world independent of their social context. From an epistemological viewpoint, discursive approaches are about the construction of knowledge.¹⁷⁷ This suggests that also problem-driven research – which stands central to poststructuralist epistemology – is not freestanding, but is grounded in the researcher's own ontological assumptions. Besides rejecting the notion of objectivity, poststructuralism is skeptical towards the existence of universal laws about the social world, which would copy the laws of nature. Because the ideational and the material world are inseparable as they gain meaning through language, it is impossible to establish causal laws between them.

This dissertation aligns with the poststructuralist interest in problem-driven and non-causal research. The research method is established as a problematization of pressing political or societal problems, prior to the analysis of the historical and structural conditions which gave rise to them.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, the adopted problem-driven analysis is not an atheoretical analysis – the very process of problematization is already defined by ontological and theoretical constraints of poststructuralism. The aim is to define and explain a studied problem, while being aware of constraints established by our own research choices.

Similarly to rejecting the canonization of methodology by either theory-driven or method-driven research, this dissertation denies the alleged superiority of causal epistemology over non-causal research. Following the earlier established ontological maxim that identities and policies are constituted through language, causal *truths* are seen as historically and politically defined. Put

¹⁷⁷ Stefano Guzzini, "A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 6, no. 2 (2000): 160.

¹⁷⁸ See discussion in David Howarth, "Applying Discourse Theory: The Method of Articulation," in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, eds. David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 316-19.

differently, because ideational and material factors are given meaning through language – discursive representations of identity are at the same time the precondition for, and are reproduced through, articulation of policy – it is not possible to answer the question about the causal effect of discourses over non-discursive factors.¹⁷⁹

A rejection of positivist and causal analysis is often mistaken for a rejection of methodology.¹⁸⁰ To reject the universal validity of quasi-scientific methods does not mean one accepts a laissez-faire perspective on methodology. A structured and methodologically informed analysis is not only compatible with poststructuralism, but is also desirable. Works by Diez, Drulák, Hansen, Kratochwil and Friedrichs, Larsen, Wæver, etc. offer a systematic and detailed account of how one can use discourse to unpack social and political realities.¹⁸¹ With methodology no longer being restrained to testing and applying quasi-explanatory formulas in the positivist tradition, the discussion of research models and methods also becomes a prerogative for scholars concerned with questions about discursive construction of political identities, or the hegemonization of subjects by particular discourses. Howarth draws from Durkheim and Weber to suggest that poststructuralism approaches method as an exercise in the clarification of what is logical. It is a reflection upon, and a structured presentation of, research means whose relevance has already been demonstrated in the field.¹⁸² Similarly, Kratochwil and Friedrichs see poststructuralist methods as pragmatic; a set of practical suggestions about methodology that mimic the way we generate knowledge in social practice.¹⁸³

Methodology in poststructuralism is not relatable to a rationalist effort in establishing quasi-scientific truths and causal laws about the relations of studied phenomena. It is also not absolutely relativist and empiricist as it does not stand solely on the researcher's intuition in the construction of a historical narrative. I see poststructuralist methodology as following a set of

¹⁷⁹ For a discussion, see Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*: 22-25.

¹⁸⁰ Poststructuralists have traditionally observed Derrida's rejection of methodology for it being inherently positivistic and inconceivable with their interests in non-causal analytical patterns. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida classifies deconstruction as a non-method as it goes beyond a positivist quest for reliability and validity testing. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1998). Also see Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism in International Relations. Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999).

¹⁸¹ Diez, "Europe as a Discursive Battleground."; Petr Drulák, "Methaphors Europe Lives By: Language and Institutional Change of the European Union," *EUI Working Papers* 15 (2004); Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*; Henrik Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis: France, Britain and Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013); and Wæver, "Identity, Communities, and Foreign Policy Analysis: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory."

¹⁸² Howarth, "Applying Discourse Theory: the Method of Articulation," 317-18.

¹⁸³ Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil, "On Acting and Knowing: How Pragmatism Can Advance International Relations Research and Methodology," *International Organization* 63, no. 4 (2009): 166.

rules and justifying one's choices at every stage of the analysis. In short, it is about making choices about how to approach and study discourses, and then how to build a research design.¹⁸⁴

Therefore, this chapter sets to answer the following:

- (a) How is one to study discourse in line with poststructuralist ontology and epistemology?
- (b) What is the focus of analysis? What empirical problems are examined and why?
- (c) How is the research design structured? What research questions are produced by a poststructuralist theorizing of Europeanization?
- (d) How is the empirical corpus selected and collected to facilitate a reliable answer to the established research questions?

Part 1 establishes the focus of the conducted research. It discusses the choice of analyzing Europeanization of territoriality discourses within policy debates on territorial reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and then in Croatia. Part 2 turns to methodology. I justify the choice of an inductive approach to delimiting central discourses that define Europeanization. While maneuvering within the realm of poststructuralism, broader conclusions about Europeanization are established from the analyzed data. The Czech and Slovak comparison is utilized to induce a research model for the underlying discourse structures that inform Europeanization. This is followed by a discussion on the organization of the Croatian case study. As an outlier, the Croatian case is utilized to translate the established analytical model of a poststructuralist reading of Europeanization to the non-CEEC context. Finally, Part 3 elaborates on the applied method of text analysis and the established corpus of the empirical material.

Research Focus

As stated in the Introduction, this thesis studies the domestic perception and articulation of Europe and EU norms in the Europeanization context. I am particularly interested in interpreting how domestic discourses mold the meaning of EU norms, while also reproducing these same norms. Accordingly, my research sets to challenge the established *canons* of Europeanization scholarship via the adoption of the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization in the EU accession context. Whereas Chapter 1 and 2 discussed how poststructuralism speaks to

¹⁸⁴ For various forms of discourse analysis methods, see Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations." For a discussion of research design questions in poststructuralist literature, see Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*: 65-82.

Europeanization on the more abstract level of metaphysics, the proceeding chapters *get real* to cope with the empirical questions. Simply put, the first part of the dissertation established why one should consider poststructuralism in relation to Europeanization, and the ensuing parts discuss how one is to do so with real world case studies.

Territoriality as a Discursive Construct

I chose Europeanization of domestic discourses on territoriality, and more specifically a state's political territoriality, to be the central object of analysis. The research is situated in the context of the EU's widening to the east. In the poststructuralist tradition, the proceeding empirical section of the thesis analyzes domestic discourses on territoriality that develop in the context of a country's accession to the EU, with particular accent placed on interpreting domestic readings of EU norms concerning territorial organization of power. The research is organized in two qualitative case studies: a comparative study of the political and policy debates on territorial reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and a single case study on the political and policy debates on territorial reforms in Croatia. The Czech Republic and Slovakian comparison is used to draw broader conceptual hypotheses about the domestic reading of the EU and Europeanization *writ large*. The case of Croatia is singled out as an *odd case* in which I put into practice the conceptual hypotheses established in the Czech Republic and Slovakian comparison.

In my study, the territorial grounding of the state's power is understood as a social construct rather than a material given.¹⁸⁵ Accordingly, the thesis about a fixed spatial demarcation

¹⁸⁵ The argument about the fluidity of political territoriality is more significantly explored by social geography in line with a broader conceptualization of space as a constantly contested phenomenon. Besides having a material dimension, territory has a strong social dimension. This suggests that a territory is viewed as an ongoing social process, consisting of social space and social action. As such, a territory is not a given, but it is constructed and deconstructed through social action. This position provides a space for research interested in deconstructing the territorial organization of states and how territoriality matters in political relations. See discussion on the meaning of territory in Anssi Paasi, "Territory," in *A Companion to Political Geography*, eds. Katharyne Mitchell, John Agnew, and Gerard Toal (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). For a critical interpretation of territoriality, see for instance Klaus John Dodds and James Derrick Sidaway, "Locating Critical Geopolitics," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12, no. 5 (1994); Simon Dalby, "Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference, and Dissent," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 3 (1991); and Robert Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Note that the hypothesis about the fluidity of political territoriality is grounded in a poststructuralist classification of the social as a discursive creation. Accordingly, poststructuralists are interested in deconstructing discursive practices through which political space is given meaning. Examples are spatial discourses on the hierarchical domestic space and the anarchical international space as its antagonistic other. See for instance John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, "The New Geopolitics: the Dynamics of Geopolitical Disorder," in *A World in Crisis? Geographical Perspectives*, eds. R.J. Johnston and P.J. Taylor (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) and Gearóid Ó. Tuathail and John Agnew, "Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy," *Political Geography* 11, no. 2 (1992). For an extensive discussion on a poststructuralist reading of state's territoriality, see Alan Finlayson and James Martin, "Poststructuralism," in *The*

of a state's sovereign powers is replaced with a view on political territoriality as a variable contingent upon the social context that defines it. To be precise, political territoriality is defined as a means in establishing political relationships through the control of socially constructed territories.¹⁸⁶ Political territoriality depicts the organization of space for political purpose. Such a position transcends the dichotomy between the canonic Westphalian understanding of political territoriality, which takes the nation state as a container of the state's sovereign powers, and the post-Westphalian approach, which treats the concept of territoriality as obsolete.¹⁸⁷ This suggests that the discussion is not whether the post-Westphalian era brings about deterritorialization of the state and consequently also a demise of a territorial politics, but how the power and space relationship is molded (re-territorialized) to establish novel forms of political control, which exist in parallel with the nation state.¹⁸⁸ My research is therefore focused on interpreting rationalities, which bring meaning to space and make this space governable. Accordingly, this study looks at the way concepts and practices defining political territoriality are created through political discourse. Read in this context, concepts such as Westphalian, post-Westphalian, territorial, or trans-territorial are narratives in the process of a permanent redefinition through practice.

Territoriality and the Integration of Post-communist Countries with the EU

Nothing speaks more clearly of the fluidity of political territoriality than the integration of the post-communist bloc with the European Union. Through a double process of supranationalization and fragmentation of the state's power, European integration challenges the position of the nation state as an archetype of territorial organization of power. This results in the formation of novel

State. Theories and Issues, eds. Colin Hay, Michael Lister, and David Marsh (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

¹⁸⁶ For a detailed discussion, see Hans Vollaard, "The Logic of Political Territoriality," *Geopolitics* 14, no. 4 (2009); Tuomas Forsberg, "Beyond Sovereignty, Within Territoriality: Mapping the Space of Late-Modern (Geo)Politics," *Cooperation and Conflict* 31, no. 4 (1996); and Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*.

¹⁸⁷ For a Westphalian approach to territoriality, see for instance Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993). For a post-Westphalian understanding of territoriality, see John Gerard Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations," *International Organization* 47, no. 1 (1993). The dichotomy between the Westphalian and post-Westphalian reading of territoriality reflects the classical differentiation in political organization between a modern territorial state system and a post-modern deterritorializing political order. For a critical overview, see Benno Teschke, "The Metamorphoses of European Territoriality: A Historical Reconstruction," in *State Territoriality and European Integration*, eds. Michael Burgess and Hans Vollaard (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁸⁸ Deterritorialization and reterritorialization are terms describing changes in the territorial organization of social life coined by Deleuze and Guattari. This thesis adopts deterritorialization to explain the process of decoupling power from a given territory. In turn, reterritorialization describes the restructuring of the meaning of a territory through the formulation of a novel power-territory nexus. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *L'anti-Oedipe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972).

normative constructions linking power and territory. The state-centricity of the Westphalian era is replaced with a multilevel system of governance, which provides a common denominator for a complex mix of non-territorially and multi-territorially grounded sources of government and governance.¹⁸⁹

Juxtaposed to deterritorialization of the nation state in the context of EU integration is the nation state's consolidation in the context of post-communist transition. In the aftermath of 1989, the former eastern bloc resurrected the territorial nation state to answer the political void created by the end of communism. Claims for territorial sovereignty and consequent housing of political territoriality within the central state underlined the state-building processes in post-communist Europe. As a result, the accession of the post-communist countries to the EU has been characterized by a tension between consolidation of the central state following 1989 and de-consolidation of state-centricity in view of integration with the European Union. This tension is most noticeable in the transposition of multilevel governance, as a novel mode of governance, via, for instance, the cohesion policy *acquis*, and the related pre-accession aid requirements to the governance architecture of the CEECs and later also the South-East European countries (SEECs).

Broadly speaking, the cohesion policy addresses economic and social disparities in the European Union through a range of primarily financial instruments.¹⁹⁰ Due to its strong

¹⁸⁹ Scholarly debate on possible shifts in the organization of political space away from the nation state and in favor of a multiperspective polity such as the European Union was first initiated by Ruggie. In a study on possible changes in the territorial organization of states and international organizations, Ruggie describes the European Union as the first multiperspective polity of the modern era. The member states act as a *collectivity of singularity*, making it difficult to deduce the EU's political conduct to separate entities with fixed preferences and identities. See Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations," 172. Ruggie's article generated a wide response among the IR scholarship and was followed by a plethora of research aiming to label and grasp the shifts in the territorial organization of politics, which were taking place under the auspices of EU integration. See for instance Caporaso, "The European Union and Forms of State: Westphalian, Regulatory or Post-Modern?"; Forsberg, "Beyond Sovereignty, Within Territoriality: Mapping the Space of Late-Modern (Geo)Politics."; Risse-Kappen, "Exploring the Nature of the Beast: International Relations Theory and Comparative Policy Analysis Meet the European Union."; Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, *Multileveled Governance and European Integration* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001); Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-Level Governance," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003); Markus Jachtenfuchs, Thomas Diez, and Sabine Jung, "Which Europe? Conflicting Models of a Legitimate European Political Order," *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 4 (1998); and Markus Jachtenfuchs and Beate Kohler-Koch, "The Transformation of Governance in the European Union," *Working Paper* 11 (Mannheim: Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung, 1995). For an overview of scholarly research on the transformation of the nation state in the post-Cold War context, see George Sørensen, *The Transformation of the State: Beyond the Myth of Retreat* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 1-7. For a discussion on fluctuating conceptions of territoriality in Europe over time, see Teschke, "The Metamorphoses of European Territoriality: A Historical Reconstruction."

¹⁹⁰ For an analysis of the EU's cohesion policy, see John Bachtler and Ivan Turok, eds., *The Coherence of EU Regional Policy: Contrasting Perspectives on the Structural Funds* (London: Routledge, 2002). For an analysis of the relationship between the EU's cohesion policy and multilevel governance, see Liesbet Hooghe, *Cohesion Policy*

subnational focus, the cohesion policy proven to be a motivator for multilevel governance, and seen as an alternative to state-centrism or supranationalism, for example. This policy particularly refers to reterritorialization of power away from the central state along vertical lines via the principles of regionalization and subsidiarity, and horizontal lines via the principle of partnership.¹⁹¹ Financial packages aimed at reducing regional disparities in economic development are implemented in a way to support decentralization of power away from the national government and to consequently guide the pluralization of domestic structures of governance. Not only are sub-state and intrastate actors encouraged to join supranational and national actors at all stages of the policy process, but democratic deliberation is also promoted as a novel method of policy-making. In the accession context, the European Union utilizes the institutional framework of the cohesion policy to put forward multilevel governance as a new discourse on territorial organization of power. The legacy of political centrism and a corresponding resolution for the political elites to maintain control over the domestic policy process – including such initiatives as decentralization or regionalization – have made it challenging for the CEECs and SEECs to meet the necessary territorial and political reconfiguration of state architecture in order to gain EU membership. Particularly telling are the studies of Bafoil and Brusis, who both describe territorial reforms in the CEECs to be the result of the central elites embracing external authorities to reinforce their dominant position *at home*.¹⁹²

By examining Europeanization of territorial politics and policies (such as decentralization and regionalization) in the CEECs and SEECs from a poststructuralist position, one should expect the policy process to be defined by the cohabitation of two antagonistic narratives on the

and European Integration: Building Multi-level Governance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Vivien A. Schmidt, *Democracy in Europe: The EU and National Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 8-48.

¹⁹¹ The principle of regionalization sets that EU funds are to be administered at the regional level within states. Whereas the *acquis* provides the EU Commission with limited leverage over the territorial organization of member states, the principle of regionalization was employed to steer the formation of self-governing regions as meso-units of government in the CEECs. The principle of subsidiarity, as a norm determining the political organization of power, states that public authorities are to be administered by the level closest to the citizens. Being relatively ambiguous, subsidiarity was accredited with several different interpretations in the political practice of the European Union. In the accession context, it was primarily interpreted as an organizing principle of decentralization in favor of regions and localities. The principle of partnership requires funds to be administered in cooperation with several state and non-state actors. This supports horizontal decentralization through the engagement of non-state actors in the policy-making process.

¹⁹² See François Bafoil, *Central and Eastern Europe: Europeanization and Social Change* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and Brusis, "The Instrumental Use of European Union Conditionality: Regionalization in the Czech Republic and Slovakia."

territorial organization of power. The idea that democracy is best served if power is centralized in a territorial state is confronted with a pluralist model of political organization where power is diffused through multiple authorities (both territorial and non-territorial). Thus, multilevel governance is conceptualized as a novel discursive frame, which challenges the hegemonic position of the unitary conception of territorial organization.

Europeanization of the domestic understanding of territoriality, as the central empirical problem of this thesis, is positioned to highlight how particular articulations of the EU and EU norms construct the domestic policy process, especially when these EU discourses are in an antagonistic relationship with other discourses operating in the domestic political space. How domestic actors have perceived and coped with the EU's reading of territoriality (as reflected in the provisions of the cohesion policy for instance), as an antipode to national demands for state-centricity, is an interesting and still relatively unexplored subject of analysis.¹⁹³ Through the prism of political debates on the reform of the state's territorial organization (such as localization and regionalization), this study interprets how the EU constructs the domestic understanding of territoriality with particular focus placed on the potential shift away from a state-centric conceptualization of territoriality towards a polycentric one.

Research Design

The research is organized into two case studies. The first is a comparative study of policy debates on territorial reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (when discussing the comparison, henceforth also referred to as Czech/Slovak). The purpose of the comparison is to establish basic discourses (ideal-types) on the European Union that inform the Europeanization process, as expressed in shifts in domestic perception of territoriality in view of EU accession. The core of the analysis centers on the second wave of territorial reforms, particularly regionalization (i.e.

¹⁹³ Note that whereas there is vast literature interested in the impact of the cohesion policy *acquis* on the governance practices in CEECs and (to a lesser extent) in SEECs, most studies conceptualize regionalization or decentralization in terms of transposition of EU norms (rules) into the domestic structures of the candidate states. For an overview, see Diana Pitchel and Michael W. Bauer, "Subnational Governance Approaches on the Rise – Reviewing a Decade of Eastern European Regionalization Research," *Regional and Federal Studies* 19, no. 3 (2009). The fact that the preponderance of research conceptualizes the EU as a cause, and the domestic processes as an effect, speaks directly to the already identified limitations of Europeanization scholarship. For the rationalist account of the Europeanization of domestic governance via the cohesion policy, see Hughes, Sasse, and Gordon, *Europeanization and Regionalization in the EU's Enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe: The Myth of Conditionality and Grabbe, The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization Through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe*. For a sociological account, see 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).

formation of regions as meso-level units of government), as these reforms were introduced in the context of Czech and Slovak accession to the European Union. The rationale is that by reconstructing how EU norms were linked to particular representations of political territoriality in domestic policy debate on territorial reforms, one can draw broader conclusions about the mutually constitutive relationship between EU norms and the articulation of these norms in domestic policy processes. The Czech/Slovak comparison will help us better understand the duality of the Europeanization process in which actors' identities and interests are transformed by EU norms, while at the same time, they also shape the nature of these very norms.

The second case study examines the Europeanization of territoriality in the policy debate on territorial reforms in Croatia. Conclusions drawn from the Czech/Slovak comparison are applied to Croatia, which is studied as an *outlier* case. I use the findings about the Europeanization of discursive representations of territoriality in the Czech Republic and Slovakia to explain the political debate on territorial reforms in Croatia. If there is a deviation between the Croatian case and the tentative theoretical model established by the Czech/Slovak comparison, the model is modified to accommodate the results of the Croatian study. Accordingly, the addition of new concepts reduces (mends) the potential deviations.

Case Selection

The Czech Republic and Slovakia were selected because these countries share an institutional legacy in state administration, which is the result of a common history when together they made up Czechoslovakia. Additionally, both countries dissolved the old system of territorial organization as part of a post-communist reform package and were consequently faced with the task of territorial restructuring while negotiating for accession to the European Union. In the Czech Republic and in Slovakia, the EU's push for the formation of self-governing regions coincided with strong indigenous pressures for territorial reforms. However, the two countries differ in the domestic perception of, and the experience with, the European Union. Slovakia's accession to the EU was troublesome due to the authoritarian practices of Vladimír Mečiar's government.¹⁹⁴ The Czech Republic entered the EU from a different position as regards to both political and economic development. The Czech and Slovak political discourses illustrate a

¹⁹⁴ Vladimír Mečiar is the former leader of the national conservative People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Ľudová strana – Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, ĽS-HZDS or HZDS). He served three mandates as Prime Minister; 1990-1991, 1992-1994, and 1994-1998.

dichotomy in the domestic understanding of the EU as a motor of economic development and modernization, and the EU as an alternative to undemocratic practices of the national government.

Although the institutional arrangements following the territorial reforms are rather similar, a more focused analysis reveals major differences in certain policy choices. Both countries introduced self-governing regions as the second tier of territorial government. The Czech reform was part of broader public administration modernization. Regionalization resolved the problem of a missing link between the central state and the local self-government. In Slovakia, however, regionalization was an attempt in democratization by restricting the omnipresence of the central state. Drawing from Mill's method of difference, the Czech/Slovak comparison suggests that there is a mutually constitutive link between a particular conceptualization of the European Union and its norms and policy choices made in the context of EU accession.¹⁹⁵

Croatia constitutes an atypical case because its progress towards EU membership does not copy the standard pattern of the post-communist region's integration with the European Union. Pre-accession Europeanization of the Croatian state was marked by the same tension between the quest for sovereignty and integration into a post-sovereign entity, as was the case with the CEECs. The Croatian case deviates from the CEECs – and thus also from the Czech/Slovak comparison – in its experience with transition and its relationship with the European Union. Although Croatia underwent an abrupt reform of territorial organization in the post-communist period, the perception of territoriality in the Croatian political discourse was determined by the dramatic restructuring of state borders following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the consequent war. As a result, the mainstream political discourse in Croatia was able to discredit any attempts to transform the centralized state architecture as separatist or secessionist. Croatia stands out because its modern history proved the importance of territoriality, and the territorial nation state in particular, at times when these concepts were thought to be obsolete.

¹⁹⁵ Note that I use Mill's method of difference solely as a reference point in case selection, whereas I choose not to follow the method's positivist grounding. This is to say that the proposed methodological framework does not examine the country's experience with the EU as a causal variable in bringing about certain policy outcomes. For a discussion on Mill's method of difference, see Andrew Bennett and Alexander George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005): 157-66.

Moreover, Croatia entered the accession negotiations with significantly more embedded institutions than the Czech Republic or Slovakia. This is well exemplified by the administrative reforms in connection to the EU's cohesion policy. Whereas the Czech Republic and Slovakia started the talks while missing both a regional level of government and a pending reform of territorial administration, Croatia's administrative and territorial structure, while highly contested, has remained largely unchanged since the early 1990s.

Finally, the context of the engagement with the EU changed between the Czech/Slovak accession and Croatia's. In comparison to the 2004-2007 enlargement round, accession conditionality for Croatia was firmer and far more encompassing. In addition, the euphoria of post-Cold War reunification of Europe, which epitomized the CEEC's accession, was long gone by the time Croatia joined. Negotiations with Croatia also coincided with the institutional and financial crises in the European Union. Brussels did not prioritize the accession negotiations, pushing them from the top of the political agenda, which certainly not the case with the CEECs. All of these differences make Croatia an ideal case study for a poststructural approach to Europeanization.

Discourse Analysis of Europeanization

The proposed research methodology builds upon the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization as established in Chapter 2. In a study of the relationship between EU norms and domestic policy processes, the analysis looks at the way the European Union and its norms are constructed by the Czech, the Slovak, and then the Croatian policy and political discourses, and how these discursive constructions relate to particular conceptualizations of territoriality in domestic debates on territorial reforms.

Because Europeanization is identified with the practice of *articulation* – establishing a relationship among concepts so that their meaning is mutually modified – my analysis deconstructs the articulated links between the European Union and both its norms and territoriality.¹⁹⁶ The European Union and its norms, such as multilevel governance, 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 they define.¹⁹⁷ By

¹⁹⁶ For a discussion on the concept of articulation, see Chapter 2 of this thesis on page 55-56, for a discussion on articulation in connection to Europeanization, see pages 67-69.

¹⁹⁷ For a discussion on DNPs, see Chapter 2 of this thesis on pages 55-56, for a discussion on DNPs in relation to the EU, see pages 60-63.

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

Discourse analysis thus examines what the EU does to the domestic conception of territoriality. This is achieved by reconstructing the type of links between the EU and territoriality, with the goal of outlining the logic (meta-discourse) that stands behind them. I use a three-stepped research framework.¹⁹⁸ I first identify links between the EU (or EU norms) and territoriality that are articulated in the domestic policy debate. Second, drawing from the collected data, I categorize individual articulations of the EU and EU norms in mutually related categories. The third step uses the established categories to examine the underlying narratives on which these categories are drawn. Altogether, the framework provides the reader with a structured view of how different discourses on territoriality are produced in view of the Europeanization process. Additionally, it stresses 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.

Europeanization and the Czech/Slovak Comparative Case Study

The research is inductive to the extent that I utilize empirical data to construct a theoretical model of basic discourses, or ideal-types, on the meaning of the European Union and EU norms that inform the Europeanization process.¹⁹⁹ These ideal-types act as analytical tools (meta-discourses) to determine how discourses are formed and how they are mutually related within a given policy debate.²⁰⁰

The adopted theory induction through empirical analysis approach grants me more freedom when handling the empirical data. This method is consequently better fit to uncover the

¹⁹⁸ The framework largely copies Diez's approach in reconstructing European governance as a nodal point. Diez, "Europe as a Discursive Battleground."

¹⁹⁹ For an instructive explanation, see James Jaccard and Jacob Jacoby, *Theory Construction and Model-Building Skills. A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010): 256-94.

²⁰⁰ These *ideal-types* should be understood as theoretical assumptions derived from the empirical data. Because the bulk of this thesis is dedicated to forming theoretical propositions about the poststructuralist understanding of the Europeanization process, it is important to note that while the ideal-types are grounded in the studied empirical corpus, they are not complete replicas of the rhetoric of individual actors. As theoretical hypotheses, they rest on the principle of parsimony. Additionally, it is misleading to base the ideal-type discourses solely on the frequency of their articulation in the text. They also do not need to be derived from the official discourses. Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*: 46-47.

unexpected structures of discourses, as compared to borrowing pre-given coding templates from such works as Diez, Eriksen et al. and Wæver et al.²⁰¹ At the same time, I approach the empirical data in line with the methodological framework detailed in the next few paragraphs.²⁰² The adopted methodology allows me to approach the empirical material in a systematic manner while remaining true to the flexibility of inductive scientific inquiry.²⁰³ By categorizing the collected data through comparing similar incidents, I can establish parsimonious categories applicable to a variety of empirical phenomena. For the established research model, see Table 4: *Dates, Facts, Categories and Hypotheses in Czech/Slovak Territoriality Debates* on page 86.

I first study the policy debate on regionalization in the Czech Republic. Particular focus is placed on key legislative decisions that have informed the regionalization and the decentralization processes during the five years from 1997 until 2002. This time period is interesting as it coincides with accession negotiations in the domain of cohesion policy.

I use the 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 representations articulated by the wider public sphere as well. As such, it proves to be vital for the understanding of political and social relations of the Czech Republic.²⁰⁴ I then utilize the official policy discourse to examine how the EU and EU norms (such as regionalization, subsidiarity, partnership, etc.) are framed to produce (or stabilize) a particular discursive representation of territoriality. This means that I search for links between the EU and EU norms, and territoriality in texts produced by key political and executive authorities involved in the policy process on regionalization.

²⁰¹ Diez, "Governance as a Matter of Discourse. Discursive Nodal Points in the British Debate over Europe."; Erik Oddvar Eriksen, ed. *Making the European Polity: Reflexive Integration in the EU* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004); and Hansen and Wæver, *European Integration and National Identity: A Challenge of the Nordic States*.

²⁰² Note that the adopted method resembles, but does not fully copy, the constant comparative method of grounded theory as established by Glaser and Strauss. See Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1967). For a reformulated version, see Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1998).

²⁰³ For an instructive explanation, see Jaccard and Jacoby, *Theory Construction and Model-Building Skills. A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*: 256-94.

²⁰⁴ Hansen suggests that the official policy discourse can be studied as a representation of a broader political and public discourse about a given matter. For one, the official policy discourse is situated within a larger political and public sphere. This suggests that official policies largely reflect representations articulated by the media and expert groups (as examples). At the same time, political elites also determine what counts as proper representation in speaking back to the public. Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*: 6-7.

This is followed by an analysis of oppositional discourses in the representations of the adversarial political parties and the media. Here I focus on the wider political debate to assess the degree of stability of the official discourse – therefore, 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 and EU norms, and territoriality.

The collected data from the Czech case is grouped into 36 categories that reflect various conjunctions of the EU and EU norms with territoriality. The established list is relatively heterogeneous to include the conjunction of subsidiarity with administrative and political decentralization on the one hand, and multilevel governance with state sovereignty on the other. I subsequently move to a higher level of abstraction by ordering the data into synthesizing categories based on different micro-frames of the EU and EU norms, and territoriality. These categories are: modernization, instrumentalization, functionalization, democratization, and Europeanization. It is important to stress that the established categories are constructed in such a way as 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 is extended to the Slovak regionalization debate. Accordingly, the case study of Slovakia is 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 above-discussed categories (i.e. modernization, instrumentalization, functionalization, democratization, and Europeanization) are elaborated upon with data from the regionalization debate in Slovakia to generate a higher level of theoretical abstraction. This allows me to delimit more refined theoretical conclusions and prevents me from becoming overwhelmed by the extensiveness of the empirical material. As a rule, I stopped collecting pertinent data once no new categories emerged. In the Slovak case study, next to the official governmental discourses, I examine the representations of the political opposition, the media, and the civil society in the period from 1996 until 2003.

The third analytical step employs the comparative study of regionalization processes in the Czech Republic and Slovakia to generate four ideal-types (meta-discourses) concerning the meanings of the European Union that inform the domestic reading of the European Union in

relation to territoriality.²⁰⁵ It is important to note that the given ideal-types are not a complete reinterpretation of a particular political stance, but are simplified to illustrate dominant constellations of the EU/territoriality nexus. I argue that each of the ideal-types is linked to a different discursive representation of statehood, and that it in turn constructs a different meaning of political territoriality. These are:

1. The European Union is an economic community of territorial states.
2. The European Union is a political community of territorial states.
3. The European Union is a federal state.
4. The European Union is a multilevel polity.

As the fourth and final step of the analysis, I elaborate upon the results of the empirical section against the backdrop of my earlier discussion on the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization. Thus, I give more attention to the process of norm construction and contestation. The established conclusions are to be read as theoretical propositions on how to study domestic construction of Europe in the context of the Europeanization process. They should provide a more tangible answer to the underlying question of this dissertation about the relationship between domestic perception and articulation of EU norms, and domestic policy processes.

²⁰⁵ Note that the above-discussed hypotheses are established to fit the two major requirements of theory – theoretical parsimony and generality of scope. Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*: 111. These criteria partially overlap with Gerring's work on a good theoretical concept. See Gerring, "What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences."

Table 4: *Dates, Facts, Categories, and Hypotheses in Czech/Slovak Territoriality Debates*

	1990	1992	1998	2002	2004
Historical context		Ongoing economic and political reforms			
		Velvet Divorce	EU accession negotiations		
	Consolidation of post-communist Czechoslovakia		The post-Klaus and the post-Mečiar era		
Policy process	1 st reform wave – from localization to territorial restructuring		2 nd reform wave – formation of regions and consolidation of regional self-government		
Categories 1 – lower level of abstraction	<i>Return to Europe</i> – democracy consolidation via local civil society, grassroots democracy, communitarianism, response to totalitarianism		Europe as economic growth – regional development, regional funds, filing station, cost-benefit analysis, cohesion		
			Europe as modernization of public administration – efficiency, solidarity, welfare state, financial decentralization, subsidiarity, transparency, de-concentration, rationalization, economic growth, against Eurorealism		
			Europe as a threat to state sovereignty – bureaucratization, inefficiency, anti-state		
			Europe as democratization – multilevel governance, subsidiarity, decentralization, pluralism, democratization, regionalization, regional democracy		
			Europe as confirmation of national unity – state consolidation, confirmation of identity, against decentralization, state unity		
Categories 2 – Higher level of abstraction	Modernization				
	Instrumentalization				
	Functionalization				
	Democratization				
	Europeanization				
Ideal-types (meta-discourses)	The European Union is an economic community of territorial states.				
	The European Union is a political community of territorial states.				
	The European Union is a federal state.				
	The European Union is a multilevel polity.				

Europeanization and Croatia as an Outlier Case

As argued earlier in the chapter, because Croatia's experience with the post-communist transition and its relationship with the European Union stand out from the pattern exemplified in the Czech/Slovak case, Europeanization of territoriality in Croatia is studied as an *outlier*, thus a

high-residual case.²⁰⁶ The Croatian case study helps to address how the situation looks in a non-CEECs context. The established model of a poststructuralist approach to Europeanization is used to understand how the Croatian political discourse constructs territoriality in the context of Croatian accession to the European Union. The core model is consequently altered to account for potential deviations in the Europeanization of Croatian discourse on territoriality relative to the Czech/Slovak study, which would otherwise be left unaccounted for.

The analysis interprets how the contesting conceptions of the European Union have shaped the Croatian debate on territorial reforms. The Europeanization of Croatian discourses on territoriality is studied beyond establishing how particular representations of the European Union and EU norms frame domestic conception of territoriality, and the stemming policy solutions of territorial reforms, by also including the study of the underlying constructions that make particular constellations of the EU/territoriality nexus possible. Such an analytical framework can grasp how domestic effects of the European Union are tied to the discursive representations of the EU in the domestic policy process, and the meta-narratives on which these representations draw.

The data is subjected to multiple readings. The first reading analyzes Europeanization of Croatian policy discourse in relation to the four ideal-types (meta-discourses) on the meaning of the European Union, as established in the Czech/Slovak case study. These ideal-types are utilized as coding templates when approaching the empirical material on Croatia. This provides the reader with deeper insight on the construction of territoriality in relation to particular articulations of the EU and EU norms, which are either present or absent in the Croatian policy debate.²⁰⁷ The second reading studies the established central discourses as various constellations of the EU/statehood nexus. I am interested in the rules according to which the identified constellations are constructed, and to what extent these constellations reproduce (or contest) state-centricity as a hegemonic reading of territoriality. The third reading evokes the outlier status of the Croatian study to focus on the possible deviations in the Europeanization of the Croatian discourse on

²⁰⁶ On the application of deviant case analysis in inductive research, see Jaccard and Jacoby, *Theory Construction and Model-Building Skills. A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*: 54 and Bennett and George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences*: 114-15.

²⁰⁷ Reference to the four core ideal-types on the meaning of the EU and their stemming representations of territoriality enables one to establish discourses that dominate the policy process (hegemonic discourses), but also those discourses that are marginalized by or fully absent from the policy process. Because the analysis examines both what is problematized and what is not problematized in the policy debate, this approach allows for a more critical view on how the Europeanization process constructs the domestic understanding of territoriality. On the issue of *discursive exclusion* through policy framing, see Carol Bacchi, *Women, Policy and Politics. The Construction of Policy Problems* (London: SAGE Publications, 1999): 31-50.

territoriality relative to the Czech/Slovak case. The original framework is broadened to account for the interpretations of the meaning of Europe in the Croatian political discourse. The goal is to expand the given meta-discourses as theoretical propositions for studying the Europeanization of domestic discourses in other member and prospective member states.

The wider political debate on territorial reforms (including processes such as territorial restructuring of the meso and the local level, and political, fiscal, and institutional decentralization) is examined. In contrast to the Czech/Slovak example, Croatia did not introduce substantial reforms to its territorial organization prior to EU accession. Whereas increased engagement with the European Union did channel another wave of discussions about the need to change the present form of territorial organization, one only seldom finds translated issues such as decentralization or territorial restructuring in the policy options. This gap between normative aspirations of political elites and policy practice shifts the methodological focus to the content analysis of the political debate instead of using the official policy discourse as an epitome of domestic identity representations, as suggested by the Czech/Slovak case study.

Accordingly, the proposed research model analyzes the wider political debate on territorial reforms in the period from 2004 until 2011.²⁰⁸ The given time span is defined by some of the critical junctures in Croatia's political development, such as receiving candidacy status for EU membership in 2004 and parliamentary elections in 2007 and 2011.

The Applied Method and Text Selection

In this section I will address the applied method of text analysis and the choice of the empirical material. To fulfill the requirements of the proposed research question, which concerns the way language fits within the wider social sphere, I analyzed the content of the socio-political texts linked to the respective debates on territorial reforms.²⁰⁹ I utilized a qualitative interpretation of text to see how certain discursive representations were related to a wider discursive space, as

²⁰⁸ Note that in 2004 Croatia received candidate status, which made the country eligible for a set of pre-accession aid programs (PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD). These programs were replaced by the Instrument for the Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) in 2007. All of these pre-accession instruments played a significant role in preparing the groundwork for the implementation of the cohesion *acquis* including the promotion of multilevel governance principles. I chose 2011 as a cut-off point for the analysis, seeing that Croatia completed the accession negotiations with the European Union in June 2011. *Acquis* Chapter 22 on Regional Policy was closed in April 2011.

²⁰⁹ This suggests that the text is identified as part of the social process. See Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*: 21-38.

reflected in key socio-political texts.²¹⁰ The choice of qualitative text interpretation is supported by the poststructuralist inclination for an analysis of the connotative meanings of language.²¹¹ Additionally, the method of qualitative text interpretation compliments the methodological framework of this thesis, which is based on *simple* mechanics of reading text samples (usually line by line) to identify and compare the common analytic categories and their mutual relationship. The examined material concerns all aspects of reterritorialization – centralization, regionalization, localization, and various forms of decentralization along territorial lines. Additionally, I covered debates on negotiations with the EU in the domain of cohesion policy, which subsumes problems of horizontal cooperation of regions and localities, transborder activities of sub-state units, or the formation of statistical NUTS regions, provided that these debates were integrated into the broader discourse on territorial reforms.²¹²

The analysis was conducted on original texts, which were written in Czech, Slovak, and Croatian. I provide English translations only for specific texts that are directly quoted in this thesis. These translations stay as close to the original meaning as possible, with less regard for grammar and syntax rules. Knowing the language of the studied text was essential for a true discourse analysis. This not only refers to my ability to read and fully understand the text, but also my familiarity with the wider social setting.²¹³ Because particular concepts do not articulate the same meaning in all contexts, knowledge of key political vocabulary and their conceptual history enables me to identify the precise contextualized constitution of meaning.²¹⁴ I was able to assign the text to a specific meaning in a given context and to consequently uncover deeper meanings in the examined material. This implies that next to proficient knowledge of Czech, Slovak, and Croatian, familiarity with the non-discursive aspects of the respective territorial

²¹⁰ The forms of linguistic and semiotic analysis (including the inquiry into the semantics, grammar, vocabulary and the phonological relations in a language) are deemed as immaterial to the subject of this thesis. These linguistic features of language (what is being said) are seen as secondary to the problem of the relationship between discourse and the social context. However, this would not apply if the research were grounded in critical discourse analysis (CDA), for example. On methods in CDA, see Ruth Wodak, ed. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002).

²¹¹ Statistical and computer techniques associated with content analysis might seem as a more reasonable option in dealing with the quantum of the collected data material. Nonetheless, poststructuralist discourse theory does not adopt a quantitative methodology and therefore it cannot resort to statistical methods in data sampling or computer programs in text encoding. See Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. On content analysis see Robert Philip Weber, *Basic Content Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications, 1990).

²¹² The NUTS classification (Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) is a hierarchical system for dividing up the territory of the EU for the needs of the regional development policy.

²¹³ See Simeon Yates, Stephanie Taylor, and Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001): 17-18.

²¹⁴ See Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*: 75.

reforms was essential for conducting this research. I use the non-discursive, contextual data to construct a historical narrative. This provides the reader with background information on the course of territorial reforms as well as the process of the EU accession negotiations.

Moving to the matter of text selection, all of the covered material is primary. Because poststructuralism rejects the possibility of a single correct reading of the text, relying on secondary sources is problematic from an epistemological viewpoint. The material for the Czech/Slovak comparative study was collected during two field visits to Prague and Bratislava (as well as a few additional cities) for archival research in the parliamentary and governmental archives, and to conduct field interviews. The first visit was in May 2010. I spent my second visit as an independent researcher at the Institute of International Relations Prague (IIR) from September 2011 to January 2012. Fieldwork in Zagreb also consisted of archival work (I visited the parliamentary archives at the National Parliament and the newspaper archive at the National and University Library) and interviewing. I was in Zagreb as an independent researcher at the Institute of International Relations (IMO) from January to May 2011.

For text selection, special attention was given to the validity of research. Given that poststructuralism rejects positivist methods in evaluating the reliability of the studied material (such as reference to statistical measuring of the sample significance), and while feeling the need to strengthen the legitimacy of the results by introducing some standardization in data collection, I selected the empirical data (texts) in line with an established set of criteria. First, only primary data contemporary to the studied policy debates was selected. Second, for identification of dominant discourses within the larger body of material, the studied texts had clear articulations of identities (norms) and policies, they were widely read, and they were articulated by actors with access to the policy debate. The latter two criteria ensure the centrality of the given text to the policy process and consequently enabled me to establish hegemonic (dominant) and antagonistic discourses. The former criterion speaks to the problem laid out in this thesis by referring to texts that are explicit in the construction of territoriality through particular articulations of the EU and

EU norms.²¹⁵ Because not all texts meet the established criteria (parliamentary debates might have score high on the identity articulation criterion as well as the formal authority criterion, yet they might not have resonated with the greater public) the corpus was built from multiple sources of data. Reference to more than one source of text also serves as a sort of post-positivist data triangulation. Rather than establish the validity of the research, triangulation was adopted to locate the core discourses through the analysis of several accounts of the policy-process.²¹⁶ Thus, the empirical material was collected from three sources: legal texts coupled with transcriptions of the accompanying parliamentary debates; media releases in newspapers and weekly publications; and transcripts of in-depth interviews with relevant participants in the policy process.

Further elaboration on the method of text selection is needed with respect to the Czech/Slovak and Croatian cases. The Czech/Slovak case study maps the policy debate surrounding an exhaustive list of legislative texts that stood central to the policy process on territorial reforms in the respective countries. For an overview of key legislative documents connected to the Czech and Slovak territorial reforms see Table 5: *Key Legislation on Territorial Organization and Subnational Self-Government for the Czech Republic and Slovakia* on page 94. Because policy documents including laws, policy proposals, statements, and communications were a result of a political compromise, they tend to be vague in the articulation of identities. For that reason, these documents were coupled with texts that are more explicit in constructing the social meaning to produce full discourses. These texts include transcripts of the parliamentary debates in addition to various statements of the political elites on the meaning and the relevance of the given legislation. Focus was placed on stenographic protocols preceding the adoption of key legislation on the subject of territorial reforms in the period from 1996 until 2002/2003.

Media texts were also examined. Although lacking formal authority, these texts were widely read and often included clear articulations of both the official and the oppositional discourses. I looked at the printed media for a dual analysis of the official policy discourse in the statements of the political elites and of the oppositional discourses in commentaries, editorials, etc. The analysis covered three dailies in the Czech Republic (*Hospodářské noviny*, *Mladá fronta Dnes*, *Lidové noviny*) and two dailies in Slovakia (*Hospodárske noviny*, *SME*), between 1996 and

²¹⁵ For a detailed discussion on data selection in discourse analysis, see *Ibid.*,: 73-78 and Yates, Taylor, and Wetherell, *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*: 24-29.

²¹⁶ On triangulation as a scientific method of ensuring the reliability of qualitative research in social sciences, see Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1990).

2003. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze all the articles published on topics such as regionalization and decentralization within the studied period. However, it is highly unlikely that I have omitted any dominant position in the discourse. The covered dailies represent a broad spectrum of editorial and ideological positions, and they had a relatively wide-ranging readership. Moreover, publications coinciding with the timing of major legislative debates and decisions were analyzed more extensively.

Transcripts of in-depth interviews with representatives of the political elites and expert groups were the final source of empirical material. Interviews are not usually associated with poststructuralist analysis, primarily because the researcher is involved in producing their own data. Since the interviewer is claimed to instigate the data by posing questions to the interviewee, the interview discourse is considered unnatural and is often rejected as a viable method of research.²¹⁷ That is not to say that poststructuralist researchers have never adopted the method of interviews.²¹⁸ Interviews offer a break with so-called *armchair research*, which is often associated with discourse analysis.²¹⁹ Interview transcripts complement the primary corpus by connecting textual with contextual data, which relevant to research interested in how language is linked in the wider social context. The presence of a researcher's bias in the interview data is not considered problematic because an interview is defined as a form of interaction between the researcher and respondent. The goal of analysis is not to produce unbiased data (poststructuralism sees all data as ipso facto biased), but to give interviewees the opportunity to establish the fullest account of the studied problem. This can be achieved by asking solid open-ended questions, and structuring sub-questions.²²⁰ In this thesis, I used transcripts of seventeen qualitative interviews with key participants in the Czech and Slovak territorial reforms (See Appendix 1: *List of Interviewees – the Czech Republic and Slovakia* on page 191). I inquired into the interviewee's role in the process of reterritorialization and their account of domestic territoriality vis-à-vis EU accession. All interviews were conducted on a confidential basis and therefore the interviewees'

²¹⁷ See Yates, Taylor, and Wetherell, *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*: 27-29 and Jonathan Potter, "Discourse Analysis as a Way of Analysing Naturally Occurring Talk," *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. David Silverman (London: SAGE Publications, 1997).

²¹⁸ See for instance James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

²¹⁹ See Iver B. Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002).

²²⁰ See Steinar Kvale, *Psychology and Postmodernism* (London: SAGE Publications, 1992); Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*; and Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* (London: SAGE Publications, 1987).

anonymity has been respected. I transformed the recordings of these interviews into transcripts, and subsequently subjected the transcripts to qualitative interpretation.²²¹

The Croatian case study copied the Czech/Slovak method of text selection. The corpus reflects the political and the policy debate surrounding key legislation on territorial self-government throughout the 1990s and the 2000s. For an overview of key legislative documents connected to Croatian territorial reforms see Table 6: *Key Legislation on Territorial Organization and Subnational Self-Government for Croatia* on page 94. The corpus consists of the official documents (mostly policy strategies and guidelines) and records of the political debate that preceded the adoption of these documents. As mentioned earlier, Croatia did not introduce substantial territorial reforms prior to its EU accession. This also means that a serious policy debate concerning the problem of reterritorialization did not take place. Because issues such as decentralization, regionalization, and localization seldom entered the policy discourse, but were present in the political discourse, I put greater emphasis on sources that provided insight into the wider political debate on the given problem. In addition to the listed official documents (including the accompanying parliamentary debates), I examined the official discourse in various governmental releases and statements of the governing elites. The oppositional discourses were mapped in the parliamentary discussions and other political releases including electoral programs. Wider political debate was covered through the incorporation of two daily newspapers with a nation-wide focus (*Vjesnik* and *Jutarnji list*) and two regional dailies (*Novi list* and *Glas Istre*). I traced statements of the governing and the oppositional elites and various experts on the problem of territoriality. Commentaries and editorials on the topic of reterritorialization were also covered. Given the relative deficit of the official documentation, the corpus was supplemented with thirty-six qualitative interviews with relevant political (representatives of national, regional, and local elites across the political spectrum) and societal actors (experts and academics on the topic of territorial organization and EU accession, NGO representatives concerned with subnational politics, and the administrative staff involved with the EU and negotiations on EU accession in the field of cohesion policy in particular). Following the Czech/Slovak case, anonymity of the interviewee has been guaranteed. I authored transcripts of all 36 interviews; see Appendix 2: *List of Interviewees – Croatia* on page 193.

²²¹ On transcription, see Yates, Taylor, and Wetherell, *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*: 29-36.

Table 5: *Key Legislation on Territorial Organization and Subnational Self-Government for the Czech Republic and Slovakia*

Czech Republic	Slovakia
Creation of higher territorial self-administrative units and amendment of the Constitution (347/1997, amended by Law No. 176/2001)	Territorial-administrative division (221/1996) and amendment of the Constitution (90/2001)
Formation of regional self-government (129/2000, amended by Law No. 231/2002), the City of Prague (131/2000)	Regional self-government (302/2001)
Elections to the assemblies of regions (130/2000)	Elections to self-government of regions (303/2001)
New municipal statutory law (128/2000), amendment of the municipal statutory law (453/2001)	Amendment of the municipal statutory law (453/2001)
Abolition of district offices (147/2000), transfer of district competences to regions (500/2004)	Regional and district offices (222/1996)
Fiscal decentralization package and regional development (transfer of state property to regions (219/2000), budgetary rules of territorial budgets (250/2000), amendment of the budgetary rules law (445/2001), support of regional development (248/2000), (503/2001), assignment of tax revenues to territorial self-administrative units (483/2001))	Fiscal decentralization and regional development (property of regions (446/2001), amendment of the budgetary rules law (445/2001), support of regional development (503/2001))

Table 6: *Key Legislation on Territorial Organization and Subnational Self-Government for Croatia*

Croatia
Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (85/10)
Law on Local and Regional Self-Government (33/01), (60/01), (129/05), (109/07), (125/08), (36/09)
Law on Financing Local and Regional Self-Government (117/93), (69/97), (33/00), (73/00), (127/00), (59/01), (107/01), (117/01), (150/02), (147/03), (132/06), (26/07), (73/08)
Law on Regional Development (159/09), Regional Development Strategy (2010), Division of the Territory of the Republic of Croatia in Territorial Units for Statistics (2007)
Law on the City of Zagreb (62/01), (125/08), (36/09)
Guidelines and Principles of Functional Decentralization and Territorial Restructuring (2010)

Limitations in Data Collection

In effort to collect relevant data, I encountered two central limitations: the considerable time span between the timing of the studied reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the conducted research; and the lack of substantial policy debate on territorial reforms in Croatia. I will discuss each of the difficulties separately.

In the Czech/Slovak comparative study, I traced the debate from 1996 – 2003. This left a fourteen-year gap between the initiation of the studied policy debate and the timing of the data collection. This has had limited effect on my access to primary sources, which for the most part consist of archival material. The exception is with my conducted interviews with key actors of the given policy processes and subsequent use of the transcripts as text material. The time lapse not only influenced the access to relevant political elites and civil service representatives, but also their respective accounts of the examined problem. Temporal distance could have caused the interviewees to filter out information and thus provide incomplete data. This is why interview transcripts were used only to complement policy documents and newspaper articles, which constitute the core of the corpus.

The second difficulty concerning the lack of a substantial policy debate on reterritorialization in the Croatian political discourse is more problematic. The marginalization of the reterritorialization *problématique* on the policy level did not mean that reterritorialization was a non-issue in political and societal discourse. The gap between the marginalization of this topic in the policy debate and its saliency in the political discourse was analytically interesting. As I ask how the EU/territoriality nexus was framed to push territorial reforms in the Czech/Slovak context, I can also ask how the EU/territoriality nexus was framed to deter certain reforms in the Croatian context. The lack of policy documentation was compensated by greater emphasis on media texts and qualitative interviews in discovering both official and oppositional discourses. As Croatian accession took place more recently, the gap in when the debates took place and my ability to conduct interviews was less pronounced. Therefore, there was a lesser chance that interviewees forgot or filtered information, allowing these interviews to carry more weight.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered an introduction to the empirical section of this thesis by discussing questions of research design and methodology. It addressed poststructuralism's practical

application in relation to Europeanization, with particular focus on how research in this study has been conducted. In line with the methodological and research design choices established in this chapter, the proceeding Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 are constructed as a narrative on the development of the Czech, Slovak, and Croatian understanding of territoriality vis-à-vis EU accession as depicted in each country's debate on territorial reforms. The empirical data is approached in a systematic manner to outline, through the Czech/Slovak comparative study, and apply, through Croatia, the underlying discourses on Europe that define and are being reproduced and contested via Europeanization.

I have defined methodology as following a set of rules, and must justify choices at every stage of analysis, while maneuvering within the ontological and epistemological constraints of poststructuralism. The introduction to this chapter established a methodological framework for the empirical research in line with four important questions. First, how is one to study discourse in line with poststructuralist ontology and epistemology? Second, what is the focus of analysis? What empirical problems are examined and why? Third, how is the research design structured? What research questions are produced by a poststructuralist theorizing of Europeanization? Fourth, how is the empirical corpus selected and collected to facilitate a reliable answer to the established research questions?

Regarding the relationship between poststructuralism and methodology, this study maintains that poststructuralist ontological claims about the discursivity of the social world have consequences on how one is to organize the research from a methodological and a research design viewpoint. Besides the obvious interest in the study of *talk* (for instance texts that articulate particular ideas and identity representations), poststructuralism further encourages problem-driven and non-causal analysis. Poststructuralist post-positivist epistemology dismisses the value of theory-driven and method-driven research. The aim is to illuminate a problem independently from our methodological and theoretical constraints, while at the same time remaining aware that the very problematization of an issue is always theoretically biased. This study's focus on the perception of the European Union and its norms – as represented in domestic discourses – in the context of Europeanization, complies with the discussed quest for problem-driven research.

Turning to the poststructuralist demand for the research to go beyond the study of simple causalities between identity on the one hand and policy change on the other, this chapter has

drawn from the discussion on the meta-theoretical embedding of poststructuralism as established in Chapter 2. Both the ideational and the material are given meaning via discourse. Because identities are produced and reproduced via policy discourses, it is impossible to reduce any social process (including Europeanization) to the identification of causality between an independent and a dependent variable. When asking how EU accession changes domestic perception of territoriality, this study will examine the underlying discursive structures that make individual perceptions (conceptualization) of EU and EU norms vis-à-vis territoriality possible in Czech, Slovak, and Croatian debates on territorial reforms.

Next, I established the research focus of the empirical analysis. Europeanization of domestic discourses on territoriality in the context of a country's EU accession was delimited as a focal point of the empirical research. Constructed in the poststructuralist tradition, the research question seeks to answer how EU norms were articulated to produce different discursive representations of territoriality in the domestic policy setting. This suggests that territoriality is considered a narrative about the political organization of space contingent upon the discursive context that defines it. Accordingly, political territoriality has not been demarcated in the European territorial nation state, which would suggest its gradual demise due to European integration or globalization. I defended the position that political territoriality acquires multiple meanings across different discursive spaces. It is the task of a researcher to map the diversity of these meanings vis-à-vis a common *template* of a multilevel European Union. The problem is not *to what extent* Europeanization threatens the central state's monopoly over political territoriality, but *how* Europeanization challenges domestic hegemonic representations of the power and space relationship by providing novel discourses on the political control of a territory.

This research question was positioned in the context of the post-communist countries' accession to the European Union due to the noticeable clash between the consolidation of the *post-communist* state carried by the transition process, and its de-consolidation consequent to accession-driven Europeanization. The EU's multilevel governance, as a form of a heterarchic organization of power, stands in opposition to national demands for sovereignty and state centrism as a defining discourse of post-communist transition. How the policy process has coped with this cohabitation of two antagonistic representations of political territoriality was argued to be an interesting, but generally neglected problem.

We turned next to the third question on the research design in view of the thesis' poststructuralist theoretical embedding. Because Europeanization has been defined as articulation, the analysis will deconstruct the articulated links between territoriality on the one hand and the European Union and its norms on the other. The European Union and its norms are studied as DNPs that attach particular meaning to territoriality. At the same time, these norms are being essentially contested under different meta-discourses. Multiple articulations of EU norms in relation to territoriality produce multiple conceptions of territoriality. Using discourse analysis, I will look at the links between the EU and territoriality that frame domestic policy debate and consequently discuss meta-discourses on which the established EU/territoriality constellations draw.

Further operationalization of the research into two consecutive case studies – the comparative study of the debate on regionalization reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the single case study of the debate on territorial reorganization in Croatia – has been justified by the model-building task ascribed to the empirical section of this thesis. The Czech/Slovak comparison was selected because it highlights the importance of the discursive setting in the framing of particular constellations of the EU/territoriality nexus relative to the alternative variables including endogenous institutional legacy or exogenous EU conditionality. The Czech/Slovak comparison refuted the supremacy of more traditional, compliance-based understandings of Europeanization. The argument was that by reconstructing the storyline on how EU norms were articulated in connection to territoriality, we can establish underlying meta-discourses that enable Europeanization, which allows broader conclusions about the discursive reading of Europeanization.

The study of the political discourse on territorial reforms in Croatia was constructed as an outlier case due to Croatia's distinct experience with the consolidation of statehood in the post-communist period, as well as the relative uniqueness of its negotiations for EU accession. Thus, I will apply the theoretical conclusions established in the Czech/Slovak comparison to the study of the Croatian discourse on territorial reforms. Potential deviations in the data on the Croatian territorial reorganization debate relative to the Czech/Slovak example are noted, and subsequently used to broaden the core model.

In conclusion, the fourth question was addressed by explaining the adopted method of text selection and text analysis. Owing to the nature of poststructuralist analysis, which rejects the

notion of an objective proof in the domain of the social, the reliability of the study rests on the researcher's consistency in the application of research methods and on the reliability of the selected textual corpus. The reliability of the examined corpus was ensured through the variety and number of sources used in the analysis. Moreover, the selected texts were all primary texts (or were treated as primary), and were contemporary to the examined debates. Concerning the specific task of this research to identify hegemonic and antagonistic discourses within the larger body of material, the selected texts had clear articulations of identities (norms) and policies, they were widely read, and were articulated by actors with access to the policy debate. The empirical material was collected from three sources: legal texts coupled with transcriptions of the accompanying parliamentary debates; media releases in newspapers and weekly publications; and finally transcripts of in-depth interviews with relevant participants in the policy process.

Chapter 4: Europeanization via Discursive Practice – Articulations of Europe in the Domestic Policy Debate on Territorial Reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Introduction

This chapter compares Europeanization of domestic discourses on territoriality in the debate on territorial reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Drawing on the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization established in Chapter 2, and the accompanying discussion of the methodology of discourse analysis in Chapter 3, the research examines how the EU and EU norms were articulated to produce different discursive representations of territoriality in the setting of the Czech and the Slovak regionalization debates. The comparison between the Czech Republic and Slovakia is analyzed to uncover deeper structures of meaning behind domestic articulations of the European Union and its norms that inform Europeanization.

The problem of the state's territorial restructuring preoccupied the Czech and Slovak political discourses throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. Besides the most obvious 1993 Velvet Divorce, and the consequent formation of the independent Czech Republic and Slovakia, local self-government was reformed and consolidated in the beginning of the 1990s; regional self-government reform only took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s.²²² Administrative and spatial reorganization of the state were considered essential for a wider rebuilding of political, societal, and economic systems in the post-1989 Czech Republic and Slovakia. Illner suggests that the socio-political and economic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe had a strong spatial dimension: "The reform of subnational government was not only parallel to other components of this all-encompassing stream of changes, but it was also contingent on them."²²³ Policy debates on processes such as localization, regionalization, de-etatization, and decentralization are interesting subjects of analysis. These debates can also be viewed as a symptom of the wider socio-political and economic transformation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the post-communist period.

²²² The Velvet Divorce refers to the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, which took effect on January 1, 1993. On the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and EU accession, see Jacques Rupnik and Jan Zielonka, *The Road to the European Union* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). See also Jiří Musil, *The End of Czechoslovakia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000).

²²³ Michal Illner, "Thirteen Years of Reforming Sub-National Government in the Czech Republic," in *Reforming Local Government in Europe*, eds. Norbert Kersting and Angelika Vetter (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2003): 262.

When speaking of the post-communist transition in these countries, one cannot ignore the European context. In the aftermath of the 1989 Velvet Revolution, integration with the European Union was uncontested. Early political documents of the communist dissent had already pushed the idea of integration with Europe into the center of the Czech and the Slovak policy agendas.²²⁴ This was not only due to a sense of belonging based on common cultural and geopolitical space, but also because of the perceived political and economic appeal of EU membership.²²⁵ Both the Czech Republic and Slovakia embarked upon the process of EU accession negotiations, which created widespread reforms as a part of accession conditionality.²²⁶ The Czech Republic submitted its membership application in 1996. Negotiations on the accession were opened in 1998. The country was perceived as a front-runner for the accession process, and compliance with various *acquis* chapters was relatively unproblematic. The same cannot be claimed for Slovakia. Slovakia, under Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar, had difficulties in establishing groundwork democratic structures – rule of law and protection of minorities in particular. Consequently, the country was excluded from the first negotiation round on political grounds. Slovakia applied for EU membership in 1995. Yet, the negotiations were opened only in 1999 following the fall of Mečiar's government.

The importance of the EU applies also to a more concrete problem of territorial restructuring. In the context of the CEECs' accession to the European Union, the Commission utilized the cohesion policy *acquis* and the related financial instruments to push for the formation of self-governing regions, and the overall shift from a state-centric to multilevel form of governance.²²⁷ To comply with EU conditionality, the acceding country needed to establish an institutional and legislative framework for the absorption of structural and cohesive programs, which implied also the formation of self-governing regions as meso-level units of government. The pre-accession funding programs provided the Commission with a set of mechanisms for

²²⁴ See Václav Havel, *Projevy a jiné texty z let 1992-1999* (Prague: Torst, 1999) and "Programové zásady Občanského fóra – Co chceme," (Prague: totalita.cz, 1989).

²²⁵ Bafoil, *Central and Eastern Europe: Europeanization and Social Change*: 1-2. See also Rupnik and Zielonka, *The Road to the European Union*: 1.

²²⁶ For a detailed analysis of the EU's accession conditionality in relation to the Czech Republic and Slovakia, see Grabbe, *The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization Through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe* and Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism*. On conditionality, see Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Governance by Conditionality: EU Rule Transfer to the Candidate Countries of Central and Eastern Europe," *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 4 (2004) and Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism*.

²²⁷ See Ian Bache, *Europeanization and Multilevel Governance: Cohesion Policy in the European Union and Britain* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008).

building administrative, financial, and institutional capacities on the candidate's subnational level via the partnership principle, subsidiarity, and additionality. The EU's leverage over the CEECs grounded in the membership perspective, and the lower resistance of the CEECs' institutions to change in the aftermath of communism, have encouraged authors to study Europeanization of territoriality in the Czech Republic and Slovakia as a case of compliance via EU membership conditionality.²²⁸

In line with the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization, this thesis diverges from traditional models embedded in conditionality. The comparison of the Czech and Slovak discourses on the EU vis-à-vis territoriality is utilized to put my earlier theoretical conclusions to practice. The aim is to identify basic theoretical propositions (ideal-type constructions) that inform individual conceptualizations of the EU and EU norms in the observed policy debates on territorial restructuring. This chapter sets out to identify the prevailing articulations of the European Union in the Czech and Slovak debates on territorial reform discourses, and how these articulations are connected to specific understandings of territoriality. Therefore, the following questions are to be answered:

- a) How did Czech governmental and oppositional discourses articulate the European Union with particular reference to territoriality? How did Slovak governmental and oppositional discourses articulate the European Union with particular reference to territoriality and in relation to the conclusions established by the analysis of the Czech case?
- b) What are the meta-discourses on Europe in the Czech and Slovak discourses and how did these inform the domestic understanding of territoriality?
- c) What is the standing of the established conclusions in relation to the wider scholarly debate on Europeanization?

Part 1 analyses the history of territorial reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in order to contextualize the analyzed discourses. Part 2 outlines the central narrative on each country's approach to the European Union in relation to territoriality. Part 3 focuses on presenting the established meta-discourses on the meaning of the European Union vis-à-vis particular

²²⁸ See for instance Brusis, "The Instrumental Use of European Union Conditionality: Regionalization in the Czech Republic and Slovakia."; Hughes, Sasse, and Gordon, *Europeanization and Regionalization in the EU's Enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe: The Myth of Conditionality*; and James T. LaPlant et al., "Decentralization in the Czech Republic: The European Union, Political Parties, and the Creation of Regional Assemblies," *The Journal of Federalism* 1, no. 34 (2004).

understandings of territoriality in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The final section discusses the implications of the empirical findings for the broader understanding of Europeanization.

Contextualizing the Discourse - Regionalization of Territorial Governance in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Post-communist Czechoslovakia – Territorial Reforms as a Relic of the Communist Dissent

After the fall of communism, variances in ideas about pluralist governance, such as regionalism, localism, and communitarianism, came together to promote decentralized public administration combined with strong territorial self-government. Territorial decentralization, contextualized as a step towards the formation of participatory democracy, was promoted as essential for a post-communist society. Decentralization of the state was primarily an answer to the centrism of the totalitarian epoch and a safeguard against suppression from above, but also an instrument for rationalizing an oversized and ineffective public administration that was inherited from communist times. The goal was to democratize, de-etatize, and decentralize the territorial government.

The Czechoslovak dissent was severely critical of the centralized governance model and the *democratic centrism* doctrine of the communist regime.²²⁹ In the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution, the new elites adopted the idea of a pluralist state as the guardian of democracy. Decentralization of governance along vertical and horizontal lines was positioned as a focal point for the political and social transformation from authoritarian to democratic rule. In the first years of Czechoslovakia, the Civic Forum repeatedly called for a strong civil society and self-governing subnational units as the bedrocks of democracy.²³⁰ Particularly visible was the rise of

²²⁹ Democratic centrism rejects the heterogeneity of interests within a state. By default, seeing that both the state and the sub-state are to serve the best interest of the working class, preferences and actions of all governmental levels ought to be harmonious. For a critical reaction, see "Prohlášení Charty 77," (Prague, 1977) and "Průvodní dopisy k Prohlášení Charty 77," (Prague, 1977).

²³⁰ Petr Pithart, "Speech at the Czech National Council - 29 November 1990," 1. The Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*) was a political movement in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, established during the Velvet Revolution in 1989. The corresponding movement in Slovakia was called the Public against Violence (*Verejnosť proti násiliu*). Both platforms unified the political dissent of communist Czechoslovakia with a purpose of overthrowing the communist regime for the establishment of a democratic one. The Civic Forum saw an overwhelming victory in the 1990 elections, with its leader and founder Václav Havel becoming the first president of post-communist Czechoslovakia. In 1991, the Forum ceased to exist as it was split between the newly founded Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana - ODS*) led by Václav Klaus, and the Civic Movement (*Občanské hnutí*) led by Jiří Dienstbier. Whereas the former gathered the conservative fraction of the political elite, the latter occupied a more leftist side of the political spectrum. The ODS won the 1992 parliamentary elections, and the Civic Movement failed to pass the 5% threshold and subsequently ceased to exist. For a detailed analysis see Michal Klíma, "Consolidation and

localism, promising the enhancement of grassroots democracy and a stronger identification of the individual within the community. One also observes the revival of political regionalism in Moravia, mainly through the activities of the Movement for Democracy–Party for Moravia and Silesia (*Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii - Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko*) and *LS–HZDS* (*Ludová strana–Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko*, or the People’s Party–Movement for a Democratic Slovakia).

The 1990 electoral program of the Forum placed decentralization in direct relation to democratization:

We argue that for state power not to disintegrate from the citizen, it needs to be constructed from below. Hence, it needs to be embedded in the local civil society and other forms of the subnational self-government with wide competences. The new political representation is to be elected in free and fair elections on national and subnational levels.²³¹

The text goes as far as outlining a policy proposal for territorial restructuring, which is again placed in the context of the democratization process:

To support the political engagement on the subnational level, it is necessary to ensure wide self-governing competences for localities together with their economic independence. We support a fair regional policy sensitive to disparities in the degree of regional development. We also stress the importance of respecting the territorial identities of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia.²³²

The new elites constructed territorial decentralization and pluralization of the state not only as means of forming a democratic system, but also as a way to ensure the country’s membership in the European Union. Put differently, a pluralist vision of state territoriality was constructed in opposition to communist totality and in relation to the return to Europe discourse:

Belonging to Europe is not only belonging to a community of states with economic efficiency and a standard of living. It also means belonging to a community with shared but also cultural and political values. These European values include diversity, not uniformity, the fundamental political value is

Stabilization of the Party System in the Czech Republic," *Political Studies* 46, no. 3 (1998) and Zdenka Mansfeldová, "The Czech and Slovak Republics," *The Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe*, eds. Sten Berglund, Tomas Hellen and Frank H. Aarebrot (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1998).

²³¹ "Volební program Občanského fóra," (Prague: Občanské fórum, 1990): 3-4.

²³² *Ibid.*,: 6.

democracy, not totality. [...] We must restore democratic institutions and mechanism that enable real participation of all citizens in the management of public affairs and at the same time establish an effective barrier against the abuse of political and economic power.²³³

Territorial restructuring was also seen as a functional necessity in the context of the broader public administration reform. A break with the old habit of treating public administration as a means in the exercise of power called for a fundamental reform of existing state structures. The earlier mentioned doctrine of *democratic centrism* established the sub-state as a de-concentrated state. This made local and regional institutions of little use in the new age of building democracy from the bottom up, and looking at public administration as a service to the public.²³⁴ Replacing old structures of territorial governance with a new system appeared to be a quick fix to this problem. In line with the *out with the old, in with the new* dictum, the 1990s brought about the abolishment of existing regions and national committees. In exchange, the reform introduced a dual model of territorial organization, which separated state administration from sub-state self-government. Municipalities were reestablished as fundamental units of territorial self-government.²³⁵

Even though both the Czech and Slovak elites debated the formation of strong self-governing regions as part of the 1992 constitutional reforms, most of the introduced changes concerned the local level only. The legislation aimed at dismantling the communist *nomenclatura* concentrated in national committees and regional bodies, while at the same time proposing localities as a more efficient and democratic alternative.²³⁶ By abolishing regional units as a link

²³³ "Programové zásady Občanského fóra – Co chceme," 2-3. See also Jiří Suk, *Občanské fórum: listopad-prosinec, 1989* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1998).

²³⁴ Illner describes the organizational structure of the territorial government during communism as a system of double subordination. This means that at the municipal, the district, and the regional level, self-government was replaced by a structure of national committees (*národní výbory*) acting as a de-concentrated state. These committees were simultaneously subordinate to the central government and organs of a higher tier of government. Although self-governance was adhered to through the institution of elected councils (*zastupitelstva*), their autonomy was *pro forma* at best. Hence, the subnational government in the period 1948-1989 is often portrayed as undemocratic, impotent, and financially and politically subordinate to the central apparatus. Michal Illner, "Territorial Decentralization: An Obstacle to Democratic Reform in Central and Eastern Europe," *Polish Sociological Review* 1, no. 117 (1997): 10-12.

²³⁵ "Zákon Slovenskej národnej rady o obecnom zriadení - č. 369/1990 Zb," (Bratislava: Slovenská národná rada, 1990). *De jure* self-governance on the municipal level was slightly stronger in Slovakia, seeing that Slovakia also introduced direct elections of mayors, which was not the case in the Czech Republic.

²³⁶ "Zákon České národní rady o obcích (obecní zřízení) - č. 367/1990 Sb," (Prague: Česká národní rada, 1990).

between municipalities and the state, a significant gap within the territorial legislation was created.²³⁷

Whereas the regionalization *problématique*, and the question of territorial restructuring more generally maintained their presence in the political agenda in connection to the above-discussed municipal reforms, Czechoslovakia ended 1992 with the Velvet Divorce. The dissolution affected territorial reforms as political elites in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia replaced the narrative of state decentralization with the diametrically opposing story of state consolidation. Accordingly, various proposals on the formation of strong self-governing regions were rejected by the Czech Parliament on grounds that this could expose the country to further fragmentation:

In developing the draft constitutional law on formation of higher territorial units, we must take into account the political criterion. We must eliminate dualism in foreign policy, i.e. we must prevent the possible creation of so-called Euro-regions, which would exceed the territorial borders of our state.²³⁸

This was stated despite the fact that this proposal was framed in the context of the rapprochement with the European Union: “The creation of five higher territorial units in the Czech Republic will bring us closer to the European model of territorial organization.”²³⁹ The saliency of organizing economic and political life in the post-independence period, combined with the fear of further fragmentation of the state, pushed the regionalization debate aside: “Public administration reform has to be about something else, about the smooth functioning of public administration and not about taking [the] side of one political ideology over another.”²⁴⁰ This fed well into the overall public disillusionment with decentralization, mainly caused by the often ill-functioning municipal level. Even though both the Czech and the Slovak Constitution provided for the formation of

²³⁷ It is interesting to note that in 1992, a parliamentary committee within the Slovak National Council developed a draft proposal dividing Slovakia into twelve regions based on natural regions in line with the historic župa model. The proposal was never subjected to policy deliberation. Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview E - Czech Republic/Slovakia," (Bratislava: Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky, 2011): 1.

²³⁸ Jiří Drápela, "Návrh poslanců Jiřího Drápely a Jaroslava Sýkory na vydání ústavního zákona o vytvoření vyšších územních samosprávných celků v ČR (Sněmovní Tisk 1915 - první čtení)," (Prague: Poslanecká sněmovna, 1995).

²³⁹ "Návrh ústavního zákona o vytvoření vyšších územních samosprávných celků v České republice," (Prague: Poslanecká sněmovna, 1995).

²⁴⁰ Marek Benda, "Návrh poslanců Jiřího Drápely a Jaroslava Sýkory na vydání ústavního zákona o vytvoření vyšších územních samosprávných celků v ČR (Sněmovní Tisk 1915 - první čtení)," (Prague: Poslanecká sněmovna, 1995).

regions as third-tier units of self-government, the momentum created by the Velvet Revolution was wasted.²⁴¹

Consolidation of the State in the Early Years of Independent Czech Republic and Slovakia

In the Czech Republic, the idea of decentralization as a prerequisite for democracy was contained in select, peripheral discourses with limited effect on the policy-making process.²⁴² In exchange, the political discourse was overtaken by the need to consolidate power in the hands of the central government during the sensitive transitional time. In essence, decentralization was conceptualized as a barrier to – rather than a prerequisite for – transition to democracy and a market economy.

Subsequent to the 1990 reform of the municipal government, the question of decentralization in conjunction with the formation of regions, as the third-tier of self-government, faded into the background, and in fact almost disappeared altogether. This stretched throughout the 1990s with far-reaching consequences for both the political system and political culture. The size of the Czech territory, the relative homogeneity of the Czech population and the Czech lands, as well as the post-independence decline of regionalist aspirations in Moravia, all combined and resulted in public disregard for the reforms. Largely short of regional identity, Czechs perceived the institutionalization of the third-tier of self-government as an unnecessary expansion of the administration and a financial burden.

Notwithstanding the efforts of Havel and his allies, the governing ODS, with Václav Klaus as Prime Minister, managed to substitute territorial reforms with concerns over economic reforms, efficiency, privatization, etc.²⁴³ In the 1995 New Years' presidential address to the nation, Havel argued the following:

²⁴¹ The Constitution of the Czech Republic, adopted in 1992, anchors local self-governance as a fundamental constitutional norm. Territorial self-government is specifically dealt with in Chapter 7, which institutionalizes municipalities as fundamental self-governing territorial divisions, and regions as the superior self-governing territorial division. Similarly, the Slovak Constitution establishes that territorial self-administration shall be composed of a municipality and a higher territorial unit.

²⁴² These ideas continued to be articulated by the political representatives of the Moravian region, who, among others, called for international support against centrist practices of the government. Both the international and domestic reaction was minimal. Similarly, some voices in support of further decentralization came from ODS' coalition partners. These, too, proved ineffective. Peter Holub, "Bud'me Moravany," *Respekt*, 29 January 1996. and Vladimír Mlynář, "Jen pro otrlé," *Respekt*, 4 July 1994.

²⁴³ Václav Klaus served as Prime Minister of the Czech Republic from 1992 until 1998. He also served as President of the Czech Republic from 2003 to 2013. Klaus is the principal co-founder of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS).

I believe that our country is facing a challenge not uncommon for the times we are in, a challenge that has deeper meaning than it appears at first sight. If our state is brave enough to truly decentralize herself in due time, hence, to transfer various decision-making powers to the lowest possible level of government and offer more space to self-government – also at the level above municipalities – our state can significantly contribute to the creation of a genuine civil society. [...] Well organized territorial self-governance – as one of the instruments of citizen participation in public affairs – is not a burden for the central state, but rather a relief.²⁴⁴

Havel's words fell on deaf ears; ODS was still successful in containing the debate on regionalization throughout its mandate. To quote the then Prime Minister: "After having successfully abolished regions in 1990, do we really want a new regional bureaucracy?"²⁴⁵ Regionalization gradually became a non-issue.

The consequences of this were vast. On the one hand, one observes a trend in the fortification of municipalities, which were still too weak and too fragmented to assume the competences of the meso-level. On the other hand, one sees the widening of state bureaucracy, which consolidated control over the most banal aspects of the people's daily routine; schooling, health-care, transportation, culture, business, and economic development were all operated by the sectoral ministries in Prague. Moreover, the system at hand effectively crippled the development of participatory democracy. Citizens grew indifferent towards their communities as they saw little chance of being able to change anything. This phenomenon, being reminiscent of the communist era, stands as a barrier to pluralism even today.

What was a *dead letter* in the Czech Republic received prime focus in Slovakia. Developments concerning the territorial reform were largely in tune with the overall trends in the political life of Slovakia. While both the Czech Republic and Slovakia were faced with the same challenge of simultaneously (re)constructing a market economy, democracy, nationhood, and statehood, Prague opted to concentrate on the first two, whereas Bratislava concerned itself with the latter two.

Following the 1994 elections, the debate on the territorial reform in Slovakia took a U-turn when Mečiar's government issued draft legislation that was going to divide the country into

²⁴⁴ Václav Havel, "Novoroční projev prezidenta republiky Václava Havla," (Prague, 1994).

²⁴⁵ Found in Andreas Beckmann, "The Big Yawn. Decentralization in the Czech Republic," *Central Europe Review* 1, no. 13 (1999): 3.

eight large administrative meso-level units and seventy-two districts.²⁴⁶ In its rhetoric, the government endorsed the idea of decentralized public administration while referring to western European practices of empowering the regions and integrating these within EU structures.²⁴⁷ In reality, the government did its utmost to consolidate the political and financial supremacy of the central state. Despite domestic and international condemnation, the reforms were broadly supported as they rode on nationalist sentiment in conjunction with growing *Magyarophobia*.²⁴⁸

The proposed legislation provoked extensive criticism from subnational political elites, representatives of the Hungarian minority, and the expert community. The Association of Slovak Cities and Municipalities (ZMOS), supported by the Union of Slovak Towns and Cities (ÚMO SR), advocated the institutionalization of a strong self-government in conjunction with dividing the country in line with the legacy of the *župa* system dating from the 13th century.²⁴⁹ The argumentation relied substantially on norms arising from the Council of Europe's *Charter on Local Self-Government* (hereafter the Charter), particularly regarding subsidiarity and financial decentralization. Associations representing subnational interests asked for immediate ratification of the Charter, portraying this as a step towards EU membership. Parliamentary representatives of the Hungarian minority also backed the cause of the European normative structure on territorial organization, but in the context of minority protection.²⁵⁰ They argued for strong territorial self-governance as the sole guarantor of minority rights and peaceful coexistence in multiethnic societies. Self-governance was interpreted as self-administration of minority groups in regions where they would constitute a majority.

Despite strong criticism from the directly affected political and societal actors, the Parliament passed Act No. 221/1996 and Act No. 222/1996 in July 1996, effectively establishing a new structure of territorial governance with 8 regions and 79 districts as de facto state agencies on the sub-state level. The reform also included changes to the structure of municipal self-

²⁴⁶ "Vládny návrh zákona Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky o územnom a správnom usporiadaní Slovenskej republiky," (Bratislava: Vláda Slovenskej Republiky, 1996).

²⁴⁷ "Stenografická správa o 14. schôdzi Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky," (Bratislava: Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 1996).

²⁴⁸ Bútorová shows a greater preference of the wider public for national unity over pluralist democracy. She further illustrates that despite growing public dissatisfaction with the governing practices of the ruling elite, especially in the second period of his governing term, Mečiar was still supported on the government's handling of the Hungarian issue. Zora Bútorová, "Public Opinion," in *Slovakia 1996-1997 Global Report on the State of Society*, ed. Martin Bútorá and Thomas W. Skladony (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1998): 68.

²⁴⁹ "Apríl 1995 - V. sněm ZMOS," (Prešov: Združenie miest a obcí Slovenska – ZMOS, 1995). and "Apríl 1996 - VI. sněm ZMOS," (Bratislava: Združenie miest a obcí Slovenska – ZMOS, 1996).

²⁵⁰ "Stenografická správa o 14. schôdzi Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky."

government, instigating fragmentation and a weakening of the local level. A number of pending questions concerning the transfer of competences to units of territorial self-government, the formation of regional self-government, and financial decentralization were left unanswered. This remained unchanged until the 1998 elections.

Europeanization of Territoriality in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

National Discourses on Europe

The European context – or the context of each country’s relationship with the European Union to be precise – proves pivotal for the understanding of the development of the discourse on territoriality. The negotiation for the accession to the European Union is also one of the strongest points of differentiation between the Czech and Slovak cases.

Czech accession to the European Union was relatively unproblematic. Owing to the degree of economic growth and democratic development, the Commission positioned the Czech Republic as a frontrunner for EU membership among the associated members.²⁵¹ Moreover, the *return to Europe* discourse from the early 1990s was promoted by Václav Havel and the Social Democrats (ČSSD), and defined the Czech national identity as well as their EU membership.²⁵² Havel, who next to Klaus is one of the most prominent political authorities in post-communist Czechoslovakia, spoke of Czech membership in the European Union as a testimony to the country’s political and economic transformation:

The European Union is an unprecedented attempt to forge Europe as a single area of democracy and solidarity. I know that neither the Union nor the North Atlantic Alliance can open themselves overnight to all those who aspire to join them. What they undoubtedly can do – and should do before it is too late – is to give the whole of Europe[,] a sphere that shares a body of values[,] an unequivocal assurance that they are not closed clubs and to formulate a clear and concrete conception of their gradual enlargement that would not only contain a timetable, but also explain the logic of that timetable.²⁵³

²⁵¹ See "Agenda 2000 - Commission Opinion on the Czech Republic’s Application for Membership of the European Union DOC/97/17," (Brussels: European Commission, 1997).

²⁵² Václav Havel served as a president of Czechoslovakia from 1989 until 1992. He was president of the Czech Republic from 1993 until 2003. The Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická, ČSSD) represents the center left political agenda in the Czech political spectrum. Since its recreation in the early 1990s, it has been one of the two most important political parties in the Czech Republic.

²⁵³ Václav Havel, "Europe as a Task," (Aachen, 1996).

For Havel, the meaning of the European Union was dual: the EU was a confirmation of Czech identity as a liberal democracy and a market economy; and it was also a means to protect the country from slipping back to the totalitarianism of the communist times.

A similar position was taken by the Social Democrats. Under the leadership of Miloš Zeman, the ČSSD placed emphasis on the political aspects of EU integration, while embracing what were perceived to be core EU values, including solidarity, the welfare state, and a pluralist organization of state power.²⁵⁴ The European Union was articulated as a social democracy and consequently an instrument in achieving state-regulated progress. Already the 1996 program document identified EU membership with the consolidation of a democratic welfare state:

The Czech Republic is a new European state. [...] For the Czech Republic to integrate further into the international system, it is necessary to establish democratic development, political stability, social peace, and economic development. [...] EU membership will enable the Czech Republic to access a dynamic market, but will also provide an opportunity to consolidate democracy in a wider European context. [...] We add that the Europe Agreement emphasizes respect for democratic norms and human rights in line with the Helsinki Declaration and the Paris Charter for New Europe.²⁵⁵

The point of contention was the neo-classical doctrine of the center right Civic Democrats (ODS) led by Václav Klaus, which constructed the Czech identity in terms of introducing radical economic reforms. The European Union was consequently framed around the rationale of furthering the liberal economy paradigm in national politics:

We observe a major simplification of the "return to Europe" discourse, which is now mainly interpreted as integration with the European Union. Our return to Europe was, nonetheless, "only" a return to a European civilizational and cultural context to which we have always belonged. [...] The obtainable and sustainable model for the future of Europe is based on a free market, open competition, voluntary relationships among its members, but also the economic and political links with the transatlantic area, as we share a common cultural and civilizational heritage. The Czech Republic will be proud to be part of such a Europe.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Miloš Zeman led the Czech Social Democratic Party during the 1990s. Zeman served as Prime Minister of the Czech Republic from 1998 to 2002. In 2013, Zeman took presidential office.

²⁵⁵ "Volební program ČSSD pro volby 1996," (Prague: Česká strana sociálně demokratická, 1996): 6.

²⁵⁶ Václav Klaus, "Vážně o evropské integraci," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (1999): 2. See also "Interview with Václav Klaus," *Mladá fronta dnes*, 1992.

One observes increased hegemonization of the economic reading of the European Union as a bastion of the liberal economy and an instrument to catch up with Western European standards. Every so often, this position conflicted with the EU's political integration in the post-Maastricht context, which was described as the institutionalization of economic interventionism, and consequently in opposition to the Czech identity.²⁵⁷ The more critical views on Europe in the Czech political discourse – constructed around the idea of Czech Eurorealism – can be referred back to the conflicting articulation of the European Union as an economic unit *at home* and the ongoing process of political integration in Brussels.²⁵⁸ Klaus often projected EU integration as a dilemma between economic stability on the one hand, and national sovereignty on the other:

[The process of European integration] should not be allowed to artificially suppress the diversity of states, nations and cultures. [...] How can one be European without dissolving like a lump of sugar in a cup of coffee?²⁵⁹

Slovak relations with the European Union were more complicated. The political elites led by Mečiar – as first Prime Minister of independent Slovakia – first emphasized the European identity of the Slovak nation. Already in 1992, the electoral program of Mečiar's HZDS articulated a strong commitment to European integration and its stemming political and economic reforms: "We find European integration to be of utmost importance for Slovakia. Integration with Europe allows us to fulfill our economic and political interest."²⁶⁰ A similar stance was repeated by the party leadership in the 1994 elections:

Membership in the European Union is a long-standing priority of Slovakia. We will introduce the necessary system-wide measures – including the alignment of national legislation – with the European one, to achieve this goal. We will seek full cooperation with NATO and make every effort to become members of the European Union.²⁶¹

This identity was put to the test when Slovakia was excluded from the EU accession process following its failure to comply with the political criterion of conditionality in 1997. The

²⁵⁷ "Interview with Václav Klaus," *Lidové noviny*, 11 June 2003.

²⁵⁸ Eurorealism can be summarized as a critical stance on the EU's political integration. For a detailed analysis of Klaus' position vis-à-vis the EU, see Mats Braun, "Understanding Klaus: The Story of Czech Eurorealism," *EPIN Working Paper* 26 (2009).

²⁵⁹ Found in *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ "Programové tézy HZDS na vol'by 1992," (Bratislava, 1994): 19-20.

²⁶¹ "Slovensko do toho!, Volební program pro volby do NR SR," (Bratislava, 1994): 122.

Commission's criticism of Mečiar's semi-totalitarian regime resulted in the substitution of the narrative on the Slovak Europeanism with Slovak Slavism.²⁶² Drulák suggests that when the largely pro-European rhetoric of the elites failed to materialize in the actual practices of the Mečiar government, the government rejected Europe and resorted to the idea of an independent Slovakia with a strong Slavic heritage:

At the start the Western option prevailed, but this changed when the largely pro-European Slovak rhetoric was more and more contradicted by the undemocratic practices of the Mečiar government. Criticism by Western institutions strengthened the option of a rejection of Europe.²⁶³

As a result, Mečiar's move towards the Slavic East was counterproductive as it only further mobilized the pro-Western opposition. This created the idea of Slovak Mitteleuropeanism, which was used as a reaffirmation of Slovakia's deserved place in Europe to counter Mečiar's rapprochement with the East.²⁶⁴ Drulák further indicates that the construction of a Mitteleuropean identity strongly defined Slovakia's relations with the West, and the EU in particular. The rejection of Slovakia's membership application in 1997 provided leeway for the anti-Mečiar coalition led by Mikuláš Dzurinda, which eventually won the elections and initiated a set of substantial reforms to catch up with other CEECs in the integration with Western institutions.²⁶⁵ The oppositional discourses identified the European Union as democracy and progress, and as an anti-thesis to the state-centrism of Mečiar's government:

We want to integrate Slovakia with the European Union as quickly as possible. Integration with Europe is the basis for our political and economic stability and prosperity. Above all, it will allow our citizens to participate in the institutions of the European Union, to move freely, to live and work anywhere in the European Union.²⁶⁶

²⁶² See for instance Vladimír Mečiar, *Slovensko, dôveruj si!* (Kralupy nad Vltavou: R-Press, 1998) and Dana Podracká and Luba Šajdová, *Vladimír Mečiar: Slovenské tabu: eseje a úvahy* (Bratislava: Silentium, 2000).

²⁶³ 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*, ed. Helene Sjursen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006): 180.

²⁶⁴ Petr Drulák, "Slovensko, Česko a Západ," *Zahraničná politika* 4 (2013): 2. On Mitteleuropean identity see: Ksenija Vidmar-Horvat and Gerard Delanty, "Mitteleuropa and the European Heritage," *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 2 (2008) and Eberhard Bort, "Mitteleuropa: The Difficult Frontier," in *The Frontiers of Europe*, eds. Malcom Anderson and Eberhard Bort (London: Wellington House, 1998).

²⁶⁵ Mikuláš Dzurinda served as Slovakian Prime Minister from 1998 to 2006. He is the founder and leader of the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) and later the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ-DS).

²⁶⁶ "SDK: Spolu za lepšie Slovensko, volební program pro volby do NR SR," (Bratislava, 1998): 25.

Domestic Articulations of Europe vis-à-vis Territoriality

It was argued earlier that multilevel organization of governance – as a new paradigm on the political organization of a territory – was promoted via the cohesion policy *acquis* and the related pre-accession aid instruments. This was supplemented with the *Europe of the regions* discourse, which foresaw the consolidation of regional self-governance and the region as a carrier of economic and political development. In relation to the CEECs, multilevel governance was specifically targeted at the decentralization of public administration, and the formation of regions as meso-level territorial units.²⁶⁷ The Czech and Slovak domestic debates reacted to the European Union's incentive by framing the question of territorial restructuring in light of particular conceptualizations of Europe, while reproducing the existing antagonisms in the representation of the state and state territoriality.

Both Czech and Slovak compliance with EU norms was enabled by a change in the political landscape, which consequently created space for novel representations of the state, territoriality, and the EU. Both the Zeman government in the Czech Republic and the Dzurinda government in Slovakia framed EU accession as a political priority. As a result, both governments were open to the demands voiced by the Commission. The EU's acknowledgments were in turn used against the political opposition (the parties of Klaus and Mečiar), as their relationship with the EU was more problematic. The proceeding analysis examines the construction of the European Union (and EU norms) in relation to the concept of statehood. It examines what discursive strategies were employed to frame a particular understanding of territoriality. Drawing from the established results, I will propose four basic ideal-type discourse representations of the European Union.

The Czech Republic – Much Ado about Nothing

In the early 1990s, the ongoing question of regionalization was pushed aside by what was presented as more urgent pending reforms, such as market liberalization and privatization. However, the turmoil in which the Czech political scene found itself in the late 1990s and the early 2000s placed the question of regionalization at the epicenter of debates between leading

²⁶⁷ See for instance: "Agenda 2000 - Commission Opinion on the Czech Republic's Application for Membership of the European Union DOC/97/17." and "Agenda 2000 - Commission Opinion on Slovakia's Application for Membership of the European Union DOC/97/20," (Brussels: European Commission, 1997). For an extensive analysis, see Hughes, Sasse, and Gordon, *Europeanization and Regionalization in the EU's Enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe: The Myth of Conditionality*.

political parties.²⁶⁸ With the question of regionalization up in the air, the EU provided the old debate with a new robe. Accordingly, the second wave of reforms in the Czech Republic, stretching from 1997 until 2002, had an evident European pretext.

Void of those who would advocate in favor of political regionalism, the regionalization debate was hijacked by economic considerations and framed around already existing ideological differences between the conservative ODS led by Klaus, and the center left ČSSD led by Zeman; political considerations came second. Dominant constructions of EU norms in relation to the state and territoriality were processed through the web of Czech party politics, and were consequently rearticulated through Klaus' hegemonic *economic centrism* and Zeman's antagonistic *economic pluralism*. The EU was used throughout the debate in such a way as to support the stance on regionalization by both camps. The political interpretations of the European Union and territoriality were subordinate to the economic rationale.

Policy Process

In November 1997 Klaus handed in his resignation. In December, the parliament adopted a Constitutional Act, proposed by the Tošovský caretaker government, creating fourteen units of regional self-government.²⁶⁹ Predominantly based on socio-geographic criteria, the model at hand disregarded the historic delimitation of the Czech territory. After years of sustaining the status-quo, the second wave of territorial restructuring, which in actuality brought about regionalization, was instigated by technocrats in absence of substantive public deliberation. During the Social Democrats' mandate, the parliament adopted Act 129/2000 on regions and Act130/2000 on regional elections, successfully establishing regions as a higher unit of sub-state self-government. In 2001, the first regional elections took place.²⁷⁰ The beginning of 2003 brought about the

²⁶⁸ After the fall of the ODS-led coalition in 1997, the Social Democrats (ČSSD) formed a minority government subsequent to the 1998 elections. For the government to achieve some stability, it entered the so-called *Opposition agreement* with ODS, which continued throughout the whole mandate until the 2002 elections. Many describe the Opposition agreement as a de facto grand coalition. "Smlouva o vytvoření stabilního politického prostředí v České republice uzavřená mezi Českou stranou sociálně demokratickou a Občanskou demokratickou stranou," (Prague, 1998).

²⁶⁹ "Vládní návrh Ústavního zákona o vytvoření vyšších územních samosprávných celků," (Prague: Parlament České Republiky, 1997).

²⁷⁰ "Zákon ze dne 12. dubna 2000 o krajích (krajské zařízení) 129/2000 Sb.," (2000).

complete abolishment of districts; the districts' competences were mainly taken over by the regions.²⁷¹

Key Discourses

The then Prime Minister Václav Klaus was among the key protagonists of state centrism. His account of *political realism* inspired by Friedmanite liberalism launched a new stream of economy-centered conceptualizations of state organization. Klaus identified transition with the goal of establishing a functioning market economy. Accordingly, the political reforms were subordinate to the economic ones. For Klaus, democracy came down to a well-functioning market and a pluralist party system: "The success of parliamentary democracy is entailed in the strength and the quality of political parties and the overall effectiveness of indirect, representative democracy."²⁷² This ideological position refused any intermediary between the utilitarian individual and the market, apart from a unitary state, which is naturally minimal from both a political and administrative viewpoint. The *Klausian* state left little room for the evolution of pluralist governance along vertical and horizontal lines.

By defining civil society through the interest of a rational individual, Klaus was able to dismantle the democracy/decentralization nexus in the debate over regionalization. If the state was fit to protect the interest of an individual, there was no need for the self-governing sub-state or the civil society to act as a middleman between the two. Additionally, decentralization and de-concentration of state powers were linked to the mushrooming state administration reminiscent of the communist days, and were inevitably portrayed as negative. In a reflection on the problems of Czech political organization, Klaus defined concepts such as pluralism and civil society as undemocratic:

[Representative democracy] is under a continuous threat by a modern exogenous factor. This factor is collectivism and post-democratism of a civil society. [...] Civil society organizations try to aggregate popular interests not on the basis of political ideology, but on the basis of partial and sectoral interests of various groups. [...] I will not discuss in detail why we are moving from a democratic political system towards a postpolitical and a postideological era. [...] But

²⁷¹ In 1990 district offices stopped existing as organs of subnational self-government. They were transformed into the organs of deconcentrated state. The 2003 legislation fully abolishes districts as a form of territorial organization of power.

²⁷² Václav Klaus, *Kde začíná zítřek* (Praha: Knižní klub, 2009): 169-70. See also Václav Klaus, *Renaissance: the Rebirth of Liberty in the Heart of Europe* (Washington: Cato Institute, 1997).

precisely this shift is the greatest challenge to the quality and effectiveness of our political system.²⁷³

This position is further translated in Klaus' reference to the state as the sole unit to serve the rights of an individual, which rejects the benefits of the de-concentration and decentralization of this state:

It seems that anyone who wants to divide the Czech countries into many more countries is in favor of civil society, whereas those against are portrayed to be also against civil society. What is civil society in any case? I fear that it is portrayed as something above the society of free citizens.²⁷⁴

Klaus' opposition to further decentralization was not solely normative. The ruling Civic Democratic Party (ODS), with Klaus as Prime Minister, enjoyed the benefits of a parliament majority. The party was reluctant to compromise this advantage by introducing an additional source of power at the regional level for the opposition to seize.²⁷⁵

Following the proven path of Klausian economic centrism in state organization, ODS, which possessed parliamentary majority between 1993 and 1997, successfully deterred attempts to further decentralize. Nevertheless, in 1997, Klaus was forced to step down over an ODS-related corruption controversy, which instantly created new momentum for regionalization. The opposition headed by the ČSSD saw regionalization as the Achilles heel of Klaus' government, and a niche for its own political advancement.²⁷⁶ Consequently, ČSSD built a noteworthy share of the 1997/1998 election program around the regionalization issue.²⁷⁷ This program placed regionalization directly in the context of public administration reforms, portraying the formation of regions as a necessity for both modernizing state administration and achieving equal distribution of economic growth.

²⁷³ Klaus, *Kde začíná zítřek*: 170.

²⁷⁴ Václav Klaus, "Snahy o třetí cesty nekončí 1994," in *Občan a obrana jeho státu*, ed. Jiří Weigl (Prague: Centrum pro ekonomiku a politiku, 2002): 14.

²⁷⁵ Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview A - Czech Republic/Slovakia," (Olomouc: Palacky University, Philosophical Faculty, 2011): 1.

²⁷⁶ Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview B - Czech Republic/Slovakia," (Prague: Czech University of Life Sciences, Faculty of Political Science, 2011): 2 and Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview A - Czech Republic/Slovakia,": 3.

²⁷⁷ "Volební program ČSSD pro volby 1997 - Alternativa pro naši zemi," (Prague: Česká strana sociálně demokratická, 1997) and "Volební program ČSSD pro volby 1998," (Prague: Česká strana sociálně demokratická, 1998).

In line with its strong pro-EU orientation, ČSSD found support for regionalization in the harmonization with the norms of the European Union. The 1998 program statement of the newly established government spoke of the regionalization process in direct relation to the European Union's regional policy.²⁷⁸ Not only was ČSSD referring to the necessity of adhering to subsidiarity and financial decentralization in the context of Czech accession to the European Union, but it also portrayed the Council of Europe's *Charter on Local Self-Government* to be directly correlated with EU legislation. Deliberate or not, contextualizing the Charter – which legally and in actuality was not part of the *acquis* – and the ensuing norms with the European Union in general, and EU accession in particular, was a common practice for the Czech political elite who supported decentralization. The ČSSD argued for the administrative organization of the state to be based upon transparency, subsidiarity, decentralization, and de-concentration:

It is absolutely necessary for the formation of higher units of self-government to be accompanied by a tax reform. This is the only way for the acquired competences to be put to practice. In this way, regions will have their own financial source at the expense of the central state budget and in no case of the municipal budgets. It is necessary to harmonize competences of subnational bodies with the provision of the EU's Charter on Local Self-Government, which sees a high degree of financial and administrative decentralization as a pillar of a democratic society.²⁷⁹

The center left utilized the European Union to overcome the stigma of economic inefficiency that was attached to decentralization by the center right, and was further entrenched by the inability of municipalities to profile themselves as strong players in the domestic political arena. A European region was framed as a dynamic and prosperous nucleus of economic development, financially and politically autonomous from the central state. The same was subsequently presented as a prototype for the forthcoming self-governing regions in the Czech Republic.²⁸⁰

In 1999, Zeman identified centrism as a source of economic difficulties, while at the same time stressing that Europe was a *Europe of the regions* and that there was no EU member, apart

²⁷⁸ "Programové prohlášení vlády," (Prague, 1998): 5.

²⁷⁹ "Volební program ČSSD pro volby 1997 - Alternativa pro naši zemi,"": 40.

²⁸⁰ Note that the center left favored the regionalization model to reflect the NUTS 2 classification system, as the most economical option. The parliamentarians argued for the restructuring of territorial organization with the goal of establishing larger and stronger regions, and consequently regions more capable of absorbing structural funding. This proposal was unacceptable for other parliamentary representatives, the center right in particular. "Návrh poslanců Zdeňka Koudelky, Jiřího Václavka a dalších na vydání ústavního zákona o zřízení vyšších územně samosprávných celků (Sněmovní Tisk 174 - druhé čtení)," (Prague: Poslanecká sněmovna, 1999).

from the small states, which lacked self-governing regions.²⁸¹ Particularly in the course of the parliamentary debate on the formation of regional competences, one observes a clear focus on the economic aspect of regionalization reforms, with regional self-government being framed in direct correlation with the EU's regional policy. Ideational aspects of the reforms, such as subsidiarity and pluralism, were portrayed as subordinate and as a mechanism of a well-functioning regional development policy. Václav Grulich, then Minister of Interior for ČSSD, argued:

I emphasize that the formation of regional self-government is an important prerequisite in the implementation of the EU's regional policy in the process of becoming an EU member. [It] is obvious that the absence of regional self-government is one of the key points of criticism we have received from the Commission. It is therefore irrelevant how regions are called, but it is crucial for them to be able to carry out regional policy and ensure greater involvement of citizens in the governance, based on democratic principles of civil society and coexistence.²⁸²

In response, ODS, too, adopted the “*it's the economy, stupid!*” mantra vis-à-vis the regionalization *problématique*. Whereas the center left framed multilevel governance and the accompanying norms on territoriality in the context of economic development in line with the EU's social model, the center right framed these norms as a barrier to state centrism and consequently also a barrier to economic development.

Following the 1996 political debacle, ODS was unable to stall the territorial reforms further. Once the *don't ask, don't tell* tactics failed, the center right revived the old rhetoric of equating decentralization to bureaucratization, and framed territorial reforms as an impediment to economic growth. Their program prior to the 1998 elections adopted the already proven reasoning of Klaus from the early 1990s:

ODS respects the will of legislators, which led to the adoption of a constitutional law on higher territorial administrative units. Nevertheless, we do not hold that the emergence of a regional self-government translates into making the public administration simpler and more approachable for the citizen. We are still not reconciled with the risk of fragmentation and an increase in the state bureaucracy resulting from regionalization reforms.²⁸³

²⁸¹“Rozhovor s Milošem Zemanem,” *Veřejná správa*, 1999: 10.

²⁸²“Vládní návrh Ústavního zákona o vytvoření vyšších územních samosprávných celků.”

²⁸³“Čtyři poděbradské artikuly - součást volebního programu ODS HLAVU VZHŮRU pro volby do PSP ČR 1998,” (Prague: Občanská demokratická strana, 1998): 4.

Remaining faithful to ideology, which saw the nation state as the sole guardian of the free market – or the national interest – ODS was categorically opposed to any reform which might jeopardize the integrity and sovereignty of the state. They were against regionalization and they were against the EU's multilevel governance:

It is difficult to talk about an ideal model of European integration. However, out of the two outlined models – intergovernmental and supranational – the Czech Republic should support the intergovernmental model. EU integration must be conducted from below, from the European nations and citizens, member states, represented by national parliaments and governments, and not from the above, from the administrative desks of the European political and bureaucratic elites. [...] For similar reasons, one needs to reject another fashionable theory – dissolution of a nation state from below – regionalization, often presented as a historically progressive process.²⁸⁴

Any dissolution of the nation state from below or above was rejected. Multilevel governance, and *Europe of the regions* as a particular manifestation of this representation of territoriality, were framed as hostile to state sovereignty (and ipso facto economically inefficient), and therefore rejected. To a large extent, this was translated into the policy discourse on domestic and especially transnational positioning of Czech regions; the obvious example being ODS' strong insistence that Czech territorial restructuring not copy the statistical parameters established by the NUTS classification system. The party argued that territorial organization was strictly a domestic issue and was not to be equalized with European regions (as defined by the NUTS system).²⁸⁵ From their perspective, beyond the normative idea of Europe of the regions, which was wrong in and of itself, European regions were a statistical creation established for the purposes of funds distribution, and were certainly not living organisms capable of trans-state activity.

Outside of the dominant ODS-ČSSD dichotomy stood smaller political parties and interest groups, which represented the sub-state – the Association of Municipalities (SMO) in particular. These smaller parties supported the reforms and endorsed norms such as multilevel governance, subsidiarity, and decentralization in formulating regional self-government in the Czech Republic.²⁸⁶ In addition to the SMO, the Freedom Union (US-DEU) is also worth noting.

²⁸⁴ Jan Zahradil et al., "Manifest českého eurorealismu," (Prague: Občanská demokratická strana, 2001): 8-9.

²⁸⁵ "Návrh poslanců Zdeňka Koudelky, Jiřího Václavka a dalších na vydání ústavního zákona o zřízení vyšších územně samosprávných celků (Sněmovní tisk 174 - druhé čtení)."

²⁸⁶ "Stenozáznam z 4. dne schůze," (Prague: Senát Parlamentu České Republiky, 1999) and "Strategie přípravy KDU-ČSL na vstup ČR do EU: Česká republika před branami Evropské unie," (Prague: KDU-ČSL, 2001).

As supporters of EU integration, this party identified Europe as *Europe of the regions* with subnational actors being vital actors within the EU's political space. The US-DEU (among others) advocated for regions to have a say in the creation of Czech foreign policy.²⁸⁷ However, these discourses were marginalized and had only a minor impact on both the policy debate vis-à-vis the regionalization package and the final policy documents.

Finally, what about the Czech citizens? Throughout the lengthy debate, the citizens remained distant and essentially uninterested. Although the government communicated the draft reforms to the broader public, the response was limited at best. Media coverage was contained to a small number of specialized periodicals. It did not seem to matter as the non-governmental sector preferred to remain uninvolved. For the broader public, the historical momentum of restructuring the state to be more efficient, democratic, and/or closer to the citizen was uneventful and boring.²⁸⁸ With normative considerations being underscored by the absence of public interest in regionalization, the end reforms reflect the power division of the time, rather than the public sentiment of the day. Paradoxically, the reforms that were supposed to bring the government closer to the people were drafted by technocrats with little involvement of the actual people. The result was a political compromise. The center left wanted a strong regional self-government, but instead got regions that were a faint image of what was initially envisioned. ODS, who opposed regionalization in the first place, was left with little alternative but to vote in favor of the regionalization package. Making the paradox even greater, the first elections at the regional level saw a triumph of the center right.²⁸⁹

Slovakia – So Much More than “Just” a Territorial Reform

Regionalization of territorial governance in Slovakia partially refutes the supremacy of the economic rationale that was dominant in the Czech policy discourse. The reform was framed as a democratic response to the undemocratic rule of Vladimír Mečiar, and therefore one of the most contentious political problems faced by independent Slovakia. The Slovak context of territorial governance reorganization is particularly interesting because the nationalist take on state-building clashed directly with the country's aspirations towards EU membership.

²⁸⁷ "Evropská vize Unie svobody – S Unii do Unie," (Unie svobody, 2003).

²⁸⁸ Beckmann, "The Big Yawn. Decentralization in the Czech Republic," 9.

²⁸⁹ For a detailed analysis of the 2000 elections for regional representations, refer to Ladislav Mrklas, ed. *Krajské volby 2000 - fakty, názory, komentáře* (Prague: CEVRO, 2001).

In the early 1990s, the government of Vladimír Mečiar showed interest in becoming part of European institutional structures – the EU and the *European Charter on Local and Regional Self-Government* – and consequently claimed adherence to European norms and values, including decentralization and territorial self-government. Centrist tendencies fit the nationalist flavor of the Mečiar era better than pluralism supported by decentralization. Mečiar linked consolidation of the Slovak state to the principle of national self-determination and the *one nation, one state* dictum.²⁹⁰ Discourses on Slovak nationality were always framed in the context of territorial integrity of the Slovak state. This is well illustrated in the political debate prior to the 1994 elections, which discussed minority laws against the integrity of the country's territorial borders:

At the international level, we will push for Europe-wide standardization of minority rights. We are in favor of the solution, which will take into the account international standards as well as particular needs of the society. The territorial integrity of the Slovak state is a key condition of our statehood. The existing territorial borders of our state shall not be challenged.²⁹¹

Discourse on national unity was utilized by Mečiar to refute criticism addressed by the opposition, and to further centralize his power. In many addresses to his supporters, Mečiar capitalized on the idea of a vulnerable and young Slovak statehood to marginalize his political opponents and cast them as enemies of the state:

the same people who opposed the formation of the state, the same people who wanted and who brought about the fall of the government in 1994, are again making predictions to reverse the development, to impose a different notion of order and development. We cannot lead a political struggle forever; enough is enough. We will not allow our republic to be subverted, and thus the government will adopt an amendment to the penal code that will make such activities unlawful and will punish them.²⁹²

Not soon after, nationalism was *upgraded* to ethnocentrism. From then on, nationalist rhetoric, largely targeted against the Magyars and the Roma population, became another instrument in

²⁹⁰ For nationalism in the early years of Slovak statehood, see Peter A. Toma and Dušan Kováč, *Slovakia: From Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001): 286 and Sharon Fisher, *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 23-52.

²⁹¹ "Slovensko do toho!, Volební program pro volby do NR SR," 82.

²⁹² "SME," 3 October 1996. Found in Grigorij Mesežnikov, "Domestic Politics," in *Slovensko 1996–1997: súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*, eds. Martin Butora and Thomas W. Skladony (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1997): 11.

furthering Mečiar's power ambitions. Demands of the Hungarians for minority rights, including territorial self-government, political representation, and the use of their minority language in education and public administration, were framed as anti-statist and therefore rejected.²⁹³

It soon became clear that the European pretext of the reforms was nothing more than a smokescreen. The European context provided the opposition with a target in its critique of the rigidity of the regime. To cite Viktor Nižňanský, a key protagonist of the territorial reforms:

Decentralization in conjunction with the public administration reform is indispensable for a geographically and ethnically diverse Slovakia. It is also an instrument for a change of the overall understanding of the state – in order for the wider public not to understand the state as an institution, but as a community of citizens, this public needs to identify with the state and have a common interest in the prosperity of the district, the region, and hence the state in its totality.²⁹⁴

The political and the public discourse following the electoral defeat of Mečiar in 1998 onwards saw decentralization and territorial restructuring as an imperative in the country's economic and political development.

References to the European Union placed particular emphasis on both the EU as a political community, and the role of common European values, in shaping the democratization process (also in Slovakia). The official discourse under Mečiar constructed the European Union and EU accession as a confirmation of Slovak identity. This discourse was continued by the new government following Mečiar's political defeat. In 1999, then president Rudolf Schuster defined EU membership as an accomplishment of Slovakia's sovereignty.²⁹⁵ Referring to the national debate on the future of the European Union, Schuster discussed a sovereign Slovakia within the European Union, which allowed for national specificities.²⁹⁶ Partially carried by the euphoria of EU accession, some officials referred to the federal character of the European Union.²⁹⁷ The discourse on the EU as a collective of sovereign states formed around the concept of a market

²⁹³ See Ondrej Dostál, "Minorities," in *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Martin Butora and Thomas W. Skladony (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1996).

²⁹⁴ Viktor Nižňanský, *Decentralizácia na Slovensku: bilancia nekonečného príbehu 1995-2005* (Bratislava: Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky, kancelária splnomocnenca vlády SR pre decentralizáciu verejnej správy, 2005): 9.

²⁹⁵ Rudolf Schuster, "Speech to the European Parliament," (Strasbourg, 16 May 1999).

²⁹⁶ Rudolf Schuster, "Introduction to the Slovak National Convention about European Future," (Bratislava, 2002).

²⁹⁷ Pavol Hrušovský, "Budúcnosť Európy: s pokorou ale optimisticky," paper presented at the *Europe Possible* conference (Rome, 2003) in *Europe Possible* (Rome 2003) and Pavol Hrušovský, "'Spat' k základom Európy'," in *Speech at the Meeting of Speakers of the Parliaments of EU Accession Countries* (Paris, 2003).

economy – central to the Czech Europeanization process – proved marginal in the case of Slovakia.

The political identification of the European Union and efforts in the democratization of the state came together in the debate on territorial reforms. References to subsidiarity, decentralization, or pluralism as core values of European order were much stronger in the Slovak policy debate. Interestingly, the European Union was also utilized by the opposition to the territorial reforms to stress the need of rationalization – as opposed to democratization – of territorial self-government. With EU norms being framed within the policy discourse to simultaneously endorse both strong and weak regional self-government, EU accession came as a blessing in disguise for the opponents of territorial restructuring more than it was an asset to the pro-reformist camp.

Policy Process

The Mečiar era was marked by a set of territorial policies that disregarded Slovakia's legacy in territorial organization and were unfavorable to the country's socio-demographic diversities. The year 1998 brought about a new wave of legislation regulating territorial governance meant to strengthen the power of the state. This provoked widespread revolt from the side of sub-state interest organizations and the political opposition, who classified the government's move as a disservice to self-government and democracy in Slovakia. Following Mečiar's electoral defeat in September 1998, the grand coalition government (formed primarily as an opposition to Mečiar's LS–HZDS), with Miloš Dzurinda as the new Prime Minister, was eager to reverse the unfavorable territorial organization through political and fiscal decentralization and territorial restructuring.

The first initiative for territorial restructuring came from the non-state sector – predominantly interest groups representing the municipal level. In addition to dividing Slovakia into twelve self-governing higher territorial units (in line with the *župa* model), the interest groups advocated for a high degree of fiscal and administrative decentralization for both the municipal and regional level. Although interest groups such as ZMOS and the ÚMO had been preparing the reform since 1993, the prospect of establishing a social dialogue with state representatives throughout the 1990s was limited at best. Accordingly, deliberations took place with complete absence of state policy-makers. For the material to become a full-fledged political platform, however, political support was needed. Hence, the reform was promoted on two fronts

simultaneously. It was presented to the municipal political elite, the broader public, and the nongovernmental sector, while at the same time individual activists joined opposition parties, and pushed the reform into the spotlight of those parties' political agendas.²⁹⁸ Following the electoral victory in 1998, the public administration reform became one of the key points in the program of the newly governing coalition. At the same time, regionalization was strongly supported by the general public and the non-state sector, making it difficult for the government to default. Viktor Nižňanský, as the appointed Commissioner for Public Administration Reform, received considerable discretion in implementing the reforms. He drafted the 1999 *Strategy for Public Administration Reform* and the 2000 *Concept for Decentralization and Modernization of Public Administration*.²⁹⁹ These blueprints supported the consolidation of self-governing regions in line with subsidiarity and financial decentralization. The scheme was open to a widespread public debate brought about by government representatives traveling across Slovakia organizing public forums concerning the matter at hand. This marked the start of the second epoch of decentralization reforms in Slovakia.

However, the question of territorial restructuring proved to be detrimental for the coalition. The negotiations over the exact number of regions lasted for a year. In the end, the Government had to endorse the proposal which divided Slovakia into twelve self-governing regions (in line with the *župa* model), but the consent was not unanimous; center left coalition members expressed their reservations. This then spilled-over into the parliamentary debate. In parliament, the initial normative considerations over decentralization as a precondition for the democratization of public administration were quickly sidelined by political quarreling over the exact number and territorial borders of the regions in the making. The inability to reach consensus reflected negatively upon the final content of the reforms, as well as the stability of the government.

The legislative package, adopted in late 2001, significantly deviated from the original draft and was not the most optimal solution concerning both the number of regions and their competences. The result was eight instead of the initially agreed twelve regions – a model failing

²⁹⁸ In 1994, Viktor Nižňanský, one of the key architects of the reform, joined the Democratic Party (Demokratická strana - DS). In 1999-2001 Nižňanský acted as the Government's Commissioner for Public Administration Reform, and in 2002-2006 as the Government's Commissioner for Decentralization, DS upgraded the regionalization/decentralization material to the official party program. In 1997, DS, together with five parties, established the anti-Mečiar Slovak Democratic Coalition, which has also endorsed the reform.

²⁹⁹ "Stratégia reformy verejnej správy v Slovenskej Republike," (Bratislava: Vláda Slovenskej republiky, 1999) and "Konceptia decentralizácie a modernizácie verejnej správy," (Bratislava: Vláda Slovenskej republiky, 2001).

to acknowledge socio-historical and geo-economical preconditions. The legislation ultimately attached self-governing competences to the existing higher territorial units established under Mečiar in 1996. This was accompanied by a rather weak fiscal decentralization and a blurring division of power between the state and the sub-state.³⁰⁰ The first regional elections took place in 2001 with regional governments assuming office in early 2002. Fiscal and administrative decentralization were finalized only in the second term of Dzurinda's rule. Despite some voices on Slovakia's political scene advocating for a new wave of territorial restructuring in the post-2002 period (which would break away from the existing structure of eight regions), this cause fell flat.³⁰¹

The outcome of an over-a-decade-long struggle for regionalization was a fragile semi-finished product, which did more to confirm than to resolve the sources of Slovak social and political anxieties. With the provisions outlined in the 1999 Strategy and the 2000 Decentralization Concept postponed indefinitely, large regional development disparities, the unresolved Hungarian minority question, and weak legitimacy of the sub-state political elites remain pending to this day.

Key Discourses

Brusis describes regionalization in Slovakia as a "political project in its own right," instigated by mobilized civil society representatives and the opposition under the motto "expanding democracy vis-à-vis the state."³⁰² Indeed, democratization by means of decentralization was the *catch phrase* of the political discourse on territorial reforms. Initially framed as a response to centrist and undemocratic practices of the Mečiar government, the regionalization debate subsequently triggered much deeper dilemmas within Slovak politics; the Hungarian minority right to self-determination in particular. All things considered, one may say that regionalization was a hot topic in the Slovak political scene throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

³⁰⁰ "Uznesenie Vlády SR 491/2000 k alternatívneému návrhu usporiadania samosprávy vyšších územných celkov," (Bratislava: Vláda Slovenskej republiky, 2000); "Zákon 302/2001 Z.z. zo 4. júla 2001 o samospráve vyšších územných celkov (zákon o samosprávnych krajochoch)," (Bratislava: Vláda Slovenskej republiky, 2011); "Zákon 303/2001 Z.z. zo 4. júla 2001 o voľbách do orgánov samosprávnych krajov a o doplnení Občianskeho súdneho poriadku," (Bratislava: Vláda Slovenskej republiky, 2001); and "Zákon 416/2001 Z.z. z 20. septembra 2001 o prechode niektorých pôsobností z orgánov štátnej správy na obce a na vyššie územné celky," (Bratislava: Vláda Slovenskej republiky, 2001).

³⁰¹ Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview E - Czech Republic/Slovakia," 5 and Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview F - Czech Republic/Slovakia," (Bratislava: UNDP, 2011): 8.

³⁰² Brusis, "The Instrumental Use of European Union Conditionality: Regionalization in the Czech Republic and Slovakia," 314.

In such a long-term scenario, which Nižňanský describes as the “never-ending story of decentralization,” European norms took a supporting, rather than a leading act.³⁰³ Still, reference to European values did play a role in reinforcing the democratization context of the territorial reform:

The argument of *Europe wants it* was often used in support of many reforms, in some cases more than in others. However, we did not blindly follow a particular European model just anywhere. But of course, principles arising from the *European Charter(s) on Local and Regional Self-government* were a very strong motto, which we have referred to when advocating and explaining the reforms. Everything that was available and that we could use in support of our idea, we did.³⁰⁴

Prior to the 1998 elections, both the non-state sector and the opposition utilized the international condemnation of Mečiar’s increasingly repressive governing style to their advantage.³⁰⁵ On more than one occasion, in the media and during public rallies the opposition held the government responsible for disrespecting key principles of democracy, and for being an obstacle to Slovakia’s progress towards EU membership.³⁰⁶ The same strategy of referring to the *un-Europeanness* of the existing state of affairs, and drawing from EU norms and principles to reinforce their own policy proposals, was used by the opposition with regard to public administration reforms. The opposition’s electoral program called for a decentralized model of public administration with strong self-governing regions. This was projected as a step towards democratization and Europeanization of the Slovak state. Following European trends in the organization of public administration in line with subsidiarity, partnership and financial decentralization were given particular importance.³⁰⁷

Pro-reformist forces within the Dzurinda led coalition continued alluding to EU norms in the context of territorial reforms in the post-election period. Once in office, the government

³⁰³ Nižňanský, *Decentralizácia na Slovensku: bilancia nekonečného príbehu 1995-2005*.

³⁰⁴ Neuman Stanivukovič, "Interview E - Czech Republic/Slovakia,": 3.

³⁰⁵ In 1997, the European Commission published the Agenda 2000, which states that due to instable institutions, immature political structures, and shortcomings in the functioning of democracy, Slovakia does not fulfill the Copenhagen criteria. The EU Parliament and Council of Europe have expressly condemned the tendency to consolidate power at the expense of sub-state self-government. "Agenda 2000 - Commission Opinion on Slovakia's Application for Membership of the European Union DOC/97/20,": 130 and "Resolution 83 (1999) on the Current State of and Prospects for Regionalisation in Europe," (Strasbourg: The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, 1999).

³⁰⁶ "Juraj Švec: Ak si nedáme pozor, pripravíme sa aj o asociačnú dohodu," *SME.sk*, 1997.

³⁰⁷ "SDK: Spolu za lepšie Slovensko, volební program pro volby do NR SR,": 51.

placed public administration reforms at the top of its priorities.³⁰⁸ Guided by the question *What kind of a state do we want?*, the government referred to a modern European state based on pluralist and participatory democracy as a blueprint for furthering the instigated territorial reforms.³⁰⁹ In that setting, decentralization in conjunction with regionalization spoke practically for itself: "An additional characteristic of a pluralist state is decentralization of state power along vertical and horizontal lines."³¹⁰ The framework strategy for territorial restructuring of the state referred to participatory democracy, subsidiarity, decentralization, de-concentration, and efficiency. Adherence to these principles was presented as a tool in strengthening – as opposed to weakening – the state in the context of European and global political and economic structures. The formation of self-governing regions was referred to as an essential step *in keeping up with the West*:

Conferring with the provisions of the *European Charter on Regional Self-governance*, the existence of regions, governed by elected representatives and accredited with self-governing competences, assures effective and citizen-oriented governance. A region represents a governance level suitable for the adherence to subsidiarity, which is among the core principles of a modern state. The formation of higher territorial units is to help Slovakia integrate with the EU. Consequently, Slovakia will take a European path vis-à-vis territorial government reforms. Furthermore, self-governing regions are to help Slovakia make use of structural funds.³¹¹

Representatives of the Hungarian minority outlined an extensive number of legislative provisions, derived from both the EU and the Council of Europe, which spoke in favor of decentralization as a means of allowing minority participation in policy-making. To support the creation of regions with a Hungarian majority, they read the regionalization question exclusively from the context of minority protection.³¹² Rather interestingly, the Hungarian minority managed to frame regionalization as a transnational phenomenon, but contained within the borders of a sovereign Slovak state.

³⁰⁸ "Programové uznesení č. 788/1998," (Bratislava: Vláda Slovenskej republiky, 1998).

³⁰⁹ Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview E - Czech Republic/Slovakia," : 2.

³¹⁰ "Stratégia reformy verejnej správy v Slovenskej Republike," : 5.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, : 45.

³¹² József Kvarda, "Deviaty deň rokovania 50. schôdze Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky 2. júla 2001," (Bratislava: Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 2001): 148-50.

Notwithstanding political uncertainties, the draft legislation was agreed upon by the government in April 2001 and put to vote in Parliament in July of the same year.³¹³ The government resorted to proven argumentation of combining historical tradition with EU integration to support the regionalization process. However, the argumentation was significantly watered down by a growing disunity of the governing coalition, which in the post-election political environment had lost its *raison d'être* and eventually become estranged. A gap between the initial commitments made regarding territorial restructuring and the positions of the individual coalition members during parliamentary deliberations had severe consequences on the course of the regionalization process and the overall stability of the government.³¹⁴

As a result, territorial reform was subjected to criticism from the opposition, trade unions, and left-wing coalition members. The public debate politicized the reforms by predominantly constructing the territoriality discourse around the sensitive issue of the Hungarian minority becoming a majority in the anticipated Komárno region. Additionally, the model that suggested twelve regions was accused of being too costly and based exclusively on ethnic considerations, and was thus deemed unacceptable. Transforming the already existing eight administrative regions into self-governing regions arose as the most prevalent alternative. Paradoxically, the opposition to the bill, from within and outside of the governing coalition, also resorted to the European Union when articulating its objections. Proponents of quasi-etatism with regions as an extension of – rather than a supplement to – the central state advocated for the eight-regions model of territorial division. The government's proposal was described as an unacceptable attack on state unity, favoring the needs of a minority over the majority.³¹⁵ Against this background, the EU region was framed as a functional unit utilized exclusively for the purposes of assessment and distribution of EU funding.³¹⁶ Three core arguments were adopted. First, the need for larger territorial units to fit with the standards set by the NUTS statistical classification was articulated.

³¹³ Whereas the Explanatory Memorandum to the bill puts both the eight-region and the twelve-region model of regionalization up for deliberation, the final draft legislation presented to the Parliament respects fully the provisions outlined by the Strategy and the Concept, thus proposing twelve regions to be established as meso-level units of self-government in Slovakia.

³¹⁴ Viktor Nižňanský and Miroslav Kňažko, "Verejná správa," in *Slovensko 1999–2000: súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1999): 241-42.

³¹⁵ MP Augustín Marián Húska cited in Grigorij Mesežnikov and Viktor Nižňanský, *Reforma verejnej správy na Slovensku 1998–2002: súvislosti, aktéri, vol'by* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2002): 141-42.

³¹⁶ Melánia Kolláriková, "Deviaty deň rokovania 50. schôdze Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky 2. júla 2001," (Bratislava: Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 2001): 143.

Second, the argument of EU accession was utilized to stress expediency over the content of the reforms and consequently disrupted further discussions on the matter. It was more important to have some – albeit weak – regional level, than to stall the process over unnecessary and costly territorial restructuring. Accordingly, the territorial reform was described as a lavish caprice, which not only jeopardized state integrity, but was also an obstruction to Slovakia's progress towards EU membership:

The here advocated fragmentation of our territory is certainly not what the EU requires of us to do. [...] To the contrary, the EU has hinted that further disintegration of the existing territorial units is not desirable.³¹⁷

Third, it was claimed that a smaller number of regions with a higher degree of centralization was the most beneficial to Slovakia in the post-accession period. A consolidated state that ensured internal integrity was not only seen as compatible with EU practices, but also as a precondition for the survival of the Slovak state and nation within the European Union and other transnational structures.³¹⁸

Outlining the Four Meta-discourses on the EU

The Czech and Slovak policy debates on territorial reforms illustrate four ideal-type representations (meta-discourses) of the European Union in relation to the particular understandings of the state, and therefore also territoriality.³¹⁹ These will now be discussed in detail below.

The Economic Community Discourse

The first ideal-type discourse – the economic community discourse – constructs the European Union as a condition of economic stability via the establishment of a functioning market economy. The European Union is a community of states defined by joint adherence to the principles of market-economy, including norms such as economic growth, efficiency,

³¹⁷ Katarína Tóthová, "Deviaty deň rokovania 50. schôdze Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky 2. júla 2001," (Bratislava: Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 2001): 185.

³¹⁸ Pavol Kačic, "Deviaty deň rokovania 50. schôdze Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky 3. júla 2001," (Bratislava: Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 2001): 56.

³¹⁹ As mentioned in the previous chapter, because the ideal-types are located at a more general level of discourse, the text referred to when composing the ideal-type might not fully replicate the given ideal-type discourse. For a more detailed explanation, see Chapter 3: *Discourse as Data – Methodology of Discourse Analysis* on pages 71-99.

rationalization, etc.³²⁰ This position supports the thesis on the intergovernmentalist or statist nature of the European Union because it is grounded in the conception of the territorial state as an a priori framework for the realization of economic relations. The discourse on the EU as an economic community is an extension of the economic reading of statehood, where the state assumes the role of a supreme regulator of the economy. As such, EU integration is understood as a continuation of statehood rather than as a transfer of state competences to the suprastate level (or multi-territorial levels).

The state is identified as *an ideal collective capitalist* – a crucial condition in shaping the dynamic of market economy, as well as being shaped by that dynamic. The relationship between the economy and the state (and also the EU as a continuation of the state) is explained as one of mutual constitution. Because the capitalist system is unable to sustain itself through market forces alone, it does so via the articulation of the state in the function of securing the general interest of the capital.³²¹ This leads to the personification of the state in the variances of the market discourse – be it the Keynesian welfare nation state based on solidarity, social citizenship, and state-regulated economy, or the liberalist minimal state grounded in laissez-faire economics.

Political territoriality is constructed in a utilitarian sense as a mechanism in establishing a particular socio-economic order, be it neo-liberal or socio-democratic (i.e. the welfare state). Territoriality is framed in the context of a market-economy paradigm. Territoriality is linked to the state as long as the state is perceived to best serve the condition of a functioning market economy, and the related economic growth and improved living standards. This means that the hegemony of a state-centric reading of territoriality is reproduced through various representations of the state-market nexus such as Western liberal democracy, the European/Nordic welfare state, etc., and the related concepts including efficiency, economic growth, wages, taxation, stability, and so forth.

From this perspective, the implied hegemony of state territoriality in the discourse on the EU as an economic community can be challenged solely by the disjunction of the state-market

³²⁰ In contrast to the more cited connotations of European economic integration with a regime-based identification of Europe (see for instance Eriksen, *Making the European Polity: Reflexive Integration in the EU.*), which is ascribed to a rational interest of EU members in, for instance, a common market, I see this interest to be driven by the idea of a free market. Accordingly, I see the EU's economic order to be based upon a set of common values. For this reason, I refer to the discourse above about the EU as an *economic community* as opposed to an *economic regime*.

³²¹ For a critical reading, see Bob Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) and Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in Their Place* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). For a literature overview, see Michael Marinetto, *Social theory, the State and Modern Society: the State in Contemporary Social Thought* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2007).

nexus. Antagonistic discourses are constructed as novel formations of the organization of economic relations. In the context of EU integration, this includes cross-border regions, transnational regional networks, denationalization of cities as economic *hubs/networks* unbound from the territory of the nation state, etc. Multilevel governance is neither a complete disjunction of power from territoriality nor a total demise of the state. Rather, it is an attempt at reconstructing territoriality around novel nodal points in the institutionalization of power (which includes the articulation of novel forms of territorial and non-territorial government/governance and a rearticulated state) in order to fit the needs of the market.

The ideal-type *Europe as an economic community* discourse can be found in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia. What is more, it presents itself as one of the constituting frames in the Europeanization of the Czech discourse on territoriality. This is due to the Czech national identity throughout the 1990s being defined by the rationale of economic transformation. Consequently, domestic articulations of Europe were processed through an economic reading of the state. In his genealogy of the representations of Europe in the Czech political discourse, Drulák shows that the 1996 Czech application for EU membership suggested that the Czech Republic was “devoted to the ideas of the liberalisation of economic activities and international economic relations,” whereas it *only* “accepts the broader, non-economic aspects of European integration.”³²² This also refers to the context of territorial reforms, which were primarily framed around the questions of rationalization and economic efficiency.

Particularly interesting is the rhetoric of the center right. They constructed the state as a unitary actor to prevent additional interference between the state and the citizen. The state, as defined by the Czech center right, was both unitary and minimal, and was constructed solely around the liberal-market ideology. This position was translated into a very minimalist understanding of EU integration in line with the *Eurorealism* doctrine. Consequently, because the center right rejected any diffusion of state power from both above and below, the European Union was either rejected as a political Union or was framed as a confirmation of the Czech identity as a Western liberal market. The issue was that this discourse found it problematic to reconcile the state-centric construction of the EU as a liberal market with the economic reading of the EU’s region; the center right’s discourse read political territoriality through the prism of a

³²² Drulák, “Probably a Problem-Solving Regime, Perhaps a Rights-Based Union. European Integration in the Czech and Slovak Political Discourse,”: 179.

unitary state, which was irreconcilable with the idea of multilevel governance. Consequently, norms on multilevel Europe were constructed in opposition to the state-market nexus, and as such, as a barrier to economic growth.

To answer widespread references to decentralization, regionalization, territorial restructuring, etc. in the context of economically unbeneficial state fragmentation and bureaucratization, the center left framed the EU region as a fundamental unit of the European economic model. Note, however, that the discourse was constructed in support of the state's territorial sovereignty, meaning that the Czech discourse constructed regionalization as state (economic) consolidation rather than as a deterioration of the state. The EU's multilevel governance, and the accompanying norms, were framed as a re-articulation of state territoriality. The same economic community discourse also explains the insistence of the center left in framing the reforms in the context of harmonization with the EU's cohesion policy *acquis*. Territorial reforms were welcomed to the extent that they brought economic benefits to the state via the EU's pre-accession funds, and later the absorption of structural funds.

The Slovak case replicates the Czech discourse to the extent that the economic reading of the EU's multilevel governance was articulated in support of state unity. However, because Slovak political elites relied more on the European Union as a *prima facie* political entity, and consequently a mechanism in confirming Slovak's political identity, the *economic community* discourse appears as an antagonistic discourse constructed by the political opposition to oppose the drafted territorial reforms. Territorial reforms were thus limited to the context of absorbing and distributing EU funding.

The Political Community Discourse

The second ideal-type discourse on Europe as a political community is related to the political aspect of the EU integration project. It constructs the EU as a political community of sovereign states grounded in the EU's institutional order. This entity is founded on a degree of *commonality*, expressed through normative values associated primarily with the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. These principles are politicized in the sense that they are not reducible to a common culture constructed around a (transnational) European demos/ethos. Rather, references to commonly shared values and norms are legitimized through an institutionalized value consensus among EU member states. The political and economic community discourses share the conception of the

state as a primary framework for the organization of power in relation to territory. However, whereas the first ideal-type is derived from a normative understanding of the socio-economic relations of the state, this second ideal-type concerns itself with the wider sphere of the state's political organization. As such, the political reading of the European Union is linked to the discourse on modern European statehood.

Modern European statehood in a Weberian tradition is defined as an institutional complex claiming sovereignty for itself as supreme political authority within a demarcated territory for whose governance it is responsible.³²³ It is constructed around the state/institution nexus. These institutions are democratic and based on the respect for human rights and civil liberties in line with the liberal democracy paradigm. Economic institutions such as private ownership and market economy also matter, but are articulated to a lesser extent.³²⁴ Noteworthy then is the construction of the modern European state (in the context of the EU as a political community) in terms of the nation state, which tries to reconcile institution-based and nation-based statehood. This results in the *nationalization* of state institutions in the sense that their legitimacy is constructed through common cultural (as opposed to political) values based on shared heritage, language, etc. This explains why the institution-based reading of the EU and nation-based reading of the state are not necessarily contradictory.

What does this mean for territoriality? I have argued above that modern statehood is defined through territoriality. In this sense, the European Union is (equally as in the previous ideal-type) defined as a continuation of state territoriality. At the same time, democratization, as another defining element of modern statehood, opens the discursive space for its reinterpretation from a statist towards a multilevel understanding of political territoriality. Thus, the democratization process allows for an uncoupling of the state/institution nexus, consequently contextualizing institutions with society.³²⁵ As a result, the territorial state, while reclaiming its

³²³ See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); and Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber* (London: Routledge, 2002).

³²⁴ Note that the previous economic rationale in the construction of the European Union also draws from a Weberian interpretation of statehood. Nonetheless, it puts market relations before institutions and is therefore different from the above-discussed type-two basic discourse.

³²⁵ For a discussion on modern statehood in relation to society, see Christopher Pierson, *The Modern State* (London: Routledge, 1996).

position as an overarching structure of political life, is redefined as a multiplicity of governing structures in and through which political governmental and non-governmental actors interact.³²⁶

Representation of the European Union as a political community is most clearly illustrated in the discourse of Slovakian political elites. The identification of Slovak identity with Western European institutions in general, and the European Union in particular, rearticulated democratization as an instrument to become a *normal* European country. The construction of the European Union as a collective of democratic institutions was complementary to the democratization question, which was the focal point of the Slovak political and societal discourse. Given the sensitive context of transition, the conjunction of the European Union with democratization was hardly contested. Mečiar's later insistence on the protection of a national identity against the constructed image of European universalism as threatening the particularities of national cultures was never accepted as a viable alternative to the institutional reading of the European Union.

Seeing the EU as a political community had specific consequences for the articulation of statehood within the territorial reforms debate. Because territorial reforms were framed as a question of democratization rather than a problem of territorial restructuring, the European Union and the accompanying norms were also articulated in the context of the formation of democratic state institutions and not in the context of Slovakian territorial sovereignty. Whereas the official discourse emphasized the consolidation of regional self-governance as a method of achieving the political standards of the West (in line with European norms), the opposition to the reforms referred to the European Union in terms of consolidating the state's economic structures. Although the problem of the state's territorial sovereignty marked much of the Slovak political discourse in the 1990s and beyond, the narrative of the EU's threat to the Slovak nation state was limited to marginal discourses with little leverage over the final regionalization policies.

The Federal State Discourse

The federal state discourse, as the third ideal-type, is also constructed within the realm of modern statehood. Because this discourse effectively reproduces the modern statehood at a different territorial level of organization, we can speak of a discursive reconstruction of identity from the

³²⁶ See Bob Jessop, "Multilevel Governance and Multilevel Metagovernance. Changes in the EU as Integral Moments in the Transformation and Reorientation of Contemporary Statehood," in *Multi-Level Governance*, eds. Ian Bache and Matthew Flinders (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

member state's national territory to the European supranational territory. In contrast to the political community discourse that is reducible to the normative institutional order shared among member states, here, emphasis is placed on the construction of a common European identity (European demos) based on shared values and norms embedded in the European constitutional tradition. Put simply, one is referring to the union of the peoples as opposed to the community of states. This basic discourse is premised on a *Rechtsstaat* (i.e. constitutional state) as the identity is derived from the democratic constitution that brings together a heterogeneous and plural populous. It is also premised on political participation of the united citizens in the democratic process. This means that public deliberation and the constitutional order are mutually constitutive; communicative action within the normative framework of the given legal structure shapes collective interests (identities) and vice versa.³²⁷

The concept of federation inescapably confirms the state-centric discourse because the legal system and the demos (as constituting elements of a federal state) are bound to a delimited territory. In many cases, territorially grounded identities play a significant role in the construction of federations (see for instance Swiss cantons or German Länder). However, the conception of territoriality in a federal political system is more complex because it is based on the element of heterogeneity as opposed to, for instance, national unity in a nation state. This means that it is permanently contested along the given cultural, economic, social, ideological and other diversities. The federal state discourse reproduces the territorial state more than it indicates its demise. Still, it opens the discursive space for the state's perpetual reconfiguration as well. Especially because of this fluidity, which is attached to the concept of federalism, references to federal Europe within national discourses are more prone to shifts in the relationship between the central state and the sub-state.

Since territorial reforms in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia were primarily framed as a process of state economic or political consolidation, references to federal Europe were restricted to marginal discourses with limited effects on the policy process. For example, this is visible in the Slovak political discourse, where regionalism was sporadically mentioned as an indispensable part of European identity, but only outside of the context of the

³²⁷ For a detailed discussion, see Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Jürgen Habermas, "The European Nation State. Its Achievements and Its Limitations. On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship," *Ratio Juris* 9, no. 2 (1996); and Jürgen Habermas, "Constitutional Democracy. A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?" *Political Theory* 29, no. 6 (2001).

regionalization/territorial restructuring debate.³²⁸ Moreover, a conflict between state-centric readings of the European Union and territorial reforms, as well as a federal representation of Europe, was evident in the anti-eurofederalist stance of the Czech center right. The federalist Europe discourse was rejected for violating state sovereignty. Any further political integration, which transcended minimalist Europe in line with the conservative/liberal paradigm, was therefore discussed in opposition to Czech demands for sovereignty.³²⁹ This included territorial reforms that were presented as part of the European federation framework. As Mirek Topolánek, former ODS leader and Czech Prime Minister between 2006 and 2009 put it, “I particularly refuse further diffusion of the nation state into self-governing euroregions, which would mark the end of national government.”³³⁰

The Multilevel Polity Discourse

The fourth, and final ideal-type, which represents the European Union as a multilevel polity, is probably the most interesting because it directly challenges the hegemony of a state-centric reading of territoriality. Here, the European Union is represented as a non-state entity characterized by dispersed and fragmented forms of power, and a plurality of problem-solving sites. This suggests that political power is organized in a heterarchical manner through complex partnerships and networks that may or may not be territorially grounded. Whereas such a European Union continues to be defined by common adherence to the principles of democracy, market economy, welfare state, etc., these values cannot be pinpointed to either a community of states or citizens, but to a variation of actors with either a territorial or a functional constituency.

This ideal-type is not derived from a particular reading of statehood. Rather, the concept of statehood is reconstructed through the articulation of a multilevel Europe as its antagonistic other. This suggests that the discourse on the state as a *power container* is challenged by multilevel governance as a new conceptual space for the understanding of political order in

³²⁸ See Rudolf Schuster, "Speech at ZMOS (Príhovor pána prezidenta SR J. E. Rudolfa Schustera na XIV. sneme ZMOS-u)," (Bratislava, 2004) and Rudolf Schuster, "Speech at the Third National Convention on the European Future of Slovakia (Uvodné slovo prezidenta SR Rudolfa Schustera na 3. zasadnutí Národného konventu o európskej budúcnosti)," (Bratislava, 2002). For the Czech discourse, see "Programové prohlášení Koalice Volby 2002 - KDU-ČSL," (Prague, 2002).

³²⁹ Ladislav Mrklas, ed. *Proč nejsem eurofederalistou* (Prague: CEVRO, 2003). Particularly interesting is the connotation between eurofederalism and communism in the title of the above-cited edited volume (which is de facto ODS' program declaration on EU integration). The volume's title "*Why I Am Not a Eurofederalist*" makes a discursive link to Čapek's more famous "*Why I Am Not a Communist*."

³³⁰ Mirek Topolánek, "Proč nejsem eurofederalistou? Pohled předsedy ODS," in *Proč nejsem eurofederalistou*, ed. Ladislav Mrklas (Prague: CEVRO, 2003): 13.

relation to territory.³³¹ Accordingly, the multilevel polity representation of the European Union separates the state/territoriality nexus and consequently *decenters* the idea of a singular source of political power in support of a novel system of political organization where authority is claimed and shared by a multiplicity of territorial and non-territorial actors, and across multiple territorial levels.

The emerging discourse on the EU as a multilevel polity comes as an answer to three key premises about the functional reorientation of the state and the ensuing structural transformation of statehood, all being the result of a redefinition of the state/territory nexus.³³² First, the state/territory nexus is weakened by the pooling of the state's competences to supranational and subnational institutions, and transnational organizations (*denationalization of statehood*). As a second point, this is accompanied by a pluralization of policy-making through the increased involvement of (not necessarily territorially defined) expert groups, interest organizations, NGOs, etc. (*de-etatization of politics*). Finally, state territory is transgressed as the policy process is increasingly taking place in various international and subnational arenas (*rearticulation of territoriality*). Put differently, state-centricity as a hegemonic reading of territoriality is challenged as it encounters problems in grasping phenomena that stand outside of the state-centric representation of territoriality – such as transborder regions, Eurocities, policy-networks, transnational movements, etc. Multilevel governance is juxtaposed to the image of an almost obsolete modern state defined by an operating bureaucratic government with a monopoly over power within a designated territory. Whereas competences traditionally explained by the concept of government are now articulated via governance – broadly defined as steering and controlling the social and economic life by collective action for a collective purpose – the state is redefined as a conceptual umbrella of a relatively heterogeneous network of governing actors.

In a scenario where the state is decentered as a unitary actor – in addition to the state's position as the sole and most fundamental actor in this governance being challenged – territoriality as a defining principle of the state's political organization becomes less important.³³³ Multilevel governance allows for a more lenient interpretation of the link between the state and territoriality, which in turn allows for the inclusion of extraterritorial or nonterritorial phenomena

³³¹ The term was coined by Giddens to explain the uncontested accumulation of power within the territorial boundaries of nation states. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985).

³³² For a broader discussion on the redefinition of statehood, see Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State*.

³³³ Note, however, that this does not mean a full rejection of the modern understanding of statehood via the central government, which continues to be perceived as a key motor in defining the socio-economic life of the society.

as integral parts of the decentered state. More concretely, transnationalization, decentralization, or full deterritorialization of state powers and institutions are not viewed as a threat to the state's unity and sovereignty, but rather as a rescaling of the state's governance process.

Brining the discussion back to the empirical data, the Czech/Slovak debates on territorial restructuring invent the multilevel polity discourse to accommodate various claims for decentralization or de-etatization of power in order for these not to be discredited as anti-statist. Demands for various degrees of autonomy from the central state were not articulated against, for instance, the substate/state dichotomy. Instead, Europe was conceptualized as an entity where regions and localities exist alongside the state, as opposed to being subsumed by the state. References to multilevel Europe and the accompanying norms on subsidiarity or proportionality were welcomed particularly by relatively marginalized discourses on political regionalism in the Czech Republic, and on the position of ethnic minorities in Slovakia. To illustrate, in the Czech Republic, smaller political parties with regionally defined constituencies, and various interest groups representing the sub-state, discussed the transnational character of sub-state actors via the *Europe of the Regions* discourse. By framing the EU as a *Europe of the Regions*, these actors called for the transnationalization of Czech subnational politics within the framework of a multifaceted and multilevel European Union. This permitted the articulation of demands for political and economic regionalization outside the traditional sub-state/state antagonism.

Demands of the Hungarian national minority in Slovakia for regionally demarcated self-government give an even clearer illustration of territoriality being a more inclusive principle under the multilevel Europe discourse. Political representatives of the Hungarians in Slovakia, the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) in particular, expressed demands for territorial self-government within Slovakia in the context of European minority legislation. The SMK emphasized the phenomenon of a European region as a political space accompanied by a pallet of norms ranging from subsidiarity to self-determination. EU accession was characterized as de facto transnationalization of the Hungarian minority status, and the European Union as a natural space for the articulation of Hungarian minority demands.

Implications for the Europeanization Debate

The analysis demonstrates that Europeanization constructs territoriality in view of four different interpretations of Europe in relation to statehood. Whereas the economic community, the political community, and the federal state discourses confirm the state-centric reading of territoriality, the

multilevel polity discourse challenges the hegemony of state-centrism. In all four cases, the European Union is represented as an instrument in achieving political and economic progress via either confirming or dislocating state-centricity as a hegemonic reading of territoriality. Conclusions of this study point towards a teleological projection of Europe as progress towards a given political and economic order. The identified representations of Europe vis-à-vis territoriality as an economic community and as a political community can be interpreted as different constellations of the progress narrative constructed around the economic and the political rationale. Both discourses imply that progress is best realized in the frame of European economic or political statehood. The understanding of progress is fully articulated in the process of state consolidation via compliance with the EU's economic and political order.

The third identified discourse on federal Europe differs from the economic and political to the extent that progress is linked to transnational as opposed to national statehood. Whereas the federal state discourse also identifies Europe as an instrument in achieving given economic and political order, it challenges the idea of a modern nation state as the core institution of this order. In a sense, what is being redefined is the conjunction of the nation state and the capitalist order, as the state is no longer the sole locus of economic relations. Progress is therefore rearticulated as a transcendence of the nation state to the supranational level.

While challenging state-centricity, the final meta-discourse on Europe as a multilevel polity repeats the nexus between Europe as progress and Europe as a territorial organization of politics. In this sense, discourse on multilevel Europe concerns deconstructing the state/territoriality nexus more than a novel hegemonic meta-narrative on the meaning of Europe and the accompanying claims about the European political and economic governance. I see the multileveled governance meta-discourse as antagonistic because it rejects state-centricity in favor of several competing forms of power organization along territorial lines. The discussion on the construction of territoriality vis-à-vis the idea of Europe as a multilevel polity in the Czech/Slovak political debate illustrates that concepts such as de-etatization of politics or denationalization of statehood are fit to explain what territoriality is not, but remain vague when defining what it is. The multilevel governance discourse, as defined by the Czech/Slovak political discourse, conceives the European Union as a non-state and a hybrid of various forms of power organization along territorial lines. This implies a construction of territoriality as a contested

hybrid of many concepts from decentralization to deterritorialization united in the opposition to the idea of state territoriality.

The established conclusions indicate that Europeanization, as addressed in the Czech/Slovak political discourse of the early 1990s to 2000s, was driven primarily by the progress narrative. It can be argued that the political discourses instrumentalized Europe as a promise of political or economic institutions, which were used to either confirm or contest the established order *at home*. But what does this mean for the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization?

Chapter 3 of this thesis argued in favor of a paradigm shift within Europeanization scholarship following a specific ontological reading of the social structure (discourse) as a relational system of signification. What we say, think, and do is conditioned by a relatively established discourse, which is constantly contested and transformed by what we are saying, thinking, and doing. The social process is therefore defined as a reproduction or contestation of a given social meaning via articulation. The poststructuralist discursive ontology is consequently translated into three core propositions on Europeanization.

The first proposition rejects the idea of an a priori determined meaning of Europe. This proposition is derived from a poststructuralist deconstruction of the traditional conceptualization of structure as a closed and centered totality. Instead, poststructuralism speaks of a relational and contextual nature of social structures, which implies that the meaning of Europe, as a discursive structure, is contingent upon the discursive context in which it is articulated. Europeanization scholarship should discuss many *Europes* as opposed to one hegemonic Europe. The above-analyzed empirical data for the Czech/Slovak cases demonstrates that the meaning of Europe in the Europeanization process is discursively constructed in national political debates. The Czech and the Slovak territoriality discourses expressed the coexistence of several, and sometimes contradictory, images of Europe. By articulating Europe in relation to specific conceptual arrangements of statehood, domestic actors attached different meanings to Europe while at the same time reproducing or contesting the hegemony of state-centric territoriality. Further analysis defined the established images of Europe as different constellations of the progress narrative, which speaks of domestic transformation in view of the idea that Europe was progress towards democracy and a market economy.

The second proposition puts forward a further departure from the conventional reading of Europeanization by conceptualizing intentional and plural agency. An agency-focused analysis of the Europeanization process, while not denying the agency's structurally determined nature (as essence of the Europeanization research), is allowed under a poststructural analytical framework. The agency is intentional in the sense that it reproduces or contests the hegemonic discourse via the practice of articulation, although it does not stand outside of the given hegemonic discourse. The agency is plural because it is likely to produce multiple, even contradictory, representations of a given discourse. Both the Czech and the Slovak discourses suggest a degree of (guided) *voluntarism* in domestic articulations of Europe. Mainstream articulations of Europe in the context of territorial reforms were never constructed as a *contrapatria* or a *transpatria* doctrine. The idea of a plural actor is even more interesting. The discourse of the Czech center left revealed the coexistence of several different interpretations of Europe vis-à-vis statehood by a single actor (Europe as an economic community and Europe as a political community). This means that one actor is likely to reproduce arguments from various meta-discourses, even if these arguments might indicate contradictory positions on a given issue.

The final proposition equates Europeanization with the practice of articulation. This definition is derived from the poststructuralist conceptualization of the social process as articulation, bluntly defined as a practice that establishes a relation among discursive elements that invokes a mutual modification of their identity. To say that Europeanization is de facto articulation of Europe in domestic political debates implies the idea of Europeanization as a process of domestic accommodation to Europe via concurrent reproduction and contestation of the EU and EU norms. Ultimately, the empirical data demonstrates that domestic perceptions of Europe and EU norms was as important (to say the least) for the Europeanization of Czech and Slovak territorial policies, as was accession conditionality, which was grounded in the cohesion policy *acquis* and the related pre-accession aid instruments.

Conclusion

This chapter applied the theoretical and methodological considerations attached to a poststructuralist reading of Europeanization to the comparative study of territoriality discourses in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It examined how the EU and EU norms were articulated to produce different discursive representations of territoriality. The empirical data was used to uncover deeper structures of meaning behind domestic articulations of the European Union and

its norms that inform Europeanization. Therefore, this chapter set out to answer three specific questions. First, how have the Czech and the Slovak governmental and oppositional discourses articulated the European Union with particular reference to territoriality? Second, what was the main representations of the EU in the Czech and the Slovak discourses and how did these inform the domestic understanding of territoriality? Third, what was the standing of the established conclusions with regard to a wider scholarly debate on Europeanization?

I found that the meaning of territoriality has been defined via various constellations of the Europe (defined as an instrument of progress)/statehood nexus. This means that Europe was articulated as progress to either confirm or contest the hegemony of a state-centric reading of territoriality. The Czech and the Slovak discourses were defined by two divergent understandings of both Europe and the state. The Czech elites primarily constructed the state as an organization of power in a function of securing favorable market conditions, and Europe as an economic community. As such, Europeanization of territoriality was established in the context of a market-economic paradigm. EU norms were articulated as an instrument in progressing towards a given territoriality model that would best serve the goal of establishing a particular socio-economic order, be it neo-liberal or socio-democratic. In contrast, Slovak elites consolidated statehood along the question of national identity. The European Union was established as a means to confirm the identity of the Slovak state grounded in state-centricity and national unity. Counter-hegemonic articulations of Europe, which questioned the established state-centric order, were seen as a challenge to state identity and were thus rejected as anti-statist. When the existing order was rejected by Brussels as undemocratic, and therefore un-European, the established national identity was put into question. This created a critical juncture seized by oppositional elites to destabilize the hegemony of state-centricity in favor of an alternative model of territorial organization.

On addressing the second question, the comparative study of territorial reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia generated four ideal-types (meta-discourses) on the meaning of the European Union. Each ideal-type was linked to a different discursive representation of statehood and therefore constructed a different meaning of political territoriality. To recap, these ideal-types defined the European Union as: (1) an economic community of territorial states; (2) a political community of territorial states; (3) a federal state; and (4) a multileveled polity.

The first ideal-type discourse constructed the European Union as a condition of economic stability via the establishment of a functioning market economy. The European Union was seen as a community of states defined by joint adherence to the principles of a market-economy. This position was grounded in the conception of the territorial state as an a priori framework for the realization of economic relations. The discourse on the EU as an economic community was an extension of the economic reading of statehood, where the state assumed the role of a supreme regulator of the economy. Territoriality was constructed as a mechanism in establishing a particular socio-economic order. The hegemony of state territoriality in the discourse on the EU as an economic community could be challenged solely by the disjunction of the state-market nexus.

The second ideal-type discourse constructed the European Union as a political community of sovereign states grounded in the EU's institutional order. The EU was established as a condition of political stability. The political reading of the European Union was linked to the discourse on modern European statehood based on normative values including liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, etc. The European Union was defined as a continuation of state territoriality. Democratization, as another defining element of modern statehood, opened the discursive space for the state to be reinterpreted from a statist towards a multilevel understanding of political territoriality. The democratization process allowed for a disassociation of the state/institution nexus, consequently contextualizing institutions with society.

The third ideal-type discourse constructed the European Union as a union of the people. Because the institutions were still bound to a delimited territory, the federal state discourse reproduced state-centricity from a national to a supranational level. The conception of territoriality in a federal political system was more complex because it was based on the element of heterogeneity as opposed to, for instance, national unity in a nation state. This means that it was permanently contested along the given cultural, economic, social, ideological, and other diversity lines.

The fourth ideal-type discourse constructed the European Union as a non-state entity characterized by dispersed and fragmented forms of power, and a plurality of problem-solving sites. Political power was organized in a heterarchical manner through complex partnerships and networks that might or might not have been territorially grounded. This ideal-type challenged the

hegemony of a state-centric reading of territoriality with multilevel governance as a new conceptual space for the understanding of political order in relation to territory.

Finally, looking at the third question, this chapter contributed to the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization by establishing several propositions. First, the meaning of Europe was discursively constructed. The Czech/Slovak comparison testified to the coexistence of several discursive representations of Europe within the territoriality discourse. By articulating Europe in relation to specific conceptual arrangements of statehood, domestic actors attached different meanings to Europe while at the same time reproducing or contesting the hegemony of state-centric territoriality. Further analysis defined the established images of Europe as different constellations of the progress narrative. The second proposition argued that the actor in Europeanization was intentional and plural. Both the Czech and Slovak discourses illustrated a degree of (guided) voluntarism in domestic articulations of Europe. Furthermore, these discourses showed the coexistence of several different interpretations of Europe vis-à-vis statehood by a single actor. The third proposition defined Europeanization as a process of domestic accommodation to Europe via concurrent reproductions and contestations of the EU and EU norms. The comparison of the Czech and Slovak territoriality debates confirmed that the domestic perception of Europe and EU norms must be taken into account when studying Europeanization.

Chapter 5: Debating Territorial Reforms in Croatia

Introduction

This chapter utilizes the conclusions established in Chapter 4 to examine how Europeanization informed the understanding of territoriality in the Croatian territorial restructuring debate prior to the country's accession to the European Union. The goal of this analysis is to identify and interpret the domestic construction of territoriality via the articulation of contesting meanings of Europe. The four ideal-type discourses established in Chapter 4 are retained throughout this chapter as analytical categories according to which the Croatian territoriality debate is studied. Ultimately, this will deepen our understanding of how and what kind of Europe informed the Croatian territoriality debate.

A study of discursive construction of territoriality in light of Croatia's accession to the EU is methodologically interesting for two reasons: it shifts the dissertation's empirical focus away from questions of the CEECs' accession to European Union, and, more importantly, it highlights Croatia's ambiguous relationship with territoriality, which has marked much of its modern history. Croatian accession to the European Union differed significantly from the accession of the CEECs in the 2004-2007 EU enlargement round, and this has had consequences on the negotiations in cohesion policy. In comparison to the CEECs, Croatia entered the accession process with far more embedded territorial institutions. This made the country hesitant to embrace norms of multilevel governance, such as regionalization or partnership, and to engage in any form of territorial restructuring. Whereas the formation and the consolidation of most of the CEECs' meso-level governmental tiers had a strong European pretext, the effects of the EU pre-accession instruments on territorial governance in Croatia were minor.

Despite the omnipresence of the Europeanization phenomenon in the Croatian political discourse, accession-related reforms were controlled by the central state and implemented in a way that confirmed the old institutional architecture instead of changing it. Zagreb maintained its position as gatekeeper over the main channels of influence both externally (i.e. communication with the EU) and internally (i.e. implementation of the *acquis*), and therefore was able to dictate

the ground rules for the new governance arrangements that emerged from the accession process.³³⁴

In addition to the changing context of accession negotiations in the domain of cohesion policy (among others), the Croatian case brings to this study a considerably different experience with regards to political territoriality and statehood. Although a rift between simultaneous consolidation and dissolution of statehood also marked accession of the CEECs to the European Union, the Croatian outlook on political territoriality has been heavily burdened by the dissolution of former Yugoslavia and the ensuing armed conflict in the early 1990s. In fact, war circumstances can be singled out as the most significant determinant of Croatian territorial politics with regard to institutional architecture, governance practices, and the structure of regional development policy.

With the overall post-communist transition being defined by an interplay between democratization, state-building, and war, the question of territorial organization was absorbed by the contested territorial integrity and the nationalist pretext of the state consolidation process. Such an environment led to preferences of centralization of power and hierarchical organization of politics over the ideas of political pluralism or deliberative democracy. Koprić argues that between 1993 and 2001 the Croatian public administration developed under the conditions of etatization, centralization, and politicization of an authoritarian type.³³⁵ The regime was marked by power concentrated in the hands of a dominant president, combined with insufficient guarantees of civil and political rights, lack of horizontal accountability and separation of powers, corruption, and clientelism. The few voices calling for decentralization were discredited as anti-statists. These conditions endured until the government change in 2000, which has since created a window of opportunity for long-overdue territorial reforms. Because the introduced legislative package only partially tackled pending questions of territorial restructuring, decentralization, and the formation of a regional development policy, these questions were incorporated into the accession negotiations with the European Union and continue to press Croatian political debates to this day.

³³⁴ See for instance Ian Bache and Danijel Tomšić, "Europeanization and Nascent Multi-Level Governance in Croatia," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10, no. 1 (2010): 80-81.

³³⁵ Ivan Koprić, "Contemporary Croatian Public Administration on the Reform Waves," paper presented at the *Global Discontent? Dilemmas of Change* conference (Santiago de Chile, 2009): 12. See also Nenad Zakošek, "The Heavy Burden of History: Political Uses of the Past in the Yugoslav Successor States," *Politička misao* 44, no. 5 (2008): 601.

My analysis of the Croatian territorial reforms debate is organized around the following questions:

- a) How has Europeanization constructed the understanding of territoriality in the Croatian territorial reforms debate prior to its accession to the European Union? This question is studied in line with the four ideal-type meta-discourses of the Europe/statehood nexus from Chapter 4: economic community discourse, political community discourse, federal state discourse, and multilevel polity discourse.
- b) What discourses on Europe are likely to inform the Croatian discourse? To what extent do these discourses reproduce state-centricity as a hegemonic reading of territoriality?
- c) To what extent does the case of Croatia contribute to a broader applicability of the theoretical conclusions drawn from the Czech/Slovak comparison in Chapter 4?

Part 1 of this chapter describes the evolution of the territoriality question in post-independent Croatia. Part 2 turns to the question of Europeanization. It analyzes the construction of the territoriality discourse vis-à-vis Europe. I look at the ways the idea of statehood is reproduced and contested in the debate on regionalization, decentralization, and other forms of territorial restructuring in light of the EU accession process. The final section of this chapter discusses possible modifications of the original model established in Chapter 4. Accommodations are made to include potential discourses that provide a more complex picture of Europe, add new elements to the debate, and maneuver outside of the discursive border lines of the four established ideal-types.

Contextualizing the Discourse – the Evolution of the Territorial Debate in Croatia

The Croatian territory is highly heterogeneous, composed of several geographically, economically, and culturally distinct areas with deeply rooted regional identities. Historically and topographically there are five regions – Littoral, Dalmatia, Northern Croatia, Croatia proper, and Slavonia – and six sub-regions – Istria, Župa Dubrovačka, Međimurje, Baranja, Eastern Slavonia, and Western Srijem.³³⁶ These embedded regional divisions continue to shape the socio-political

³³⁶ Željko Pavić, "Tipovi jedinica lokalne samouprave," *Hrvatska javna uprava* 4, no. 1 (2002). Note that the present structure of territorial governance does not copy the historical and topographical divisions.

developments today by providing a source of political regionalism.³³⁷ The relatively exceptional socio-historical and geographical diversities of the Croatian territory stand in opposition to a centrist tradition in the organization of territorial politics. Throughout modern Croatian history, subnational politics have been heavily politicized and constructed within the framework of continuous competition between system-driven centralization and the decentralizing concession to diversity. From post-Second World War Yugoslavia onwards, individual regimes have articulated the ideas of regionalization or decentralization as subordinate to the grander task of state consolidation. However, none of these regimes were able to disregard the existence of these territorial diversities and the demands for some form of subnational self-government.

Legacy of the Communist Regime

The Croatian experience with territorial decentralization developed in the opposite direction from the experience of the CEECs. For the CEECs, the break with communism brought about decentralization as the essential condition of the democratization process. Croatia, instead, replaced the emergently decentralized political system of 1970s Yugoslavia with the extreme centrism of the post-independent period. Petak suggests that by the end of the 1980s, the Yugoslav republics (Croatia included) had established a strong decentralized system, derived from a *Titoist type of federalism*, with subnational governments enjoying a great degree of administrative and fiscal autonomy.³³⁸ He argues the municipality structure of the 1980s was presumably the most optimal structure of territorial organization considering the Croatian socio-historical and geographical characteristics. The work of Eugen Pusić also points out the growing importance of localities within the Yugoslav political structure, particularly following the 1974 constitutional reforms.³³⁹ Although Pusić is certainly not ignorant of the problems faced by

³³⁷ For a detailed analysis of the historical roots of Croatian territorial diversities, see Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia: A History* (London: C.Hurst and Co. Publishers, 1999): 2.

³³⁸ Zdravko Petak, "Politics of Decentralization Policy: Explaining the Limited Success of the Croatian Case after 2001," *Politička Misao* 48, no. 5 (2012): 73 - 74. The Yugoslav form of federalism was embedded in the principles of social ownership of the means of production and social self-management. As such, it departs from the traditional federalist theories by juxtaposing the political with a societal reading of territoriality. In other words, it refers to a sort of *social federalism*, where functional units (non-territorial) and direct political participation via, for example, subsidiarity are equally important as territorially defined political actors including the nation states. For a discussion, see Jovan Djordjevic, "Remarks on the Yugoslav Model of Federalism," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 5, no. 2 (1975). For a critical review, see Matthew McCulloch, "Polyvalent Federalism: Johannes Althusius to Edvard Kardelj and Titoism," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Federalism*, eds. Ann Ward and Lee Ward (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

³³⁹ Eugen Pusić, "Intentions and Realities: Local Government in Yugoslavia," *Public Administration* 53, no. 2 (1975).

Yugoslav subnational politics in the 1970s, he highlights the ideology of communal democracy to be one of the founding principles of the political architecture of the time.³⁴⁰

Both historical tradition and ideology tended to commit the architects of the Yugoslav local government system after World War II to the goal of decisive decentralization and local autonomy, to the picture of the local community as a self-governing territorial association where the industrial working class would have a decisive influence on shaping policy, and to the use of local government as a coordinative instrument in a generalized system of self-management.³⁴¹

In the analysis of Kardelj's political thought, Jović goes even further when claiming that the territorial structure of former Yugoslavia was *prima facie* anti-statist:

Edvard Kardelj believed that the main danger to post-Tito's Yugoslavia would come from the renewal of a centralised state either in its interwar [bourgeois] form or in a form of Soviet statist ['Stalinist' or-as Kardelj called it – 'Great-Statist'] socialism.³⁴²

The constitutional debate between 1967 and 1974 was framed as a constant struggle between centrist and federalist tendencies in state organization. Jović suggests that the anti-statist wing of the Communist party elite used the favorable circumstances of the 1960s to advocate the idea of anti-statist socialism as a defining principle of Yugoslavia.³⁴³ This position denied the furthering of Yugoslavia as a supracommunity as an answer to the possible revival of *national questions*, and it has primarily articulated decentralization as a precondition for functioning self-management and democratization.³⁴⁴ In a discussion on the future of the political organization of Yugoslavia, which later served as a blueprint for the 30th session of the Central Communist Committee in 1977, Kardelj set out the contours of self-managing pluralism, including decentralization along territorial lines and the strengthening of local communities:

³⁴⁰ Ibid.,: 142.

³⁴¹ Ibid.,: 141.

³⁴² Edvard Kardelj was a leading figure of the Yugoslav communist party and the author of the decentralization process that was initiated by the 1974 Constitution. Dejan Jović, "Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism: From Tito to Kardelj," in *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea 1918-1992* ed. Dejan Djokić (London: Hurst and Company, 2003): 168.

³⁴³ Yugoslavia of the 1960s was defined by a relatively high degree of economic prosperity and political stability. Ibid.

³⁴⁴ In the context of the Former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), the term refers to the aspirations of the individual national groups for the formation of national states outside the federal framework.

The third dimension [of pluralism] relates to the interests of citizens in their place of residence. This area is covered by self-governing local communities and self-governing communes. The fourth dimension concerns the specific interests of nations and nationalities. These interests are ensured via self-governing republics, autonomous regions and the democratic distribution of self-governing competences within the federal structure.³⁴⁵

The political discourse of the 1970s articulated decentralization and subnational self-government in direct relation to Yugoslav identity and sovereignty. As a result, the 1974 Constitution instigated the process of radical decentralization defined by a transferral of sovereignty from the federal level towards the republics and the municipalities.³⁴⁶ This not only included increased self-governing competences for national and subnational units, but also extensive decentralization of the Communist Party. Consequently, Yugoslavia moved towards a system of multilevel and multi-actor governance structure ensured by a decentralized model of multi-national federalism and self-governing management.³⁴⁷

The great paradox of this anti-statist discourse is that it actually allowed for nationalist claims in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. Jović argues that the decentralization process instigated in the 1970s, and the subsequent weakening of the central apparatus, made the nationalist demands for a strong state (be it Yugoslavia or separate nation states) plausible.³⁴⁸ Nationalism and state centrism were framed as an alternative to a decentralized structure of self-management. Consequently, the Croatian take on post-communist transition focused on establishing the state as a missing link in the territorial organization. Whereas the CEECs' discourses in the early 1990s framed decentralization as key to achieving post-communist democratization, Croatian territorial politics in the early years of the post-communist transition developed in conditions of "etatization, centralization, and politicization of an authoritarian type."³⁴⁹ The newly formed Croatian state was about to internalize state-centrism as a principle doctrine of its territorial organization.

³⁴⁵ Edvard Kardelj, *Pravci razvoja političkog sistema socijalističkog samoupravljanja* (Beograd: Komunist, 1977): 68.

³⁴⁶ "Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije," (1974).

³⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of constitutional reforms vis-à-vis the local government, see Gene S. Leonardson and Dimitar Mirčev, "A Structure for Participatory Democracy in the Local Community: The Yugoslav Constitution of 1974," *Comparative Politics* 11, no. 1 (1979). For a comparison, see Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21, no. 2 (1969).

³⁴⁸ Jović, "Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism: From Tito to Kardelj," : 180.

³⁴⁹ Koprić, "Contemporary Croatian Public Administration on the Reform Waves," : 10.

Nationalization of Statehood in the Early 1990s

Throughout the 1990s, efforts to liberalize and pluralize the government and the corresponding decentralization reforms were overshadowed by the pending state and nation building processes. The first multiparty parliamentary elections in 1990 only indirectly dealt with questions of the territorial organization of politics. Instead, the main focus was placed on the fundamental issue of defining Croatian statehood and ensuing national interests. Concerns about subnational politics did not define the developing phase of the Croatian political discourse, but the individual political actors' positions on statehood did define the future national debate with regard to the territorial organization question. It is not entirely accurate to say that the 1990 electoral debate ignored the problem of regionalization, as this problem was framed as part of a broader issue of the territorial organization of Croatia as a whole.³⁵⁰ The political cleavage regarding the contours of Croatian statehood had a profound influence on the individual readings of regionalism and political territoriality throughout the 1990s.³⁵¹

The nationalist bloc linked statehood to national identity.³⁵² The construction of the discourse on national unity as a basis of the Croatian state denied the possibility of any diversity in the organization of statehood. This element of communitarianism – articulated via slogans such as national reconciliation or national unity – was a central thread of the nationalist bloc's political campaign.³⁵³ Regionalism was treated as going against the collective interest and supporting the creation of fractions within what was perceived as a very homogeneous community, and was thus rejected. Support for centrism via the discourse on national unity was even found in the political rhetoric of moderate nationalists including Dabčević-Kučar, who stressed the importance of integrity and the indivisibility of the Croatian territory when speaking against the creation of autonomous regions within Croatia.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ Dejan Jović, "Regionalne političke stranke," *Društvena istraživanja* 1, no. 1 (1992): 179-80.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*,: 179.

³⁵² The nationalist block (officially named the Coalition of Croatian Accord) was formed around the political figures of Savka Dabčević-Kučar and Mirko Tripalo to include political parties supporting Croatian independence to prevent a possible split of nationalist votes, which would lead to the electoral win of communists.

³⁵³ The analysis of the political discourse in the 1990 election is based on Aleksandar D. Đurić, Bojan Munjin, and Srđan Španović, *Stranke u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: NIRO "Radničke novine", 1990); Srđan Vrcan, ed. *Pohod na glasače: izbori u Hrvatskoj 1990.-1993.* (Zagreb: Puls, 1995); and Vjekoslav Afrić and Tvrтко Ujević, "Analiza sadržaja političkih programa političkih stranaka u Hrvatskoj (Izbori 90.)," *Revija za sociologiju* 1, no. 1 (1990).

³⁵⁴ Cited in Đurić, Munjin, and Španović, *Stranke u Hrvatskoj*: 139. Savka Dabčević-Kučar was a very influential politician in communist Yugoslavia and post-independence Croatia. She was one of the ideological leaders of the Croatian Spring, a 1970s movement that called for democratization of Yugoslavia.

Territorial reforms based on principles of decentralization, pluralism, or regionalization were supported by political fractions that opposed the communitarization of statehood via the discourse on national unity. A strong subnational government was portrayed as an answer to Croatia's geographic, historic, and economic diversities, and also as a way to Europeanize and democratize the governance system.³⁵⁵ The political program of the communists was particularly noteworthy for highlighting the concept of cultural regionalism.³⁵⁶ Localization and regionalization were therefore presented not only as part of a regional development policy, but more importantly as a way to acknowledge Croatian cultural and historical diversities next to the existing regional identities. Particularly interesting is the Communist party program reference to *Europe of the regions* and European norms of multiculturalism and multiethnicity: "Croatia of the regions, as a cultural program, fits well with the current process of European multicultural integration; Europe of the regions in particular."³⁵⁷ As former Communist party member and co-author of the electoral program argued:

Our intention was to make Croatia more democratic and more European. We did not have to please the voters because we had a solid electoral base, whereas those in favor of the national idea were going to vote against us in any case. Hence, regionalism was more than just an alternative to nationalism.³⁵⁸

Despite the presence of these voices, the electoral victory in May of 1990 of the openly ethno-nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) under the leadership of Franjo Tuđman, in addition to the increasing rebellions of ethnic Serbs (which later escalated into an armed conflict), did not provide fertile ground for territorial decentralization.³⁵⁹ Struggling with the consequences of war and a contested territorial integrity, the new government effectively framed territorial politics as a means, not an end, in the consolidation of the nation state. In other words, the political and public discourses were preoccupied with constructing a cult of national statehood as the realization of a '1000-year old dream.'³⁶⁰ The new Croatian Constitution of 1990 defined Croatia as a state of

³⁵⁵ See discussion in Jović, "Regionalne političke stranke,": 180-81.

³⁵⁶ After adopting a socio-democratic orientation ahead of the 1990 elections, the party was renamed as the League of Communists of Croatia—A Party for Democratic Change (SKH-SDP). A few months later the name acquired its current form; Social-Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP).

³⁵⁷ Cited in Jović, "Regionalne političke stranke,": 180.

³⁵⁸ Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview Q - Croatia," (Zagreb: SKH-SDP, 2011):1.

³⁵⁹ Franjo Tuđman was President of Croatia between 30 May 1990 and 10 December 1999.

³⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion, see Alex J. Bellamy, *The Formation of Croatian National Identity: A Centuries-Old Dream* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

solely ethnic Croats (as opposed to Croatian citizens as a whole), and the Preamble to the Constitution spoke of a millennial continuity of the Croatian nation and statehood.³⁶¹ Additionally, in frequent public addresses, interviews, and press conferences, political elites defined the state's territorial integrity as the basis of Croatian national identity. In a speech to the public following the signing of the Dayton agreement, President Tuđman identified full territorial sovereignty as not only a strategic interest of the Croatian state, but also a "great and holy" goal of the Croatian people.³⁶² The link between national identity, statehood, and territory was made even more explicit in his 1998 State of the Union address:

The year 1997 and the beginning of 1998 are marked by full realization of the fundamental objective of Croatian national and state policies – full sovereignty over the entire national territory. This goal has been reached through the reappropriation of the Croatian Danube region including Vukovar – a symbol of Croatian resistance and unity of the Croatian people – to our homeland. This has fulfilled a centuries-old dream of the Croatian people; a free and autonomous, independent and democratic Croatian state has established its sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders.³⁶³

Decentralization, regionalization, and similar political ideas were discredited as autonomist and separatist, and consequently a threat to the young Croatian state. This was particularly evident in the open conflict between President Tuđman and the newly created regionalist movements. Accordingly, Tuđman framed regionalism in direct opposition to national identity and statehood. He argued: "some brought the idea that the people, the nation, are not as important as the region. The regionalist idea is directed against Croatian independence and sovereignty."³⁶⁴ Hostile attitudes towards different efforts in territorial decentralization were not limited to the governing HDZ, but were also expressed by the more pro-democratic and liberal elites. This included Gotovac, who accused regionalists of promoting other territorial identities besides the Croatian. And Budiša, who in a parliamentary debate openly spoke against the bilingualism and multiculturalism celebrated in Istria, which he saw as a denial of Croatian

³⁶¹ Featherstone and Papadimitriou, *The Limits of Europeanization: Reform Capacity and Policy Conflict in Greece*.

³⁶² "Poslanica Predsjednika Republike Hrvatske Dr. Franje Tuđmana hrvatskoj javnosti," (Zagreb: Ured Predsjednika Republike Hrvatske 1995): 4.

³⁶³ "Izvešće Predsjednika Republike Dr. Franje Tuđmana o stanju hrvatske države i nacije u 1997. godini na zajedničkoj sjednici oba doma Hrvatskog državnog Sabora," (Zagreb: Ured Predsjednika Republike Hrvatske, 1998): 1-2.

³⁶⁴ Cited in Gordana Uzelac, "Franjo Tuđman's Nationalist Ideology," *East European Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1997): 460.

culture.³⁶⁵ In the early years of parliamentary democracy in Croatia, we clearly see that norms associated with political regionalism were severely questioned by the dominant construction of statehood as a project establishing a homogenous nation state. This logically extended to territorially or non-territorially expressed diversities too. It becomes obvious that etatism and centrism were a better fit with the spirit of the age than horizontal or vertical pluralization of governance: "The desire of forming a sovereign nation state was so strong that many were afraid to jeopardize this goal for values such as democracy or pluralism."³⁶⁶

Regionalism as an Anti-thesis to Nationalism

Regionalist movements in the 1990s were mostly framed in opposition to the hegemonic reading of statehood via the discourse on national unity. Particularly, Dalmatian and Istrian regional parties fought accusations of being anti-Croatian and a danger to the indivisibility of the Croatian territory. These accusations were a distorted reading of emerging regionalist ideas, as these parties advocated stronger regional units as a way to further consolidate (as opposed to undermine) Croatian democracy.³⁶⁷ Regionalists themselves saw regionalism as an antithesis to the nationalist discourse on statehood, but were very explicit in denying the anti-statist analogy that was imposed on them by the rhetoric of the elites in Zagreb. Regionalism provided a novel discursive space for the political opposition to develop an answer to what was perceived as economic and political stagnation under the centralized leadership.³⁶⁸ The aftermath of the 1990 parliamentary elections included the strengthening of regional parties and regionalism as a political platform that offered a more sober prospect of the state-building process in response to the overwhelming nationalist euphoria propagated by the ruling elites. Demands for greater political and economic autonomy of the regions were articulated together with norms such as

³⁶⁵ Vlado Gotovac was a Croatian poet and communist dissident. He also was a crucial figure in Croatia's post-1990 opposition, particularly because of his open criticism of the semi-authoritarian practices of Franjo Tuđman. Dražen Budiša was a leading oppositional figure in the 1990s. *Ibid.*: 460. See also Ljubomir Antić, "Porodajne muke hrvatskog višestranačja - dnevne bilješke Ljubomira Antića," *Vijenac* 414 (2010) and Jović, "Regionalne političke stranke," 182-83.

³⁶⁶ Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview Q - Croatia," 2.

³⁶⁷ The exception, of course, being secessionist demands of the Serbian national minority and their political representatives.

³⁶⁸ The 1992 electoral campaign of some regional parties framed the region as a way out of a stagnating political and economic circumstance: "If you do not opt for the region, you will remain trapped in this overall socio-political depression." Ivan Jakovčić, "Speech - Election Campaign," in *Twenty Years of IDS* (Pula, Istarsko narodno kazalište, 1992). What is more, the concept of regionalism as a source for political opposition in the 1990s was addressed by several interviewees: Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview L - Croatia," (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 2011): 3 and Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview Z - Croatia," (Zagreb: Istarski demokratski sabor, 2011): 2.

support for human rights, democracy, etc.: “IDS argues that only a regionally defined Croatia is able to guarantee democratic development and full civilizational, economic, and cultural integration with the European Community.”³⁶⁹ Jović suggests that the establishment of local and regionalist parties in Istria, Dalmatia, or the city of Rijeka in the early 1990s, and their gradual popularization, were predominantly caused by the growing monopolization of the political space by the governing HDZ.³⁷⁰

IDS was especially effective in politicizing the Istrian regional identity around principles such as multiculturalism, multiethnicism, liberalism, and pluralism.³⁷¹ While stressing the economic, historical, and geopolitical uniqueness of the Istrian peninsula, the 1992 program declaration defines Istrian identity in the following way:

Istria is a multicultural and a multilingual region. This is a result of centuries' long coexistence of multiple ethnic communities in Istria. [...] The Istrian identity, as a sense of territorial identification, defines Slavic and Latin citizens of Istria. This multiethnic identity reflects the geographical and cultural unity of the peninsula. Istrians are also Croats, Slovenes, and Italians.³⁷²

Similarly, in 1995 Ivan Jakovčić, Dino Debeljuh, and Furio Radin – all key figures of the Istrian political scene – defined Istrian identity as European, transborder, multicultural, and multiethnic, as well as anti-fascist, anti-totalitarian, and anti-nationalist, but certainly not anti-national or anti-Croatian.³⁷³ In an environment where the mainstream political discourse constructed a very strong link between national identity and statehood, regional parties adopted concepts such as multiculturalism to frame an alternative post-national image of territory. In conjunction, they defined the region as a novel form of territorial organization of power. In line with this post-national discourse, regionalist politicians also articulated a strong European orientation of their respective regions and political programs. This suggests that the political discourse of IDS in the

³⁶⁹“Rovinjska deklaracija - Deklaracija o regionalnom ustrojstvu Republike Hrvatske,” (Pula: Istarski demokratski sabor, 1994). The Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS-DDI) was founded in 1990 and is the strongest regionalist party in Croatia. It was part of the national governing coalition following the 2000 and 2011 elections.

³⁷⁰ Jović, “Regionalne političke stranke,”: 183.

³⁷¹ For a detailed discussion of the Istrian regional identity, see Bellamy, *The Formation of Croatian National Identity: A Centuries-Old Dream*; Boris Banovac, *Društvena pripadnost, identitet, teritorij. Sociološko istraživanje regionalne pripadnosti u Istri* (Rijeka: Pravni fakultet, 1998); and Boris Banovac, “Etničnost i regionalizam u Istri: povijesni rakurs i suvremeni kontekst,” *Migracijske teme* 12, no. 4 (1996).

³⁷² “Programska deklaracija Istarskog demokratskog sabora,” (Zagreb: Istarski demokratski sabor): 2-3.

³⁷³ Dino Debeljuh, Furio Radin, and Ivan Jakovčić, “Istra,” *Erasmus Journal for Culture of Democracy*, no. 11 (1995).

1990s drew from EU norms to support the construction of regions as on par with nation states in the territorial organization of power within Europe:

We are against state borders in Europe. We support the creation of an integrated European territory, which is to articulate the interests of everyone in the Parliament of European Regions. Istria and the Istrian islands were always an integral part of the European civilization. They are therefore entitled to develop in line with established European norms and standards.³⁷⁴

Policy Reform, 1992-1993

Regardless of the increasing presence of regionalist movements and parties in the Croatian political space, the marginalized position of regionalism vis-à-vis the prevailing representation of territorial governance as an instrument in strengthening the central state had particular repercussions on territorial policy processes. Shortly after gaining independence in 1991, Croatia introduced significant territorial reforms that effectively placed subnational authorities under direct control of the central government in Zagreb. The 1990 Constitution and the accompanying legislative package in 1992 introduced a two-tiered structure of self-government. Municipalities and towns were established as units of local self-government. Counties (*županija, a pre-1918 era institution*) were reestablished as units of regional self-government. Croatia was divided into 489 local units and 21 counties, including the city of Zagreb, which was given double status as a municipality and a county. Seeing that the reform allowed for parts of municipalities, such as villages and groups of villages, to claim municipality status and township based on historic, economic, and geographic reasons, this number has gradually increased. Today, Croatia has 555 towns and municipalities and 21 counties including the city of Zagreb. It is important to add that the counties were constructed as a de-concentrated state with limited self-governing competences. Both counties and localities remain highly diverse in size and demographic numbers to this day; borders were drawn with little regard for geographic, historic, and cultural specificities of the particular territories.

Simultaneously with territorial restructuring, the early 1990s reforms encouraged an intrusive etatization of public administration with the appropriation of subnational competences and finances in favor of the central state, which acted as the sole redistributor of revenues, responsibilities, and power, predominantly according to political affiliations and aimed at buying

³⁷⁴ "Programska deklaracija istarskog demokratskog sabora," 2.

political loyalties. Thus, not only did the 1992-1993 wave of reform severely reduce the sub-state's administrative and fiscal competences, it also created a very large and fragmented structure of subnational government. The territorial restructuring era actually resulted in the fragmentation, depowering, and incapacitation of cultural and historic regional units into a large number of small and fragile counties and municipalities. Koprić argues that the novelization aimed to break the power centers located in formerly large, strong, and autarchic communes.³⁷⁵

The Retreat of National Statehood and the Birth of Civil Statehood

The second wave of reforms from the beginning of the 2000s, following the death of President Tuđman in December 1999 and the change in government in January 2000, is linked to a wider change in Croatia's political identity. The parliamentary elections held on 3 January, 2000 resulted in HDZ's defeat by the center-left six-party coalition headed by Ivica Račan.³⁷⁶ These events were a critical juncture that created an opportunity for a complete reorientation of Croatia's politics, characterized by democratization on the inside and rapprochement with the EU on the outside. To cite Zambelli:

For many Croats the event [of Tuđman's death] was understood as an end of an era. The whole of the following year was characterized by the new government's attempt to get away from the previous government's direction as much as possible, to build a dramatically different image of themselves on the international plane as well as at home, and to energetically embark upon reform and to accommodate EU demands that would eventually lead Croatia towards long desired [EU] membership.³⁷⁷

The most apparent lapse in Tuđman's regime was the construction of a civil image of statehood linked to representations of modernity, democracy, and Europeaness. The idea of civil statehood was framed in opposition to national statehood, which was portrayed as archaic and redundant once Croatia achieved independence from Yugoslavia. This is particularly evident in the 2000 debate on constitutional reforms, where the juxtaposition of the civil state as a matter of

³⁷⁵ Ivan Koprić, "Local Government Development in Croatia. Problems and Value Mix," in *Local Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, eds. Harald Baldersheim, Michal Illner, and Hellmut Wollmann (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2003): 191.

³⁷⁶ The earlier discussed regionalist party IDS was part of Račan's coalition government, with party leader Ivan Jakovčić taking the post of European Integration minister. Jakovčić left the coalition in 2001 over personal disagreements with other coalition members.

³⁷⁷ Nataša Zambelli, "Između Balkana i Zapada: problem hrvatskog identiteta nakon Tuđmana i diskurzivna rekonstrukcija regije," *Politička misao* 47, no. 1 (2010): 59.

the present and the nation state as a matter of the past was articulated in a broader context of redefining Croatian identity as pro-European, democratic, based on civil liberties, etc. The official discourse suggested that the idea of a nation state was justifiable in the historical context of state-building, but that the link between the nation and the state became burdensome in view of Croatia's newly established integration with the European Union.³⁷⁸ Mato Arlović, sponsor of the 2000 constitutional amendments, argued:

Croatian statehood remains rested in national and civil sovereignty. However, the proposed amendments remove some barriers to the development of democracy in Croatia. Moreover, these amendments create grounds for faster and better harmonization of Croatian legislation with those of EU member states and other European organizations.³⁷⁹

Arlović also added that although it made sense to define Croatia as a nation state and a state of Croatian people at the beginning of the 1990s when the country was fighting for independence and sovereignty, now that the battle was won, such formulation was no longer necessary.³⁸⁰ In line with that, the 2000 amendments to the Constitution broke with the nationalist understanding of statehood that had dominated the national discourse throughout the 1990s.

What were the consequences for the territoriality debate? The disjunction of statehood from the discourse on national unity framed territorial politics as a function of state consolidation, this time in terms of reducing the gap between the state and the citizen. This produced two underlying discourses on territorial reforms. First, it instigated the pluralization of state powers along horizontal and vertical lines as a part of a more encompassing democratization initiative. Second, it prompted the rationalization of territorial politics under a broader headline of consolidating the administrative architecture. The civil notion of statehood opened the doors for dual interpretation of subnational politics; as a counterbalance or substitute to the central state and as an instrument of the central state, with both interpretations framed as a function of a more underlying discourse on civil statehood. Governmental guidelines and program declarations from

³⁷⁸ For a detailed analysis of the concept of statehood in the 2000 Constitutional debate, see *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ "Reports and Minutes of the Croatian Parliament Plenary Session in 4th Convocation - IHS 280," (Zagreb: Croatian Parliament, 2000): 5. See also "Ime Hrvatski sabor izglasano je i Božićnim ustavom 1990. Godine," *Vjesnik*, 15 October 2000.

³⁸⁰ Siniša Pavić, "Najavljene promjene Ustava uzburkale opoziciju. Hoće li Hrvatskoj ostati samo zastava i himna?" *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 4 November 2000.

the early 2000s spoke of territorial restructuring and the consolidation of local self-government as a step towards the democratization of governance in line with the principle of subsidiarity:

[the program declaration] initiates a process of broad decentralization, which includes consolidation of local and regional powers via determining the scope of subnational competences, and the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity.³⁸¹

At the same time, they also refer to territorial reforms in the context of the state apparatus's economization in line with the rationalization principle:

[the program declaration] includes a critical analysis of the effectiveness and feasibility of public administration in connection to the implementation of various budgetary saving measures [...and] gradual reform of territorial organization (reduction in the number of regions and localities leading to the improvement of subnational governing capacities and the rationalization of subnational politics).³⁸²

This discourse created a paradoxical situation in which the problem of decentralization and the accompanying territorial restructuring shifted from being a taboo topic in the 1990s to becoming a panacea of post-Tuđman transformation in the 2000s, supported by the establishment of party-wide consensus. In addition to promoting decentralization as an obsession of the governing coalition's efforts in economic and political restructuring, the post-Tuđman HDZ also abandoned its centrist ideology in search for political support in regions and localities.³⁸³ At the same time, decentralization was a major source of controversy among the coalition members, which culminated in the regionalist IDS party's demise in 2001. The problem was that the rationalization and democratization discourses, while grounded in the same idea of civil statehood, produced rather diverging visions of decentralization policy.

The Rationalization Discourse

The rationalization discourse put forward a functional approach to territoriality and a relatively modest version of territorial reforms. Although the anti-Tuđman coalition government had already advocated territorial restructuring based on regionalization, pluralism, subsidiarity, etc. in the election campaign, the final policy proposal offered a decidedly watered-down version of

³⁸¹ "Hrvatska u 21. stoljeću," (Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2000): 59.

³⁸² "Program Vlade Republike Hrvatske za razdoblje 2000. – 2004. godine," (Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2001).

³⁸³ Neven Šantić, "Regionalni bauk kruži Hrvatskom," *Novi List*, 20 June 2000.

reform.³⁸⁴ Driven by the logics of financial and administrative functionality, the government favored decentralization of state powers and finances over territorial restructuring. The 2000 program document issued by the Račan government, among others, provided a “critical evaluation of the economic rationality of the state apparatus, the implementation of a cost-reduction and savings program.”³⁸⁵ Therefore, although territorial restructuring was included in the overall reform package, it was outlined as secondary to decentralization, and articulated in terms of financial and administrative consolidation of the state:

a gradual transformation of territorial organization – including the establishment of a smaller number of regional units and the consolidation of local self-governing units – is needed for capacity building and rationalization of subnational structures.³⁸⁶

In that sense, the region was articulated in the function of state consolidation via improved responsiveness of the state to the needs of the citizen and greater citizen participation in decision-making, which were therefore set as primary goals of the decentralization process:

The objective of the reforms is to bring the citizens closer to the decision-making process, to have greater citizen participation, and a more comprehensive meeting of needs with the ultimate result being the reduction of the concentration of political power in the central government of the state.³⁸⁷

A utilitarian reading of territoriality in the function of state consolidation created a gradual depoliticization of the regionalization *problématique*. Specifically, the official policy discourse of the early 2000s transitioned from framing territoriality as a problem of political power allocation towards the economic reading of territoriality under the context of regional development. The regionalization process became detached from regionalism as a political idea and instead articulated with decentralization as a key mechanism in modernization and development:

³⁸⁴ "Pošteno, pravedno, pametno: izborni program SDP," (Zagreb: Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske, 1999).

³⁸⁵ "Program Vlade Republike Hrvatske za razdoblje 2000. – 2004. godine," : 30-31.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ "Strategija razvitka Republike Hrvatske: Hrvatska u 21. stoljeću," (Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2000). Cited in Teodor Antić, "Central Government and Local Self-Government in Croatia: Decentralization and Democratization," paper presented at the *Fiscal Decentralization in Croatia* conference (Zagreb, 2002): 59.

The media and the political discourse in our country should differentiate between the concept of regionalization and regionalism, particularly as regionalism is traditionally bound to only negative epithets.³⁸⁸

Accordingly, the 2003 National Development Strategy mentions regionalization and decentralization in direct relation to regional development and socio-economic growth of Croatia as a whole:

Because the underdevelopment of particular regions poses a problem for the overall development of the country, processes of decentralization and regionalization – based on regional comparative advantages – are in our primary focus. These processes are aimed at increasing educational and research resources, encouraging the mobility of people and capital, and improving the overall infrastructure.³⁸⁹

Increased focus on territoriality in view of the regional development policy is also particularly observable in the media discourse and, to some extent, in the discourse of certain regionalist politicians. From 2000 onward, newspapers such as *Novi list*, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, or *Glas Istre* conceptualized regionalization as a prerequisite for growth in economically underdeveloped Croatian territories or the overall modernization of the country.³⁹⁰ To answer the increasingly dominant rationalist take on territoriality, regional elites expanded the earlier discussed democratization discourse to include arguments about the inefficiency of the centralized system and the budgetary burden of the existing state administration. In an interview for *Deutsche Welle*, then IDS president Ivan Jakovčić discussed the extensive strengthening of regional self-government – including competences in economic, education, health, and even parts of defense and security policy – in connection to the economic burden of centrism:

My regionalization efforts are targeted against extensive centrism and an overly expensive system of public administration and with a purpose of establishing balanced growth across all of the regions.³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ "Regionalizacija tema dana," *Slobodna Damacija* (2002).

³⁸⁹ "Strategija razvitka Republike Hrvatske: Hrvatska u 21. stoljeću – Znanost," (Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2003): 6.

³⁹⁰ "Regionalizacija – čarobni štapić," *Novi list*, 23 July 2000 and "Nova Vlada pred odlukom o radikalnoj reformi teritorijalnog ustroja Hrvatske: briše županije, Dalmacija postaje regija," *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 5 March 2000.

³⁹¹ "Interview with Ivan Jakovčić," *Radio Deutsche Welle* (Bonn: Deutsche Welle, 2002). See also "Interview with Ivan Jakovčić - Sazrelo je vrijeme za stvaranje Hrvatske kao regionalne države," *Novi list*, 9 July 2002; "Interview with Nikola Ivaniš - Regije će pojeftiniti državni aparat," *Novi list*, 11 July 2002; and "Interview with Damir Jurić - Tražit ćemo osnivanje pet regija," *Novi list*, 21 June 2002.

The transition from a political to a functional approach to territorial reforms was intensified by Zagreb's improved relationship with Brussels. The country's rapprochement with Brussels, and particularly its harmonization with the EU's cohesion policy, not only encouraged national debate on the formation of regional policy, but also launched a novel discursive space for domestic comprehension of territoriality and the accompanying regionalization and decentralization processes. Domestic debate defined territorial reforms as a condition for regional development and, among other things, EU membership. Territoriality was conceptualized in a dual (and interrelated) function of state consolidation via economic efficiency and regional development on one hand and via EU membership on the other:

In the past twelve years we spoke of Croatia as a region-based and a European country. Regionalization as a part of EU accession is therefore a natural course of development.³⁹²

Particularly interesting, then, is the use of the EU discourse by political elites to alleviate the demands of political regionalism by articulating regionalization in terms of statistics in line with the EU's NUTS standardization of territoriality. Neven Mimica, Minister of European Integration at the time, responded to the Goran Declaration and the accompanying efforts of regional parties as follows:

Croatia will soon redefine her territorial organization on non-administrative, statistical grounds. This is done with the purpose of accessing the EU's regional and structural funding. We therefore speak of regionalization due to EU accession and harmonization with the EU's legislation.³⁹³

The parliamentary debate was soon hijacked by the question of statistical regionalization, and effectively pushed aside the economic and political consequences of territorial organization. In response, Furio Radin spoke on behalf of the Committee on Human and National Minority Rights about the unwanted political consequences of statistical regionalization:

³⁹² "Interview with Nikola Ivaniš - Ne odustajemo od stvarne regionalizacije Hrvatske," *Novi list*, 10 May 2003.

³⁹³ "Interview with Neven Mimica," *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 25 March 2002. Drafted by the representatives of regionalist parties, the Goran Declaration is a policy proposal on the formation of strong regional self-government based on a five-region model and extensive decentralization.

We should not forget that the problem of statistical regionalization triggers a number of political questions, which we failed to discuss. The Committee is of the view that a broader public debate on different regionalization models should be opened.³⁹⁴

Accordingly, the European Union and the EU's regional policy were framed to deter the pending question of territorial restructuring while casting the region as a statistical reference in the distribution of EU funding – hence, as being deprived of not only political but also administrative dispositions.

The Democratization Discourse

The 2000 Motovun Declaration and the 2002 Goran Declaration, regionalization blueprints of the regionalist parties (the IDS included), formulated subnational self-government, decentralization, and territorial restructuring as key principles in the political and economic modernization of Croatian statehood. The people's right to a functioning subnational self-government was addressed in the preamble to the Goran Declaration. An emphasis on wide, self-governing competences of regions (and to a lesser extent localities) was outlined as a prerequisite for democracy and resultant cultural and material development.³⁹⁵ A similar position was put forward by regional elites in the 2001 policy debate on territorial organization reform and the accompanying decentralization. Proposals for only a partial transfer of competences to regions or localities void of, for instance, financial decentralization or territorial restructuring were openly rejected as being undemocratic.³⁹⁶ Instead, the reading of the citizen/territory dichotomy via the democratization discourse redefined the region as a historically and geographically distinct territory with an established identity.³⁹⁷ The regionalist bloc demanded territorial restructuring defined by the formation of five historically, culturally, and geographically distinct regions – Slavonija and Baranja, Dalmatia, Istria, the Kvarner, and Central Croatia. The extent of subnational competences for these regions bordered on the German or Austrian model of federalism:

³⁹⁴ "Hrvatska u pet regija," (Zagreb: Hrvatski Sabor, 2003): 55-56.

³⁹⁵ "Deklaracija o polazištima za ustrojstvo regionalne samouprave (Goranska deklaracija)," (Brod na Kupi, 2002).

³⁹⁶ See "Nema demokracije bez tolerancije," (Zagreb: Hrvatski Sabor, 2001): 15.

³⁹⁷ "Motovunska deklaracija," (Motovun, 2000). For the political debate surrounding the Motovun Declaration, see Šantić, "Regionalni bauk kruži Hrvatskom."

Three regionalist parties have established the Motovun Declaration, which calls for the constitutional recognition of five Croatian historic regions. We further argue that it is crucial to legislatively divide local and regional self-government and to grant regions wide self-governing competences.³⁹⁸

IDS in particular promoted an alternative to the state centric reading of political territoriality based on multiculturalism, multiethnicism, and transnationalism. This was made explicit in the 2001 Statute of the Istrian County, which drew from the norms of democratization, pluralization, and subsidiarity.³⁹⁹ Representatives of IDS praised the Statute as a single document that codified principles of regionalism, bilingualism, and transnationalism as core values of territorial identity:

This Statute is much more than a technical document because it codifies the core values of Istrian identity – from anti-fascism to bilingualism, from *transborderism* to regionalism – into a legal system. It is an attempt to show in a form of statutory provisions the life of Istrian citizens based on the principles of multicultural and multinational coexistence and void of any interethnic conflict.⁴⁰⁰

Still, demands for territorial restructuring were seen as particularly problematic by the central state; the advocated regionalist model would not only undermine the existing (and already embedded) *županija model*, but by dividing the country in line with the existing regional identities, it would provide regions with a significant degree of political legitimacy as compared to the central state. Regionalist ideas were subjected to major criticism by members of the national political elites (coalition partners included), who revived the 1990s' rhetoric of calling for unity with regard to Croatian statehood.⁴⁰¹

In response to the centrist tendencies of the elites in Zagreb, the democratization discourse used EU norms such as subsidiarity and *Europe of the regions* to advocate for greater subnational autonomy from the central state and possible transnationalization of regional activities. Europe was articulated with the dual purpose of discrediting the nation-based reading of statehood as an undemocratic relic of the Tuđman era, and establishing regions as a novel political player:

It is evident that the role of national states is being redefined. It is our obligation to tell this to the people. It is clear that the concept of state sovereignty developed by

³⁹⁸ "Interview with Nikola Ivaniš," *Novi list*, 6 July 2000.

³⁹⁹ "Izmjene i dopune Statuta Istarske županije," (Pula: Istarska županija, 2001).

⁴⁰⁰ Branka Žužić, "Vijećnici skupštine Istarske županije danas odlučuju o redizajnira nom Statutu. Uporaba jezika kao predizborno poprište," *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 9 April 2001: 2.

⁴⁰¹ "Interview with Zlatko Tomčić," *Hrvatska radiotelevizija*, 04 September 2001.

the Tudman regime finds no equivalent in [the] Europe of today. [...] Therefore, we must build a 21st century Croatia. [...] We should acknowledge the federalization of Europe with an increased role for subnational actors. Although this is not a matter of daily political developments, it is most definitely what we can expect in the future.⁴⁰²

The formation of bilateral and multilateral relations with other European regions or the opening of regional office representations in Brussels were explained as steps in the Europeanization of Croatian governance rather than as anti-statist activities. Similarly, various statements on the transnationalization of the Istrian region and possible integration of the Croatian, Italian, and Slovenian parts of Istria were not framed as being against the central state, but were placed in a larger pro-European framework based on a regional and transnational understanding of political territoriality:

I deeply believe that Europe will have a clearly defined structure of territorial organization, which will include the European, the national, the regional, and the local level. Following the principle of subsidiarity, which is already a part of the EU's legal system; each level will carry its own share of political responsibilities. [...] If the European Parliament is to decide for the European level, it becomes less important whether constituencies are nationally defined or not. I can imagine that some parts of Europe – especially border regions or those that share a distinct history – will enter the polls jointly. Hence, political activity does not need to be constrained to the borders of individual nation states.⁴⁰³

The Policy Reform of 2001

Defined by a hodgepodge of concepts ranging from regional autonomy and democratization to administrative efficiency and regional development, and because it was developed in an unsteady political environment connected to the post-Tudman restructuring of the state, the 2001 reform package did not meet its potential. Multiple pressures for territorial restructuring were challenged by what were presented as more pending problems, public administration efficiency and regional development in conjunction with statistical regionalization as examples. Despite detaching the problem of regionalization from the stigma of secessionism found in the 1990s, the 2001 package left many questions pending even to this day.

⁴⁰² "Interview with Ivan Jakovčić," *Feral Tribune*, 25 November 2000: 4.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*: 2.

The 2001 Law on Local and Regional Self-Government defined counties as units of regional self-governance, and cities and municipalities as units of local self-governance, while confirming (rather than reforming) the territorial organization from the 1990s.⁴⁰⁴ The creation of two tiers of administration on the county level (i.e. bodies of regional government and self-government) added to the complexity of the territorial structure, but largely failed to empower the subnational level. Counties and localities remained overly small and weak to carry out both the regionalization process and the EU's regional policy. Emphasis was placed on decentralization in line with the government's effort to disburden the central administration. Although the subnational level gained self-governing competences over the complete policy process in areas such as education, welfare, and healthcare, the decentralization process was centrally managed and was not met with bottom-up capacity-building efforts.⁴⁰⁵ While being assigned with substantive powers, the subnational level remained financially and administratively incapacitated to implement these powers. The 2001 decentralization only transferred the problems of the 1990s – a fragmented, weak, and crippled subnational level, a large and expensive de-concentrated state, and an explosion in the number of centers of gravity at the meso-level – into a new decade.

Despite the ongoing debate regarding the restructuring of territorial governance and sporadic reforms with limited outreach,⁴⁰⁶ the present system remains highly centralized, overly complex, and ineffective. Further decentralization is dependent upon both the political will of Zagreb and the capacity of the subnational level to enhance self-governance. Necessary conditions for effective decentralization such as competences, administrative capacities, and fiscal capacities are still unmet.⁴⁰⁷ Academia and experts generally agree that the current system of territorial organization fails to meet the demands of modern regionalism.⁴⁰⁸ The organization of subnational self-governance has been a key barrier to the harmonization of regional policy with EU norms both in terms of effective and democratic governance, and of the subnational

⁴⁰⁴ "Zakon o lokalnoj i područnoj (regionalnoj) samoupravi," (Zagreb: Hrvatski sabor, 2001).

⁴⁰⁵ For a detailed analysis, see Petak, "Politics of Decentralization Policy: Explaining the Limited Success of the Croatian Case after 2001."

⁴⁰⁶ The law was subjected to modification in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2012, and 2013. Noteworthy are the 2005 reforms on the special statute of the City of Zagreb and the 2008 reforms introducing direct elections of county and local representation. "Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o lokalnoj i područnoj (regionalnoj)," in *01-081-05-3149/2* (Zagreb: Hrvatski sabor, 2005) and "Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o lokalnoj i područnoj (regionalnoj)," in *011-01/08-01/138* (Zagreb: Hrvatski sabor, 2008).

⁴⁰⁷ Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview I - Croatia," (Zagreb: Hrvatska zajednica županija, 2011): 5.

⁴⁰⁸ Ivo Šimunović, "Regionalizacija - hrvatska lutanja," paper presented at the *Forumi o regionalizaciji i održivom življenju* conference (Zagreb, 2007): 26.

capacity to carry out EU-funded projects. Even today, it hampers Croatia's ability to absorb the EU's regional funding:

What happened is the concentration of power, decision-making, capital, and institutions into one center. Consequently, the entire country was provincialized and her cities disempowered. Counties are degraded to state offices on a regional level. Their authority is reduced to a small number of secondary functions with no impact on regional development programs. The county system of regionalization did not respond to the demands of modern regionalism. It has produced more harm than good. Territorial disparities have given a negative stamp on the current developments in Croatia.⁴⁰⁹

Europeanization of the Territoriality Debate (2004-2011) as a Continuation of the Functionality-Democracy Dichotomy

Europeanization has resonated against a structure split between functional and normative interpretations of space. The European Union and the accompanying norms such as *Europe of the Regions*, subsidiarity, partnership, regional autonomy, and decentralization were processed by the already existing dichotomy between the hegemonic representation of territoriality grounded in the functionality discourse, and the antagonistic representation of territoriality grounded in the democracy discourse. Both discourses adopted a utilitarian reading of the European Union, where the EU became an instrument in redefining the state, but were linked to diverging rationales on how the state was to be recomposed. The functionality discourse articulated the European Union in view of economically achieving the most efficient form of territorial organization. It was linked to representations such as regional development, growth, competitiveness, etc. The democracy discourse constructed the European Union as *Europe of the regions* to challenge the hegemony of state-centricity in the national debate on territoriality.

Although the EU's regional development policy offered a novel paradigm in the representation of territoriality in the post-Tudman period following Croatia's reestablished relationship with Brussels, the hegemony of the functionality discourse was further enhanced by the central government's gatekeeper position throughout EU accession negotiations. Having substantial autonomy in both the implementation of the *acquis* and the communication with EU institutions, Zagreb maintained control over Europeanization in the domain of regional policy

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

(among others).⁴¹⁰ Zagreb successfully managed to monopolize domestic resonance of EU norms, while articulating these in relation to the economic and administrative consolidation of the state. Europeanization was consequently read as an essentially economic problem. Quick and efficient absorption of EU pre-accession funding was vocalized as more pivotal than the restructuring of territorial organization – once again pushing the political reading of territoriality based on the ideas of multilevel governance into the margins of the policy process.

The Hegemonic Discourse: Functionality via the Regional Development Paradigm

Subsequent to the intensification of accession talks between Zagreb and Brussels, the Croatian territoriality debate shifted further towards the regional development discourse and the problem of EU funds absorption. The official discourse conceptualized the EU region as a functional space and an instrument to meet the requirements of the EU's single market, as well as the global economy. Territoriality reforms were conducted not only as an austerity measure to cut down on what was perceived as a mushrooming state apparatus, and the accompanying public service efficiency-building, but also as a step in the economic consolidation of the state in line with the European model.

It is particularly interesting that the functional understanding of territoriality, and the articulation of the EU region as a system of development, survived several critical junctures in the 2000s. These included the change of government in 2003, the start of accession negotiations in 2005, and the closing of *acquis* Chapter 22 on *Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Funding* in 2011. Variations on the idea of functional regionalization were evident in the discourse of parties across the political spectrum, but were also established in the discourse of various interest groups and civil society representatives involved in the reterritorialization process.⁴¹¹ Even though the political left and right might have disagreed on the exact model of territorial restructuring, their discourses were economy-driven with rationalization as the key credo behind any reform option.

Both the 2007 and the 2011 electoral programs of the center left SDP (and its coalition partners) referred to decentralization in the context of demands for an efficient public

⁴¹⁰ For a detailed analysis of vertical and horizontal Europeanization in the domain of regional policy, see Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Territoriality is in the Eyes of the Beholder," *L'Europe en Formation* 1, no. 363 (2012).

⁴¹¹ See, for instance, "Plan 21 - Politika decentralizacije," (Zagreb: Kukuriku koalicija, 2011); "Izborni program 2011.-2015.," (Zagreb: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, 2011); Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview F - Croatia," (Zagreb: Udruga gradova u Republici Hrvatskoj, 2011); Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview J - Croatia," (Zagreb: Udruga općina u Republici Hrvatskoj, 2011); and Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview I - Croatia."

administration in conjunction with the overall development of subnational units as conditions for economic growth and stability:

Decentralization and the development of regional and local self-government, an increase of citizen participation in local affairs, are key conditions for stable and balanced growth and for the stability of a democratic system.⁴¹²

The coalition parties are united in defining decentralization policy via decentralization of the public sector. The aim is to meet the needs of the citizen for public goods and services and local and regional development promotion.⁴¹³

What is more, when asked to define pending problems of Croatian territorial organization, the interviewed center left parliamentarians discussed the budgetary burden of the rapidly increasing local administration in parallel with the capacity of the subnational units to absorb post-accession regional development funding. Implementation and operationalization of EU norms, including the principles of partnership and subsidiarity, were seen as essential to tackle problems such as nepotism and unaccountability in redistributing public finances towards the sub-state, and the related incapacity of localities and regions to manage regional development:

Subsidiarity, partnership, etc., everything is written in the papers, the question is how to bring these norms into practice. [...] We are aware that there are enormous problems with the capacity of localities and regions, but we will soon have the opportunity to change things.⁴¹⁴

The discussion on regionalization largely replicated the national debate on regional policy. Again, harmonization with the European Union for the purpose of achieving a more efficient form of territorial organization dominated the debate. The statistical classification in the form of the NUTS system was increasingly discussed as the new form of regionalization. The interviewees discussed statistical regionalization as not only a technical problem, but also a political one: "It is necessary to consolidate counties into more homogenous entities – regions, while taking into account the specificities of the existing territorial policy."⁴¹⁵ Accordingly, the

⁴¹² "Izborni program SDP-a 2007: Nova snaga. Sigurnost. Solidarnost. Prosperitet," (Zagreb, Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske, 2007): 6.

⁴¹³ "Plan 21 - Politika decentralizacije."

⁴¹⁴ Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview H - Croatia," (Zagreb: Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske, 2011): 4.

⁴¹⁵ Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview K - Croatia," (Zagreb: Odbor za regionalni razvoj, šumarstvo i vodno gospodarstvo, 2011): 5. See also Branko Grčić, "Regionalizacija Hrvatske u kontekstu pridruživanja Europskoj

interviewed members of the center left argued that their political program on regionalization to a large extent copied EU legislation. For them, Croatia's regional development policy effectively was the EU's policy of regional development.⁴¹⁶ This again illustrates the discursive contextualization of territorial restructuring as a function of the economic restructuring of the state via (among others) harmonization with the demands of EU accession.

The EU's regional development policy was also utilized by the center right HDZ party as a novel paradigm in its political discourse on territoriality. The discourse on regional development effectively enabled HDZ to exchange the statist policy discourse of the 1990s for a more moderate discourse based on the economic outlook on regionalization, while not having to compromise on the overall unfavorable stance towards regionalization. The 2004 program document advocated decentralization of power towards localities, but continued to insist that regionalization was at odds with the Croatian tradition of territorial organization. The program further echoed the rhetoric of the 1990s that the formation of regions would effectively reopen the problems of fragmentation and lead to the division of the Croatian territory.⁴¹⁷ The 2007 and 2011 electoral programs referred to subnational politics only sporadically, and even then only in the context of creating a *European Croatia* via effective public administration and regional development.⁴¹⁸ When asked to elaborate on the party's policy on territorial restructuring, an HDZ parliamentarian (who is also currently involved in local and EU-level politics) referred to rationalization and efficiency as the two main concepts behind the reforms:

To this day, we had several public debates [on the question of reterritorialization], but we did not proceed with the reforms as we are still thinking about the best model that would rationalize subnational organization, including a reduction in the size of the administration and the degree of fragmentation.⁴¹⁹

Moreover, while stressing the difference between political and statistical regionalization, the interviewee (on several occasions) spoke about regrouping counties into larger regions in line with the NUTS model for the purpose of rationalizing territorial politics:

uniji," paper presented at the *Forumi o regionalizaciji i održivom življenju* conference (Zagreb, 2007) and Branko Grčić, *Regionalna politika SDP-a* (2007), Video.

⁴¹⁶ Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview H - Croatia."

⁴¹⁷ See "Program Hrvatske Demokratske Zajednice," (2004).

⁴¹⁸ See "Pokrenuli smo Hrvatsku! Ostvareno 2004.-2007.," (Zagreb: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, 2008). and "Čuvajmo Hrvatsku," (Zagreb: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, 2011).

⁴¹⁹ Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview O - Croatia," (Zagreb: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, 2011): 2.

When we talk about regional organization, Croatia is divided into three statistical regions, according to the NUTS2 classification. This has nothing to do with either political divisions or our regionalization. However, with the debate on regionalization still open, there is need for rationalization and we must create some logical groupings of counties, however, it is too early to speak about this now.⁴²⁰

When asked how EU norms affect the policy program of the party vis-à-vis territoriality, the interviewee raised the importance of decentralization and subsidiarity in the context of reducing the bureaucracy and restructuring industry, tourism, etc.: “Decentralization and subsidiarity are two key components of regional development. The principle of partnership is also very important for our party.”⁴²¹

Finally, interest groups with a local or regional agenda did little to distance themselves from the hegemony of the functional understanding of a territory. Partial pluralization of the policy debate, particularly in the second half of the 2000s, did not challenge the established monopoly of the central state over the economic reading of territoriality. This has only embedded the dominance of the articulation of the European Union in support of rationalization of the state bureaucracy and via territorial restructuring of the local level. Various groupings of subnational actors failed to approach territoriality in a more holistic manner, and have consequently focused on establishing (or disproving) the economic benefits of the proposed territoriality reforms. Indicative of this problem, the Croatian Association of Counties commissioned the Institute of Economics (Zagreb) to develop an analytical framework for the reorganization of territorial politics in 2010. The study focused on creating a basis for effective decentralization in terms of finding the optimal model for the redistribution of public finances and services.⁴²² Referring to the need of decentralization, civil society representatives and subnational elites often invoked the problem of EU accession and the financial incapability of localities and regions to participate in the cohesion programs. When asked to elaborate on the issue of subnational capacity building, the interviewee discussed the need for fiscal and functional decentralization in accordance with the European Charter for Local Self-Government and the EU’s regional development policy.⁴²³ Contact with the European Union, and EU norms such as partnership or subsidiarity, were most

⁴²⁰ Ibid.,: 1.

⁴²¹ Ibid.,: 5.

⁴²² "Analitičke podloge za učinkovitu decentralizaciju u Hrvatskoj," (Zagreb: Ekonomski institut, 2010).

⁴²³ Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview I - Croatia,": 9.

often discussed in the context of strengthening the position of regions and localities vis-à-vis the central state, and defending decentralization via the functionality doctrine: “We use the EU to articulate our interests when these are ignored by the state. Otherwise the EU would be another fiscal burden.”⁴²⁴

Rather interesting then, is the discourse of local representatives whose existence is directly threatened by the functionality narrative. While they have also articulated Europeanization as essentially the process of making the state effective, stress was placed on the link between the citizen and the sub-state via various norms including subsidiarity. The *Declaration on Active Involvement of Local Authorities of South East Europe in the EU Integration Process*, signed by Croatian representatives of localities in tandem with other associations representing local interests from the SEE, expressed the demand for greater participation of localities in EU integration precisely on the idea of the rationalization of statehood in line with the subsidiarity principle:

considering that local governments are the best placed to represent the interests of citizens and address their needs, [and] considering the need to involve local governments and their associations in the EU negotiation and integration processes.⁴²⁵

Similarly, interviewed representatives of localities and cities discussed territory in terms of providing the best service to their citizens in line with subsidiarity, the consolidation of a European welfare state, etc.⁴²⁶ The welfare state was established as an antithesis to the principal interpretation of the functionality discourse via fiscal rationalization. The argument of bringing the state closer to the citizen was expressed to deter and contest territorial restructuring based on the idea of creating regions and localities fit to survive under market conditions:

Fiscal decentralization is a precondition to functional decentralization. The idea that territorial restructuring is to make the state cheaper is like a populist catchphrase that sounds good on TV.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁴ Ibidem.

⁴²⁵ "Declaration on Active Involvement of Local Authorities of South East Europe in the EU Integration Process," (Istanbul: NALAS, 2009): 1.

⁴²⁶ Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview J - Croatia." and Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview F - Croatia."

⁴²⁷ Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview J - Croatia," : 5.

The central state utilized Europeanization to promote the idea of functional regionalization and the corresponding economic consolidation of the state. The European Union was consequently defined as an extension of the EU's cohesion policy and the region was represented as a carrier of economic development. Put differently, the EU region was articulated as a purposeful and functional space. Reference to the EU region, as a norm, established an additional niche for the depoliticization of territorial reforms. This led to further reconceptualization of territoriality from the political towards the functionality discourse in the Croatian debate on territorial restructuring.

The policy discourse replicated the political discourse. This included the decentering of politics from territoriality, and diverting the discussion away from regionalization as consolidation of regional self-government towards regionalization as rationalization of statehood (via either the dominant market-based or the minority welfare-based discourses). The 2004 Decentralization Framework linked democratization and decentralization with EU cohesion policy-based norms on capacity building and partnership promotion:

We prioritize local democracy development, decentralization and capacity building, in addition to promoting partnership between central, mid-level, and local authorities together with relevant non-state actors.⁴²⁸

Decentralization, then, was framed in the context of overall effectivization of the state:

It is our goal to improve the quality and efficiency of the subnational administration, which consequently defines the cost-effectiveness of public administration. Decentralization shall improve the quality of public service, management of local administration, and finally entrepreneurship of local units.⁴²⁹

There are also references to a similar functionalist interpretation of territoriality and the European Union in the policy debate on the 2005 and 2007 amendments to the Law on Local and Regional Self-government, as well as the 2010 *Guidelines for Functional Decentralization*. The *Guidelines*, which remain the most concrete policy proposal on decentralization to this day, made a connection between functional and fiscal decentralization, and territorial restructuring and administrative rationalization:

⁴²⁸ "Okvirni program decentralizacije (razdoblje od 2004. do 2007. godine) - prijedlog," (Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2004): 1.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.,: 8.

The underlying goal of the reform is to achieve more rational, more effective, and better local self-governance and to increase accessibility, expedience, and quality, while decreasing the costs of services subnational bodies provide citizens with.⁴³⁰

That the *Guidelines* firmly established a functional reading of territory was confirmed by the reasoning of one of the text's drafters, who among others argued that the team did its best to establish a framework for the pending consolidation of the state apparatus, but it would then be up to politicians to implement the reform.⁴³¹ Territoriality reforms were consequently explained as a dichotomy between a large (social) and a minimal (functional) state:

Hence, we tried to work out a comprehensive model of public administration. Everything depends on what kind of a state we want. The previous state was predominantly conceived as a welfare state with a wide range of public services. This is no longer the case. Today there is strong commitment to a *low-cost* state. We do not want a welfare state, but a cheap state.⁴³²

Even more importantly, the reterritorialization problem was incorporated into policy discussions on regional development. This provided an additional nexus between decentralization and demands of EU accession, and the accompanying debate on the formation of the national regional development policy. The 2005 draft *Regional Development Strategy* document, which drew directly from the principles of the EU's cohesion policy, articulated decentralization as one of the conditions for regional capacity building.⁴³³ The policy process preceding the adoption of the *Law on Regional Development* (LRD) in December 2009 and the completion of the *Regional Development Strategy* in summer 2010 defined regional and decentralization policies as interlinked. Subsequently, changes in the organization of Croatian territorial policies were articulated as essential for the functioning of new regional development policy in line with the principles of regional administrative, and fiscal capacity building, socio-economic development, and good governance.⁴³⁴

⁴³⁰ "Smjernice i načela za funkcionalnu decentralizaciju i teritorijalni preustroj," (Zagreb: Ministarstvo uprave Republike Hrvatske, 2010): 2.

⁴³¹ Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview Y - Croatia," (Zagreb: Institute for International Relations, 2011): 2.

⁴³² Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview AA - Croatia," (Zagreb: Institut za javnu upravu, 2011): 5.

⁴³³ "Strategija regionalnog razvoja Republike Hrvatske (SRR): Smjernice za razvoj županija i širih regija," in *Strategija i jačanje kapaciteta za regionalni razvoj (CARDS 2002 za Hrvatsku)*, ed. ECORYS (Zagreb: Ministarstvo mora, turizma, prometa, i razvitka, 2005).

⁴³⁴ Sanja Maleković et al., "Decentralisation and Regional Policy in Croatia: the Impact of EU Accession and the Prospect of Territorial Reorganisation," (Zagreb: Institute for International Relations, 2011).

An additional push towards the depoliticization of regions via Europeanization can be found in the debate over the statistical numeration of the Croatian territory in line with the NUTS system. Harmonization with the NUTS system blurred the boundary between the statistical and the political regions. At the same time, it shifted the overall understanding of the region from a political space towards a functional space. The debate on statistical regionalization rearticulated the concept of a region as larger than the existing county architecture, but also deprived of any governmental structure. In that sense, the region was detached from its political base and re-established as a system of development; a novel level of territorial organization governed by a complex network of public and private actors with the purpose of better meeting the needs of the market. Following the 2005 implementation of the *Stabilization and Association Agreement* (SAA), I observed a discursive escape towards the concept of statistical regions. The Agreement's obligation for statistical regionalization provided a pretext for the elites to steer any concrete discussion on territorial reforms further in the direction of meeting the requirements of the EU's cohesion policy in general, and the formation of a multilevel and multi-actor partnership in particular. The Minister of European Integration at the time, Neven Mimica, talked about the necessity of creating larger (non-administrative) regions:

Croatia will redefine her regions on a non-administrative (statistical) level. We do so to harmonize with the requirements of the EU's regional development funding. Because regions should have in between of 800,000 and 3 million inhabitants, Croatia will be divided into five regional units.⁴³⁵

In response, regionalist media called upon the elites to stop equating statistical regionalization with the still unresolved problem of territorial restructuring: "We should stop hiding behind the statistical regions, whose purpose is completely different from the purpose of real and identifiable Croatian regions."⁴³⁶ Whereas reterritorialization continued to be one of the most contentious problems throughout the 2000s, the policy debate was reformulated as a problem of statistical regionalization in conjunction with a more normative discussion on power-sharing between various levels of government, the civil society, businesses, etc.⁴³⁷ The question of administrative regions was consequently pushed to the margins of the parliamentary debate:

⁴³⁵ "Interview with Neven Mimica."

⁴³⁶ Neven Šantić, "Konture moderne Hrvatske," *Novi list*, 10 July 2002.

⁴³⁷ See "Statistička potreba je jedno, a administrativni ustroj države nešto posve drugo," *Vijesnik*, 8 March 2002 and "HNS i HSS protiv podjele Hrvatske na tri regije," *Nacional*, 10 April 2007.

First we should define the extent of regional self-government and only then we can discuss the problem of territorial restructuring. On the other hand, the problem of territorial restructuring should be examined from a functionalist and not an administrative viewpoint. This is how we will be able to establish five or six regions as economic (statistical) units, and not administrative units.⁴³⁸

The Oppositional Discourse: Democratization via the Europe of the Regions Paradigm

The efficiency discourse was contested by regionalist parties, who persisted as key advocates of political regionalization. In the context of Croatia's accession to the EU, subnational political elites pushed for territorial organization according to the existing regional identities, while at the same time protecting the boundaries of their political influence. On the level of policy debate, the question of territorial restructuring was framed as subordinate to demands for more extensive regional autonomy.⁴³⁹

The accession process further shifted the regionalist discourse away from the nation state towards the European Union. The *Europe of the Regions* narrative was employed to legitimize regionalist aspirations in the domestic policy debate. As such, it was framed in opposition to centralized territorial organization and centrist governance practices. Consequently, the consolidation of regional self-government was identified as the harmonization of Croatian territorial governance with EU norms and a step towards EU integration. The narrative was also claimed to help Croatia achieve political and economic stability.⁴⁴⁰ However, *Europe of the Regions* also provided regionalists with a novel discursive framework that transcended the nation state. As an alternative to demands for autonomy within national boundaries, regionalism was increasingly conceptualized as a Europe-wide governance model with Croatian regions as actors within this European political space:

Europe has found a strategic interest in turning itself into a Europe of regions. The Europe of today is regionalized, which has led to the cessation of hostilities between countries (e.g. Germany and France) and the creation of new friendships. Regionalization prevents the recurrence of strong centralist, authoritarian, national governments, which have always been a threat to peace. What we need to do in Croatia is to regionalize. Regionalism is a means in reaching harmonious internal

⁴³⁸ "Interview with Mate Arlović," *Novi list*, 22 January 2004.

⁴³⁹ "Deklaracija o polazištima za ustrojstvo regionalne samouprave (Goranska deklaracija)."

⁴⁴⁰ "Regionalne stranke su jedina prava opozicija," in *Hrvatski regionalni grč*, ed. Neven Šantić (Zagreb: Pan Liber, 2006): 123.

development of our country. Now we have counties, but we should create regions.⁴⁴¹

Regional representatives increasingly defined political regionalism as a transborder phenomenon recognized within the European political space. By the same token, Croatian regions were progressively identified as also European regions, hence, entities within the political space of *Europe of the Regions*:

For over twenty years we have called for regional autonomy [of Istria] and decentralization. Europe has recognized the potential of subsidiarity and has encouraged regionalism as a best model for political and economic development. The European Union and Europe of the Regions remain a crucial element of our political agenda.⁴⁴²

Accordingly, one observes a paradigm shift with political regionalism constructed in line with multiculturalism, transnationalism, and transnationalization of regions as part of a European polity.

Discussion

Having presented the evidence on the conceptualization of territoriality in the Croatian political and policy debates, I can now address the Europeanization of the territoriality discourse according to the four ideal-types on Europe as established in Chapter 4 – the economic community, the political community, the federal state, and the multilevel polity. From the evidence, I find a divide between the hegemonic economic community-based representation of Europe grounded in a state-centric idea of territoriality on the one hand, and the contesting discourse on multilevel polity Europe as a challenge to state-centricity on the other hand. Whereas the former defined Europe as a condition for economic growth and is accompanied by a functional construction of (state) territory as a framework for the realization of economic relations, the latter representation articulated Europe in the function of democratization via a disjunction of the state-territoriality nexus. This suggests that the remaining two ideal-types – political community Europe based on the Weberian notion of statehood, and federal state Europe based on a reconstruction of state's territoriality at the suprastate level – were relatively

⁴⁴¹ "Interview with Ivan Jakovčić - Sazrelo je vrijeme za stvaranje Hrvatske kao regionalne države," 3.

⁴⁴² Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview Z - Croatia," 2. See also Senka Neuman Stanivuković, "Interview R - Croatia," (Zagreb: Istarska županija, 2011).

marginalized in the Croatian territoriality debate. National political elites resorted to the EU's regional policy and the rhetoric on functional regionalization. This enabled them to give up a little power in favor of the sub-state (and thus keep the rest), and remain politically correct. Regionalists utilized the *Europe of the Regions* norm, as it allowed them to demand greater autonomy without seeming autonomist. Ivo Šimunović summarizes the situation as follows:

Regionalism in Croatia in the last sixty years lived through ideological drifting and misconceptions. The concept was framed as a struggle for autonomy, separatism, nationalism, breaking of national unity and so on. As long as regionalism was pushed from the inside, it was evaluated negatively. Now that it comes from the outside, it is presented as a magic stick. However, regionalism remains what it is.⁴⁴³

Alongside Croatian progress towards EU membership, the territoriality debate increasingly articulated EU norms as the function of either economic or political restructuring of statehood. More concretely, the economic community and the multilevel polity representations of Europe framed territorial reforms as an economic/political reform of the Croatian statehood. To repeat, the mainstream political and policy discourses discussed the European Union in terms of economic output and the overall consolidation of the state economy. This was linked to various references of the economic advantages of EU membership and the EU's regional policy in particular, including the rationalization of the state apparatus or the benefits of EU regional policy. Equally important were the debates on the optimal model of territorial reforms for the absorption of cohesion funding, and on the capacity of localities and regions to draw money from Brussels. A direct result of the articulation of Europe as an economic community was a further enhancement of the functional reading of territoriality and consequent construction of a region as a means to secure economic gains. As mentioned earlier, such instrumentalization of Europe and the corresponding construction of territoriality as a function of economic restructuring continue to dominate the Croatian national discourse across the political and the policy spectrum today. On a policy level, the depoliticization of territoriality triggered the sidelining of policy debates on decentralization, regionalization, and territorial restructuring *writ large*. These processes were consequently reestablished as part of a regional development policy calling for financial, political, and administrative rationalization of the state.

⁴⁴³ Šimunović, "Regionalizacija - hrvatska lutanja," 32-33.

The ideal-type on Europe as a multilevel polity was articulated as a counter-hegemonic discourse. Regionalist parties in particular drew from such a representation of Europe (and the accompanying norms including *Europe of the Regions*, partnership, subsidiarity, pluralism, and multiculturalism) to decenter the dominance of functional territoriality. Europe was represented as a challenge to state-centricity because it subsumed multiple territorially and non-territorially defined actors. This suggested a process of disassociating territoriality from the state, but also a concurrent failure to present an alternative hegemonic reading of territoriality. Thus, a region was not articulated as a political alternative to the state within a broader European space, but as one of the forms of power representations alongside state, transstate, sub-state, or non-state actors. In contrast to the economic community discourse, while also removing the territoriality debate from the underlying tension between the central state and the sub-state, this multilevel representation of Europe did not deprive a region of its political foundation. In the context of the Croatian debate, such a representation of Europe was articulated as a continuation of a broader democracy discourse, and the consequent reading of reterritorialization as a step towards bringing the governance process closer to the citizen. Illustrative of this stance was the articulation of autonomist demands by Istrian political elites as a means to consolidate democracy (as opposed to challenging state integrity) in the post-EU accession period. Construction of regional self-government was therefore presented as a problem to be articulated in a European political space in line with EU norms and rules, and independently from, for instance, decentralization of the national state:

EU accession changes everything. Formal membership brings novel political possibilities. In this context, I want to make clear that we are very dissatisfied with the degree of decentralization in our country. [...] On this day I want to clearly state that EU membership opens up new perspectives for Istria and IDS, which is fully ready to do whatever it takes to achieve regionalization and decentralization. This includes following the lines of independent regionalism, autonomously from Croatia. This will be our contribution to the spread of European values in the post-accession period.⁴⁴⁴

The Croatian case speaks to a wider applicability of the analytical model established in Chapter 4. Europeanization is identified as a broader discourse on progress towards a given

⁴⁴⁴ "Jakovčić: Regionalizacija Hrvatske i regionalna autonomija Istre bit će centralna tema IDS-a," *Glas Istre*, 1 July 2013.

economic or political order. The economic community discourse and the multilevel policy discourse, as two antagonistic representations of Europe in the Croatian debate, were constructed as opposing constellations of the idea of progress vis-à-vis the state. Hence, the Croatian case reproduces the dichotomy between a functional reading of territoriality as state territoriality in the economic community discourse and a political reading of territoriality as multilevel territoriality in the multilevel polity discourse. The remaining two ideal-types (the political community discourse and the federal state discourse) are underrepresented in the Croatian case in comparison to the Czech/Slovak cases. This is due to the specificity of the state-building process in Croatia and the context of Croatian accession to the European Union.

Conclusion

This chapter has utilized the analytical model established in Chapter 4 to study the Europeanization of territoriality in the Croatian debate on territorial reforms. Because Croatia is an outlier case in relation to the Czech/Slovak study – both in terms of the specificity of Croatian state-building processes and its negotiations for EU accession – this chapter also examined the wider applicability of the established reading of Europeanization. Thus, I set out to answer the following questions. First, how has Europeanization constructed the understanding of territoriality in the Croatian debate on territorial reforms prior to its accession to the European Union? Second, what discourses on Europe were likely to inform the Croatian territoriality discourse, and how did they? Third, to what extent does the case of Croatia contribute to the broader applicability of the theoretical conclusions drawn from the Czech/Slovak comparison?

On the first question, I argued that the first wave of territorial reforms in 1992 and 1993 could be explained as a realization of the national unity discourse, which equalized state-building with the nation-building project. Because territorial sovereignty was articulated via this idea of *Croatianness*, processes such as decentralization, regionalization, and pluralization were delegitimized as antagonistic vis-à-vis not only the central state, but also national identity. The counter-hegemonic discourse adopted the European Union to defend regionalism as a democratic answer to state-centricity grounded in multiculturalism, multiethnicism, anti-fascism, anti-nationalism, etc. The multilevel image of the European Union, and regionalism as its derivative, were presented as ideological alternatives to the growingly totalitarian practices of the Tudman regime. While this suggested a decentering of the state's monopoly over territoriality, it did not

appear as a direct challenge to a state-based understanding of territoriality; territoriality was presented as beyond the state, but certainly not as anti-state.

The following decade brought about a paradigm shift. Subsequent to the death of President Tudman and the corresponding start of the democratization, Westernization, and Europeanization processes, the nationalist/regionalist dichotomy was replaced by the idea of civil statehood. State territoriality was thus no longer legitimized via the nation state, but via the link between a citizen and their government in line with subsidiarity, partnership, etc. This civil definition of statehood was constructed via representations of progress, democracy, and Europeanness. Whereas the idea of civil statehood produced a novel antagonistic relationship between a hegemonic functional and an antagonistic political reading of territoriality, here territory was also placed as a function of state consolidation via either rationalization or democratization. This implied a construction of the EU region as either a functional space and a mechanism in achieving economic growth, or a political space and a mechanism in democratization by deepening the link between the state and the citizen.

By controlling access to Brussels, national elites managed to monopolize the Europeanization process, which further pushed the territoriality discourse towards the functionality rationale in line with such issues as statistical regionalization, the EU's regional policy, and the corresponding economic benefits of EU membership. This depoliticized territoriality even more, and made the position of regionalist parties (which grounded legitimacy of regional self-government in norms such as local/regional identity, pluralism, and multiculturalism) very difficult. To counter the functionality discourse, regionalists adopted the idea of a multilevel Europe, where regions operated alongside state and non-state actors within a wider EU political space. A strong regional self-government became a pre-condition for the integration of Croatia with the European Union.

The move from national to civil statehood and the consequent establishment of novel territoriality discourses had minor policy effects. The reforms were constructed as a means to consolidate the state, albeit via different processes including bureaucracy-modernization or amalgamation of mushrooming localities. With the policy constructed around issues of subnational capacity building for the absorption of EU funding or the establishment of service-oriented regions and localities, the subnational level was displaced from its political basis and

consequently depowered. In turn, issues of territorial restructuring and the corresponding formation of politically strong regions became less relevant.

The second question looked at discourses on Europe and how they informed the Croatian territoriality debate. Beginning with the communist era up until today, the Croatian discourse has constructed territoriality in the context of state consolidation. I argued that territoriality was thus interpreted through the prism of statehood. Accordingly, following the regime change in 2000, I observed a change in the interpretation of statehood from national to civil. This paradigm change shifted the domestic articulation of the European Union from a rather marginalized idea of a multilevel polity in the discourse of regionalist elites, to a tool for promoting the functionalization of the territoriality issue. The 1990s were marked by a dichotomy between nationalistic and multilevel readings of territoriality and the corresponding articulation of the European Union in opposition to the dominant nation-centrism. The 2000s saw the EU become mainstreamed, with the EU constructed as an economic community in line with the interpretation of a region as a functional unit and a carrier of economic growth. Multilevel polity Europe, then, was constructed as a counter-hegemonic discourse in the function of democratization via pluralization, decentralization, etc. Similarly to the Czech/Slovak examples, in the Croatian case the hegemonic discourse was firmly grounded in the progress narrative. The conclusions indicate that the European Union was absorbed by domestic discourses to articulate an antagonism between economic and normative ideas on territoriality in the wider context of state consolidation. However, because the Europeanization process was highly monopolized by domestic elites, EU norms played a stronger role in depoliticizing territoriality rather than enhancing regionalism.

On the third question, the Croatian case confirmed the idea that Europe is conceptualized by domestic discourses as a means to determine progress. The established four ideal-types on Europe as particular constellations of the Europe (as progress)/state nexus were modified. The Croatian case demonstrated the presence of the economic community discourse and the corresponding functionalist reading of state territory as a hegemonic representation, and the multilevel polity discourse in line with a political reading of territoriality as an antagonistic discourse.

General Conclusion

This dissertation was constructed around the hypothesis that domestic perception of the European Union and the direction and the extent of Europeanization are mutually constitutive. Accordingly, it was my empirical ambition to study how competing articulations of the EU and its norms constructed debates in EU member and candidate countries. I have pled for greater meta-theoretical awareness in Europeanization scholarship, accompanied by a shift in the ontological reading of underlying questions about the meaning and the content of Europeanization. This concluding chapter elaborates on the central argumentation developed throughout this dissertation to answer the call for a paradigm shift in how we define and explain Europeanization.

The research in this dissertation was constructed in three consecutive steps. In the first step, I argued that the meta-theoretical and theoretical premises of poststructuralism reconceptualized Europeanization from being a unidirectional process to a relational one (Chapters 1, 2, and 3). Poststructuralism allows the European structure to be reproduced and contested by a (semi)intentional actor.

As a second step, I adopted poststructuralism to study the Europeanization of territoriality discourses in the Czech and Slovak territorial reforms prior to these countries' accession to the European Union (Chapter 4). The comparative study was used to generate broader propositions about the types of structures of discourse that informed Europeanization. This resulted in the identification of four ideal-type meta-discourses – the economic community discourse, the political community discourse, the federal state discourse, and the multilevel polity discourse – as various constellations of the Europe as progress and statehood nexus. Whereas the first three discourses have reproduced state-centricity as a hegemonic representation of territoriality, the final meta-discourse on Europe as a multilevel polity was articulated in an antagonistic relationship to the state-centric representation of territoriality.

In the third step, the established meta-discourses were applied to analyze the discourse in the Croatian debate on territorial reforms in view of the country's EU accession (Chapter 5). The empirical data demonstrated that the Croatian debate also reproduced the idea of Europe as progress. Additionally, the dichotomous representation of a state-centric reading of territoriality was seen as a function of economic consolidation on the one hand and a challenge to state-centricity as a function of democratic consolidation on the other.

The result of the established theoretical and empirical considerations was a novel framework for the study of Europeanization. Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter will assess the theoretical and the practical relevance of the established poststructuralist reading of Europeanization in line with the following questions:

- a) What are the implications of the proposed analytical framework for the broader Europeanization literature?
- b) What are the implications of the proposed analytical framework for practitioners?
- c) What are key insufficiencies of the proposed framework and how can these be addressed?

Part 1 will first restate the main propositions about Europeanization as established in this dissertation. Part 2 will discuss the contribution this research makes to Europeanization scholarship. I will once more highlight the problems found in the mainstream literature and will put forward poststructuralist answers to these. I will also look into the benefits of the established conclusions for practitioners. The final part will put forward several proposals for further research.

Summary of the Main Arguments

Poststructuralism rests on a dual ontological foundation. The first premise maintains reality's discursivity. This suggests that social identities, albeit materially grounded, do not exist outside of language. The second premise rejects the existence of structural totality in view of mutual constitutiveness of structure and agency in political articulations. Poststructuralism points the analysis towards the question of how actors' practices articulate the discourses that constitute social reality. It is therefore fit to theorize Europeanization by linking the underlying discourses on Europe, the perception of EU rules and norms in the domestic debate, and the final policy effects.

The European structure is not a given. It is an idea contingent upon the political process. As the European structure concurrently constructs the actor but also is contested by the very same actor, the meaning of EU norms is dual and relational. Seeing that EU norms are constructed differently when articulated under different discursive frames, we should study the idea of many *Europes* as opposed to the idea of one hegemonic EU. In line with its anti-essentialist ontology, poststructuralism allows for the problematization of the actor. Poststructuralism suggests that a single actor may articulate and reproduce various and mutually conflicting interpretations of a

particular EU norm by way of drawing from several meta-discourses. The idea of an intentional and plural actor allows one to explain how actors standing outside of the EU's physical borders can mold the meaning of Europe and its norms. Ultimately, poststructuralism defines Europeanization as a relational process based on a dialectical interplay between structures and agencies in a given discursive context. The European structure is fluid and contested. It is a practice of articulation of EU norms in domestic and transnational political debates, which implies concurrent reproduction and contestation of discursively established meanings (identities). Accordingly, the analysis was focused at deconstructing structuring discourses (meta-narratives), which articulated particular meanings to norms inferred to the EU's institutional order within the domestic policy process.

The empirical ambition of the thesis was to adopt the poststructuralist approach to Europeanization by examining how competing articulations of the EU and its norms constructed state territoriality in debates of countries/candidates for EU membership. More specifically, the study offered a critical reading of Europeanization in examining the (re)construction of domestic understanding of territoriality vis-à-vis the EU in Czech and Slovak pre-accession debates on territorial reforms (Chapter 4). The aim was to define underlying meta-discursive representations of Europe in relation to the state that in turn informed Europeanization. These meta-discourses were then adopted and modified in the study of the reterritorialization discourse in pre-accession Croatia (Chapter 5).

Data across the board rejects the idea of a singular and fixed reading of the European Union and its norms. Europeanization is a relational process contingent upon the actor because EU norms are reproduced and contested by domestic discourses. Rather than a teleological reproduction of one, fixed EU structure across the studied discourses, I found multiple and divergent articulations of the EU's territoriality and norms, such as multilevel governance, across and within the observed cases. By way of articulating Europe compared with specific arrangements of the state, domestic discourses have reproduced different meanings of Europe and ipso facto territoriality.

As a corollary to the argument about the relational nature of Europeanization, the empirical data also problematized the traditional reading of reproduction/contestation of various identity representations. EU norms have to be conceptualized as analytically open because they are contested by the articulation practice of the (quasi)intentional actor. While deconstructing the

articulated links between EU norms and territoriality, the analysis identified rules according to which particular representations of the EU are established to produce particular territoriality discourses.

The Czech/Slovak comparison established that the meaning of the European Union and its norms follows from a particular understanding of the state. Competing readings of the European Union were created through the delineation of multiple representations of the state, and a simultaneous construction of the radical *other*; hence, the anti-state. Four divergent ideal-types (meta-discourses) on Europe in relation to statehood were determined – the economic community, the political community, the federal state, and the multilevel polity. Whereas the prior three representations reproduced state-centricity as a hegemonic discourse, the final multilevel polity representation positioned itself as an antagonistic discourse and a challenge to a state-centric reading of territoriality. The analysis showed that the established representations of Europe could be traced back to a broader narrative on Europe as an instrument in achieving progress towards a given political and economic order. The Croatian case confirmed the hegemony of the state-centric reading of territoriality via the functionality discourse embedded in the idea of Europe as an economic community. It further confirmed the antagonistic representation of multilevel polity Europe to challenge state-centricity.

In view of the territorial debates in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Croatia, Europe and EU norms have provided domestic actors with a novel discursive space to be adopted *at home*. The established analysis of territoriality discourses illustrated that the EU's credibility and legitimacy, and therefore also its appeal, was first based on the domestically constructed idea of Europe, and only then on the *acquis*.

Implications for Theory and Practice

This dissertation speaks directly to the pending problems in mainstream literature on Europeanization. The undisputed cohabitation of Europeanization and neoinstitutionalism has exposed the research to the fallacies of EU-centrism and teleological reasoning. Furthermore, it has reduced Europeanization to unidirectional transposition of EU rules and norms within and beyond the borders of EU member states. Poststructuralism promises to rid the literature of these falsehoods.

To achieve analytical coherence, traditional literature on Europeanization relies on meta-theoretical and theoretical assumptions of the historical, sociological, and rational-choice

derivatives of neoinstitutionalist theorizing. The link between neoinstitutionalism and Europeanization is not only logical, but also pivotal in transforming what used to be an eclectic concept into a relatively homogenous and mature research agenda. This development of the field has provided room for a critical reflection upon the meta-theoretical and theoretical roots of the research.

The symbiosis between Europeanization literature and neoinstitutionalism has bound the analysis to a dual ontological premise of first, equating the social structure with the institutional order of political systems, and second, taking the structuralist stance in the agency-structure debate. As a consequence, Europeanization research is defined as a reversed image of European integration – i.e. the domestic impact of EU institutions. Traditional Europeanization literature rests on the following ontological foundations: the European structure is fixated within the EU's institutional order; and formal and informal rules, procedures, policies, appropriate behavior, shared beliefs, and norms are attributable to the EU's political system. With the institutional link between the EU structure and the domestic actor being hypothesized as a condition of Europeanization, the empirical pool of potential actors is narrowed down to EU member states and member state look-alikes. The European (read EU) norms and rules are conceptualized as independent from the actor (be it a member, quasi-member, or potential member state). As a result, the Europeanization process is defined as an uncontested reproduction of the EU's institutional structure to domestic spaces. Domestic identities, discourses, interests, or political structures are therefore positioned as receivers or mediators of Europeanization.

Uncritical adherence to neoinstitutionalism opens the analysis to well-documented problems of structuralist thinking. The neoinstitutionalist theoretical scheme suggests that Europeanization takes place in a contextual vacuum. Europeanization and the EU are analyzed as *a priori* givens, autonomous from wider spatial and temporal contexts within which they operate. This is problematic as it exposes the literature to the bias of teleology and EU-centricity.

The first problem relates to the fallacy of teleological reasoning. Not only is structural change theorized as exogenous to the social process, but also the agency is reduced to the role of a passive consumer of structural pressure for change, and consequently bracketed from the analysis. What does this mean for Europeanization? The traditional approach fails to theorize the EU as a moving target, thus the Europeanization process remains equated to a constant reproduction (albeit, in view of mediating variables, not homogenization) of one institutional

order. In turn, the nature and the degree of domestic change, as the dependent variables, are not open ended. Instead they are evaluated in terms of domestic compliance with a pre-given set of EU institutions – as a degree of becoming more or less like the EU.

The second problem is the fallacy of EU-centricity. Besides assuming the ontological preexistence of a given institutional structure, which stands exogenous to the social process, the literature also conceptualizes this structure to be inherently linked to the EU's institutional integration. The wide consensus about epitomizing Europe in the EU's institutional structure fails to identify the contingency of EU institutions upon broader processes including globalization and domestication, but also the shifting meaning of Europe (and thereby EU institutions) across time. By reducing the European structure to vacuumed EU institutions, we bracket from the analysis the fact that the EU is redefined through a binary relationship with Europe *writ large*, but also with what is considered *non-Europe*.

Poststructuralism rids Europeanization of the fallacies of EU-centric and teleological argumentation by defining the EU structure as fluid, and contingent upon the broader discursive context in which it is positioned. The EU is understood as a discursively constructed idea and contingent against domestic policy debates. Once EU norms are articulated by domestic actors at home, they are subjected to a process of contestation against domestically operating discourses. Domestic actors are simultaneously being formed by EU norms, and are forming the meaning of the very same norms. Ultimately, for one to understand Europeanization, in addition to studying the already well-recognized question of how and to what extent the EU's institutional structure changes the member and the candidate countries, one should also *domestify* Europeanization by way of studying what the EU means to these countries.

The further set of implications is of a practical order. Conclusions of this dissertation demonstrate that practitioners should also take into account the importance of the relational character of Europeanization. When we study Europeanization in the accession context, one very important fact is generally left out; the 2004-2007 EU enlargement and accession-driven Europeanization of the CEECs was enabled by the *nachholende Revolution* and the *return to Europe*. These two discourses were internal to the CEECs and central to their post-communist identity formation. This dissertation has shown that the success of Europeanization is often more dependent on the nature of domestic institutions, and the related cognition of Europe, than on the quality of conditionality.

Many problems the European Union is currently facing at home and in its neighborhood are due to Brussels' ignorance of various domestic perceptions and representations of the European Union. The growth of the euro-sceptic sentiment in the member states, but also the losing appeal of EU membership for neighboring states, are just a few of the more apparent reasons why Brussels-based policy-makers should be more responsive to the meaning of Europe and its norms in domestic discourses.

Proposals for Further Research

The conclusions established in this thesis discuss Europeanization as a relational concept. However, the responsiveness of Brussels to the established domestic representations of Europe has not been addressed. Whereas the study of EU-based changes in relation to member and accession states is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it needs to be elaborated upon in future research to complete the picture. In addition, the relevance of the poststructuralist reading of Europeanization and the accompanying four meta-discourses on Europe should be tested with empirical data from the remaining EU member states. Furthermore, although I relate my conclusions to the entire scholarly canon on Europeanization, this thesis derives its findings from the empirical case of accession driven Europeanization. Because Europeanization in the context of EU accession still stands on the margins of the Europeanization agenda, the validity of the established conclusions should be confirmed with a wider empirical sample.

Appendix 1: List of Interviewees – the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Association of Cities Slovakia, Bratislava, November 2012

Doc. Dan Marek, Ph.D., Palacký University, Faculty of Philosophy, Olomouc, October 2012

Doc. PhDr. Jaroslav Čmejrek, CSc, Czech University of Life Sciences, Faculty of Political Science, Prague, October 2012

Doc. RNDr. Ján Buček, PhD, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Comenius University, Bratislava, November 2012

František Cipro, City of Prague, Prague, October 2012

Grigorij Mesežnikov, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, November 2012 Institute for Sociology (SAV), Bratislava, November 2012

Ivana Pánková, Association of Czech Regions, October 2012

Jaroslav Kling, UNDP, Bratislava, November 2012

Matilda Kropáčková, the Bratislava County, Bratislava, November 2012

Mgr. Dan Ryšavý, PhD, Palacký University, Faculty of Philosophy, Olomouc, October 2012

PhDr. Petr Jüptner, PhD, Charles University, Institute of Political Studies, Prague, October 2012

RNDr. Tomáš Kostelcký, Institute for Sociology, Prague, October 2012

Roman Haken, Institute for Communal Issues, Prague, November 2012

Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic, Prague, October 2012

Viktor Nižňanský, PhD, Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, November 2012

Zuzana Špačeková, the Association of Cities and Municipalities, Bratislava, November 2012

Appendix 2: List of Interviewees – Croatia

Committee for Regional and Local Self-Government, Croatian Parliament, Zagreb, April 2011

Committee for Regional Development, Croatian Parliament, Zagreb, April 2011

Damir Kajin, Istrian Democratic Assembly, Zagreb, May 2011

Daniel Mondekar, Social Democratic Party of Croatia, Zagreb, April 2011

Davor Žmegač, Croatian Social Liberal Party, Kutina, May 2011

doc.dr.sc. Zdravko Petak, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science, Zagreb, March 2011

dr.sc. Mira Lenardić, National Committee for Competitiveness, Zagreb, March 2011

Dubravka Šuica, Croatian Democratic Union, Zagreb, May 2011

Ivan Završki, Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja, Osijek, April 2011

Ivana Maletić, Negotiator for Chapter 22, Zagreb, May 2011

Josip Borak, Varaždin County Development Agency (AZRA), Varaždin, April 2011

Krešimir Ivančić, Directorate for Regional Development, Ministry of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management, Zagreb April 2011

Larisa Križan, Varaždin County, Varaždin, April 2011

Maja Lehnam, Varaždin County Development Agency (AZRA), Varaždin, April 2011

Maja Tatalović, the City of Rijeka, Rijeka, April 2011

Marko Kovačić, Institute for Public Administration, Zagreb, April 2011

Marta Vidaković Mukić, Croatian County Association, Zagreb, March 2011

Mirjana Ostrec Bosak, Zagreb County, Zagreb, April 2011

Miroslava Nina Mišković, Ministry of Public Administration, Zagreb, April 2011

Mladen Ivanović, Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, March 2011

Negotiating Team for Accession Negotiations with the European Union, Zagreb, March 2011

Nensi Radulović, City of Zagreb, Zagreb, May 2011

Nives Kopajtich Škrlec, Association of Cities in the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, March 2011

Oriano Otočan, County of Istria, Zagreb, May 2011

prof.dr.sc. Ivan Koprić, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law Zagreb, Zagreb, March 2011

prof.dr.sc. Branko Caratan, Croatian Political Science Association, Zagreb, June 2010

Richard Máša, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, March 2011

Sandra Pernar, GONG, Zagreb, March 2011

Croatian People's Party, Zagreb, May 2011

Istrian Democratic Assembly, Pula, June 2010

League of Communists of Croatia, Zagreb, March 2011

Social Democratic Party of Croatia, Zagreb, May 2011

Vesna Šimić, City of Zagreb, May 2011

Working Committee on Functional Decentralization, Zagreb, May 2011

Zlatko Koračević, Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats, Zagreb, April 2011

Working Committee on Regional Development and EU Funds, Zagreb, May 2011

Nederlandse samenvatting

Het startpunt van deze dissertatie is de hypothese dat de richting en de mate van Europeanisering afhangt van de nationale perceptie over de Europese Unie en haar normen. Zodoende was het mijn empirische ambitie om te bestuderen hoe concurrerende uitspraken over de EU en haar normen geconstrueerd worden in EU-lidstaten en kandidaat-lidstaten. Ik pleit voor een groter metatheoretisch besef in de academische literatuur over Europeanisering dat samengaat met een verandering in de ontologische lezing van onderliggende vragen over de mening en de inhoud van Europeanisering.

Het resultaat van de gevestigde theoretische en empirische afwegingen is een nieuw raamwerk voor de bestudering van Europeanisatie dat ingebed is in het poststructuralisme. De ontologische basis van het poststructuralisme is tweeledig. De eerste aanname stelt dat de waarheid te begrijpen valt door discoursen. Het stelt dat sociale identiteiten, die weliswaar materialistisch gefundeerd zijn, niet bestaan buiten taal om. De tweede aanname wijst het bestaan van een structurele totaliteit af gezien de wederzijdse beïnvloeding van structuur en agentschap in politieke uitdrukkingen. In de analyse wijst het poststructuralisme naar de vraag hoe de praktijk van actoren vorm geeft aan de discoursen die vorm geven aan de sociale realiteit.

De Europese structuur is niet statisch van aard. Het is een idee dat afhankelijk is van het politieke proces. Omdat de Europese structuur de actor vormt, maar tegelijkertijd bekritiseerd wordt door diezelfde actor, is de betekenis van EU-normen tweeledig en relationeel. Door op te merken dat EU-normen onder verschillende discursieve raamwerken (meta-discourses) verschillend geconstrueerd worden, moet het idee van meerdere Europas bestudeerd worden in plaats van het idee van één hegemoniale unie. In lijn met de anti-essentialistische ontologie waar het poststructuralisme uit voortkomt, laat het poststructuralisme de problematisering van het concept actor toe. Het poststructuralisme staat toe dat één actor verschillende en met elkaar conflicterende interpretaties van een bepaalde EU-norm kan articuleren en reproduceren door te putten uit verscheidene meta-discoursen. Uiteindelijk definieert het poststructuralisme Europeanisering als een relationeel proces dat gebaseerd is op een dialectische interactie tussen structuren en agentschappen in een bepaalde discursieve context. De Europese structuur is veranderlijk en wordt betwist. Het is een praktijk van de articulatie van EU-normen in nationale

en transnationale politieke debatten, wat de simultane reproductie en contestatie impliceert van door discoursen vastgestelde betekenissen (identiteiten). Derhalve was de analyse gericht op het deconstructueren van gestructureerde discoursen, die bepaalde betekenissen toedichten aan normen die afgeleid zijn van de institutionele orde van de Europese Unie in het binnenlandse beleidsproces.

Het is de empirische ambitie van dit proefschrift om een poststructuralistische benadering voor Europeanisering te gebruiken door te onderzoeken hoe met elkaar concurrerende articulaties van de EU en haar normen de territorialiteit van de staat construeert in debatten over EU-lidmaatschap in (kandidaat-)lidstaten. Specifieker biedt deze studie een kritische visie op Europeanisering door de (re-)constructie van het nationale begrip van territorialiteit ten opzichte van de EU in de pre-toetredings debatten over territoriale hervormingen in Tsjechië en Slowakije af te leiden. Het doel is het definiëren van onderliggende meta-discursieve weergaven van Europa in relatie tot de staat die vervolgens Europeanisatie informeren. Deze meta-discoursen worden vervolgens toegepast en aangepast in de studie over het reterritorialisingsdiscours tijdens de debatten over Kroatische toetreding.

De vergelijking tussen Tsjechië en Slowakije bevestigt dat de betekenis van de Europese Unie en haar normen voorkomt uit een bepaald begrip van de staat. Rivaliserende visies over de Europese Unie worden gecreëerd door de afbakening van meervoudige weergaven van de staat, en een gelijktijdige constructie van de radicale 'ander', de anti-staat. Er worden vier divergerende ideaaltypen (meta-discoursen) over Europa met betrekking tot staat-zijn vastgesteld: de economische gemeenschap, de politieke gemeenschap, de federale staat en de staatsinrichting in meerdere lagen. Waar de eerste drie weergaven het staatcentrisme als hegemoniaal discours reproduceren, heeft de laatste weergave van een meerlaagse staatsinrichting zichzelf gepositioneerd als een antagonistisch discours en een uitdaging ten opzichte van de staatcentralistische interpretatie van territorialiteit. De analyse laat zien dat de gevestigde weergaven van Europa teruggevoerd kunnen worden naar een bredere vertelling over Europa als een instrument dat voert naar een bepaalde politieke en economische orde. De Kroatische casus bevestigt de hegemonie van een staatcentrische lezing van territorialiteit door het functionalistisch discours dat ingebed is in het idee van Europa als een economische gemeenschap. Verder bevestigt de casus de antagonistische weergave van de meerlaagse staatsinrichting dat het staatcentralisme uitdaagt.

Gezien de debatten over territorialiteit in Tsjechië, Slowakije en Kroatië, hebben Europa en EU-normen nationale actoren een nieuwe discursieve ruimte gegeven die *thuis* aangenomen kan worden. De gevestigde analyse van territorialiteitsdiscoursen illustreert dat de geloofwaardigheid en de legitimiteit van de EU, en daardoor ook haar aantrekkelijkheid, in de eerste plaats gebaseerd is op het nationaal geconstructiveerde idee van Europa en pas daarna op het *acquis*.

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