From ‘Strategic Accession’ to ‘Tactical Europeanisation’?
The Promotion of and Resistance to LGBT Equality in Serbia’s European Integration Process

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Abstract

In recent years, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans* (LGBT) rights have become increasingly salient within the EU enlargement process as a so-called litmus test for Europeanness, yet the promotion of such norms has provided a fulcrum for political contestation. Based on this observation, this thesis asks how do the EU and a candidate country negotiate LGBT-related normative tensions which have been created as part of the overarching political integration process? By taking into account the international symbolism of LGBT norms, it is suggested to move away from a classical approach to Europeanisation in which the impact of the EU on a third country is examined, towards a more dynamic conceptualisation of the EU enlargement process in which norms are inherently contested, and a resolution to normative struggles are required to advance political integration. Drawing on the critical scholarship on normative power Europe, this thesis rejects a uni-directional (top-down) understanding of EU enlargement in which the EU transplants its rules and norms to candidate countries, while proposing a complex multidimensional conceptualising in which different hegemonic struggles and normative tensions come together in a multi-layered normative struggle with its own tensions.

How these tensions are negotiated is empirically studied in the context of the European integration process of Serbia (2001–2015). Using process tracing, which draws on 89 semi-structured interviews, document analysis and participant observation, this thesis analyses the promotion of and resistance to LGBT-inclusive anti-discrimination legislation and the organisation of LGBT Pride Parades in Belgrade. Overall, the thesis introduces the concept of ‘Tactical Europeanisation’ to highlight that the EU accession process is better thought of as a process of negotiated transformation in which EU policies and norms are (re)defined, negotiated and transformed with both sides making compromised to further the political integration. It calls for a more critical analysis of the civilizational politics embedded in the EU enlargement process that goes beyond institutional changes to include an analysis of transnational configurations of politics and the complex (negotiated) outcomes they produce.
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