

From ‘Strategic Accession’ to ‘Tactical Europeanisation’?

The Promotion of and Resistance to LGBT Equality in Serbia’s
European Integration Process

By

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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 multi-dimensional 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.

Table of Content

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY	2
ABSTRACT.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENT	4
LIST OF FIGURES	6
LIST OF TABLES	6
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	9
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	13
1.1. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND.....	19
1.2. CONTRIBUTION TO THE LITERATURE	26
1.3. NOTES ON METHODOLOGY	29
1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	40
CHAPTER 2: EUROPEANISATION AS A MULTI-LAYERED NORMATIVE STRUGGLE:	
CONSTRUCTING A CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK.....	43
2.1. CONCEPTUALISING EUROPEANISATION AND THE EU ENLARGEMENT PROCESS	44
2.1.1. <i>Europeanisation and EU Enlargement as a Multi-layered Hegemonic and Normative Struggle.....</i>	<i>52</i>
2.2. APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF EUROPEANISATION: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	59
2.2.1. <i>Rational Choice Institutionalism: The External Incentives Model.....</i>	<i>64</i>
2.2.2. <i>Sociological Institutionalism: The Social Learning Model</i>	<i>72</i>
2.3. CONCLUSION(S).....	81
CHAPTER 3: MAPPING THE MULTI-LAYERED NORMATIVE STRUCTURE: THE OTHERING	
PROCESSES OF THE EU AND SERBIA	85
3.1. EU'S CHANGING PATTERNS OF OTHERING: THE CO-EVOLUTION OF ENLARGEMENT AND LGBT RIGHTS PROMOTION	86
3.2. SERBIA'S OTHERING PROCESSES: THE ROLE OF KOSOVO AND GENDER IN SERBIA'S NATIONALISM SINCE THE 1980S.....	96
3.3. CONCLUSION(S).....	108
CHAPTER 4: FROM CHANGE AT THE MARGINS TO HOMONATIONALIST MOVES: THE EUROPEANISATION OF SERBIA'S ANTI-DISCRIMINATION FRAMEWORK.....	111
4.1. PART 1: THE ADOPTION OF THE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION FRAMEWORK.....	112
4.1.1. <i>Phase 1 – Changes at the Margins: LGBT as a political non-issue.....</i>	<i>113</i>

4.1.2.	<i>Phase 2 – The Politicisation of Sexual Orientation: Adopting the Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law</i>	123
4.1.3.	<i>Phase 3 – Making Homonationalist Moves: The adoption of Hate Crime Legislation and the anti-discrimination strategy</i>	141
4.1.4.	<i>Intermediary Conclusion(s)</i>	147
4.2.	PART 2: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION FRAMEWORK.....	148
4.2.1.	<i>Combatting Discrimination: The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality</i>	149
4.2.2.	<i>The Judicial Route and General Barriers to the Implementation of the Anti-discrimination law</i>	162
4.2.3.	<i>Intermediary Conclusion(s)</i>	177
4.3.	CONCLUSION(S).....	177
CHAPTER 5: TAKING IT TO THE STREETS: BELGRADE PRIDE AS A LITMUS TEST FOR SERBIA'S EUROPEANISATION		
181		
5.1.	PART 1: THE ORGANISATION PROCESS OF BELGRADE PRIDE.....	187
5.1.1.	<i>Phase 1 – From Violence to Ban</i>	189
5.1.2.	<i>Phase 2 – From ‘State Pride’ to National Threat</i>	203
5.1.3.	<i>Phase 3 – Pride as a Homonationalist Move</i>	227
5.1.4.	<i>Intermediate Conclusion(s)</i>	235
5.2.	PART 2: THE DEPOLITICISATION OF THE BELGRADE PRIDE AS ACTIVIST TOOL: FROM ‘STATE PRIDE’ TO ‘GHOST PRIDE’	236
5.2.1.	<i>Belgrade Pride as Community Building Tool?</i>	237
5.2.2.	<i>A Tool for Whom? Belgrade Pride Co-opted by State</i>	246
5.2.3.	<i>Intermediate Conclusion(s)</i>	252
5.3.	CONCLUSION(S).....	253
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION(S).....		
257		
6.1.	IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF EUROPEANISATION AND LGBT POLITICS	261
6.2.	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	266
6.3.	AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	269
REFERENCES.....		
272		
APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWS		
312		
APPENDIX 2: SERBIAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK		
319		
APPENDIX 3: DETAILED STATISTICS ON CPE CASES REGARDING SEXUAL ORIENTATION		
323		
APPENDIX 4: LEGAL FRAMEWORK REGULATING THE BELGRADE PRIDE		
324		