Article

A cosmopolitan analysis of the contradictions in EU regional and enlargement policies as drivers of Europeanization

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Abstract

Although much has been written on the process of Europeanization, there is a lack of research on its nuances and implications. The academic literature to date focuses on debating the contradictions inherent within the politics of Europeanization without attempting to conceptualize what those contradictions mean in actual practice. This paper draws upon the work of Beck and Grande to analyze the myriad of contradictions shaping all levels of European space. To do so, this paper examines concrete instances of cosmopolitan practice that actually promote the maintenance of the nation-state reality currently characterizing the European Union. These examples show that, at the intersection of the subnational/supranational and supranational/national levels, contradictions are instrumentalized, creating bottom-up and top-down flows of power and influence between all European scales. The evidence presented in this paper indicates that these flows are unintended side-effects that drive Europeanization processes in a way that allows for the simultaneous promotion and regulation of European diversity. This implies that carefully managed and instrumentalized contradictions are powerful engines of Europeanization that actively transform European governance.

Keywords

Cohesion policy, European Union, Europeanization, geopolitics, Structural funds

Introduction

> Few studies have attempted to conceptualize Europeanization as 'something to be explained'. . . [which is] is unfortunate, for the scales and spaces of Europeanization and their socialization and learning foundations represent an important research agenda, ripe for empirical analysis. (Clark and Jones, 2008: 301)

Accepting Clark and Jones' challenge, this paper explores the significance of contradictory views of enlargement, blurred boundaries of competence among institutions, and contrasting views of development that are actively used by European bureaucracies at all levels to gain institutional strength. It argues that these contradictions, defined as clearly

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differentiated and sometimes opposing views of the goals and motives of European Union (EU) policy, are used strategically in response to tensions resulting from the EU reality of being an ongoing and as of yet undefined political project (Bourlanges, 2004). Within this reality, the EU struggles with the paradox of having both the stubborn and enduring presence of a state-centric *realpolitik* and the growing presence of new institutional arrangements and power relations, such as its emerging sphere of supranational governance, which can be seen as cosmopolitan in nature – in the sense that they are new forms of political rule beyond the nation-state that encompass indefinite pools of sovereignties and actors, with evolving spheres of influence (Beck and Grande, 2007).

In order to shed light on the strategic use of contradictions that both produce and reproduce these cosmopolitan, or non-nation-state-centric forms of relations, despite Europe's conscientious avoidance of identifying itself in such terms, this paper uses a cosmopolitan realist lens drawn from the work of Beck and Grande (Beck and Grande, 2007; Rumford, 2008). At the outset, we would like to make clear that, although we employ this lens, we do so with reservations. This paper does not intend to imply either that Europe is fundamentally cosmopolitan in nature or that cosmopolitanism is a product of European origin.

In this sense, cosmopolitan realism is particularly useful because it allows for an analysis that takes into account the presence of nation-states in the EU vying in realist terms to pursue their interests while strategically giving up aspects of their sovereignty. The cosmopolitan side of the theoretical equation allows for an analysis that is also able to take into consideration the flows of influence, governance, and power developing as what Beck and Grande argue is an unintended side-effect of Europeanization. Thus, this theoretical perspective can be used to both recognize the presence of the nation-state and divorce analysis from its rather narrow theoretical constraints imposed by a methodological nationalist approach that 'equates societies with nation-state societies and sees states and their governments as the cornerstones of social-scientific analysis' (Beck, 2003: 453). The

specific instances explored in this paper indicate the presence of a non-zero-sum game in which supranational, national, and subnational bureaucracies simultaneously strengthen their power while voluntarily forfeiting aspects of their sovereignty. As a result, the whole process of Europeanization is reinforced through the largely unintended consequences, or side-effects, resulting from flows of top-down and bottom-up influence resulting from the strategic use of contradictions by a variety of new political actors. These flows can be understood as cosmopolitan practices because they simultaneously recognize and regulate the differences between actors, bureaucracies, regions, and European states in such a way that they all gain influence.

The theoretical section of this paper links Beck and Grande's approach with much of the literature in political geography, which shows the rescaling of European political authority at all levels (Mamadouh and Van der Wusten, 2008; Murphy, 2008; Johnson, 2008), and in the political sciences, which describes Europeanization as the outcome of the dynamic relation between EU-level and nation-level administrations (Green Cowles et al., 2001; Knill, 2001; Olsen, 2002, 2007; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005; Graziano and Vink, 2007). In particular, it links Beck and Grande's argument on the contradictory character of Europeanization with geographers' findings concerning the design and implementation of specific EU policies (Kostadinova 2009; Sellar et al., 2011).

The following sections discuss the interrelated domains in which divergent, or even contradictory, views of Europe result in furthering Europeanization at two different intersections of scales: supranational/subnational and supranational/national. When viewed in the cosmopolitan realist perspective, the examples in this paper provide evidence of the simultaneous emergence of significant bottom-up and top-down flows of influence and power occurring at these intersections. The first example, based on a survey of literature and EU policy texts, discusses the development policies of the EU Cohesion policy. Cohesion policy was designed at the supranational level to balance the development of the subnational, or regional, level. This section argues

that Cohesion policy generates new relations among institutions that affect governance in a rather contradictory and contrasting way. Semi-codified sets of 'best practices' are used strategically by all levels to achieve their individual development goals. As a side-effect, both top-down and bottom-up flows of influence are created. These flows are significant because they are able to accommodate an evolving model of European development that promotes differentiation in individual project implementation and further blurs institutional competences on all levels. As a result, both the subnational and the supranational scales gain influence as national bureaucracies are brought in line with EU preferred development norms. This drives Europeanization in a contradictory way because, although power is generated at the supranational/subnational intersection, the nation-state maintains its sovereignty.

The second example draws on introductory fieldwork in which 10 semi-structured interviews with high-level officials of the European Commission and the Bulgarian government were conducted in the summer of 2009. Despite the relatively small sample of interviews, the findings are significant because they cover both key directorates at the Commission and ministries in Bulgaria dealing with enlargement and with policies of economic development: the Directorate General (DG) for Regional Policy (DG Regio), DG Trade, DG Enterprise, and DG Enlargement in Brussels; and the Ministry of the Economy and Energy, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of State Administration, and the non-governmental organization 'Foundation for Entrepreneurship Development' in Sofia. This section uses the 'ritual of listening to foreigners' (Kuus, 2004, 2008a, 2008b) to analyze how both Commission and Bulgarian officials manage enlargement and development policies. As a result, we see contrasting visions of enlargement coexisting among officials in the Commission responsible for creating policies and among Bulgarian officials charged with implementing these policies on the ground.

In the views of the interviewees, the achievement of good governance and development in the new member states is at the same time a bottom-up and a top-down process. It is top-down because the Commission attempts to directly influence the reorganization of local bureaucracies and it is bottom-up in the extent to which the EU is willing to include local officials in its decision-making process. Between the two views lies the Commission's tension between 'teaching' new members best practices while maintaining respect for their individual sovereignties. Bulgarian officials' responses are equally ambivalent. On the surface, they are keen to apply EU regulations, because the EU is widely seen as a source of good governance and EU funding programs come with conditionalities; at the same time, they are very skilled in 'interpreting' those requirements in ways that support and enhance local visions and needs.

Taken together, the examples discussed in this paper show how tensions in the meaning of 'Europe' and 'European governance' actually contribute to fostering Europeanization. In particular, they show that officials on all scales keep supporting the building of 'EU'rope while bending meanings and policies to fit their own contingent needs through the strategic instrumentalization of contradictions. In doing so, they create flows of top-down and bottom-up power and influence. Building on Beck and Grande, for whom 'cosmopolitanism means in essence the organization of contradictions and ambivalences, the latter must be endured and politically processed because they cannot be eliminated' (Beck and Grande, 2007: 93), we argue that not only are contradictions endured, they are one of the primary motors of the whole process of Europeanization.

Cosmopolitan realism, reflexive modernization, and Europeanization

Beck and Grande are correct in their perception of Europe as 'a highly differentiated, politically animated and flexible political project [that] cannot be defined clearly and precisely, and certainly not for all time, in a binding way' (Beck and Grande, 2007: 11). As a result, they turn to cosmopolitanism for answers to the question of a European definition and the problem of conceptualizing Europe as a changing political entity. They posit that cosmopolitanism is particularly well suited for Europe because of its ability to break away from the chains of the

nation-state as a unit of analysis; and they are correct in this presumption. Cosmopolitanism does allow for the conception of political rule that goes beyond the nation-state and the vast array of differences found in all aspects of European society. This being said, it cannot be denied that, as it currently stands, the EU is a union of individual nation-states. So how is cosmopolitanism useful?

Beck and Grande address this concern through their 'theory of reflexive modernization' as a means of clarifying the process of Europeanization (Beck and Grande, 2007: 28). Within this theory, we can see that the 'either/or logic' that used to characterize the Europe of disparate nation-states has been eclipsed by a 'both/and logic' that allows for less distinction between spheres of action and institutional ascriptions of jurisdictions (p. 29). Using the both/and logic, we can see that the EU is able to accommodate both the enduring nation-state structure and the new presence of supranational governance.

Further conceptualizing this both/and logic, it can be seen as the logic of ambiguity. As a result of Europe's logic of ambiguity, 'the nation state is not replaced but integrated in a variety of ways into new international regimes' (Beck and Grande, 2007: 32). The 'theory of reflexive modernization' explains how such integration has occurred in terms of five hypotheses or theorems (p. 30). First, the structural break theorem states that in the final quarter of the 20th century there had been a fundamental discontinuity in modern societies, which shifted from a 'first' modernity led by nation-states to an increasingly cosmopolitan 'second' modernity. Second, there is an inclusive relationship between the first and second modernity (both/and Europe). Third, the transformation of societies happened as an unintended consequence of modernization, rather than through revolutions (the side-effect theorem). Fourth, the transition from first to second modernity occurs imperceptibly (the theorem of internal dynamics). Fifth, the parameters of change are themselves changing (the self-transformation theorem).

Three consequences of Beck and Grande's reasoning are particularly relevant to this paper. First, the logic of the second modernity forces institutions to deal with increasing ambiguities and contradictions stemming from the structural break in European

societies. Second, the nation-state is not replaced by, but integrated into, the new international regime of the 'both/and Europe'. As a consequence of this integration, the national bureaucracies only appear to be losers in the process of Europeanization, but in reality they gain resources and influence (2007: 153). Third, national and supranational bureaucracies are integrated into the new administrative elite of Europe, reflecting a 'transnational fusion bureaucracy' (p. 154). In doing so, these newly integrated bureaucracies experience sometimes unexpected shifts of power and authority that lead to a combination of support for and resistance to the European project (side-effect theorem). This paper's analysis places a considerable amount of weight on the side-effect theorem. We posit that as a result of the transformations of national and regional institutions – brought about by the emergence of a European level of governance – the outcomes of policy processes are often unexpected by the policy makers who initiate them.

The themes outlined above are widely discussed in both political geography and political science. Beck and Grande's concern with the nature of Europeanization reflects studies on the meaning of Europe. Their argument about the integration of states into a new international regime speaks to geographers' work on the territorial dimension of Europeanization. Finally, their discussion of the contradictory character of Europeanization is a relevant part of both literatures. In relation to the first of the aforementioned concerns, a vast body of work in the social sciences discusses Europeanization and its various definitions. In one of its broadest definitions, Europeanization refers to 'the ways in which differing concepts and manifestations of Europe – both as a physical entity and an ideological construction – are reshaping . . . senses of community, including the national, regional, and local' (Clark and Jones, 2009: 193). Other definitions adopt a narrower viewpoint, focusing on the current phase of European integration. For example, 'Europeanization . . . can mean the diffusion of ideas and patterns of behavior on a cross-national basis within Europe, the creation of European level institutions and the modifications of the external borders of the EU (Leibenath, 2007: 152; see also Olsen, 2002: 923–35; Featherstone,

2003: 6–10). In accordance with Europeanization in its more focused sense, a vast literature in the political sciences has examined the 50-year history of the EU and its influence on the structures, policies, and identity of European states (Green Cowles et al., 2001; Knill, 2001; Olsen, 2002, 2007; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005; Graziano and Vink, 2007). This literature has discussed Europeanization from several standpoints, such as the growing authority of EU-level actors (Buller and Gamble, 2002; Bache, 2003), their impact on domestic policies (Nugent, 2003), and the export of European governance outside EU borders (Olsen, 2002). The following section of this paper focuses on one of these standpoints, that is, the role of EU regional policies in Europeanization. These policies and their related funding programs are particularly relevant to our argument, because they exert contradictory influences on governance through their encouragement of the establishment of common 'European best practices,' while at the same time recognizing the value of diversity (Drake, 2000; Gruber, 2002; Doucet, 2006; Faludi, 2007; Bachtler and McMaster, 2007). In doing so, Cohesion policy plays an integral role in Beck and Grande's vision, according to which 'European cosmopolitanism signifies the need to restrict and regulate difference' (2007: 14).

All the definitions of Europeanization put forth throughout this section have one point in common: they analyze the rescaling of authority and governance at all levels. In turn, the rescaling of authority leads to the reorganization of Europe's territory, along the blurred lines and logic of ambiguity described by Beck and Grande. Far from being a 'passive backdrop,' territory plays an active role in the politics of Europeanization (Clark and Jones, 2009: 195). Albeit research on the role of territory in Europeanization is just beginning, it builds on significant geographical work on the transformation of territories induced by globalization. Traditionally, geographers have identified three main political functions of territory: territory as a process, territory in relation with sovereignty, and territory as a source of identity and power. Territory as a process means it is actively produced and reproduced, generally by elites to fit their own purposes (Shore, 2000) but also by ordinary people (Jones, 2008). Furthermore,

states may use territories as a source of discipline (Cox, 2003; Agnew, 2005a; Bialasiewicz et al., 2005; Gilbert, 2007; Jessop et al., 2008), which underscores their fluidity: the emergence of new forms of territoriality (for example by supranational or transnational actors) leads to processes of de-territorialization and re-territorialization, that is, the reorganization of territories under new principles and structures (Toal and Luke, 1994; Sparke, 2006).

Critical engagements with the nature and function of territories necessitate the questioning of sovereignty, the '[u]nlimited and indivisible rule by state over a territory and the people in it' (Agnew, 2005b), and political geography is beginning to do so. For example, Sidaway (2003) and Murphy (1996) have questioned the nature of sovereignty; and a large body of work has studied the impact of globalization on the ways in which sovereignty is territorialized (see Agnew, 2005b, for a literature review). The key point of this literature is that the emergence of non-state actors as players in world politics, the growing influence of supranational courts on national legislations, the right to hold multiple citizenships, the presence of worldwide environmental issues, and the emergence of global production networks lead to the decoupling of territory and sovereignty. In John Agnew's words: 'effective sovereignty is not necessarily predicated on and defined by the strict and fixed territorial boundaries of individual states'; instead, the emergence of sources of authority beyond states, and the different capabilities of exercising such sovereignty are leading to a much more nuanced system of 'sovereignty regimes' (Agnew, 2005b: 438).

The transformation of notions of territory and by extension sovereignty implies the transformation of power relations – from the nationalist idea of 'one territory, one people,' to new ways in which territories bind people together. In turn, transformations of territory alter the ways in which power is exercised (Painter, 1995, 2001, 2003; Paasi, 2001, 2005; Rodriguez-Pose, 2002). One such instance of this phenomenon is the circular influence between the 'upshoring' of political preferences from the national to the EU level coupled with the inclusion of EU policies in national contexts (Radaelli, 2004; McEwen, 2011); also, national political elites have

actively used Europeanization to foster their own power (Hirt, 2007; Sellar et al., 2011). The changes in territoriality, sovereignty, and power outlined above have led to a rescaling of authority along the lines outlined by Beck and Grande. The structural break in European societies and the inclusion of national institutions in the new supranational regime have led to structural overlap, ambiguous jurisdictions, and blurred distinctions among spheres of action (Mamadouh and Van der Wusten, 2008; Murphy, 2008; Johnson, 2008). Geographers have also shown that contradictions in EU governance result in unintended side-effects when specific policies are implemented. For example, Sellar et al. (2011) show that 'cluster' policies designed in Brussels to stimulate innovation and the 'knowledge economy' were reinterpreted and resisted in Bulgaria because of some similarities with old socialist structures; Kostadinova (2009) shows that the European Neighborhood Policy, designed to expand economic integration beyond the EU, produces a kind of border that has elements of both a traditional, 'hard' border and an innovative 'soft' border geared towards the integration of neighbors. How can scholars interested in Europeanization generalize the findings about the unintended side-effects of specific policies? In other words, how is Beck and Grande's logic of ambiguity transformed into concrete practices and structures used to manage the territories of the EU? The following sections approach an answer by examining contradictions in practice. In particular, we look at how the implementation of two concrete policies allows actors on multiple levels to strategically use contradictions, creating significant flows of influence at two scalar intersections: the supranational/subnational and supranational/national.

Cohesion policy and Structural funds – regional perspectives on Europeanization

This section argues that the regional development policies adopted by the European Union, that is, the Cohesion policy financed by the Structural and Cohesion funds, contribute to shifts in territoriality by changing regional policies. They do so because

their design and implementation incorporate the logic of ambiguity described by Beck and Grande as a result of the tension between respecting and regulating regional differences. In particular, Cohesion policies and funds concurrently promote both cooperation and competition for funding among regions. The winners in the competition for funding meet the criteria of 'European best practices' established and promulgated by the European Commission.

The operational tools of Cohesion policy are the Structural and Cohesion funds, which involve 'a supranational institution above the state supporting the development of regions below the state' (Gruber, 2002: 211). These funds are geared to 'deliberately foster solidarity, cooperation, networking, win-win situations and synergies between regions and cities' (Doucet, 2006: 1481). These funds are a key priority in the EU, amounting to 36 per cent of the entire budget for the 2007–13 programming period (Commission of the European Communities, 2008). With an increasing emphasis placed on the creation of territorial cohesion, the funds disperse grants aimed at reducing resource and development disparities between all regions of the European Union.

Cohesion policy and funds affect development and governance, because they involve the 'territorial dimension of economic and social cohesion, to be pursued not only through structural fund operations but also by a better integration of the territorial impact of various EU policies' (Doucet, 2006: 1474). They affect notions of development in particular because targeted funding is utilized as a means of further integrating the regions into the larger supranational body as an attempt to provide equal opportunities for all nations within the Union. Cohesion policy and funds affect governance because they advance the notion of a somewhat fluid supranational set of predetermined best practices for development, which include multi-scalar governance strategies. In so doing, they spread the evolving conception of a European model of political norms to the subnational level. Although this does not fully equate to the existence of a defined 'European model,' it does imply a commonly accepted body of norms and best practices at the supranational level that are integrated into local and regional development via approved programs. A survey of literature

indicates the significance of the influence the European Union is contributing 'to a change in the structures of territorial administration . . . and to changes in the territorial relations between organizations and across levels of government' as various transformations in governance are made in order to bring state operations more in line with the loose model promoted at the supranational level (Bachtler and McMaster, 2007: 3).

One particularly useful example demonstrating the actual creation and influence of best practices in this regard is the Lille metropole, the first European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in Europe created with the help of Cohesion funds. In 2008, Lille made agreements with Belgian authorities to form the Eurometropole Lille–Kortrijk–Tournai, bringing together 4 French and 10 Belgian partners, including the national governments of both sides. Although this was an informal instance of transnational cooperation, it was fully recognized by the national governments of both member states (Ramsden, 2010). Owing to the highly differentiated nature of both national and regional planning and development policies in France, Wallonia, and Flanders, a special form of governance was necessary to manage the polycentric, tri-regional, and bi-national urban EGTC area.

Despite the long tradition of cooperation between the governments concerned, the transition was not entirely smooth. One reason for the difficulty was identified during the 2010 URBACT Citylab workshop conference in which Community-wide participants gathered to discuss specific case studies and their implications for other URBACT projects. In the Lille metropole case, one challenge that was reported was of overly restrictive French national laws that prevented the formulation of a solution to a locale-specific challenge (Ramsden, 2010: 5; Commission of the European Communities, 2010). The recognition of this particular difficulty prompted the Lille metropole partners to discuss the reflections proposed by partner cities and to 'connect the Eurometropole with the European dimension, in terms of networking and positioning' (Commission of the European Communities, 2010: 22). Following these dialogues, a local action plan was created to serve as a roadmap for the improvement of the implementation of the EGTC. In other words, facing a problem in governance for the management of a cross-border conurbation, a collection of subnational actors actively used the supranational network for the exchange of best practice for assistance in the transformation of their urban governance model, resulting in a concrete national policy response. As a result, what were formerly disparate regions became transformed and reproduced as an 'institutional social reality' (Sepp and Veemaa, 2010). In this case, the institutional social reality was called an EGTC and was formed through the direct participation of subnational actors in a supranational knowledge-exchange network.[1] Furthermore, the Lille experience was then presented at EGTC conferences and in official documents, elevating it to a model of European best practice that could be emulated by other governments attempting to create similar transnational arrangements (Commission of the European Communities, 2010; Ramsden, 2010), thus allowing for its reproduction in other European spaces.

The Lille case is significant because it represents the interplay between the subnational and supranational scales that led to the re-territorialization and rearrangement of an aspect of national sovereignty (Toal and Luke, 1994; Agnew, 2005b). This can be interpreted as cosmopolitan because the interplay initially circumvented the nation-state, indicating the presence of new actors. In addition, the re-territorialization that occurred resulted in the creation of a transboundary space that was largely mobilized at the subnational/supranational intersection (Johnson, 2009). As a direct result of the supranational/subnational interplay, enough bottom-up pressure was placed on the nation-state to prompt it to amend its national laws in response. This response constitutes evidence of the nation-state's willingness to sacrifice part of its monopoly on urban development in order to achieve its own development goals. It also shows how, because of what Johnson calls the 'messiness of EU regional policy,' the new transboundary space was instrumentalized by subnational actors to achieve their own regional development goals, or the successful creation of the EGTC, through the strategic use of contradictions in Cohesion policy (Johnson, 2009: 178). In this case, regional participants facing a national governance policy problem

were able to instrumentalize a supranational framework of norms to achieve their goal via bottom-up pressure on the national government to change one of its policies (McEwen, 2011). This regional ability can be seen as an unintended side-effect of a supranational policy inclusion.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Commission maintains its influence throughout all stages of the Structural and Cohesion fund programming process.[2] This is perhaps best exemplified in the regulatory framework for the 2007–13 programming process, which includes the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion (CSG). The CSG were introduced to Regional policy as part of a new strategic approach to Structural fund implementation in the ongoing quest for greater efficiency in the delivery of the funds. The CSG contain Regional policy's comprehensive principles and priorities with concrete suggestions for how available funding can be fully taken advantage of. In other words, the CSG are 'an indicative framework for the intervention of the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, and Cohesion Fund . . . taking account of other relevant Community policies with a view to promoting the harmonious balanced and sustainable development of the Community' (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). Use of the CSG is entirely optional: member states are 'invite[d]' to use the Commission's framework but are not required to (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

The CSG constitute a concrete instance of the Commission's strategic instrumentalization of a policy ambiguity. Although the CSG are non-mandatory, the regulation for the provisions of the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, and the Cohesion fund, EC No. 1083/2006, contains Article 27, section 1, which sets out the requirement for each member state to create a National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) outlining national investment priorities for Community-funded regional and sectoral programs, with the provision that the NSRF ensures consistency with the CSG. This transforms an ambiguous invitation into a de facto codified policy, enabling the Commission to maintain a significant amount of top-down influence over national governments during the Cohesion funds programming process (McEwen, 2011).

Taken together, these examples indicate that control of development is shifting away from the nation-state to a multi-tiered system of governance, led by the Commission from the top down and given a self-sustaining bottom-up momentum on the subnational level through best practices exchange networks (McEwen, 2011). A paradox emerges because this transformation occurs without the forfeit of nation-state sovereignty but with the effect of strengthening both supranational and subnational influences. Using cosmopolitan realism, these sovereignty trade-offs can be seen as unintended consequences of the new interplay between levels. This constitutes a concrete manifestation of geographers' work on the transformation of sovereignty and territoriality, as well as Beck and Grande's logic of ambiguity in European regional governance. Owing to the tension between 'territorial cohesion' and 'European best practice,' policy must be able to both encourage cooperation among different regions and regulate differences via the promotion of 'European best practices.' As a result, Cohesion policy increasingly blurs competences between governance levels because all scales strategically use contradictory views of cohesion and development to achieve their own ends.

Enlargement policies: Commission inputs and Bulgarian responses

Recent geographical literature supports the conclusions of the previous section that Cohesion policy has significantly reworked relationships between the supranational and subnational scales (Leitner, 2003; Sellar, 2010). This section focuses on the mechanisms of the non-zero-sum game between the Commission and national-level bureaucracies in Bulgaria to demonstrate how this seemingly paradoxical logic of ambiguity works at the supranational/national intersection. In doing so, it argues that the strategic use of contradictions has furthered the overall European project, because each elite can manipulate the meaning of 'Europe' to suit its own contrasting needs. The concept of a 'ritual of

listening to foreigners,' as it was first introduced by Janine Wedel (2001), frames the discussion and is exemplified in the following quote (Kuus, 2004):

> The Poles' ritual of listening to foreigners, in which the naïve but self-assured Westerner would encounter the shrewd Pole, who deftly charmed his guest while revealing nothing of what he truly thought . . . [a] sophisticated art of impressing Westerners while maneuvering to get what they wanted. (Wedel, 2001: 3)

Later, Kuus developed Wedel's argument into an analysis of the construction, by the local *intelligentsia*, of Central Eastern Europe portrayed in 'Western' security and development studies (Kuus, 2008a: 177). In her view, 'listening to foreigners' is much more than a process of learning; it is also 'a strategy of telling Westerners what they want to hear, so as to attract Western attention and money' (2008a: 177). This strategy often builds on partnerships between foreign and local experts and project managers. As a part of their job, those local experts collect and organize information, maximizing the likelihood of obtaining funding by 'discreetly guiding Westerners' interpretation of Central Europe' (2008a: 178). Therefore, Kuus emphasizes the active role of Central European elites in guiding Western donors, sometimes even influencing the design of aid programs (2008a: 181).

There are at least two important issues Kuus does not to account for however. First, as shown in the previous section, 'Westerners' do not necessarily tell a coherent story. Europeanization itself leads to multiple and contradictory messages, because the establishment of a European level of governance involves multiple actors. Each of those actors bears a different agenda, and their interactions lead to rearticulating power in several directional dynamics (Marks, 1993; Marks et al., 1996; Hooghe, 1996; Hooghe and Marks, 2003; Mamadouh and Van der Wusten, 2008).

The second unaccounted issue involves the profound transformation of local institutions and practices, not yet fully analyzed in the literature. Westerners do monitor their aid programs and disburse funding on a competitive basis; therefore, local elites need to show evidence of change taking place and must compete with each other to access

aid. In doing so, Central Eastern Europeans must constantly renegotiate their power relations proving the superiority of their 'being European' in relation to their competitors to Westerners. Thus, the 'ritual of listening to foreigners' can be reinterpreted as a game of mirrors, a circular relationship in which actors at the European and national levels of governance attempt to manipulate meanings and practices to foster their own agenda. The consequences of those interactions are ripe in unintended side-effects, shaping the processes of Europeanization.

The European level of governance is crucial in understanding the ritual of listening to foreigners because, as we showed in the previous section, the European Commission plays a key role in distributing funding to privilege collaborative projects between 'Western' and 'Eastern' institutions. Those joint projects are one of the key ways in which the 'West' teaches the 'East' how to become fully 'European' (Kuus, 2004). The cumulative result of those collaborative projects is the horizontal coordination among 'Western' and 'Eastern' institutions needed to spread 'Western best practices' to the East. The most important institution setting the standards of what 'best practices' should be spread to the East is undoubtedly the European Commission, which has progressively increased its own competences and influence over other actors participating in the processes of Europeanization (Nugent, 2006). Logically, because of the influence of the Commission, trends of Europeanization largely depend upon the views of 'Europe' and 'enlargement' held by individual Commission officials.

Fieldwork interviews were conducted to examine whether the existence of competing and overlapping visions of Europe affects the ways in which Commission officials understand and manage enlargement (Hudson, 2004; Paasi, 2005). Specifically, high-level Commission officials in the directorates most closely involved with enlargement were interviewed with a focus on the following question: 'Is the European Union actively trying to shape and change the institutional structure of the candidate countries and new member-states?'

As expected, the informants expressed a variety of views on the role of the Commission. Some officials recognized the need to exert a direct influence

on national bureaucracies, while others emphasized the inclusive, bottom-up character of EU decision-making. In between these two contrasting views, officials stated that the Commission helps national bureaucracies to make their own goals rational, but also that any intervention has to be cautious and respect sovereignty. For example, Official#1[3] highlighted that influence over institutional structure is a consequence of the technical assistance offered during the accession process:

> 'We look into institutions, government, parliament, judiciary, and make recommendations where we see need of improvement. . . take environmental legislation for example: supervising bodies may be not good enough; officials may need training.' (Interview with Official#1, European Commission, May 2009)

Other informants stated that funding programs have goals that are broad enough to accommodate a wide variety of institutional structures; thus EU regulations do not necessarily lead to institutional transformations:

> 'It's the Commission and the Council who create regulations and a set of general principles for the use of the funds and certainly for this specific purpose so there are things that member-states have to comply with but still these prescriptions seem quite general to me which can accommodate a wide variety of national realities in institutions. So I don't really think that there's an agenda to significantly modify the structure of government agencies.' (Interview with Official#2, European Commission, May 2009)

Others highlighted that EU decision-making is driven by national governments. The view was expressed that the influence of the Commission is aimed at rationalizing policy processes determined by political choices made for the most part at the national level:

> 'We [Commission officials] don't change the local institutions, but indirectly we help the local institutions so they change a little bit their way of working . . . to reach the rational way to do something. . . . [W]e have a political debate on the orientations of the program and so on, but they [national officials] have a stronger

weight in political choices. We [Commission officials] ask for the rationale of this political choice . . . and then when we apply the program we ask for the coherence of the application with what they presented as their own political will.' (Interview with Official#3, European Commission, May 2009)

Finally, Official#4 outlined the delicate balance between the Commission's goal to support policy processes and the need to respect national sovereignty. Among the interviewees, Official#4 was the most careful in outlining the risk of power conflicts and in stating that the most recent member states must not feel like colonies:

> 'We have to be careful there, these are not our colonies, we cannot tell them how to organize their state. We would suggest to them how best to adapt the institutions in order to meet the requirements as member-states. So I mean we are a society of rule of law so the courts have to work [properly] . . . we have to check that the judges know about EU law and EU legislation, whether it is properly fulfilled, whether you have right lawyer, whether they have access to justice. So we are not getting into how they should organize their parliament, or organize their elections, no, as long as they meet European standards that's fine, we are not interfering with how many director generals or whatever they should have, no. . . . So it's a mixture but we have to be careful . . . not to give them the impression that we want to control their state or their government.' (Interview with Official#4, European Commission, May 2009)

We argue that these differences in interpreting the role of the Commission are beneficial for Europeanization: Beck and Grande's both/and logic allows for the imposition of change from the supranational level of governance, while at the same time promoting participatory decision-making from the local and national scale. Thus, the Commission can expand the possibilities of its interactions with national bureaucracies by presenting very different types of decisions as 'European.' It follows that the 'ritual of listening to foreigners' can be reinterpreted as a game of mirrors, in which different sets of elites in the West and the East manipulate meanings and understandings of 'Europe' to foster their

own contingent goals. The 'regime of side-effects' discussed by Beck and Grande is precisely the outcome of this game of meanings and practices among multiple sets of European elites.

The recent accession of Bulgaria to the EU illustrates how the 'ritual of listening to foreigners' leads to side-effects reinforcing Europeanization, notwithstanding several obvious examples of resistance against EU regulations. Most notably, the combination of episodes of resistance and compliance with the EU project leads to differences between policy concepts developed in Brussels and national policies, because local elites constantly guide Western perceptions of what the situation is, what should be done, and how to do it. Therefore, it is convenient for Bulgarian officials to support European policies to the extent to which they can 'bend' those policies to their own needs. The specific content of those differences is determined by the varying local and subnational contexts within the nations in the EU. These contexts lead to the presence of specific cultural understandings, internal transformations of local elites, and struggles among local elites competing for resources. At the same time, Bulgarian bureaucracies are transformed in the process of implementing European policies. Thus, the tensions between the supranational and national level of governance reinforce Bulgarian Europeanization in two ways. First, Bulgarian officials support 'Europe,' or Commission-mandated policies, because they can bend what 'Europe' entails. Second, these policies contribute to structural changes in the Bulgarian bureaucracy.

For example, Sonia Hirt (2007) demonstrated that Bulgarian authorities managed to implement 'European' regional development policies that are very different from those envisioned in Brussels. Sellar et al. (2011) have also highlighted that industrial cluster policies in Bulgaria are profoundly different not only between Brussels and Sofia, but also in the way they are implemented at a regional level within Bulgaria. They argue that these differences appear because of variations in the goals of elites at each scale. Together, this research shows that there are significant differences between how 'EU policies' are adopted on the ground in Bulgaria and the supranational expectations of policy makers in Brussels.

Our interviews indicate that the implementation of EU policies led to significant transformations within the Bulgarian bureaucracy. Following the 'ritual of listening to foreigners' obligates local authorities to show willingness and enthusiasm in complying with EU regulations, including those that require changes in the organizational structure of most ministries. In some cases, these changes can be quite radical. For example, in 2005, two years before joining the EU, Bulgaria established a brand new Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reforms (MDAAR), largely because of the political will to comply with EU-led reforms and the technical need to manage EU funds disbursed to Bulgaria. One of the officials of the MDAAR's Directorate for Administrative Capacity, which was tasked to manage an operational program financed by the European Social Fund, highlighted the influence of the European level of governance on the MDAAR:

> '[This directorate] has to manage all the processes connected with absorbing the funds foreseen [awarded] under this operational program. This operational program is directed towards three groups of beneficiaries. The first and biggest group is the administration at all levels, national level, regional level, and municipal level. The second big group is the judiciary, and the third group is NGOs . . . trade unions and representative organizations of business.' (Interview with expert, MDAAR Directorate for Administrative Capacity, 24 June 2009)

When asked if the EU is actively trying to influence the structure of the government in Bulgaria, she gave a positive answer, but also highlighted the combination of the top-down influence and bottom-up participation that characterizes EU programs:

> Q: It sounds like there is a desire from the European Union to change the structure of the government in Bulgaria somehow. Do you think it is true?
>
> A: Of course, this is the goal of this operational program. . . Operational programs define the framework under which we can define more concrete terms for

operations, and then we ask through the calls of proposals for our beneficiaries to propose their projects. All operational programs are negotiated with the Commission . . . all the time we need to coordinate and to negotiate with the Commission.'

(Interview with expert, MDAAR Directorate for Administrative Capacity, 24 June 2009)

It was not only the recently established ministries dependent on EU funds that were heavily influenced by European integration. A senior official at the Ministry of the Economy and Energy indicated that both the top-down influence of the EU and the bottom-up compliance of local officials were important:

'Efforts were made and help from the EU Commission was provided to change the structure of the ministry. . . What the European Union proposes, Bulgaria accepts. The main criterion is what Brussels says: if Brussels says it is good, then we accept it.' (Interview with high-level official, Ministry of the Economy and Energy, 19 June 2009)

The compliance of local officials is rooted in the belief that the EU provides a standard of good governance. For example, the chairman [*sic*] of the Foundation for Entrepreneurship Development (FED), a Bulgarian think tank active since the 1990s, described the importance of the EU as a model of governance as follows:

'Part of the feeling of people, according to plenty of polls, [is that] Bulgarian elite could not manage the whole process [of transition], they are more believing of European [elites, bureaucracies] . . . [M]ost people think that more could be expected from good management from Brussels than from our ruling parties, coalitions, and governments.' (Interview with Chairman, FED, 18 June 2009)

On the other hand, the informants also demonstrated the active reworking of European rules and regulations by Bulgarian officials. The same official at the Ministry of the Economy pointed out that EU regulations are negotiated at various levels and generate conflicts of interests and bargaining within Bulgarian

power structures. For example, a new EU regulation on auditing was met with conflicting responses by two different ministries in Bulgaria:

'[T]he directives established by the EU need to be tweaked and adapted because there are differences in the economic climate between the EU and Bulgaria. . . . [F]or example, soon the EU will adopt a new rule to exempt small businesses from accounting reports . . . [Here in Bulgaria] the Ministry of the Economy and Energy agreed to implement it; instead, the Ministry of Finances refused. The Ministry of Finance did not agree because it was afraid the new law would disrupt tax policies. Now, the two ministries are negotiating. . . . We will see what will happen, but because of the strong position of the Ministry of Finance, this directive may in the end not be ratified.' (Interview with high-level official, Ministry of the Economy and Energy, 19 June 2009)

Not only were Bulgarian officials positive with regard to the local interpretation of 'European' norms, but so too were West European expatriates. For example, the following excerpt is part of a conversation with the foreign manager of a large manufacturing facility. His opinion highlights the contradictions and difficulties in implementing a new system of norms, and the use that officials make of those contradictions:

'On certain issues it was not clear whether we should follow the European norms or not. Some officials are capable of telling you: "Ah, this is a European regulation which hasn't been implemented yet." But what does it mean it is not implemented yet? EU regulations are implemented in the EU, and you are in the EU! I had this argument with so many state officials. I asked them "are you in the EU?" and the answer was "Yes, but we haven't introduced this norm yet" or "Yes, but we introduced this norm with some differences [from Brussels]." They played a lot on those discrepancies.' (Interview with CFO, 22 June 2009)

Using the 'ritual of listening to foreigners' in a new and broader way, this section has shown that differences between practice in Sofia and policy-making in Brussels are beneficial to Europeanization in a way that is consistent with Beck and Grande's side-effect theorem. Kuus and Wedel used the ritual of

listening to foreigners to describe East Europeans' role in shaping Westerners' perceptions of the East. We have extended the concept to include both contradictions in Western messages and their transformations as both Eastern and Western elites constantly rework meanings of Europe and practices of EU enlargement to suit their own needs. In managing enlargement, the Commission can assume attitudes and maintain the practices of both its own top-down influence and the bottom-up inclusion of the inputs of national bureaucracies. Far from being a problem, the Commission can use these contradictory views as tools to strengthen European integration from the supranational level. In Bulgaria, the implementation of EU policies strengthens the position of Bulgarian officials locally and gives them bottom-up influence on the Commission. On the surface, there are strong differences and tensions between Brussels and Sofia; however, those differences play a positive role in Europeanization because contradictions allow for changes in governance in the general direction established by Brussels, while at the same time affording Bulgarian elites the opportunity to pursue their own goals. This dual inclusion occurs through flows of power and influence between the national and supranational intersections, which create the side-effect of EU policies – to both 'buy' the support of Bulgarian officials for Europeanization, and to transform the structure of the bureaucracies themselves.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how the actions of European bureaucracies at various scales contribute to Europeanization by embedding the logic of ambiguity in European space. Specifically, it focused on two of the theorems used by Beck and Grande to describe 'cosmopolitan Europe': the both/and Europe and the side-effect theorem. In doing so, it argued that the adoption of the both/and logic of Europeanization does more than force bureaucracies to cope with blurred distinctions between spheres of actions, contradictory institutional ascriptions of jurisdictions, and constant sovereignty trade-offs. Instead, all these contradictions are powerful engines of Europeanization: elite groups at various levels interact through flows of power and influence to define policies and agendas, and in so doing actively manipulate the meanings of European practices. The consequences of these interactions are often unintended side-effects created through contradictory interpretations of European policies. Paradoxically, those contradictions have the side-effect of simultaneously strengthening subnational, national, and supranational bureaucracies, which is a counterintuitive consequence of Europeanization.

We have shown, first, how the management of certain contradictions is an engine of Europeanization and, second, how the regime of side-effects between the Commission and Bulgarian authorities works to further promote Europeanization on the ground. In the first case, Cohesion policy and Structural and Cohesion funds inscribe cosmopolitan practice in the logic of Europe by shifting control of development from the nation-states to a multi-tiered system of governance. In doing so, these policies contribute to processes of territorialization and the rescaling of sovereignty, which allow for both bottom-up and top-down pressures on the nation-states to comply with Community development goals and further blur institutional competences as an unintended side-effect. They also have the contradictory effect of both promoting a harmonious vision of territorial cohesion and cooperation encapsulated in best practices, while allowing for context-specific differentiation in individual project implementation. This apparent contradiction simultaneously tolerates and regulates difference.

In our second example we saw that the Commission and high-level Bulgarian officials engage in a game of mirrors, strategically using the 'ritual of listening to foreigners' to advance their own agendas while pursuing Europeanization. In particular, we have argued that different 'voices' in the Commission have contradictory views on enlargement and that it is those 'voices' that broaden the possibilities of Europeanization. This is because very different types of decision in relation to new member states may be justified as 'European.' Furthermore, different interpretations of those decisions on the ground not only are tolerated by all scales but are seen as a necessary means of successfully implementing EU policy on the national level.

The resulting tensions from conflicting supranational views of EU policy and its differentiated national implementation are beneficial to Bulgarian officials, because they can adapt the content of the policies to suit their own needs. Thus, the top-down influence of the Commission remains intact despite various bottom-up interpretations of that policy from the national scale paradoxically strengthening both levels at the same time. However, to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the EU, Bulgarian officials are required to show a commitment to Europeanization, which results in further driving Europeanization processes as a side-effect of the implementation of policies.

We therefore have emphasized several of the drivers of Europeanization. Drawing from Beck and Grande's logic of ambiguity, we have shown the unintentional outcomes of EU policy resulting from the tension between cosmopolitan practices in a non-cosmopolitan setting. This is because the Commission must tolerate different views of Europeanization, different interpretations in European policy implementation, and the enduring strength of its individual nation-states, while concurrently promoting internal harmonious territorial cohesion, a relatively unified vision of Europeanization processes, and its own role as a supranational political authority. As a result, we see evidence of European rules being adapted in sometimes unpredictable ways. When viewed in this manner, Europeanization is like a game of mirrors, a circular process in which meanings and practices are produced, altered, and internalized in both harmonious and disparate ways. Furthermore, we have been able to see the emergence of both bottom-up and top-down flows of power and influence at supranational/subnational and supranational/national intersections. These flows are important because they allow the multiplicity of European actors and stakeholders to both promote and normatively regulate the diversity present within the EU.

As a result of our effort to respond to Clark and Jones' (2008: 301) call for more analysis of the scales and spaces of Europeanization, we have begun to see not only layer upon layer of contradictions and flows of power in the EU, but how, through the careful use of these contradictions, various actors in the overall European political project attempt to achieve their ends. This has led us to draw from the work of Beck and Grande, which presents a useful framework for understanding the logic of contradiction and ambiguity as a fundamental characteristic of Europeanization processes. However, we see these ambiguities and contradictions as active tools that bureaucracies at all levels can and are using to fundamentally transform European governance. This is necessary because Europe would be an impossible political project without the ability to maintain cohesiveness. Europe's strength is in its contradictions and its ability to overcome the deep-seated inherent tensions between its overall political vision and its own internal diversity.

Notes

1. For a similar argument on the transformation and reproduction of regions using the case of Estonian provinces, see Sepp and Veemaa (2010).
2. Also, for a more complete picture of the Commission's role through the process, see Allen (2000).
3. Names and positions are omitted following interviewees' agreement.

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