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Research Proposal

From Ostpolitik to Europapolitik: Europeanisation of German co-operation networks in Central and Eastern Europe. A study of the bilateral technical assistance in Estonia and Hungary.

1. Theory / model.

- **Question to be researched:**

My general question is following: How is Europe affecting German foreign policy to Eastern and Central European countries (CEEC), i. e. what is the impact of European norms and institutions on bilateral co-operation networks between Germany and CEEC?

- **Historical / Economic / Political relevance:**

The German bilateral technical assistance to CEEC (education, vocational training and consulting, i.e. transfer of norms and values), or *Transform* programme, is one of the most important national one in Europe. Created by the Kohl government in 1993 in order to co-ordinate bilateral assistance projects begun in 1989, it was conceived as a complement to the EU PHARE programme. It mainly consists in education and training of selected partners from 11 countries, which, according to criteria determined by the OECD, are involved in a transformation process¹. Between 1993 and 2000, more than 1500 projects were implemented through *Transform* in manifold sectors – economics, politics, agriculture, law, environment, social matters – although in reality, they mainly concentrate on economics. Between 1990 and 2000, a total of 2.377 billion DM² was spent for consulting activities as well as other matters, mostly under the label *Transform*. But it is considered by German actors as a failure in some CEE countries, like Estonia and Hungary. How is this to be explained?

As I could learn so far, *Transform's* activities mainly help backing up German companies in targeted countries, i.e. regions where the German economy had already developed before 1989. In this context, the social market economy is rather a label used by public actors in order to reach two majors aims: 1) make German private actors win assistance contracts and influence structural and legal features as well as practices, 2) build long lasting networks drawn on confidence through education and training, and change Germany's image abroad by publicising successful projects. As bilateral assistance is more and more relayed by multilateral projects, *how far is the Europe an exit gate for different actors of the assistance, how do in return European dynamics shape theirs strategies and believes (Europeanization)?*

Therefore, our questions are following: how do actors integrate the EU dimension in their strategies and how do they adapt to the evolving context? What bargaining processes are taking place around EU norms and how do they affect socialisation processes between German and CEE actors?

Other complementary questions: which variables may explain the success and failure of the assistance from one sector to another, and from one CEEC to another? Are some actors, like NGOs and companies more successful? Does this reflect an inability of the state to adapt to changes in a regional context? I will concentrate on sectors, where the European welfare state is traditionally present, environment and social (or human) rights.

- **Theoretical Relevance:**

A large literature has developed in the 1990s on the evolution of domestic institutions in CEEC, without exploring links between the European Union and their domestic context. Since, other scholars have begun to concentrate on the impact of the enlargement process on CEEC institutions. The literature on Europeanization is

¹ They include Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Russia, Ukraine, and since 1998, Slovenia.

² For the year 1998, the repartition of *Transform's* budget in each sector was as follows: commercial sector (46%), training and qualifications (12%), financial sector (9%), consulting on government and law (8%), agricultural sector (7%), research (7%), consulting on administration (5%), labour, social, health (4%), environment (2%). BMWi (1998).

perhaps the most appropriate in order to study the internalisation of EU norms in the domestic context. It has been applied to EU member (Radaelli, Kohler-Koch...) as well as non-member states (Grabbe...).

For Radaelli (2000), Europeanization has to be differentiated from other concepts like convergence, harmonization and integration. Taking the definition of Ladrech (1994), Europeanization might be defined “*as a set of processes through which the EU political, social and economic dynamics become part of the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies*”. In contrast to the first writings on Europeanization that concentrated only on the EU impact on domestic political structures (institutions, public administration, legal structure), this definition has the advantage to include other fields of research, like structures of representation, cognitive and normative structures and public policy. ***I will concentrate on a literature defending a systemic and constructivist point of view.*** The most satisfying works on this field are those of T. Risse and C. Radaelli, and especially of T. Brzel (1999) and K. Goetz (1995) who studied the Europeanization of intergovernmental relations on a systemic point of view.

But beside a writing of Adrian Favell (2000) on migration policies, ***there was no consistent reflection on Europeanization of Foreign Policy so far, i. e. on the impact of EU norms and institutions on bilateral co-operation networks.*** Nor did I read anything about ***the impact of the EU enlargement agenda on EU member states’ policies and on their bilateral relations to CEEC.*** How to build such a concept, which variables may be used, and how to make the concept operational? *I decided to adopt a social constructivist perspective of Europeanization, as I believe that, in the enlargement process, one of the greatest competitions is taking place on the fields of norms, values and institutional procedures (in order to influence actors preferences).* As Radaelli (2000) notices, while quoting Jachtenfuchs (1999), « *the analysis of cognitive and normative structure is connected to the renewed interest in sociological institutionalism, preference formation and political legitimacy* ».

- **Proposed alternative theoretical solution:**

I suggest to analyse the integration of Europe in the strategies and projects of German actors working with CEEC partners through the lens of a constructivist approach of Europeanization. I will present variables that intend to show that dynamics of co-operation might be very different from one sector to another, and from one country to another. The variables may be applied to different categories of actors: ministries, governmental agencies, Chambers of commerce, NGOs, political parties, labour groups...

- Co-operation and mutual perceptions in the light of historical and local contexts :

- were there existing pre-conditions, i.e. historical links, for the development of co-operation networks between German and CEE actors?
- If yes, have the networks redevelop after 1989? If not, where there potential interlocutors and fields of common interest? In which fields of activity especially?
- How do the actors perceive each other (which pre-notions do they have kept or lost on each other)?

- Bilateral co-operation and Europeanization:

- * The Impact of Europe on the *quality* of institutional and interpersonal networks :

- Have each actor integrated the targeted European norms?
- Are interpersonal relationships affected by the evolution of the enlargement agenda?
- Do we observe changes in the working relations between different organizations (competition, co-operation) after the introduction of the norms?
- Does the EU enlargement agenda facilitate or hinder the communication between the actors?

- * The impact of EU norms on the density of institutional and interpersonal networks :

- How have European norms been integrated in strategies of German actors working on the bilateral assistance? Are these norms only instruments or discourses for the development of co-operation networks?
- How far do norms, which were newly put on the enlargement agenda, affect the strategies of German and CEEC actors?
- Does it affect the number of participants in bargaining processes around specific norms (parliamentarians, lobby groups, NGO, companies, state agencies...)?
(in this case, it could be useful to set up a scale in order to measure the number of actors mobilized by a certain type of norm: between 3 to 10, 10 to 20, more than 20...)

- Financial means :

- Do the actors cumulate financial resources (private, national, European...)?
- Do actors include EU norms in their strategies in order to get EU financing?
- What is the share of EU financing in their budget?
- Does the competition for EU financial questions affect the quality and/or the density of the bilateral networks?

- **Theoretical significance of the research:**

Classic international relations theories and foreign policy analysis driven on a (neo)realist, and even (neo)liberal point of view are not able to explain change in foreign policy, i. e. success and failure, and processes of adaptation to a new international or regional context. *I would like to show that perceptions and norms, which are always embedded in the national / local context (because they are constructed), do allow us to understand the situation better. Furthermore, they tend to be far more determinant variables of success or failure of a foreign policy, than for example financial or technical ones (the amount of an assistance, an investment...).* That's why perceptions and norms, as well as historical links, have to be taken into account in the study of foreign policy (Friedman, Starr, 1997).

- **Historical / Policy significance of the research :**

If western actors working in the fields of assistance want to meet success, they have to know more about the local context of the country, about the real people's needs, in order to allow socialisation processes (and thus integration) to take place. They have to be aware of the perceptions and norms they work with in order to allow integration processes to take place.

2. Methodology:

I have chosen to rely on a combination of designs: 1) *Critical or limiting case study* (the German bilateral technical assistance to CEEC) and 2) *Comparative method* inside this case (two countries, Estonia and Hungary).

1) My point of departure would be to show that the success or failure of the German assistance do not only depend on resources and on local economic presence (like realist and liberal theorists think), but on the historical and local context, on mutual perceptions in certain fields of activity. It seems that the growing co-operation around EU norms influences both the quality and density of the bilateral networks. As co-operation is built on a commonly shared interest to work together, actors both from east and west are in fact building common values and identities. In this sense, Europe is affecting German foreign policy to CEEC.

2) I will concentrate on the German assistance in two dissimilar countries, Estonia and Hungary, in the fields of environment and social rights. German actors consider that in both countries, the assistance was not very successful. How is this to be explained? How far can the above mentioned variables (historical pathways, local considerations, mutual perceptions, the importance of EU norms) explain variations in the outcomes?

I will adopt a synchronic time period: 1991 – 2001, with a stronger focus on the period 1997 – 2001 (implementation of the Agenda 2000).

Data and resources: Official declarations, documents and evaluations (*Transform*, Phare...), press releases and existing academic analysis will be consulted. Interviews with politicians, civil servants, economic and civil actors at different levels (EU, national, regional, local) will be necessary in order to get complementary information.

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