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## EUROPEANIZATION: THE ROLE OF OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND INSTITUTIONS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The present paper, on the one hand, aims to theoretically contribute for the conceptualization of Europeanization, while on the other, proposes an analytical model, as an operationalizing framework, for the better empirical understanding of the term. Undoubtedly, the approach of the paper has institutionalist and cultural characters as it highlights the normative sense of Europeanization; invokes the theory of North on formal and informal institutions; and emphasizes the importance of the concerned actors' cultural specificities, perceptions, and identifications.

**Key words:** europeanization; normative approach; formal institutions; informal institutions  
**JEL codes:** O20, B25

### 1. Introduction

Europeanization is a fashionable term in several disciplines, particularly in political science and regional studies, but it is worth to mention findings on this issue from the field of economics (especially regional economics), history and sociology too (Sittermann 2008). Despite this emerging trend it still lacks a clear definition and a generally agreed conceptual frame (Dyson, 2002, Mair, 2004, Olsen, 2002). Some suggests that it is just a re-branded mixture of some more precise approaches (Buller, Gamble, 2002, Bulmer, Radaelli, 2004). Others argue that Europeanization is a useful concept, and even though it needs further explanation and conceptualization, it is already applicable as a scientific approach (Featherstone, Kazamias, 2001). Bulmer and Radaelli (2004) list four macro-dynamics that have stimulated the academ-

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ic discussions on and the conceptualization of Europeanization. They argue that one element was the institutionalization of European Single Market. Another key milestone was the introduction of Economic and Monetary Union and later the Euro-zone. The third component is identifiable as a continuous widening in the array of joint policies carried out at the supra-national level. And the last macro-dynamic was the EU enlargement, especially regarding to the post-Socialist new democracies (Bulmer, Radaelli, 2004). These historical agreements and processes have oriented academics' attention to the fact that something is really changing in Europe, something that needs to explain. However, to grab scientifically this phenomena it is still an ongoing effort with both confusing and promising outcomes.

An attempt to comprehensively conceptualize Europeanization, according to the guidelines of Sartori (1970, 1985) and Gerring (1999), would be a hard job, thus the present paper just aims to theoretically contribute to the exploration of the term, and at the same time to present an analytical model, a research design on how to take a step toward an operationalization and empirical test. At first, the paper presents a literature review on the definitions of Europeanization. As a second step, it sums up the main approaches relate to the term with special focus on the sociological conceptualizations. Then the article draws up a theoretical argument and a research design based on an institutionalist and cultural interpretation of Europeanization, particularly on the works of North (1990, 1991, 2003). Finally it has some concluding claims and remarks.

## 2. The current debates and understandings of Europeanization

Buller and Gamble (2002) highlights that *'(I)f a reasonably clear and coherent story can be told about the reasons for the introduction of the new concept of Europeanisation, the same cannot be said for the body of literature which has attempted to provide a definition of this term'* (ibid.: 6). As they note, Europeanization has gained emerging attention mainly because there was a need to explain what is going on at the EU level; how these processes at the supra-national level have an impact on the national actors; and how the latter ones could influence the EU structures and decisions. As Buller and Gamble (2002) argue, the definitional and conceptual confusions originate from the challenge that academics try to grab different aspects of the above mentioned interplays, and without a clear and comprehensive term they are continuously elaborating new ones. According to Radaelli (2000), most studies on Europeanization are focusing on what can be explained by the concept. These efforts aim to reveal and expand the extensional properties of the term, in other words, the class of entities to which Europeanization is applicable. As Radaelli (2000) states: *'This is probably the result of an early stage of research, when the analytic grid has to be broad enough as to accommodate a wide range of empirical observations that may have something to do with Europeanization'* (ibid.: 5). Thus, the intension of the term, the collection of properties covered by the concept needs more theoretical work to do. In order to support the findings of Buller and Gamble (2002), and Radaelli (2000) the paper presents a review on the existing literatures' definitional varieties.

For Lawton (1999) Europeanization means the de jure transfer of sovereignty from the national level to the European one. This is a solid and catchy interpretation that could reflect to some aspects of the cross-way casual interplays between the national and supra-national level, however it pays less attention to the question, what happens once after the powers were transferred, and the EU starts to use her competencies. In contrast to this definition Börzel (1999) emphasize the importance of European impacts on national level contextual factors. As she argues, Europeanization is a '*process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making*' (ibid.: 574). This interpretation is indisputably focusing on the top-down effects. Risse *et al.* (2001) similarly see Europeanization as an evolution of governance institutions at the supra-national level and how these institutions are affecting national/sub-national policies. They define the terms as '*(T)he emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance, that is, of political, legal and social institutions associated with political problem-solving that formalise interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specialising in the creation of authoritative European rules*' (ibid.: 3). This definition, though takes into account the institutional evolution process at the supra-national level, dominantly argues that EU institutions, once they were established, should become problem-solving and governance-style entities in cooperation with the national/sub-national ones. Bulmer and Burch's (1998) interpretation is more obviously focusing on the top-down impacts. They refer to Europeanization as it is '*the extent to which EC/EU requirements and policies have affected the determination of member states' policy agendas and goals*' and '*the extent to which EU practices, operating procedures and administrative values have impinged on, and become embedded in, the administrative practices of member states*' (ibid.: 602).

Ladrech (1994), on the contrary, underlines that Europeanization is an '*(I)ncremental process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making*' (ibid.: 69). This is much more a bottom-up interpretation as it argues that national level policy-formulation is not about exclusive domestic issues anymore, but at the same time it has to reflect to and influence effectively the EU dynamics too.

Featherstone and Kazamias (2001) point out that Europeanization is an interactive process of cooperation between the supra-national and national actors with divergent and convergent, and disharmonious and harmonious impacts and outcomes. As they stress, it is not just a two-ways policy process but an interdependent one between EU and national/sub-national players. In addition to these specificities, Featherstone and Kazamias (2001) argue that Europeanization has multiple economic and social consequences beyond the policy-formulation and decision-making aspects. Radaelli's (2000) definition also tries to catch this complexity of the term. He states that Europeanization can be describe as a '*processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, "ways of doing things" and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies*' (ibid.: 4). Radaelli's (2000) interpretation highlights three things about the term: (1) it argues that Europeanization can derive from different stages and forms of the policy process; (2) it stresses

that Europeanization affects individuals' (collectivities') intangible assets, such as values, beliefs, norms, behavior, and attitudes; (3) it underlines that although Europeanization is a two-ways process with interdependencies between the national and supra-national level actors, however its main sense should be understood as a mechanism of impacts.

To sum up in short, basically there are two fundamental approaches related to the term of Europeanization. On the one hand there is the bottom-up dimension which refers to the evolution of EU institutions as a complexity of different frameworks, targets, strategies, action plans, rules, regulations, practices, guidelines, methods, and directives. Much of these institutions are influenced in a bottom-up sense by the member states, their governments, parliaments, regions, EU representatives, and different kind of national/sub-national level players (such as business and lobby actors, advocacy groups, epistemic communities, expert groups, etc.). This is how the national level actors are continuously 'uploading' their policy interests to the EU level. On the other hand, the above mentioned EU institutions have multiple impacts on the political, legal, social, and business structures and processes of the member states. This is the top-down dimension which in a practical sense means 'downloading' from EU level to the national/sub-national one (Börzel, 2002). Thus, better to see Europeanization as a two-ways process entails both bottom-up (uploading) and top-down (downloading) mechanisms (Börzel, 2004, Bulmer, Radaelli, 2004, Howell, 2004, Radaelli, 2000). It should be underlined here that the concerned EU institutions, in an explicit and/or implicit way, are based on different interests, goals, objectives, principles, values, and norms, thus they have a normative character. These institutions are requirements about (1) what to achieve; and (2) how to achieve. Therefore, it is worth to emphasize that according to this sense of Europeanization, the 'what to achieve' aspect clearly determines crucial objectives, while the 'how to achieve' feature should be understood as demands of normative principles. These objectives and principles are strict conditions of the Europeanized policy implementation, and at the same time, this is how Europeanization aims to foster well-defined normative values, attitudes, rules, routines, and conventions among the member states' societies.

### **3. Theoretical approaches towards examination of Europeanization**

In the literature there are several approaches which aim to conceptualize Europeanization. Overwhelmingly these theoretical efforts relate to political science however there are some important findings from other disciplines too. Just to mention, on the one hand, in a historical perspective the term refers to the ongoing evolution of European cultural unity, how the different religious, ethnic, national and traditional roots are – at least for a certain extent – melting into a continental scale social agreement based on shared values, common heritage, and a sense of togetherness (Harmsen, Wilson, 2000). This unity is not equal to the political integration of Eu-

rope though the two processes strongly interrelate. On the other hand, Europeanization as an approach of history could refer to the spread of European institutions, practices and customs well beyond the borders of the continent as a mean of colonization or – regarding to the recent trends – as EU Neighborhood Policy or strategic partnerships (Featherstone, 2003, Olsen, 2003).

A well-known economics approach interprets Europeanization as the mechanism of EU enlargement, how the economically less developed candidate or just join-in countries are financially supported to reach the standards of the member states. Thus, in this sense the term refers to modernization, catch-up processes and economic, fiscal convergence (Sitterman, 2008).

Börzel (2002) points out that Europeanization is a two-ways process where member states are motivated to ‘upload’ their national policy interests to the European level as by this incentive they could minimize the costs of ‘downloading’. If at the supra-national level more and more policies are identical with the domestic ones, then the top-down impacts are negligible. Regarding this issue Börzel distinguishes three strategies: ‘Pace-setting, *i.e. actively pushing policies at the European level, which reflect a member state’s policy preference and allow to minimize implementation costs; foot-dragging, i.e. blocking or delaying costly policies in order to prevent them altogether or achieve at least some compensation for implementation costs; and fence-sitting, i.e. neither systematically pushing policies nor trying to block them at the European level but building tactical coalitions with both pace-setters and foot-draggers*’ (ibid.: 194 – highlights from the original one). Thus, this approach aims to conceptualize Europeanization through the strategic policy attitudes of the member states.

For Radaelli (2000) the core issue is: ‘what is Europeanized and to what extent?’ As he poses the true question, if everything is getting Europeanized then Europeanization becomes meaningless. Therefore, he elaborates a complex taxonomy about the domains of Europeanization, and by this device he proposes a conceptualization that is amenable for empirical analysis. At first, Radaelli (2000) distinguishes domestic structures and public policies as the two main components at the national level which are affected by the EU. Domestic structures encompass (1) political structures, (2) structures of representation and cleavages, and (3) cognitive and normative structures. The first one refers to institutions as intra- and intergovernmental relations, public administration, and legal structure. The second relates to political parties, pressure groups, and social-cleavage structures. While the third should be understood as different norms, values, identities, political legitimacy, governance traditions, and perceptions on Europe. Thus, according to Radaelli (2000) these are the domestic structural domains on which Europeanization has impacts. And these, EU-affected national structures contain actors and represent specificities which are also Europeanized in a sense. These latter domains are interpretable as players, styles, instruments, resources, paradigms, frames, and narratives which all influence national/sub-national policy-formulations.

Sociological approaches of Europeanization are mainly focusing on the relevant actors and their behavior. The rational choice perspective states that players accept the Europeanized ‘way of doing things’ because it makes different resources accessible for them. Thus, this interpretation characterizes actors as rational, goal-ori-

ented, and purposeful (Börzel, 2003, March, Olsen 1989). As Sittermann (2008) underlines excellently: ‘(...) actors need to have a clear idea of their preferences and try to use their own resources as effective as possible. In terms of the Europeanisation process this means that the EU can on the one hand be perceived as an external constraint on the actors’ behavior and place. However, on the other hand the EU is as well a new evolving opportunity structure which provides – at least for some actors – additional means to attain their goals. In other words: The EU can contribute to a redistribution of resources between actors involved in a process’ (ibid.: 15).

The culturalist sociological approach highlights that actors’ attitude is not influenced dominantly by rational thinking, but by the intention to fulfill social expectations, to keep the values, norms, rules, conventions, routines and customs of a cultural environment which is guided by a common understanding of socially accepted behavior (March, Olsen 1989). The process of Europeanization has impacts on this common understanding as it requires the realization of certain normative cultural factors (Beck, Grande 1997). Nonetheless, because of this, societies which dispose these cultural fundamentals inherently could participate in the process of Europeanization much easier and more effectively (Börzel, Risse 2003).

Though these two sociological interpretations do not exclude each other, however the rational choice approach sees the impacts of Europeanization in a narrower sense as it focuses on how these processes affect players’ behavior and acts regarding to their expanding opportunities. The culturalist understanding of the term, beside the impacts on rational choices, takes into consideration the normative character of Europeanization, and how this external objective-, principal-, and value-based supra-national efforts influence the collectively accepted norms, rules, conventions, routines, and customs of the member states’ societies. As for this paper the normative character of Europeanization is a core definitional starting point thus it follows the culturalist understanding of the term.

#### 4. The institutional approach of North as a theoretical background

As it was mentioned, this paper invokes the institutionalist concept of Douglass C. North (1990, 1991) as a theoretical background for the analytical model to be proposed below. North’s approach provides a well-elaborated frame to understand how institutions have crucial roles in social, political, and economic interactions, and how they interrelate for their common functionability. As North points out: ‘*Institutions are humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consist of both informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)*’ (North, 1991, p. 97). He sees the evolution of institutions as an incremental process which connects past, present and future, and therefore, on the one hand, it represents both continuous change and constant stability, while on the other, it is fundamental for social interactions. North (2003) states clearly: ‘*Institutions exist to reduce uncertainty in the world.*

*In a world without institutions we would not know how to deal with each other. Institutions are the incentive systems that structure human interaction. They can make predictable our dealings with each other every day in all kinds of forms and shapes'* (ibid.: 1). At this point, it is important to notice that for North institutions are especially relevant because of their impacts on social interactions, relations and cooperation, and on the transaction costs of these activities.

According to North informal institutions mean constraints which are part of the culture, and come from socially transmitted information. As he states: *'Culture provides a language-based conceptual framework for encoding and interpreting the information that the senses are presenting to the brain'* (North, 1990, p. 37). This individual encoding process is influenced by the socially accepted, and from generation to generation – as a collective heritage – transmitted values, conventions, routines, traditions, customs and other kind of cultural factors that are able to affect one's behavior and attitude. As these informal institutions are broadly respected in a given community thus it is in everyone's interest to keep them, and to impose sanctions on those who fail to observe them. Consequently, the social interactions, relations and cooperation become predictable primarily not because of one gains sufficient quality and quantity of information about the concerned other party, but because one believes that the other also keep the collective informal institutions.

Of course, in the modern world complexity of interactions, processes and decisions is continuously increasing, therefore beside the unwritten informal institutions there is an inevitable need for codification, for precisely formed constitutions, laws, rights, agreements, etc. In North's theory these latter ones are the formal institutions which include political (and judicial) rules, economic rules, and contracts. These rules are in a hierarchical relation, the more particular ones are always subordinated to the general rules. Thus, constitution is designed to be more costly to alter than a simple law, just as the latter is more costly to alter than an individual contract. As North sums up briefly: *'Political rules broadly define the hierarchical structure of the polity, its basic decision structure, and the explicit characteristics of agenda control. Economic rules define property rights that are the bundle of rights over the use and the income to be derived from property and the ability to alienate an asset or a resource. Contracts contain the provisions specific to a particular agreement in exchange'* (ibid.: 47). Surely, this typology is amendable but it covers up the main fields of rule-producing.

To be clear, informal and formal constraints are separable in a theoretical sense however practically they are functioning well together as an institutional unity. The effectiveness of formal rules requires that these constraints should be in harmonization with the informal ones. In absence of this, enforcement needs serious and costly efforts. Of course, sometimes there could be a need to change the informal constraints, yet as these are culturally evolved and socially transmitted, to implement successfully an intention like this it demands time and more comprehensive strategies (teaching, learning, etc.) than simple law-making.

Finally, another crucial element in North's theory is the distinction between institutions and organizations. By this, he distinguishes 'rules' from the 'players' which is important as the *'purpose of the rules is to define the way the game is played. But the objective of the team within that set of rules is to win the game – by a combination*

*of skills, strategy, and coordination; by fair means and sometimes by foul means'* (ibid.: 5). To differentiate institutions from the organizations (or actors in a wider sense) it is necessary as the roles of the formers could be assessable just through the acts of the latter ones. According to North organizations could be political bodies (such as political parties, government, ministries, local or territorial governments, etc.), economic bodies (firms, unions, companies, agencies, networks, etc.), social bodies (churches, clubs, associations), and educational bodies (schools, universities, vocational training centers). As he points out, these bodies are groups of individuals bound by common purpose to achieve objectives. Regarding to the interplay between institutions and organizations North emphasize that *'both what organizations come into existence and how they evolve are fundamentally influenced by the institutional framework. In turn they influence how the institutional framework evolves'* (ibid.: 5).

## **5. An analytical model on the normative sense of Europeanization**

In the following, the paper aims to present an analytical model on Europeanization, a research design that could be a possible framework for a comprehensive approach on understanding the term. It gives an institutional and cultural interpretation of Europeanization, and takes into consideration the normative sense of the notion and its two-ways cross-impacts between the supra-national and the national/sub-national levels. This analytical model, at most, targets to reveal the specificities (strong and weak points, promising and challenging aspects) of Europeanization and not the casual backgrounds of it.

To explain the model, primarily it needs to describe the components of it. First we have to elaborate an assumption that a given policy sector is part of the Europeanized processes. As an analyzed dimension this policy sector is the first component of the model. To investigate that the given dimension is influenced by the two-ways cross-impacts of Europeanization we have to be able to identify normative objectives and related principles in conjunction with it. In a practical sense it means that we need to single out objectives and related principles regarding to the analyzed dimension at first in supra-national (EU-level) formal institutions (so in different resolutions, strategies, action plans, guidelines, frameworks, etc. accepted by the EU), and also in national/sub-national formal institutions (constitution, laws, resolutions, etc.) too.

To sum up, so far we mentioned five components of the model: dimension (the analyzed policy sector); dimensional objectives ('what to achieve' aspect); related dimensional principles ('how to achieve' aspect); supra-national formal institutions; national/sub-national formal institutions. This first pillar of the model, in a methodological sense, mostly requires qualitative document- and content-analysis (i.e. secondary) methods.

To move on, the sixth component is the actors or players. They are the ones who are responsible to realize or implement the dimensional objectives ('what to achieve' aspect) according to the related dimensional principles ('how to achieve'

aspect). These actors and players could be decision-makers, policy experts, stakeholders, beneficiaries, members of networks, epistemic communities and organizations, and collective entities like inhabitants of a given settlement, region, or a state as well. They should be understood as target groups of the research: the broader we analyze them the more comprehensive will be our knowledge on the given dimension's Europeanized features.

How to investigate these actors and players? To answer this, we should take into consideration again the normative sense of Europeanization, the 'what to achieve' and 'how to achieve' aspects. This latter one, the principles are clear requirements regarding to the actors' and players' informal institutions, or to say, regarding to their collectively accepted, socially transmitted and internalized values, norms, codes, rules, taboos, customs, and attitudes. At the same time, the former aspect, the objectives demand a certain extent of positive perception and identification from the same actors and players as to implement policies without commitment raises doubts about efficiency.

Therefore, the second pillar of the model incorporates three components: the given actors and players; their informal institutions; and their perceptions and identifications. It is out of question that the investigation of this second pillar needs

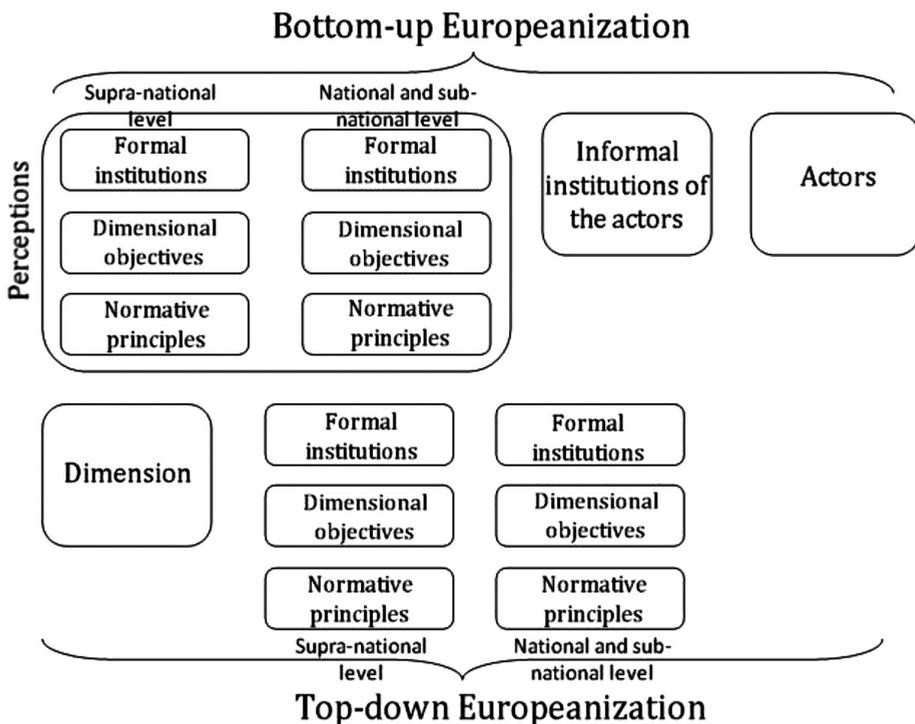


Fig. 1. The components of the analytical model  
Source: Authors' elaboration

primer, both qualitative and quantitative empirical methods (most possibly face-to-face surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group experiments).

The logical reasoning behind the model is quite simple: the normative objectives and the related principles of the given dimension adopted and published in different supra-national and national/sub-national formal institutions should harmonize to each other smoothly in a cross-level sense. This is the top-down (or downloading) aspect of Europeanization. On the other side, the concerned actors' and players' informal institutions need to be compatible to the requirements of the normative principles, while the actors should have positive perceptions on (in other words: they should identify themselves with) the national/sub-national and supra-national objectives and principles. This latter one is the bottom-up (or uploading) aspect of Europeanization. How each sides, the top-down and bottom-up aspects work, tell us the strong, weak, challenging, and promising features of Europeanization regarding to the analyzed dimension.

The model provides a broad and comprehensive enough framework for the investigation of Europeanization. Though it is applicable for wide comparisons, it is also suitable for one-case-based single study too. In a conceptual sense it encompasses several, partly similar definitional terms, as the top-down pillar of the model reflects to harmonization, convergence, and multi-level governance, while the bottom-up one to cosmopolitanism (described in the work of Beck, Grande, 2007, and Münch, 2001). Yet, our analytical method unifies these approaches in a more comprehensive theoretical context. To highlight again, our model just aims to reveal the specificities of Europeanization regarding to the selected dimension (or policy sector), and it does not intend to identify the casual mechanisms behind the empirical experiences. Of course, it is important to find out what causes what; why do the national/sub-national formal institutions harmonize with the supra-national ones, if they do, and what is the reason behind, if they do not; why do the actors or players have compatible informal institutions with the normative principles, if they do have, and what is the reason behind, if they do have not; why do the actors or players have positive perceptions on the objectives and principles, if they do have, and what is the reason behind, if they do have not. These are crucial questions however in a first step we should catch a broad enough and well-grounded picture on the specificities of Europeanization, and just after that we will be able to elaborate a more in-depth analysis on the casual factors.

## 6. Conclusion

Bluntly speaking, it is still hard to be sure if Europeanization is a real scientific concept or more like a practical mean that could grab the attention of EU decision-makers, and through them, to acquire EU funds for research. Though there are some dedicated papers in the literature which aim to explain why and how Europeanization is something else than the other existing approaches, yet to find a clear definition and a comprehensive concept needs serious tries. And of course, without solid conceptual background it is risky to elaborate any theoretical arguments.

Because of these dilemmas, this paper aimed to contribute for two things: firstly, to think over again the concept of Europeanization and take into consideration the normative sense of the notion; while secondly, to propose an analytical model, a research design amenable for empirical tests based on the previous theoretic findings of Europeanization, and the well-developed institutionalist approach of North.

As we understand, Europeanization is not an overwhelmingly new approach as it has strong ties to other concepts, like harmonization, convergence, multi-level governance, and cosmopolitanism. Yet, it may be a progressive scientific attempt to combine these concepts as elements of a more comprehensive and normative phenomenon, this should be Europeanization, that could explain the complex two-ways processes and cross-way impacts in Europe between the different levels. However, this term needs to be conceptually clear, operationalizable and empirically testable otherwise it does not help us to understand our research problems. The model described in this paper attempts to step forward on the track of crystallizing Europeanization through an institutional and cultural interpretation of the notion.

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