Recasting the Puzzle of the EU's Eastward Enlargement: Identities, Narratives, Problem Structuring and Rhetorical Entrapment

YANA STOEVA[*], ROBERT HOPPE[**]

Summary

The European Union's eastward enlargement cannot be explained by functionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism, which are the dominant rational choice theories about the developmental dynamics and governance of the European Union as a novel polity. These theories fail to explain how a process, supposedly characterized from its early stages by states bargaining to maximize their benefits, ends up with actual enlargement (in 2004 and 2007). Indeed, the high uncertainty and complexity that surrounded the EU negotiations made it difficult for the governments to define their preferences and narrow down the uncertainty. Precisely because of this, agenda-setting and problem framing played a substantial role in the pre-negotiation phase where the use of competing frames influenced the negotiation outcome. Therefore, in this paper, we explore social constructivist alternative theoretical approaches: does a theory based on identity formation, narrativity and problem structuring fare any better? More specifically: may we define a set of mechanisms which connects identity, through narratives and problem structuring, to a plausible eastward enlargement explanation? Applying social identity theory and problem structuring theory to the agenda-setting and negotiation process, we compare the policy frames and narratives present in the accession processes of 2004 and 2007. Emery Roe's method of narrative policy analysis is used for cross-case comparison, in which the 2007 cohort of accession states, Bulgaria and Romania, is treated as a least likely case. By linking the concept of narrative, as a vehicle to construct European identities, to that of enlargement, we show how the EU ended up trapped in the rhetorical cage of its own founding myth and the pan-European rhetoric of membership open to any European state respecting its founding principles. Only within the rhetorically constructed constraints do

[*] *Yana Stoeva*, MA in Public Administration, University of Twente, Enschede.
[**] *Robert Hoppe*, Professor of Policy and Knowledge, University of Twente, Enschede.

rational bargaining strategies gain plausibility – reasoning serves only to justify a previous choice.

Keywords: identity, narrative, problem frames, narrative policy analysis, EU's eastward enlargement

> '**What is truer than truth?**' *The answer, according to an old Jewish tale, is* '**the Story**'.

1. The Problem

> *'We do not discover a problem "out there"; we make a choice about how we want to formulate a problem'* (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979)

In an ideal world, truth (facts) and power (values) would never touch. In reality, they cannot keep their hands off each other (McKee, 1997: 58). It is tempting to believe that reality is readily observable and we can have access to the world in pure form (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 230). However, theories that invite only 'convenient' questions and research which proposes answers as 'objective empirical facts' leave us in the dark about the social construction of problems. It is hard to find a better topic than the eastward enlargement of the EU to illustrate that a problem is a social and political construct. Why did states that had every reason to fear financial and social losses from the eastward enlargement of the European Union, end up unanimously endorsing the accession of new Central East European member states? Therefore, in order to understand the decision to enlarge the European Union towards countries formerly belonging to the communist bloc one is required to see, as Foucault (1990: 60) maintains, that truth and power cannot be separated.

In this respect, the seemingly 'common sense' and 'self-evident' rationalist discourses of the liberal intergovernmentalists and functionalists beg the question of the politics of EU enlargement. In fact, enlargement remains a mystery for the dominant rationalist theories. On the one hand, seen from a neo-functionalist perspective, the decision to expand eastward is inexplicable as this set of theories has nothing to say about enlargement – expansion into additional functional tasks, yes; extension into additional territorial units, no (Schmitter, 2009: 61). If we adopt the neo-functionalist hypothesis of 'geographical spillover' of functions, we cannot explain why Switzerland is not part of the EU. Is it not true that the Helvetian Confederation is functionally more a part of the EU than some of its formal members? On the other hand, in the language of Moravcsik, one of the main proponents of liberal intergovernmentalism, what is perplexing is not why the accession countries were so anxious to enter, but why the existing EU-15 were willing to let them in. Moreover, the theory would have predicted that enlargement should not even be on the

EU's agenda, given that it implied major status-quo changes for important member states and a structural reshuffling of major budget items[1] in favour of the accessing Central East European (CEE) states and at the expense of older member states.

Thus, the classical rationalist idea that preferences are given, that actors will always attempt to maximize their utility, does not adequately grasp what 'rational' actors will try to maximize. The riddle of the eastward enlargement cannot be framed simply as one of efficiency, as intergovernmental and neo-functionalist theorists would be tempted to, since there is a lack of agreement on what exactly represents the problem in the first place. Moreover, the eastward enlargement provides a particularly rich case of a political environment characterised by limited knowledge and imperfect understanding, where uncertainty is the norm. Therefore, the challenge lies elsewhere – in the genesis and structuring of the metaproblem of the eastward enlargement.

By framing the question of negotiation outcome in terms of two variables – the pre-fixed preferences of utility maximising member states and their bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the candidate states – Moravcsik (1993) seems to turn a blind eye to the pre-negotiation phase where problems are framed and agenda-setting determined. The author skips what is probably the most important activity in public policy-making, namely – problem structuring (Dunn, 2008). Following Hoppe (2010), we turn Dunn's design principle of 'methodological congruence' into an empirical hypothesis or proposition: modes of *problem structuring* are 'about' and come 'before' the 'lower-order' modes of *problem solving*.

It is clear that the EU's eastward enlargement cannot be reduced to a problem of mere interstate bargaining. Calculations become possible only after an identity judgement – 'I act because of who I am'. Only after such an identity judgment can a rational person choose an interest or a set of learned values, and choose what s/he believes and judges to be the best means to an end. Therefore, it appears that the EU negotiations are not just about 'hard facts' and numbers, but also, and even more so, about uncovering meaning in the data, in finding the dominating stories that underwrite and stabilise the issue (Roe, 1994). In this respect, the way the actors made use of language as a medium of political rhetoric and influence, rather than describing a 'given' social reality, becomes crucial.

To the extent that theoretical studies exist, the literature on the EU has in the main treated enlargement primarily as an episode, or a succession of episodes, typically analysing single case studies and single enlargement rounds of single accession countries (Schimmelfennig, 2009; Tewes, 1998; Lindstrom, 2003; Bebler,

---

[1] The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Common Structural Policies (CSP) and the Free Movement of Workers (FMW).

1999; Lecheler, 2010). Few studies compare across enlargements and between countries; therefore, the state of research on enlargement demonstrates the need for an enlargement of the enlargement research.

This article represents an effort to conceptualise systematically the nature of enlargement from a political-constructionist point of view. It is the intention of this research to try to demonstrate this with the comparative case study of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania (in 2007) since they form a useful set, based on their rather similar but not identical accession discourses, recent history and difference from the '2004 accession class'.[2] On the one hand, studying the EU's enlargement to these two countries is most meaningful in view of the comparative aspect in the research design with the '2004 accession class'. On the other hand, this choice is motivated by considerations of real-world relevance to the ongoing enlargement debate with the former Yugoslavian ministates, and possibly Turkey.

We start our analysis by posing the question: is it possible to specify a set of mechanisms (in the sense of Elster, 1989, 2007) which connects identity, through narratives and problem structuring, to a plausible eastward enlargement explanation?

Taking our cues from Jupille *et al.* (2003), we seek to offer a bridge-building, problem-driven perspective of the rationalists' and constructivists' readings of enlargement and move the analysis from 'either/or' to 'both/and'. By using the 'sequencing of theories' mode of metatheoretical dialogue, we suggest sequencing constructivist and rationalist explanations to explain the enlargement domain in a step-by-step process, where a 'culturalist account of preference formation precedes a rationalist account of conflict and cooperation' (Jupille *et al.*, 2003: 22). Our expectation is that by proceeding in this way we will be able to specify the intermediary mechanisms that link the identity narratives to the enlargement discourses.

The argumentation in this paper will follow five main steps:

First, the purpose of this introductory section was to formulate the 'What it is, How it is, and Why it is' (Roe, 1994) to be studied, define the research problems and position ourselves *vis-à-vis* the existing approaches in the field of enlargement studies.

Second, the theoretical framework will trace what social identity theory, narrative policy analysis and problem structuring have to say in relation to the topic of the study. The way the existing literature applies to the research problem will be discussed and new ways proposed, as no single explanatory theory or mechanism exists to elucidate the firm commitment to the eastward enlargement.

---

[2] May 2004 saw the accession of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta.

Third, the research design and methods section will discuss the choice of case study and elaborate on how the four-step narrative model of policy analysis developed by Roe (1994) can be applied as a method of data analysis in the various ways of framing the issue of the eastward enlargement.

Fourth, we will demonstrate the story, non-story, counter-story and meta-story in deconstructing the enlargement narrative to its beginning, middle and end in order to map and reveal the hidden power relations in the enlargement discourse.

Fifth, we will wrap up with a discussion that will bring the central concepts together in a model of a causally related set of mechanisms. Further questions for research will be discussed and some additional recommendations proposed that could help foster future enlargement studies, and encourage those determined to probe into the still relatively uncharted territory of the meaning of stories in policy-making.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section presents a conceptual framework which combines problem structuring and narrative analytical approaches with the concept of European identity to enable us to understand the reason(s) behind the decision to enlarge, and to make sense of the enlargement puzzle. By linking the concepts of identities through narratives and problem structuring to that of the enlargement project, we hope to bring a new perspective to the seemingly intractable problem the enlargement presents to the existing International Relations theories.

Theoretically, this article is mainly informed by the work of Curley on social identity theory (2009), and on Hoppe's (2010) and Roe's (1994) contributions to the field of policy studies and analysis. Empirically, we draw on strategic reports, interviews and policy documents (Verheugen; rp 00/62, 2000 [14 June]; European Commission, 2007; European Parliament, 2005 [12 April]; Council, 1990 [28 April], 1993, 1997, 1999; Kuneva, 2001). Within the domain of this research, we seek to bridge social identity and problem structuring theory through narrative policy analysis, and bring it to bear on the agenda-setting and negotiation process.

Prior to examining the separate theoretical postulates, an overview of the conceptual framework delineating the dynamic mechanisms through which identity is connected via narratives and problem structuring to a plausible eastward enlargement explanation is presented in Figure 1.

The rationale behind this figure's conceptual map of mechanisms is that there is no simple one-way relationship between identity, narrative, problem structuring and enlargement, but rather each is a condition of the other and each affects the other in a continuing iterative process. The explanatory power of the theoretical framework is the underlying dialectic of the internal conflict and unity of opposites

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
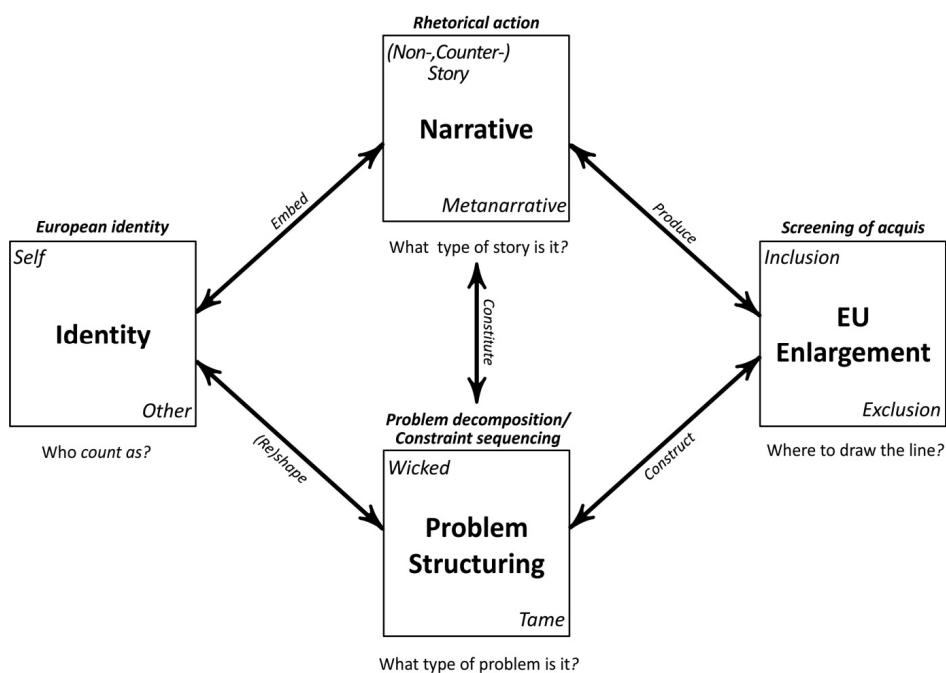
(*Self*/*Other*; [*Non-*, *Counter-*]*Story*/*Metanarrative*; *Wicked*/*Tame* problem; *Inclusion* versus *Exclusion*).

We build on the thesis that it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities, a sense of a collective 'Self'/'We' as distinct from one or more collective 'Others', and thus make sense of and position ourselves in the world. Narratives, thus, embed identities, and struggle over narratives is struggle over identities, since they articulate social realities (Somers, 1994: 631). Narratives also serve a productive function, as we are influenced in our actions also by the structural context we are embedded in and by the stories through which we create our identities. Narrativity mediates between description of our (situated) identity and prescription of appropriate actions (Ricoeur, 1994: 113ff). Stories guide action, to paraphrase a famous dictum[3]: 'First we make our stories, then our stories make us'.

Identities, like narratives, can only be understood relationally – the full meaning of *A* reveals itself only in contrast to *not-A*. Hence the question: 'How can an

---

[3] *'First we make our habits, then our habits make us'* (Charles C. Noble).

individual understand oneself if there is nothing not oneself?' (Hopf, 1959: 7). The *Self* and the *Other* are mutually necessary, in that, when making sense of the others, an individual needs a concept of his/her own identity, and the identity of the others to make sense of oneself (Jaspers, 1960: 147).

Problem structuring and framing is perhaps the single most important way of political storytelling. In getting a social group's collective problem recognized as needing political action, demand articulation and agenda-setting arguably are 'obligatory passage points' in the political process. Politics is the public arena and agora for disputes over the ways of framing political judgments on collective problems and public policies for coping with these problems. Hence, the pivotal importance of *problem framing* and *structuring* as political resources. Put simply, one has a 'problem' when one posits a gap between the situation 'as is' and 'as it ought to be' as unacceptable. This means convincing others that your problem framing merits support. In that sense, narrativity and identity are *constitutive* of political problem structuring. You have to tell a credible story about your predicament in order to have a reasonable claim on others.

The credibility of problem stories varies. Depending on the degree of political agreement on normative claims at stake, and the degree of (scientific, professional, practical) certainty on relevant and available knowledge, problem stories hover between 'tame' and 'wicked'. A *'tame' problem* is like a puzzle; however complex, the pieces of the puzzle are fixed, and there is just one configuration of pieces that represents a 'solution'. This solution usually can be found through standardized methods of applied science or the routines of professional practice. In the case of *'wicked' problems*, the problem story is one of widespread discomfort with the status quo, yet persistent high uncertainty about the validity of knowledge claims and high preference volatility in mass and elite opinions, or strongly divisive, even community-threatening conflict over values at stake. There is dissent and conflict over which pieces belong to the puzzle; and over which arrangement of the pieces means 'solving' the puzzle. Inchoate or shifting identities and incomplete (non-)stories and many different counter-stories are all over the place without coming to some stable alignment.

In this paper, it is through proposals for enlargement and the narratives the different actors tell about themselves (identities) and their problems (problem structuring) that this identity is reinforced in the enlargement discourse on *inclusion* and *exclusion* as a member of the EU. How enlargement stories and policies mean (Yanow, 1996) is produced and translated in redrawing the borders of 'Europe'. Such borders, as Klaus Eder (2006) maintains, can be hard and soft facts, meaning political struggle over objective/subjective borders of defining who the Europeans are, who '*count as*', '*where to draw the lines of inclusion and exclusion*'.

Given that this paper takes a holistic yet context-specific approach, one beyond the traditional, rational, individualistic view, in the sections to follow we summarise what the research on identity, narrativity and problem structuring hypothesizes in relation to enlargement. Ultimately, our aspiration is to provide the necessary conceptual bridge, specify the social mechanisms (*European identity*, *rhetorical action*, *problem decomposition/constraint sequencing* and *screening of acquis*), and bring the pieces together in an effort to make sense of the entire enlargement puzzle (see Figure 5 on p. 67).

2.1. Social Identity Theory

The first theory we draw upon is Social Identity Theory (SIT), which, applied to the EU enlargement process, holds that the strength of the European identity is the key variable in explaining the enlargement policy toward the applicant countries. The SIT's major thesis is that the stronger the members identify with the group, the less likely they are to support the inclusion of an outsider (Curley, 2009: 652). Thus, the criteria for an out-group member to join the group would be stricter, the stronger the members' sense of belonging to the group. The hypothesis is that the in-group members will insist on provision of more than just rational benefits for inclusion, because the applicants must also prove '*likeness*' to the group's identity. Therefore, although the enlargement debate appears to be about 'measuring' a candidate's readiness to become a group member – the so-called 'screening process', in reality it is about categorisation – who '*count as*' (Stone, 1997). This explains why rational theories *in isolation* will fail to account for the EU expansion.

In light of the above mentioned, scholars have found that people are more willing to open up to new identity-challenging information and more inclined to evaluate ideas otherwise threatening to their identity if they are allowed to confirm their overall sense of self-integrity (Cohen *et al*., 2007). Ironically, it seems that the building of an inclusive Europe will require from the individual citizens to weaken their European identity to allow applicants to join the group. Hence, based on these argumentations, it could be predicted that the enlargement would be possible as more than a mere give-and-take bargaining and negotiation of utility maximising member states. Moreover, it is said that people resist persuasion attempts based solely on pragmatic negotiations since to do otherwise would fundamentally violate their own sense of being. This begs the question whether the fifth enlargement round[4]

---

[4] The First EU enlargement in 1973 saw the inclusion of the UK, Ireland and Denmark. The second (Greece in 1981) and third (Spain and Portugal in 1986) enlargement rounds were the so-called Mediterranean enlargements. In 1995, Austria, Finland, and Sweden acceded to the EU marking its fourth enlargement. The Eastern enlargements in 2004 (Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary) and 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) formed the fifth enlargement.

should be viewed purely in material terms as a product of cost-benefit calculations of utility maximising actors and deeply embedded normative processes, or an alternative process in which preferences are not just given but shaped and changed in the pre-negotiation process, in a larger socio-political context and discourse.

2.2. Problem Structuring

In this research, we build upon the work of Hoppe (Hisschemöller & Hoppe, 1996; Hoppe, 2010), especially his work on the governance of problems. In this theory, he starts from a well-known and simple problem typology. Based on two dimensions – agreement on the values at stake, and degree of certainty about relevant and available knowledge – Hoppe identifies four types of problem structures: structured or '*tame*' problems when value consensus and informational certainty prevail; unstructured or '*wicked*' problems when both are absent; and two types of moderately structured problems for hybrid situations. The theory's major claim is that, depending on how political authorities, proximate policymakers and experts frame or structure the problem, different governance styles will prevail in tackling the problem. In the case of solidly structured problems, a *rule approach* to governance allows 'outsourcing' problem solving to bureaucratic or scientific/professional experts. In the case of unstructured problems, an *agonistic political governance style* will be chosen, allowing many types of stakeholders to play a role, perhaps with some opportunities for authentic debate and policy learning. When there is basic value consent but informational uncertainty, a combination strategy of *research and negotiation* (about accountability and expenses for risks or side-effects) between a limited number of stakeholders in a rather closed policy network will occur. Where pervasive ethical or normative ambiguity makes policy-making highly contested, a *conflict management* and *accomodationist style* of problem processing in a relatively closed and elitist policy network will be chosen.

Moving from framing the problem as '*wicked*' in the direction of '*tame*' is a prerequisite for coordinated collective action. That is one cause why political authorities and their proximate policymakers have a clear preference for more structured, 'domesticated' problems (Hoppe, 2010: 75-76). Such problem reframing or problem structuring (through *problem decomposition* and *constraint sequencing*) inevitably means reshaping the political narrative and, in some cases, also collective identities (*ibid.*: 67). Due to the information overload characteristic for political working environments, policy makers usually are cognitive misers who demonstrate a judgmental bias in favour of problems as structured or technical issues (*ibid.*). In the scientific literature, dominated by disciplinary paradigms, scholars have a bias in favour of assuming value consent, but information gaps to be closed through scientific research; hence a bias in defining policy problems as issues of maximising benefits under uncertainty. This tendency to present problems as objec-

tively given in both academia and practice need not be deliberate or even acknowledged, since it is inherent in their own belief systems and policy frames (Rein & Schon, 1991). However, it may lead to ignoring and screening out information that may complicate the policy problem (Hoppe, 2010; Hisschemöller & Hoppe, 1996). Precisely in this respect, Roe's narrative approach to policy analysis complements Hoppe's approach to policy-making as the (good) governance of problems, allowing the reformulation of intractable, wicked problems to make them more amenable to the conventional policy analytical approaches (Roe, 1994).

2.3. Roe's Narrative Policy Analysis

'What would a policy analysis look like if it started with stories rather than ended with them?' This question turned out to be a potent way to treat complex issues of high uncertainty (*ibid.*). By telling stories, we make sense of the events by assembling them in a sequential plot that helps us explain their relationship to other events. The transformation of difficulties into problems is said to 'take place in something of a black box prior to agenda formation' (Stone, 1989: 281). Policy problems as such do not have inherent properties; it is rather political actors who, in the process of policy-making, deliberately construct them in a particular way, in order to get those issues on the policy agenda or, alternatively, to keep them off (non-decision).

In the face of many unknowns, high uncertainty, and little or no agreement, a good deal of people naively resort to 'problem solving' strategies such as the mainstream dogmas of fact-value dichotomy and value neutral analysis. Roe rose up to the challenge and developed a new conceptual model with one basic rule: 'Never stray too far from the data, if you want to be useful' (1994: xii). In an attempt to make sense of the diverging perspectives, Roe proposed a four-step model that 'allows the reformulation of intractable policy problems in ways that make them more amenable to the conventional policy analytical approaches' (*ibid.*: 1). Instead of 'steering clear of political hot potatoes' (Hisschemöller & Hoppe, 1996: 41) and 'shying away' from political controversies, Roe's approach 'thrives' on the uncertainty, complexity, and polarization, accepts and puts them at the heart of his work, seeing them as 'the basis for action, not paralysis' (1994: 18). Correspondingly, from a narrative-analytical point of view, the question we are going to answer is: what are the stories behind the eastward enlargement of the EU?

Building on Roe's steps in narrative policy analysis and being interested in what drives the action of actors, how they make the 'normative leap' from '*is*' to '*ought*' (Schön and Rein, 1994), our goal is to reconstruct the conflicting narratives of *enlargement* contrary to *non-enlargement* told by EU member states; and we predict to find some *counter-stories* from accessing CEE-states, and a *metanarrative* used for enabling the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. We use the 2007

enlargement as a model example of a 'least likely' case in our attempt to capture the rich ambiguity of politics at play using the strategy to select either 'most likely' or 'least likely' cases to clearly confirm or falsify our theoretical propositions and hypotheses.

3. Research Design and Methods

3.1. Comparative Case Study

The approach employed in this research is based on multi-method qualitative research techniques. A comparison of 2004 and 2007 accession cohorts affords a valuable and novel analytical opportunity to reveal the (shifts in) structural relationships between frames, narratives and agenda-setting in the enlargement discourses. The comparative approach is inspired by the method of narrative policy analysis. It is the intention of this research to try and reconstruct the conflicting narratives of *enlargement* contrary to *non-enlargement*, which would be the *story* and the *non-story* respectively, by employing the general precept of semiotics: 'a thing is defined by what it is not' (Roe, 1994; Van Eeten, 1999). The research objective is to map the dualistic character of the enlargement discourses, and ultimately to reconstruct which story played the role of *metanarrative*; in this way we expect to uncover the hidden ideological and power structures behind the EU's decision to expand.

Building on Roe's theoretical and research method steps, the sequence in which the analysis will proceed is outlined in Figure 2:

Figure 2. Roe's (1994) Four-Step Model for Policy Analysis
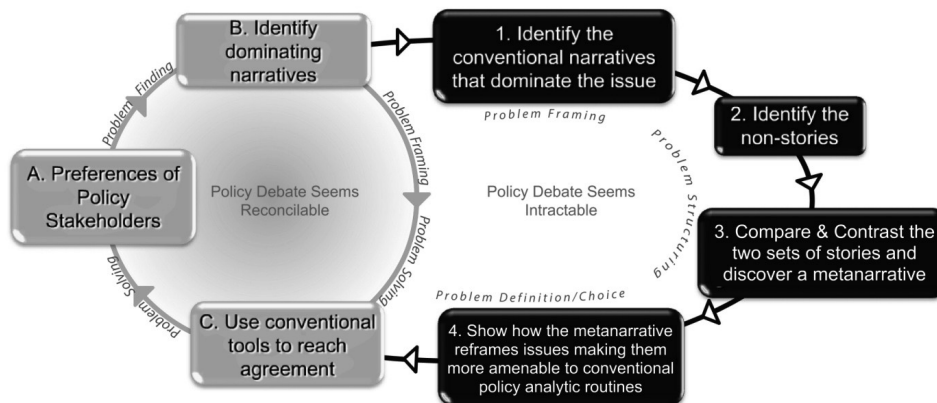
Source: Adapted from Bridgman & Barry, 2002

As can be noticed from Figure 2, if a problem is well-defined or structured, it is to be solved by standardized (quantitative) techniques and procedures. However, if a problem is ill-defined or 'wicked', 'technical methods for problem solving appear inadequate' (Hisschemöller & Hoppe, 1996: 43). Therefore, the analysis starts by asking the question: 'Is the problem highly contentious with no agreement on the values at stake?' If the answer is 'yes', as in the case of the eastward enlargement, then adopting Roe's framework for policy reconciliation as a predictive hypothesis can assist finding out how the issue was recast. Only after having reached a shared definition of the problem would applying the conventional tools for policy analysis make sense – in the case of the eastward enlargement, such conventional policy analytic techniques would be: progress measurement/monitoring against the standard of the '*acquis communautaire*', and inter-state bargaining for side-payments.

3.2. Cross-Case Comparison

A cross-case comparison between Bulgaria and Romania's accession processes with the '2004 accession class' enables us to analyse how the conceptual mechanisms link the identity narratives to the enlargement discourses. Indeed, if one follows the enlargement story from the beginning, it is clear that an important aspect of the negotiation game was the substantial degree of uncertainty and complexity that surrounded the enlargement debate. The principles, the rules of the game were not there at the beginning, but rather emerged gradually (not always in a linear fashion), as a result of an incremental deliberative process, and not a single decision. This 'learning by doing' approach to enlargement enabled the EU to revisit and adapt its strategy. The latter was already apparent with the introduction of safeguard clauses and post-accession conditionalities in the case of Bulgaria and Romania's accession, which was a major example of policy innovation in comparison to the previous enlargement rounds.

This pattern is a reversal of the usual logic of pre-fixed preferences assumed in the rationalist models of decision-making. It is of paramount importance for candidate and potential candidate countries to learn from the lessons of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, since there is sufficient evidence to support the argument that these two countries were already exposed to a tighter and stricter scrutiny than the 2004 accession class. Following the same line of analysis, we can come to see that this allows the EU further '*room for manoeuvre*' when setting the agenda in the pre--negotiation stage where the framing of the problem is potentially influential for the outcome of the negotiations.

In fact, the majority of the scholars have been busy comprehending the actual integration process, calculating side-payments (Schneider, 2009),[5] bargaining power

---

[5] Schneider introduces the concept of 'Discriminatory/differentiated membership' as a mechanism to redistribute enlargement gains and losses within the Union in order to compensate the enlargement losers.

(Moravcsik, 1993), active and passive leverage (Vachudova, 2005),[6] paying little attention to the pre-negotiation phase and agenda-setting. However, the member states *de facto* agreed to the enlargement well before the terms of accession were fixed and calculable; therefore, the agenda-setting was the crucial 'veto-point', the phase where the actual problem was framed and the preferences formed. The way the enlargement issue was framed had a real influence on how it was settled. Moreover, in the EU setting, problem definition determines whether the issue is in the sphere of 'high' or 'low' politics (Sedelmeier, 2005). Further, its construction as a more bureaucratic and technical issue ('low' politics) or a political one ('high' politics) will influence which institution(s) will process it, and therefore to some extent determine its fate. Having said that, going straight to the negotiation stage disregards the phase where the actual problem is forged, which may be the less publicly visible part of problem processing, but one that weighs heavily on the actual negotiation game. The actors, not due to their bargaining power but thanks to their framing capability, were able to influence the 'name of the game' (Friis, 1998): 'Who determines what the game is about, rules the country' (Schattschneider, 1960).

To see how this is done, the narrative analysis will proceed by four steps, identifying four narratives that underwrite and stabilise the issue that will be examined in the sections to follow.

4. Demonstrating the Story, Non-story, Counter-story and Meta-story

*Tell me your story, to tell you, who you are.*

The sections to follow will be organised in terms of deconstructing the enlargement narrative to its beginning, middle and end, forming the empirical part of this paper. Our aim is to recover those narratives, which are vehicles for making sense of the self and a way of applying order to the chaos, and see the things together as one-thing-after-another in the enlargement story.

4.1. The Enlargement Story Lines

Heretofore, the enlargement has been widely perceived as isolated episodes, 'waves', which tell us little or nothing about the EU construction as such. This came to be a reason to open the 'black box' of the collective decision-making and agenda-setting processes in order to understand how the pro-enlargement politics came about and to draw the continuum of events in the 'enlargement storyline' (Figure 3).

---

[6] By passive leverage Vachudova means: 'the attraction of EU membership' – soft power; and by active leverage: 'the deliberate conditionality exercised in the EU's pre-accession process' – i.e. hard/bargaining power.

Figure 3. The Story of the EU's Eastward Enlargement
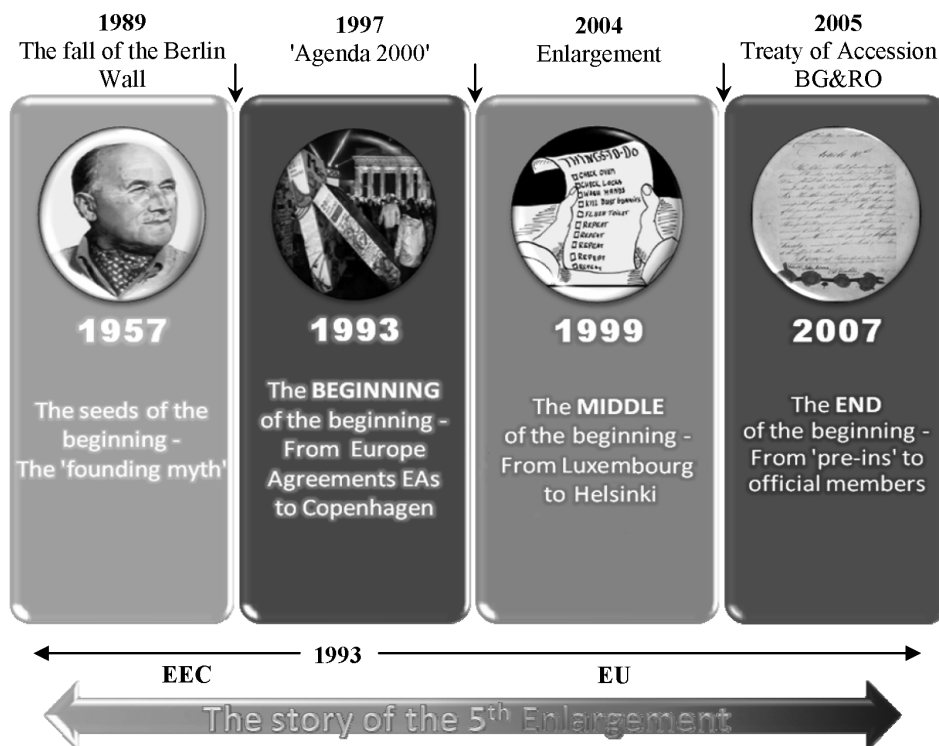
'To explain an event is to give an account of why it happened as it happened' (Elster, 1989); therefore, one way to understand an actor's behaviour is to deconstruct the process of discursive structuration – reconstruct the actor's stories of the issues that dominated the debate over the agenda-setting. This is what we turn to now.

4.1.1. Beginning of the Beginning – from EEC to EU

Researchers have been puzzled by the difficulty of identifying the exact moment when the decision to enlarge eastwards was taken. It would be fair to say that the demise of the Soviet Union and the shrinking of its ability to subjugate and control its Central and East European (CEE) satellites 'pulled the trigger' in the case of the eastward enlargement. Although it had not yet been formally announced, as early as January 1999 the enlargement decision had already been taken for granted, as the German Council President, Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher stated: 'History has already decided about the "if" of eastern enlargement, even though the "how" and "when" remain to be designed and decided' (*Die Zeit*, 21 January 1999, p. 3, quoted

in Fierke & Wiener, 1999). While earlier discourses had merely implied that enlargement was appropriate, it was the Copenhagen meeting (21-22 June 1993) that turned the discourse into a 'firmly articulated commitment to the CEECs' eventual accession'. (Sedelmeier, 2005). Indeed, as Sedelmeier maintains: 'Most EU documents (and academic writing) at later stages of the enlargement policy identify Copenhagen as the starting point of the enlargement process' (2005). In fact, the body of 'hard' evidence concerning the enlargement decision is very limited. From Europe Agreements (EAs) signed first with the Visegrád three (Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) in 1991, which formed the blueprint for accession, to the formal membership offer made at Copenhagen: 'Associated countries that wish to become full members of the Union will be admitted as soon as they satisfy the requisite political and economic conditions' (Council, 1993).

'In the run-up to the Copenhagen European Council, the decision in the Council focused mainly on trade concession and the institutional framework and did no longer seriously challenge the principle of membership' (Sedelmeier, 2005). However, the absence of any debate on enlargement at the Council meeting indicates that the decision had already been agreed upon, changing the game from one of '*whether or not to enlarge*' to '*how and when to enlarge*' (see Table 1 on p. 64 and Figure 5 on p. 67), thus moving the enlargement issue from Unstructured Problem (*UP*) to Moderately Structured Problem (goals) (*MSP-g*). Therefore, the Eastern enlargement 'looks like a typical non-decision: something, which just happened because nobody opposed it and about which we can find very little evidence' (Torreblanca, 2002). The explicit political message of membership promise matters not because it cost something not to comply with it, but because it became an objective in its own right, as stated in the preamble Treaty of the European Union, 'towards an ever closer Union': the enlargement was an end in itself. The act of changing its official denomination in 1991 from 'European Economic Community' to 'European Union' symbolises this commitment to unity. By establishing itself as a 'Union' and by the 'text' of the Copenhagen criteria through which the member states turn tacit knowledge of who they are and what they value into explicit criteria for membership, the EU paved the way to enlargement. As such, the Copenhagen criteria represent not just a 'rational' measurement for incorporation of non-members, but also a cogent representation of the EU's own self-identity, a way the member states tell themselves who they are. At the same time, these explicit criteria prepared and enabled *problem decomposition* in the later measurement/monitoring exercise of *'screening' the acquis communautaire* (see Figure 5 on p. 67).

In general, in this first stage of the enlargement story, the EU policy towards the CEE countries was neither to endorse nor to publicly reject the membership aspirations of the candidate countries and govern through the prospect of membership as the light at the end of the long transformation-tunnel.

4.1.2. Middle of the Beginning – Framing Accession as 'Objectivity' or 'Stability'?

Luxembourg is closer to Brussels than Helsinki both literally and symbolically. Despite having launched, on paper, a 'comprehensive, inclusive and ongoing enlargement process' with all twelve CEE and Mediterranean applicant states, in practice, only the 'Luxembourg six'[7] were invited to open accession negotiations in March 1998.

Not surprisingly, it was in the interest of the Commission to try and reduce the overload, faced with a situation of high uncertainty and parallel games, like the launching of the economic and monetary union (EMU), the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the negotiation of a deal with Turkey and Cyprus. The European Commission, in its attempt to cut through the uncertainty, framed its role as a 'force for good' and pledge for '*objective*', apolitical negotiations.

As the Commission later maintained, the framing of the 'number question' – how many applicants should be invited – gave the 'false' impression of creating two separate groups of applicant countries. This 'vulnerable' aspect of the Commission's *'objectivity' frame*, representing endorsement of the '*non-story*' (non-enlargement, or limited enlargement) was used by Sweden, Denmark and Italy to launch a competing frame (representing the '*story*' advocating for an inclusive, 'regatta' enlargement), whose mission, based on the inherent pan-European vocation, was to stabilise the continent (see Table 1 on p. 64). Hence, in line with the future vision of Europe (peace and stability), they proposed that 'the EU should open accession negotiations with all associated countries at the same time to avoid creating a new division of Europe' (Schimmelfennig, 2001). In their turn, the CEE countries, seeking to compensate for their inferior material bargaining power, referred to the enlargement as an issue of collective European identity, which lay less in the force of the law than in constructing a moral obligation and the concept of European social responsibility. By appealing to the very *raison d'être* of the community, the applicant states crafted in such a way their 'belonging to Europe' (the 'Return to Europe' *counter-story*) as to show 'likeness' to the European identity and compel those who openly oppose their entitlement to membership to consent or lose face among their peers.

The pressure on the Commission mounted as time went on and the Luxembourg Intergovernmental Conference drew closer. It tried to defend its position with the argument that '*differentiation does not mean discrimination*'. The German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, attempted to back up that argument by saying 'yes'

---

[7] The 'Luxembourg Six': Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus. The 'Helsinki Six': Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Malta.

to differentiation but 'no' to discrimination (AE 7057, 13 September 1997, quoted in Torreblanca, 2002). Before the Commission had launched its *'objectivity' frame*, those who supported limited enlargement were labelled enlargement 'sceptics' or defenders of self-interests. After the publication of Agenda 2000, however, the support for limited enlargement was legitimised as being the result of an impartial, apolitical and objective screening exercise. It is not surprising, therefore, that Agenda 2000 changed the nature of the enlargement game, since it limited the possibilities and was used by a number of member states to develop their preferences – like the UK and Germany, which, despite their support for inclusive vs. exclusive enlargement respectively, quickly came to support the Commission's 'objectivity' frame.

Following that sensitive discourse in the run-up to the Luxembourg Council, all the ministers were 'fretfully anxious' not to offend the uninvited. Once again, Jacques Santer, the Commission's President, proclaimed that 'differentiation is not discrimination' (*The Economist*, 30 October 1997). Quite strikingly, in the night of the forthcoming Council decision, the considerable competition between the '*objectivity*' vs. '*stability*' frame (*story* vs. *non-story*) had managed to 'rock the boat' under the Commission's position as many countries had weakened their support, since 'it was no longer just about a "natural, objective differentiation", but also about preventing new dividing lines' (Friis, 1998).

Now, the task was to 'search for some intermediate ways between the proposal of the Commission and the proposal to start negotiation with all the candidates' (Reuters, 27 October 1997). The considerable time-pressure for finding a 'middle ground' (*metanarrative*) between the '5+1 model' and the all-inclusive 'regatta option' made it possible for two rather small countries like Sweden and Denmark to change the nature of the enlargement game. Again by suppressing dissensus and leading it to result in the adoption of the principle of 'non-discrimination' and 'relative merit' by the Luxembourg Council. This policy culminated when, in Luxembourg, the Council pointed out that 'all these States are destined to join the European Union on the basis of the same criteria and that they are participating in the accession process on an equal footing. The process will be evolutive and inclusive' (Council, 1997).

4.1.3. End of the Beginning – Rhetorically Entrapped

> *In the world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.*
>
> Oscar Wilde

As with many historical events, it might appear now that the accession of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU in 2007 was a routine 'procedural' conclusion of the 2004 enlargement round, and therefore inevitable. However, we should not forget that

'not too long ago, it was far from taken for granted that the enlargement would happen at all, let alone that it will happen when it did' (Sedelmeier, 2005). The decision to open membership negotiations was not simply the result of 'history-making' decisions at Copenhagen, Luxembourg or Helsinki. Rather, it was the result of an incremental, evolutionary process, which proved increasingly hard to reverse with each consecutive step (*constraint sequencing* mechanisms). The crucial step that sparked this cumulative process of expansion was reached in a deliberative way, beginning with the formal endorsement of the CEECs' membership perspective at the Copenhagen Council in June 1993. At Helsinki in December 1999, the Council decided to open accession negotiations with the remaining candidates: Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia and Romania (the 'Helsinki six'). The European Council 'reaffirms the inclusive nature of the accession process' (Council, 1999); it marked a crucial stage in the negotiation process because opening negotiations implied willingness to conclude them.

Although the immediate aftermath of the Luxembourg compromise was largely symbolic, since, after all, only the 'Luxembourg six' entered into concrete accession negotiations in March 1998. In an interview, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Ivan Kostov, stated: '*I think that we were just formally put on the agenda of the accession process*. We knew it was like that, but that was an advance, *it was an advance gesture*.'[8] The official status of 'pre-ins' in the accession process probably created some institutional momentum, which paved the way to 25 April 2005, when Bulgaria and Romania officially signed their Accession Treaties.

It was the President of the European Commission who amplified this approach when, in his proposal to the Parliament in October 1999, he said: 'The Copenhagen criteria are so fundamental that the European Council meeting in Luxembourg and Cologne recommended opening further accession negotiations only with countries which meet them. If we apply this recommendation to the letter, it rules out opening negotiations with most of the remaining applicant countries since they do not fully meet the economic criteria. *The risk in taking this "hard line" approach is that the countries concerned, having already made great efforts and sacrifices, will become disillusioned and turn their backs on us*. Their economic policies will begin to diverge, and an *historic opportunity will have been lost – perhaps forever*. In the changed political landscape of Europe, especially *in the Balkan region, some countries may also let slip the progress they have made towards democracy and human rights, and the European Union will have seriously failed the people of those countries*' (rp 00/62, 2000 [14 June]; our emphasis).

---

[8] http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=311&film_ID=8&slide_ID=3

Accordingly, the Commission recommended to the European Council that the negotiations should start with the remaining 'second wave' candidates in 2000. The Helsinki European Council 'confirms the importance of the enlargement process launched in Luxembourg in December 1997 for the stability and prosperity of the entire European continent'. The Council articulated that 'an efficient and credible enlargement process *must* be sustained' (Council, 1999). Thus, having adopted the key recommendations of the Commission's accession strategy, the negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania were opened in February 2000. In such a way, the policy advocates achieved influence by affecting the structure of the discourse. They reinforced a discourse of collective, 'special' responsibility *vis-à-vis* the CEE countries, which implied certain legitimate limitations. Thereafter, the enlargement gradually made its way to the top of the EU's political agenda, as the debates in the European Parliament on the day preceding the assent to Bulgaria and Romania's membership manifested: '*It is also a political agreement of some sort* with the accession candidates. It *sends a message* to them that in the next 18 months, they will be high on our list of priorities, and that it is their own commitment that will eventually be decisive' (Parliament, 2005 [12 April]). This is an illustration of the '*rhetorical action*' – the strategic use of norm-based arguments, to borrow the term from Schimmelfennig (2001). In the institutional environment of the EU, this resulted in the '*rhetorical entrapment*' of those members who openly opposed the enlargement as they felt obliged to behave in a certain way in order to preserve their credibility as community members (see Figure 5 on p. 67).

This argument most clearly resonated in the words of the Greek politician Georgios Karatzaferis in his address to the European Parliament the day before it gave 'green light' to Bulgaria and Romania's accession: 'Mr President, is the question which arises whenever new countries join merely numerical and financial? *In other words, is it only a question of cost, deficit, growth and production or is it also a cultural question?* Is it perhaps also a social question? Romania and Bulgaria clearly do not have the European rate of growth or social justice. They lost forty-five years, which we signed away when we sent them to the Soviet Union. Roosevelt and Churchill both put their signatures alongside that of Stalin. We therefore owe them forty-five years' backlog in social development and economic growth. We must now therefore give them back what we owe them without grumbling; we must stretch out our hand and pull them into European society. We owe it to the civilisation, to the culture of Europe. *Let us not only look at the dry figures. Dry figures are for technocrats. Numbers do not build republics, they build banking institutions, but we here are building the European republic, the European idea.* Let us therefore vote in favour, because *it is necessary for the breadth of Europe, it is necessary for these new ideas with which we need to endow Europe*' (Parliament, 2005 [12 April]; our emphasis).

To round this story off, let us use the words of the British politician Peter Beaz-ley: 'Therefore, I will be voting in favour. *It is most important to give the right message* not only to the Romanian authorities but also to the Romanian population. *This is not the end of the story, of course; after accession we need to continue to work*' (Parliament, 2005 [12 April]).

4.2. Constructing the Meta-narrative

The best place to begin our analysis, says Roe (1994: 53), is 'those policy narratives that populate the lives of policymakers and analysts', which were the focus in the preceding section. Building on it, the enlargement controversy is dominated by two competing sets of narratives, one that closely conforms to the conventional definition of a *story* **(all-inclusive enlargement)**, and the other that was essentially its critique in the form of a *non-story* **(non- or limited enlargement)** (see Table 1 on p. 64). Neither of the two, however, was able to gain sufficient support and credibility. Therefore, in order to make the relations among them visible, we will use the semiotic square. Such a move will decouple the enlargement/non-enlargement deadlock by applying the idea on which the semiotic square operates, namely that to understand the real meaning of a position one needs to analyse the contrary and contradictory positions. This way, by enabling comparison between the arguments, the semiotic square allows us to connect them in a more fruitful way and define an alternative agenda, the *metanarrative*, that is a crosswalk and mediates between the polarised positions.

Let us now turn to the examination of those stories in more detail and see how the semiotic square can help us 'make sense of the diverging perspectives' of the enlargement discourse in such a way as to come up with proposals on how they were actually connected.

Figure 4. Semiotic Square on the EU's Eastward Enlargement Policy
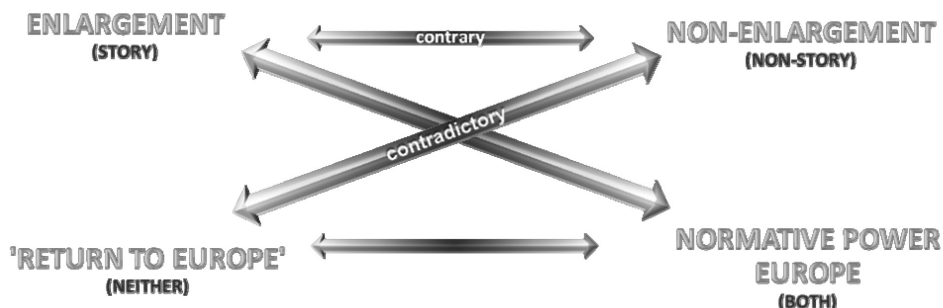
As can be seen, we are confronted with two arguments, each of which is valid on its own terms and points to opposing implications for action. If we read the first opposition to be about whether or not to enlarge, then we can see how the two other alternatives of '*Return to Europe*' and *Normative Power Europe* (NPE) emerge from that opposition. If we take the 'number issue', that is, with how many applicant states to open enlargement negotiations, which dominated the beginning stages of the debate, we can see that each of the four narratives has 'very different policy implications, even when they appear to ask for the same measures' (Van Eeten, 2007: 261) (see Table 1 on p. 64).

From the *enlargement narrative*, the number question is translated into the 'regatta approach' – comprehensive and inclusive enlargement, which is essentially the *'security' frame* advanced by Sweden, Denmark and Italy in the pre-Luxembourg enlargement game. On the other hand, for the *non-enlargement narrative*, the inclusive nature of the 'regatta' process would never be on the agenda; rather the enlargement would be conceived as limited and restricted to only a small number of countries. In essence, the framing of the problem would mirror the *'objectivity' frame* advanced by the Commission. The real question for the '*Return to Europe*' narrative does not revolve around the number of accession countries. Instead the focal point is to 'overcome the divisions of Europe', as stated by the Polish chief negotiator: 'The technocratic approach is not enough in these negotiations, which have a historic goal: give Europe back to Poland, and Poland back to Europe' (Europe 5456, 21 March 1991). In contrast to the other narratives, the dominant storyline from the '*Normative Power Europe*' is not about whether or not to enlarge, but as declared during the debates in the Parliament prior to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU: 'This enlargement enables us to extend the domain of stability, peace and prosperity to Romania and Bulgaria. It enables us to spread the values of Europe, which is based on democracy, pluralism and the rule of law' (European Parliament, 2005 [12 April]).

In mapping the relations between the arguments in a semiotic square, we come to see how enlargement and non-enlargement conflict, but also how they affect each other and intertwine. Let us now turn to separate examination of each of the narratives that dominated the issue, since how they are read deserves more analytical attention.

4.2.1. Enlargement Story

This story is grounded in the idea that the only remedy to the 'tragedy of Europe', as Sir Winston Churchill once mused, is to 're-create the European family'. This scenario, as illustrated in the preceding section, is a succession of events and, like stories in general, has a beginning, middle and end. The rhetoric of the enlargement story goes as far as the definition of the problem, for naming is also an exercise of

framing. Once a policy terrain has been named – 'enlargement', the name seems natural. As Einstein once wrote: 'the formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill'.

Therefore, one of the main problems with the enlargement is the very word itself, since it framed the reality by selecting some aspects of it, making them more salient and suggesting an appropriate course of action and framework for analysis. The demand for enlargement stems also from its availability; the very existence of the possibility to enlarge is the first step in promoting change, since 'the decision that something needs to be done often creates preferences rather than vice versa' (Richardson, 2001: 88).

The main message of the enlargement narrative, that of the community's growing integration, is signalled also by the symbolic act of name change from 'European Economic Community' to 'European Union'.

The enlargement narrative is only one part of the story, however. Had that not been the case, the enlargement would indeed be only a matter of efficiency – how to enlarge to include more countries with minimal resources. Nevertheless, the temptation to reduce the uncertainty and simplify the complexity would not carry the day, since to understand a position one needs to understand what it is not. Let us now turn to see how such contrast did help transform the uncertainties into alternatives to be debated.

4.2.2. Non-enlargement Non-story

The enlargement story had a story line, the analogue of which their opponents' story, the non-enlargement narrative, did not have. This camp entirely defines itself in terms of being opposed to the other. Although it may seem like a conventional story, since it is a point-by-point rebuttal of the enlargement story and closely mirrors its structure, the non-enlargement is not an argument, but a reaction against; it could not be read independently, while the other narrative could. In this sense, the non-story tells us what to be against without completing the argument as to what we should be for (Van Eeten, 1999). However, it should be noted that this does not mean that the non-enlargement argument is less logical or does not square with the facts; both are equally plausible, that is why we are offered the possibility for comparison and evaluation.

The most widespread counterargument of the non-enlargement supporters is that 'widening' might dilute the achieved level of supranational integration and impede its further 'deepening' (Schimmelfennig, 2003). However, as Sedelmeier maintains: 'After the Commission formally put the proposal to endorse membership perspective "on the table", none of the delegations in the Council disputed it

openly' (2005: 179). This was puzzling from a rationalist point of view and points to the underlying moral dimension in the enlargement/non-enlargement discourse. According to the memoirs of the French President Mitterrand's adviser, Védrine: 'Mitterrand considered himself in a *morally awkward situation* as long as he resisted the pressure of the German and the Central and Eastern European governments to consent to enlargement. Therefore, the French government *felt obliged* to declare its official support to the CEECs' membership aspirations' (quoted in Schimmelfennig, 2001).

This double bind situation for those who opposed the enlargement, on the one hand by the CEE governments ('*Return to Europe*' counter-story), on the other hand by the drivers inside the union ('*Enlargement*' story), restricted the non-enlargement narrative from developing into a full-fledged story.

4.2.3. 'Return to Europe' Counter-story

After having listened to the two main 'voices' in the enlargement/non-enlargement controversy, we turn to a third story being told, that of the 'Return to Europe'. In contrast to the other narratives, the dominant storyline here is not about whether or not to enlarge, but that in fact there is nothing to be decided. The crux of the argument, as stated by Jacques Delors, is: 'Believe me, this ritual opposition between "widening" and "deepening" is not the key issue. **In reality, we have no choice.**' The pleaded 'return to Europe' was no longer seen as an ideological gesture, but as an act of restoring nature.

Rationalists would argue that the 'return to Europe' is purely a linguistic device, hollow rhetoric with no real persuasive force. However, while once understood as 'just cheap talk', nowadays scholars recognise that talking is a form of doing and begin to see the importance of speech-acts.

The concept of 'return to Europe', however, does not go far enough, when seen as the only interpretation of the relationship between Bulgaria, Romania and the EU. In the next section, we will argue that its limitations could potentially be overcome by bringing the concepts of enlargement and non-enlargement together in forming the *metanarrative*.

4.2.4. 'Normative Power Europe' Meta-story

'Normative Power Europe' is first and foremost a discourse in which EU actors themselves construct an image of themselves as 'model citizens'. By placing the universal liberal democratic norms at the centre of its relations with member and applicant states, the EU has the power to shape the conception of the 'normal'. The so-called Copenhagen criteria can be seen as a prominent example of the political, economic and administrative standards imposed by the EU to 'screen' if the prospective members 'count as' eligible candidates. Those criteria serve to 'spell out

what the EU is (or is supposed to be) and therefore what candidate countries should become' (Diez, 2005).

Hence, the EU is said to lead by example, by setting standards for the world and changing others, not by military force but by normative power. As Diez aptly put it: 'Europe is called upon to embark on a "mission civilisatrice"' (2005). Indeed, the accession process was quintessentially the supreme exercise of power: '*A* may exercise power over *B* by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants' (Lukes, 2005).

The paradox of the EU's normative power, however, is that the candidate member states ended up wanting the wrong thing: they want membership in the Union, while the EU wants them to have the same norms and values. The EU has tried to find a way out of the enlargement/non-enlargement conundrum by establishing 'objective' criteria in the form of an institutionalised body of norms for 'admission' to the Union.

An interesting question about the role of enlargement as a vehicle for the Union's normative power is: will the EU become a form of Panopticon, to borrow the concept coined by Foucault, in that it 'scans' the societies for signs of deviance with the potential threat of 'punishment' by exclusion? In the same line of reasoning, has the exercise of power become automatic in the sense that the 'prisoners', the applicant states started to be their own 'supervisor', 'the principle of [their] own subjection' (Foucault, 1977)? As Lazar Comanescu, having front-line experience of the process as Romanian ambassador to the EU, phrases it: 'Perhaps the main effect of the prospect of EU membership has been its role as an anchor of the reform process. *The drive to join the EU has been one of the most powerful incentives for undertaking major reforms* in all candidate countries' (ERSTE, 2008).

In conclusion, from a narrative analytical point of view, what is interesting is not so much whether Europe is a normative power or not, but how it is constructed as one. By no means did the EU Commission President Barroso acknowledge the EU's 'soft' power when he asserted: 'The simple fact is, enlargement has always been a potent tool for spreading peace, democracy and prosperity to all corners of our continent. As a Portuguese, I know that.'

Our purpose in this section was to apply the four-step model of narrative analysis, developed by Roe (1994), to a historical case in order to recast the intractable issue of the eastward enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania, and discover the mechanisms of the EU enlargement apparatus. The outcome of the four steps is summarised in Table 1 on the next page, making transparent the logic of the narrative analysis. The 'double compare-and-swap' logic laid down in the matrix table affords a double comparison of what the EU member states, on the one hand, thought

on the candidate countries both in 2004 and in 2007, and on the other hand, what the accession-seeking countries thought on themselves in terms of identity, narrativity problem structuring and EU enlargement.

Table 1. Theoretical Structure of Cross-case Comparison between the Accession Processes of BG & RO with the 2004 Accession Cohort

	Member states on 2004 accession	**Member states on 2007 accession**	**Accession states (2004) on themselves**	**BG & RO on themselves**
Identity	A Strong self vs. non-self[9]	A^{I} Weakened EU identity[10]; suppression of non-self	A^{II} Internal others 1st (Central Europe), historical others 2nd (Baltic states)	A^{III} Historical others 1st, internal others 2nd
Narrativity	X Story vs. non-story → counter-story[11]	X^{I} Counter-story: Return to Europe	X^{II} Counter-story: Return to Europe	X^{III} Metanarrative: Normative Power Europe
Problem structuring	Y UP → MSP-g[12]	Y^{i} MSP-g → SP	Y^{II} MSP-g	Y^{III} MSP-g
EU enlargement	Z Accession, minimal conditions	Z^{I} Accession, strong conditions[13]	Z^{II} Accession, preferences	Z^{III} Accession, preferences

A, X, Y, and Z are different 'states of the world' as defined by resp. SIT, Narrative Policy Analysis, Problem Structuring theory, and (substance of) EU Enlargement decision.

---

[9] The acceding countries perceived as essentially non-self or EU's 'Other'.

[10] Citizens are to weaken their European identity in order to allow applicants to join the group.

[11] The competition between the **story** (Enlargement narrative/'*stability frame*') and the **non--story** (Non-enlargement /'*objectivity frame*') brought forth the **'Return to Europe'** ('*there is nothing to be decided*') counter-narrative – from thesis vs. antithesis, through counter-thesis to synthesis (**'Normative Power Europe'**).

[12] The framing of the enlargement shifted from Unstructured Problem ('*whether to enlarge*') to Moderately Structured Problem-goals ('*we should enlarge*'); later developed into a Structured Problem (Copenhagen criteria).

[13] The demand for additional safeguard and postponement clauses to BG and RO's Treaties of Accession.

5. Discussion

Having listened to both sides of the enlargement story, one begins to understand that there is more to a story than both sides. Only after having examined all the stories that actually populated the enlargement debate, can they start to take on meaning. By combining the stories that the different actors in the enlargement debate told, we can 'make sense of them together' (Hoppe, 1999), begin to discern patterns, and uncover under the narrative disguise the thin discourses of power beneath the surface (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Hidden Stories in the EU's Eastward Enlargement

WHY EU'S ENLARGEMENT IS POLITICAL

1. Enlargement requires decisions about categorizing, about what (or whom) to include and exclude.

2. Enlargement depends on normative constructions of 'normality' that are hidden deep inside a complex 'screening' process.

3. Enlargement can be ambiguous, and so leave room for political struggles to control its interpretation.

4. Enlargement can create the illusion that a very complex and ambiguous phenomenon is simple, countable, and precisely defined (ex. Copenhagen criteria).

5. Enlargement can create political communities out of people who share some trait that has been counted ('they' the new/old members).

6. Enlargement aids negotiation and compromise by making intangible qualities seem divisible.

7. Enlargement, by seeming to be so precise, helps bolster the authority of those who hold the membership definition.

The source of inspiration for this table is derived from Stone (1997: 176).

In the final stages of the EU accession, one is left with the impression that the entire process was essentially about dimes. However, this is only a small, readily visible part of a much broader picture. At the end of the day, we are left with the somewhat frustrating impression that we must make a choice between rationalist and constructivist conceptions. However, we have to recognise that this is a false choice. In this sense, we do not abandon the rationalist explanation, but rather show the exact place of its 'piece' in the entire puzzle (Figure 5 on p. 67). We argue that

redistribution of enlargement gains and losses, compensations and side-payments is 'the thick of the thin thing' – the formal completion of what has already been decided and defined. The novelty of this paper concentrates on providing an insight into the mechanics of the EU enlargement, and yields knowledge and understanding of the enlargement as a power play, one that depends on normative categorizations of 'normality' that are hidden inside a complex 'screening' process, which is a claim about similarities/differences.

In this sense, the Copenhagen criteria's apparently solid ground is no rock, but thin air – it emerges out of a political *milieu*. Moreover, we should not forget that the real price of the enlargement was not financial but political. Narrowly defined material considerations, institutional and financial bargaining was secondary, as the enlargement was primarily about paradigms, interests and power politics. Having said that, no story is innocent, as stories are the seedlings of realities – you sow an identity, you reap an action; you sow an action, you reap a story; you sow a story, you reap a history. The moral of the story is that if you do not control your story, your story will control what you do. That is what happened to the EU – it has lost the plot of its story, and thus ended up rhetorically entrapped to assent to the 'rightful Return to Europe' of the former communist satellite states. The EU ended up trapped argumentatively in the narratives constructed by the accession-seeking countries and the drivers inside the union, or else forced to admit the hypocrisy of its formal pan-European discourse, which can affect negatively the credibility and the legitimacy of the community.

Our conclusion then is twofold: (1) in the pre-negotiation phase, the rhetorical entrapment mechanism generated normative consent and successfully suppressed enduring normative contestation and ambiguity; (2) in the negotiation phase, the deal was finally closed through (a) reframing the accession problem as normalization through readiness-testing (screening of progress in terms of 'acquis communautaire') and (b) negotiating side-payments to compensate risks.

As can be observed in Figure 5, in the case of the EU enlargement, problem restructuring, aligned to properties of identity construction and narrativity, made the issue more amenable to conventional (rational) analysis in four ways: it

1) encouraged normative consensus (*European identity* mechanism);

2) discouraged self-interested dissensus (*rhetorical action* mechanism);

3) made measurement of 'progress' in terms of acquis possible (*problem decomposition and constraint sequencing*);

4) enabled political bargaining about compensations and side-payments (*screening of acquis*).

Figure 5. Mechanisms of the EU Enlargement Apparatus
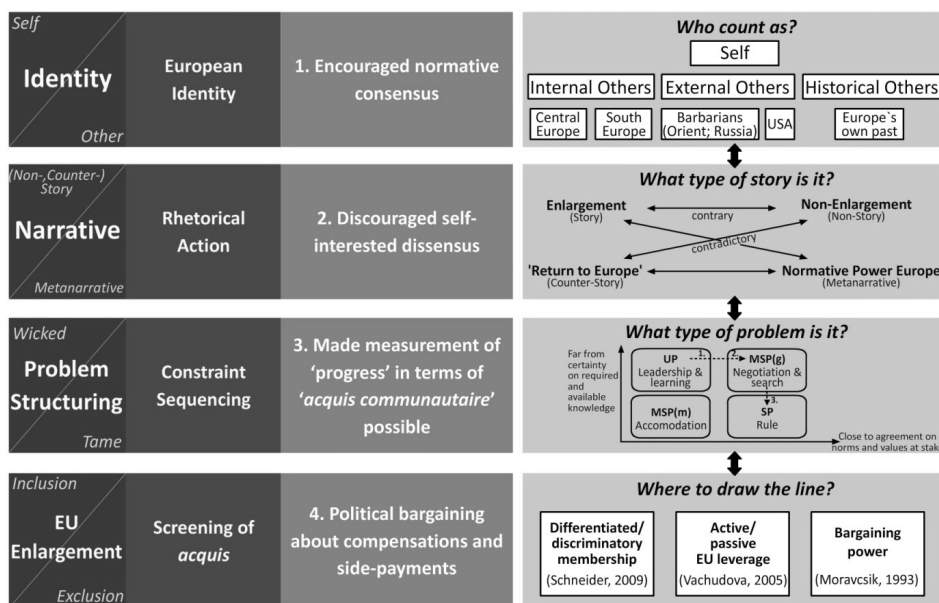
None of the first four rounds of enlargement had been undertaken primarily for security reasons. However, that security was uppermost in the minds of the EU-15 started to surface in the case of Bulgaria and Romania. Thus, it is to be expected that many of the elements that characterised the accession of the CEE countries (*economic*, *political*, *institutional* transformation) will shape again the reform process in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Moreover, the enlargement of the EU to the Western Balkans can be seen in the same context as the fifth enlargement, though with the significant factor of the Balkan wars of the 1990s, and the lack of the moral responsibility component in the case of Turkey. This is already evident in the Commission's approach, where under the framework of the 'European Neighbourhood Policy' (ENP), additional conditionalities such as the 'good neighbourliness' clause and full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal on former Yugoslavia (ICTY) are already being imposed.

In comparative terms, with the narrative shifting from the success story of enlargement to the new story of the ENP, the European 'carrot', the attractiveness of Europe's soft power, seems to be dwindling away.

A closing remark for this section is that although much ink has been spilled studying the enlargement process, priority has been given to *problem solving*, thus

paying attention only to the tip of the iceberg, while ignoring what is below the surface, namely *problem finding* (Hoppe, 2010: 25). This research contributes to the discussion by adding another component to the enlargement discourse, the taken for granted agenda-setting, the framing and possible manipulation of which can be studied through examination of the stories, myths, language and symbols used in the enlargement debate. We believe an important avenue for future research is to investigate how the definition and structuring of policy problems affects the integration process. More attention should be devoted to the *agenda-setting* and *problem--finding* processes, as the theory is devoid of hypotheses of what puts enlargement on the agenda.

Eventually, the truth always wins, but whose and which truth?

REFERENCES

Anderson, B., 1995: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London.

Bebler, A., 1999: Slovenia and NATO Enlargement, *International Journal* (55): 125--136.

Bechev, D., 2004: Contested Borders, Contested Identity: The Case of Regionalism in South East Europe, *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* (4) 1: 77-96.

Bridgman, T. & Barry, D., 2002: Regulation is evil: An application of narrative policy analysis to regulatory debate in New Zealand, *Policy Sciences*, 35: 141-161.

Cohen *et al*., 2007: Bridging the Partisan Divide: Self-Affirmation Reduces Ideological Closed-Mindedness and Inflexibility in Negotiation, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (93) 3: 415-430.

Council, 1990 [28 April]: *The Community and German unification, Communication from the Commission to the special session of the European Council Dublin. Based on SEC (90) 751, 20 April 1990.*

Council, 1993: *Copenhagen European Council.*

Council, 1997: *Luxembourg European Council (12-13 December 1997), Presidency Conclusions.*

Council, 1999: *Helsinki European Council (10-11 December 1999), Presidency Conclusions.*

Curley, T. M., 2009: Social Identity Theory and EU Expansion, *International Studies Quarterly* (53): 649-668.

Diez, T., 2005: Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 33: 613-636.

Dunn, W. N., 2008: *Public policy analysis: an introduction* (4th ed.), Pearson/Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Eder, K., 2006: Europe's Borders The Narrative Construction of the Boundaries of Europe, *European Journal of Social Theory* (9) 2: 255-271.

Elster, J., 1989: *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Elster, J., 2007: *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

European Commission, 2007: *Understanding Enlargement, The European Union's Enlargement Policy.*

European Parliament, 2005 [12 April]: *Debate in the European Parliament on the applications for accession of Bulgaria and Romania.*

Fierke, K. & Wiener, A., 1999: Constructing institutional interests: EU and NATO enlargement, *Journal of European Public Policy* (6) 5: 721-742.

Fischer, F. & Forester, J., 1993: Editors' introduction. In: F. Fischer & J. Forester (eds), *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, Duke University Press, Durham: 1-17.

Foucault, M., 1990: *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, Vintage, New York.

Friis, L., 1998: 'The End of the Beginning' of Eastern Enlargement – Luxembourg Summit and Agenda-setting, *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)* (2) 7: 1-15.

Hajer, M. & Wagenaar, H., 2003: *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in Network Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Hisschemöller, M. & Hoppe, R., 1996: Coping with intractable controversies: the case for problem structuring in policy design and analysis, *Knowledge and Policy* (8) 4: 40-60.

Hisschemöller, M., Hoppe, R., Dunn, W. & Ravetz, J., 2001: *Knowledge, Power, and Participation in Environmental Policy Analysis*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey.

Hopf, T., 1959: *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*, Cornell University Press, New York.

Hoppe, R., 2010: *The Governance of Problems. Puzzling, Powering, Participation*, Policy Press, Bristol.

Jaspers, K., 1960: *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.

Jupille *et al.*, 2003: Integrating Institutions: Rationalism, Constructivism, and the Study of the European Union, *Comparative Political Studies* (36) 7: 7-40.

Kuneva, M., 2001: *Future of the Enlarged European Union*, European Institute, Sofia.

Lecheler, S., 2010: Framing Serbia: the effects of news framing on public support for EU enlargement, *European Political Science Review* (2) 1: 73-93.

Lindblom, C. & Cohen, D., 1979: Usable knowledge: Social science and social problem solving. New Haven: Yale University Press. In: M. Hisschemöller & R. Hoppe, *Coping with Intractable Controversies: The Case for Problem Structuring in Policy Design and Analysis*, Yale University Press, New Haven: 40-60.

Lindstrom, N., 2003: Between Europe and the Balkans: Mapping Slovenia and Croatia's 'Return to Europe' in the 1990s, *Dialectical Anthropology*, 27: 313-329.

Lukes, S., 2005: *Power: A Radical View*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Marsh, D. & Smith, M., 2000: Understanding Policy Networks: towards a Dialectical Approach. *Political Studies*, 48: 4-21.

McKee, R., 1997: *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting*, Harper-Collins, New York.

Moravcsik, A., 1993: Preferences and power in the European Community: A liberal inter-governmentalist approach. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31: 473-524.

Parliament, 2005 [12 April]: *Debates concerning the applications for accession of Bulgaria and Romania.*

Rein, M. & Schon, D. A., 1991: Frame-reflective discourse Modern States. In: P. Wagner, C. H. Weiss, B. Wittrock & H. Wollman, *Social sciences, modern states, national experiences and theoretical crossroads*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 262-289.

Richardson, J., 2001: *European Union, Power and policy-making* (2nd ed.), Routledge, London.

Ricoeur, P., 1992: *Oneself as Another*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

Roe, E., 1994: *Narrative Policy Analysis: Theory and Practice*, Duke University, London.

rp 00/62, 2000 [14 June]: *EU enlargement: from Luxembourg to Helsinki and beyond.*

Saryusz-Wolski, J., 1994: The reintegration of the 'old continent': Avoiding the costs of 'half Europe'. In: S. Bulmer & A. Scott, *Economic and political integration in Europe: Internal dynamics and global context*, Blackwell, Oxford: 19-28.

Schattschneider, E., 1960: *The semi-sovereign people: A realist's view of democracy in America*, Wadsworth Thomson Learning, Belmont, CA.

Schimmelfennig, F., 1999: The Double Puzzle of EU Enlargement: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Decision to Expand to the East. *European Union Studies Association*, 50.

Schimmelfennig, F., 2001: The community trap: Liberal norms, rhetorical action, and the Eastern enlargement of the European Union, *International Organization* (55) 1: 47-80.

Schimmelfennig, F., 2003: *The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe. Rules and Rhetoric*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Schimmelfennig, F., 2009: Entrapped again: The way to EU membership negotiations with Turkey, *International Politics* (46) 19: 413-431.

Schmitter, P. C., 1996: *Governance in the European Union*, SAGE Publications, London.

Schmitter, P. C., 2009: Neo-Neo-Functionalism. In: A. Wiener & T. Diez, *European Integration Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Schneider, C. J., 2009: *Conflict, Negotiation and European Union Enlargement*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Sedelmeier, U., 2005: *Constructing the path to eastern enlargement: the uneven policy impact of EU identity*, Manchester University Press, New York.

Somers, M., 1994: The narrative constitution of identity: A relational and network approach. *Theory and Society*, 23: 605-649.

Stone, D., 1989: Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas, *Political Science Quarterly* (104) 2: 281-300.

Stone, D., 1997: *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, W.W. Norton, New York.

Tewes, H., 1998: Between deepening and widening: role conflict in Germany's enlargement policy, *West European Politics* (21) 2: 117-133.

Todorova, M., 2009: *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Torreblanca, J. I., 2002: Accommodating interests and principles in the European Union: The case of the Eastern enlargement. *Enlargement and the Finality of the EU*, 7, ARENA Report.

Vachudova, M. A., 2005: *Europe undivided: democracy, leverage and integration after communism*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Van Eeten, M., 1999: *Dialogues of the Deaf: Defining New Agendas for Environmental Deadlocks*, Eburon, Delft.

Van Eeten, M., 2007: Narrative Policy Analysis. In: F. Fischer, G. J. Miller, M. S. Sidney, eds, *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*, CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL: 251-269.

Verheugen, G. *The Enlargement Process: Shaping a New Europe.*

Yanow, D., 1996: *How Does a Policy Mean? Interpreting Policy and Organizational Actions*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C..

Mailing Address: **Yana Stoeva**, University of Twente, Netherlands.
E-mail: gnbibign@gbg.bg

Robert Hoppe, University of Twente, Netherlands. *E-mail*: r.hoppe@utwente.nl