Master thesis in Sociology, 30 higher education credits

Frames among Serbian Women's Activists and EU Enlargement Policy: Resonance and Discursive Opportunities?

Dajana Mehdin

Supervisor: Kerstin Jacobsson

Spring 2016

Abstract

This paper examines the framing of claims in the Serbian women's movement and compares these frames with the EU enlargement discourse to see if the discourse offers constraints or opportunities for movement actors. By distinguishing the framing of diagnosis and prognosis in EU enlargement policy, as well as by describing the framing of gender equality in EU policy documents, the EU is identified as a potential discursive opportunity structure that can help gain leverage to the claims put forth by Serbian women's organizations. Theoretically, the contribution here is an attempt to apply the social movement framing perspective comparatively in studying both movement- and policy frames as well as to combine the concept of *discursive opportunity structures* with frame analysis and thus highlight the discursive context of EU accession negotiations for movement claims-making. Empirically, the contributions of this paper shed some much-needed light on Serbian women's organizations describing their radical feminist frames and their view of the state as the "common enemy". The analysis indicates several points of resonance between movement and policy frames, especially regarding the weak implementation of gender equality legislation and the overall lacking political will for change.

Keywords: Women's movement, Serbia, EU enlargement, EU discourse, Movement frames, Policy frames, Framing, Discursive Opportunities, Resonance, Boomerang Patterns

Introduction

As of today, several of the former Yugoslav countries are undergoing comprehensive reform programs and harmonization to European Union (EU) legislations and politics. Apart from Croatia that has already accomplished EU membership, Serbia was qualified a candidate country in 2012 and is in the midst of accession negotiations, a phase of "transformative power" (Haughton 2007). Previous research has indicated that the EU accession context can have great impacts for local women's NGOs (Roth 2007). Given that the EU has been identified as an important political opportunity structure for social movements (Marks & McAdam 2009), the question arises of if and how the EU can facilitate the strengthening of the Serbian women's movements claims. Being in the middle of a transformation- and reconciliation process, Serbia is an interesting country to study in relation to the EU and women's activism. During the wars of the 1990s' that resulted from the disintegration of the Yugoslavian regime, women started mobilizing against the evolving militarism and nationalism, despite the increasing focus on ethnic and racial differences (Lukic 2011). Several scholars have drawn links between emerging Yugoslav feminist groups of the 1970s, the peace activism that followed the outbreak of the wars and contemporary civic engagement in the ex-

Yugoslav region (Milic 2004; Bilic & Jankovic 2012; Visnjic 2015). This study engages with the cultural dimension in social movement theory by comparing the framing efforts among Serbian women's organizations, on the one hand, with those of the EU, on the other hand, and thus analyzes if their framing of problems (diagnosis) and solutions (prognosis) are mutually supportive. This is interesting to explore for several reasons: Firstly, against the background of increased nationalism and right-wing mobilization(s) in Europe in general, where women's organizations are important reactions to this development (cf. Ferree & McClurg Mueller 2004). Secondly, since international NGOs and foundations are leaving the area, a fact that indicates the significance of EU as a political actor as well as a potential donor for the Serbian women's movement. Thirdly, little is known about contemporary women's organizing in Southeastern Europe, especially in relation to EU enlargement policy. The aim with this paper is to assess whether the framing of the EU can help gain leverage to the frames brought forth by women's organizations in Serbia. Thus, the framing of claims by both Serbian women's organizations and the EU enlargement discourse will be highlighted in order to analyze their possible convergence by answering following research questions: (1) How do movement actors in different Serbian women's organizations frame their claims? And (2) to what extent does the EU enlargement discourse provide discursive opportunities for the women's movement in Serbia? What are the possibilities for frame resonance? Hopefully, this paper can contribute to an understanding of the impact of the EU for the Serbian women's movement; especially regarding the discursive reach of goals related to the social dimension of EU integration politics. Below, I will briefly outline some basic developments regarding the EU enlargement context and EU gender equality policies.

The EU Enlargement Agenda and the Scope of Its Gender Equality Policy

Within the context of the EU enlargement agenda, there is no separate policy on gender equality that applies to candidate countries. Instead, the accession negotiations require Serbia to fulfill economic, political and administrative/institutional criteria's as well as adopt all of the 35 chapters within the legislative framework of *Acquis Communitaire* (Acquis) in which the development concerning gender equality is monitored under chapter 19 (Employment and Social Policy) and chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights). The legally binding measures in the area of gender equality are reflected in these chapters of which most directives are related to equal pay as well as equal opportunities in relation to employment. Outside the field of employment, there is only one directive that applies to the inequality between women and men, the directive (Directive 2004/113) on the equal treatment of men and women in the access to and the supply of goods and services (Burri & Prechal 2010). Furthermore, there exist several non-binding or "soft" policy instruments that can be integrated in enlargement policy. Questions of discrimination are generally treated under

the framework of "fundamental rights", as also reflected in the *Charter of Fundamental Rights*, which includes one article on non-discrimination (Article 21) and one article on gender equality (Article 23) (EU 2012). Moreover, the *Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015* includes a chapter on the promotion of gender equality in all "external actions" stressing that candidate countries must embrace the "fundamental principle of equality between women and men" because it should remain "a priority of the enlargement process" (COM 2010a). Another soft law document is the *EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010*-2015 (COM 2010b), launched as a means to reinforce the implementation of gender equality policies, both within member states as well as with partner countries. However, the enlargement context is not mentioned explicitly here, which makes this document ambiguous with regards to how far-reaching it is. While it does declare gender equality and women's empowerment as important objectives to achieve within EU development cooperation, the gender action plan fails to acknowledge the same goals within the enlargement context. As of 1996 *gender mainstreaming* has been the official strategy to pursue gender equality and was introduced in the Treaty of Amsterdam where the new amended Article 3.2 states that in *all* activities "the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women" (COM 1996). Thus, one could contend that even though the gender action plan fails to cover the enlargement agenda, a gender perspective should permeate the whole enlargement discourse. In sum, the EU has adopted important strategies and objectives regarding its gender equality policy, but it is unclear to what extent above mentioned "soft" measures are incorporated within the conditions that candidate countries must meet and to what extent the enlargement agenda is being gender mainstreamed.

Research Overview

Previous research on women's organizing in post-communist contexts has focused mainly on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), while less is known about the role of women's movements in Southeastern Europe. Especially, there is limited knowledge on contemporary women's organizing in relation to EU enlargement policy and few have analyzed the impact of EU candidacy from a social movement framing perspective. These are research gaps that this paper intends to fill. Nevertheless, this section will present some important perspectives brought up in earlier research.

Local Women's Organizations and EU Enlargement

Previous research has indicated an ambivalent picture in terms of what the context of EU accession might do to facilitate the work of women's movements (e.g. Roth 2007; Haskova & Krizkova 2008). Among others, Roth (2007:479) argues that the EU accession process in CEE countries was contradictory in its way of offering political and economic opportunities to local NGOs while at the

same time the process in itself was disadvantageous to smaller organizations that lost funding and were constrained in their activities. Likewise, Rek (2010:67f) has highlighted that the "top-down" process of EU fosters "short-term project oriented" type of organizations, favoring larger and better-organized civil society organizations (CSOs). The results can be quite severe as other international foundations leave the area when EU becomes the main donor (cf. Sloat 2005:441). Another *Europeanization* effect found in the literature, that applies to candidate countries as well, is how the EU encourages civil society actors to get institutionalized and professionalized rather than to perform "traditional" protest action (e.g. Cisar & Vráblíková 2010). Many scholars have used the concept of *political opportunity structures* to clarify that dynamics of social movement activity are under effect of the European integration politics because the EU integration process constitutes something new with regards to "shaking" the institutional power of the nation-state (Marks & McAdam 2009:98). Thus, it has been concluded that the capacity of a social movement often depends on its success with regards to forming transnational coalitions, which is especially important for movements that are constrained by domestic political opportunity structures. Keck & Sikkink (1999:5), for instance, have used the metaphor of *boomerang patterns* to illustrate the ways in which local NGOs can use transnational actors, such as the EU, to influence their national governments or empower their cause. In the case of the Czech Republic, Cisar and Vráblíková (2010) noted the positive impact of the EU, describing how the interests of women's organizations and the EU converged once the accession negotiations started. There is also evidence of the unique opportunity for change offered through what has been called EU *conditionality*, but Haughton (2007) has argued that the "transformative power" of the EU is largest during the initial phase of the accession negotiations, hence stressing the delicate nature of the opportunities and constraints the EU can offer domestic actors. The above-cited theorists all focus on the economic and political opportunities that the EU has to offer, while the discursive aspects of the EU accession process have been much less illuminated. Nevertheless, Bretherton (2011) has criticized the EU for the lack of implementation of gender mainstreaming during the pre-accession period. Analyzing the accession negotiations in ten CEE countries, she indicates that focus lied on the legal aspects of *Acquis* as well as "institutional compliance", which hindered a full policy influence in the area of gender equality. This is in line with the feminist critique of EU bureaucracy, where Stratigaki (2004) among others has argued that gender equality is a contested concept that tends to get *co-opted*, a process whereby gender equality objectives transform and adjust to other policy goals, thus becoming depoliticized. Bearing in mind that the EU monitors Serbia above all from the point of implementing the "hard" law contained in *Acquis*, it remains to be seen how the "softer" policy concerning gender equality is applied in the Serbian accession context.

Women's Organizing in Serbia

In socialist Yugoslavia, women experienced "formal" gender equality even though equal rights were mostly tied to employment and it was only a minority of women who were actually active in the labor force (Morokvasic 1998:73-75). In practice, many women, especially in rural areas, were tied to domestic work and traditional gender relations. Still, the transformation process beginning in 1989 meant that women disappeared from the public scene and that women's position worsened (Ibid). This reflects similar tendencies as in CEE countries where women generally experienced a disappointment after 1989 as their economic and social status gained during communism weakened (e.g. Pollert 2003). However, in socialist Yugoslavia self-proclaimed feminist groups emerged rather early as a result of the more open borders compared to other former communist countries, which allowed the influence of Western feminist ideas (Hughes et al. 1995:512). In the late 1970s, feminist intellectuals from the urban centers of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana created the autonomous group *Women & Society,* whose meetings have been described as academic debates. It was only later, in the period preceding the wars, that grassroots activism emerged, as these feminists needed to confront the proposed reductions of reproductive rights (Zarkov 2003:2). In general, literature on Yugoslav women's activism tends to highlight its connections to feminist theory, Lukic (2011:7) describing it as a "strategic alliance".

With war and its aftermath, the post-Yugoslav countries saw an "NGO-boom" in the first half of the 1990s (Bagic 2006). Yugoslav women played a central role in the peace activism of the 1990s (Morokvasic 1998; Lukic 2011). This peace activism took two shapes, on the one hand a "mothers protest" that started during the summer of 1991 and on the other hand existing feminist activism that started shifting towards an anti-war agenda (Hughes et al. 1995). Slapsak (2008:130f) argues that since then (1990s) Serbian women were perceived as "traitors" and gender politics in a Serbian context is generally interwoven with questions of how to relate to the committed war crimes. The study of the women's movement in Serbia inevitably brings forth the topic of war and nationalism. While contemporary women's groups and NGOs in Serbia seem, to some extent, comprised of women's networks originating in the socialist period of Yugoslavia (Milic 2004) or from the beginning of the 1990s when many new organizations arose as parts of the anti-war sentiments and as reactions to humanitarian crisis (Hughes et al. 1995), there is not much up to date research on the characteristics of the contemporary Serbian women's movement. Recent, more critical accounts have been offered by Miskovska (2014) arguing that the concept of feminism in a Yugoslav context presupposes an identity as "anti-nationalist" and still, the very ways in which feminists create boundaries between who is defined a nationalist and who is not, can be problematic. Therefore, identity formations along gender and ethnic lines seem to be important for

the way injustice is framed among Serbian women's groups. However, there is a lack of knowledge on the claims of contemporary Serbian post-war and post-socialist women's groups. In particular, few have analyzed the Serbian women's movement from a social movement framing approach and there is limited research on what the enlargement agenda for Serbia entails for local women's organizations, a dearth that this study aims to redress.

Theoretical framework

This paper employs framing analysis in order to understand meaning construction in Serbian women's organizations as well as in EU policy. Thus, the notion of *framing* is used to understand how movement actors frame their claims, while the notions of *resonance* and *discursive opportunity structures* are used to analyze the correspondence of policy vs. movement frames. In this way I try to account for both structural (contextual) factors as well as agency in the analysis of a social movement.

Comparative Frame Analysis

The *framing* concept is often employed in social movement research to describe how movements mobilize about conflictual issues. Framing is here seen as a process of meaning construction and movement actors are viewed as "signifying agents" (Benford & Snow 2000). According to Benford & Snow, movement actors produce *collective action frames* by being involved in struggle(s) over the production of ideas and meanings that help mobilize potential adherents. Collective action frames are thus the result of interactive processes where individuals are negotiating shared meaning (2000:614). In the course of this framing process, movement participants produce frames through identifying a problem and/or a situation in need of change (diagnostic frames), identification of possible solutions to the problem (prognostic frames) and by different "vocabularies of motive" urge people to act (motivational frames) (Benford & Snow 2000). Following this, the notion of *frames* and *framing* is suitable also in analyzing policy documents. The exploration of movement frames in relation to policy frames is useful since few have used the framing perspective comparatively, as Benford & Snow (2000:618) state in their research overview.

As argued by Ferree & Merrill (2000), *frames* and *framing processes* should be analytically distinguished from discourse and from ideologies. Their conceptual elaboration is useful to clarify the micro and macro connections between interrelated concepts such as frames, ideologies and discourses. In their criticism of how the framing perspective has been applied in movement research, they define *discourses* as "broad systems of communication that link concepts together in a web of relationships through an underlying logic" (2000:455). *Ideologies* are understood as distinguished by their cognitive as well as normative components since Ferree & Merrill (2000)

underscore that ideologies function as theories about the nature of social life (cognitive) but also incorporate values and norms (normative). *Frames* are comprised of cognitive ideas in that frames specify *how* to think about an issue, and are not – as ideologies – involved with the estimation of *why* it matters to think about things in a specific way (Ibid). *Framing* processes, on the other hand, is what connects the above-mentioned interlinked concepts (2000:455-456). In line with this, focus is put not only on the specific frames themselves but also on the framing process as a whole in order to account for underlying motivations in the production of specific frames (2000:457).

Discursive Opportunity Structures and Resonance

The notion of *discursive opportunities* has evolved as a way to capture the discursive conditions that facilitate movement outcomes. While the notion of political opportunities has been used to describe how political context matters for movement activity, McCammon (2013) argues that neither the political opportunity theory nor the framing theory has sufficiently explained the role of cultural dynamics in movement outcomes. The term *discursive opportunity structures* can be used for precisely this; to capture how the "cultural elements in the broader environment facilitate and constrain successful movement framing" (Ibid). As for the characteristics of such opportunities, McCammon et al (2007) maintain that the influence of frames depends on the cultural environments in which they occur pointing out that successful frames are those that *resonate* within the discourse and larger cultural environment. Such frames are also more likely to be successful in achieving their goals. Ferree (2003) has here argued that not all movement participants seek resonance with the dominant discourse, as movement groups can choose to be *radical* or *resonant* in their framing. The success of movement frames certainly depends on their resonance in the wider cultural context, but that in turn depends on the degree to which movement actors seek to be strategic in their framing. The frames that resonate with a discursive structure will "tap into the vocabulary, underlying principles, and narratives of salient discourses in the broader cultural environment" (2003:306). As power dynamics exists within social movements, movement actors that do seek resonance tend to downplay the needs of more disadvantaged organizations within the movement. Activist ideas can thus take certain directions depending on the choices of movement actors, which are in turn always constrained in their framing by existent structures (Ferree 2003:309). Consequently, this inquiry will link the framing perspective to discursive opportunities in analyzing whether the EU works as a discursive opportunity structure for Serbian women's organizations. The presumption here is that if policy frames resonate with movement frames that would create discursive opportunities for movement claims making.

Data and Methods

As this study is interested in comparing the framing exerted within two different contexts, the chosen data is twofold: qualitative interviews with representatives from Serbian women's organizations as well as a text analysis of relevant EU policy documents. Below, I discuss these methodological procedures.

Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews and Textual Analysis

During a field trip to Serbia in March 2015, the majority (nine) interviews were conducted face-to-face with respondents from different Serbian women's organizations and two interviews were carried out through Skype for practical reasons. The interviews were semi-structured and addressed themes such as *goals and strategies*, the *perceived impact of EU candidacy*, the *Serbian political context* and *future hopes*. Interviews were chosen, rather than organizational documents, as the goal was to get a deeper understanding of movement claims and different organizations' way of reasoning. Prior to the field trip, informal interviews were made with two field representatives from *Kvinna till Kvinna*[1] as a way to gain knowledge of the local context. This enabled contact details to the main organizations that *Kvinna till Kvinna* cooperates with. Each organization was then researched further; when websites or Facebook pages were available I made sure to try to find out more about a particular organization online. It should be noted here that my understanding of a *women's movement* is focused on organizations that mobilize about *conflictual issues* (cf. Della Porta & Diani 1999:16) with the particular aim of promoting gender equality and advancing women's position in society (Spehar 2012). Thus, in selection of participants, I put emphasis on organizations that are explicitly involved with social change and effort was made to include a variety of women's organizations considering their location, size and focus (cf. Marshall & Rossman 2011). As I relied on my contacts with *Kvinna till Kvinna,* respondents were mainly found through so-called "convenience sampling" (Marshall & Rossman 2011:111) and through information on organizations enlisted in the *network for European Women's Lobby*,[2] an umbrella organization comprising nineteen different women's organizations, all of which were contacted and asked for participation (however, many were currently inactive). A majority of the respondents were founders of their organizations. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Serbian, but have been cited in English. In this process, the aim was to transpose the central message rather than the precise meaning, which I find more accurate since language is culturally situated.

---

[1] *Kvinna till Kvinna* is a foundation supporting women's NGOs (http://kvinnatillkvinna.se/en/about-us)
[2] Founding members are among others: *Novi Sad Lesbian Organization*, *Women in Black*, *Autonomous Women's Centre*
[2] Founding members are among others: *Novi Sad Lesbian Organization*, *Women in Black*, *Autonomous Women's Centre* and *Out of Circle Vojvodina* – all part of this study.

The second part of the empirical material is comprised of the latest progress report for Serbia (2014) and the latest enlargement strategy (2014-2015). These are the main documents that the COM employs to monitor Serbian accession negotiations and will sufficiently reflect the frames and discourse of current EU enlargement policy towards Serbia. Strategy papers are more comprehensive in terms of policy recommendations and provide conclusions of Serbia's advancement towards EU, while progress reports are more technical in nature, analyzing each *Acquis* chapter in great detail. The focus of EU financial support to Serbia is based on these documents identifying key issues Serbia needs to continue improving to meet EU standards.

Ethical Considerations, Reflexivity and Analytical Strategy

All respondents were informed of the aim of the study and guaranteed anonymity, in line with the guidelines by the Swedish Research Council (2002). As a *Kvinna till Kvinna*-activist, I gained the trust of my respondents who were aware of my feminist sympathies. Additionally, perceived as a "Swedish feminist" I was more or less seen as an outsider, which was probably positive since the respondents might otherwise have presumed certain knowledge or positioning's on my behalf. I was careful to point out that the investigation was detached from my activism in *Kvinna till Kvinna* explaining that the choice of topic mainly had to do with my interest in my Yugoslav background. Nevertheless, the fact that many of the organizations studied identified as feminist might be telling for the fact that *Kvinna till Kvinna* sponsored 8 out of 11. The results of this study will thus not be generalized to portraying the "whole" movement; rather, the findings discussed below might instead contribute to an understanding of *feminist* organizing in Serbia. At the same time, earlier research supports my results since the history of the Serbian women's movement has been described as linked to feminism (Hughes et al 1995).

After the interviews were carefully transcribed and the policy documents were selected, the data was coded and analyzed. The approach here is best described as abductive since there was a continuous alternation between theory and empirics. The interviews were analyzed in two stages, first through an open coding where I made notes of frequently used phrases, and secondly with the theoretical concepts in framing analysis as orientating notions. Each organization was seen as having it's own frames (diagnostic, prognostic and motivational) and discursive logic. The analytic focus for the policy documents was comparative; focus lied on how gender equality as well as social change was framed in relation to the frames produced within the movement. In both materials' discursive statements were seen as the analytical units. As the chosen policy documents were technically detailed and textually heavy, a comparative frame analysis was at times hard to perform. Considering the fact that my approach has some similarities to discourse analysis, a comprehensive frame analysis of the policy documents would have been too ambitious. Instead, the

analysis focused on points of possible resonance identifying were policy documents indicated similar/dissimilar framing of diagnosis/prognosis. The theoretical concepts allowed for the policy analysis to focus both on micro (gender equality frames) and macro (discursive opportunities) level, which required nuanced observations of statements rather than a large amount of data.

Results

Below, the results will be presented accordingly: the first section describes the framing processes within the Serbian women's movement answering the first research question. The second section compares these frames with EU enlargement policy on points of possible resonance and lastly the implications of EU discourse are discussed in order to answer the second research question.

The Framing of Claims by Movement Actors

Most Serbian women's organizations studied identified as feminists and formulated their political claims in great accordance with each other. Portraying militarism and nationalism as the main problems was a common feature and an intersecting issue to the movement as a whole. Violence against women was the main focus area and was continuously connected to what was described as a repressive state politics, a framing process in which the respondents also accentuated a continuation of a war-like social situation. Despite these similarities with regards to diagnosis, some tendencies of differences in formulation of a solution (prognosis) were distinguished reflecting a generational divide. Still, the main result points to the older organizations that arose as part of the anti-war protests as having a structuring effect on contemporary women's activist claims.

The Serbian Women's Movements Origin in Feminist Anti-war Activism

Interviews with some of the oldest organizations revealed their point of departure as feminist activists engaged in the anti-war and anti-nationalist protests and uprisings of the time. One of these organizations was the *Autonomous Women's Centre* (AWC) that was formed in 1993 in Belgrade thanks to funding from a Swiss women's association. The Centre emerged from earlier volunteer organizing of women in connection to increased violence, namely the group *Belgrade SOS hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence* (Hughes & Foster 1996). AWC are nowadays known for their lobbying to combat violence against women and the organization also exerts a coordinating function for similar women's organizations across Serbia. Another organization that has had a structuring effect on the focus areas of the women's movement is *Women in Black* (WIB), one of the most well-known anti-war groups formed in 1991 to protest the wars (Mladenovic & Litricin 1993). Several overlapping tendencies existed between activists in these organizations as women involved in AWC were often also part of WIB (Hughes & Foster 1996). Ties existed also between

international women's peace initiatives and WIB who from the very start protested the "patriarchal and sexist essence of nationalism and war" (Mladenovic & Litricin 1993:116). Additionally, a *Women's Studies Centre* was formed in Belgrade in 1992, originating from the same feminist anti-war protestors. The organization *Dah Theatre Research Centre* was formed in 1991 and connected theatre and artistic development with opposition to war and violence. As some of the oldest organizations in the field, these organizations embody a clear agenda for change influenced by their early anti-war mobilization(s). Other organizations focusing on domestic violence emerged later (typically around the 2000s) across Serbia and offer SOS help lines. Additionally, two organizations are part of this study but do *not* work with issues of domestic violence per se: *Novi Sad Lesbian Organization* (NLO) and *Women's Space*. These can be described as more identity-oriented organizations focusing on empowerment of the lesbian and Roma population respectively. The close ties between different feminist groups that existed in the beginning of the 1990s seem to be accurate for today's movement as well, which is reflected in their framing of claims.

Framing the Problem: Patriarchal Violence, Militarism and Nationalism

A majority of respondents were from organizations mobilizing to combat violence against women. Within this faction of activism,[3] there was great accordance in framing the problem, violence against women, as a result of patriarchy and uneven (gender) power relations. Moreover, the main diagnostic framing among movement actors, and this was not specific to organizations involved with the issue of domestic violence, includes pointing to connections between gender violence in the private sphere and dominant state politics that legitimates militarism and nationalism and thus indirectly reproduces a normalization of all types of violence. The discursive framing of problems in contemporary movement claims making thus seems connected to the feminist opposition against the wars of the 1990s (Bilic & Jankovic 2012; Visnjic 2015), as they revolved around demarcations against militarism and nationalism:

So we are indeed in the same crisis situation as in the 90s…not much has changed. As our friends from Women in Black would say, "the absence of war doesn't mean that peace exists". Because there still exists a normalization of violence here. And women are most often hit hardest by this. (Women's Studies BG)

That moment [outbreak of war] *the state did send the message that violence is the only way to solve problems. Today we have an enormous amount of women being killed, Femicide. This is possible*

---

[3] All organizations (*AWC*, *NGO Pescanik*, *Out of circle*, *SOS Women's Centre* and *SOS Sombor*) are part of the network "Women against domestic violence", which is an important channel for cooperation. Activities of these organizations comprise preventive educational work with young women and men, alongside the direct help to battered women through offering psychological as well as legal counselling. Activities were also characterized by providing services to women with experience of partner-related violence through SOS helplines or consultative talks.

because of the different types of weapons allowed in the home due to militarization…, which, ever since the wars, has only continued and moved into the private homes. (AWC)

Thus, the respondents shared a broad understanding of the term "violence". All movement actors directed severe criticism towards state politics and the current Serbian government, a criticism that was sometimes articulated to denote a structure of "political violence" or of Serbia being caught in a "circle of violence". The respondents thus embodied an understanding of the transition to peace as failed considering that most of them mentioned militarism and nationalism as the most predominant problems of Serbian contemporary society, drawing connections between the continuity of a war-like situation and a prevailing patriarchal culture. The point of departure in their reasoning was the presumed correlation between increasing nationalism and a decrease of women's rights, which was consistently related to the recent wars in the region. This is also in line with the arguments of Croatian feminist Ivekovic (1993:114f) who described the war in former Yugoslavia as a masculinist nationalist project in which "women" were the first to experience the process of "othering". A tendency within the movement discourse on defining the problems of Serbian society was to highlight their activism as a reaction and opposition to mainstream narratives around the issue of war as "denying the past", not taking "full responsibility" or having "unresolved issues with the past". Respondents from some of the anti-war oriented organizations stated:

Above all, the unresolved political themes, the crimes committed in our names during the war in 1990s. That means, the silence and the constant flirting with the perpetrators on behalf of the state. The only way to stop these nationalist and xenophobic forces is to have a clear political ideology when it comes to dealing with the past, that is: an identification and responsibility of the crimes committed. (Dah Theatre)

The production of the "other" is always a continuation of war. [...] From then on (1991) there is this same goal of all regimes. To silence critical voices, especially the ones related to Serbian accountability for the wars, both of the Milosevic regime at that time, but also today… the lacking political accountability that leads to a discouragement of alternative views about the wars. A criminalization of solidarity. (WIB)

WIB was among the first organizations to center the diagnostic framing on themes of war and the inability of Serbia to take accountability for the past. This organization has been highlighted as a particularly important anti-war group who played a fundamental role in resisting the prevailing Serbian "culture of denial" (Fridman 2011:509). Their feminist framing of a continuation of a militarist political climate ever since the 1990s has shaped the way in which many of the organizations attribute guilt in formulation of their claims, thus it could be deemed a "master frame" (Benford & Snow 1992). As Benford and Snow (1992) argue, master frames come in "cycles" of protest affecting and constraining the framing process of other organizations that are part of the

same movement. In a Serbian context, this diagnostic framing, related to accountability for the wars, can in fact be understood as a re-framing activity (cf. Benford & Snow 2000), as the respondents are actually involved in a conscious process of creating alternative ways of viewing the recent past, thus contrasting the tendency of the political parties to avoid the subject of war.[4]

Framing the Problem: Corruption and Marginalization

Some of the respondents tended to get disillusioned when asked about the conditions of their activism. They described the prevalence of corruption, which was in turn linked to on the one hand a stagnating economy and on the other the short period of democracy in the region. All respondents exemplified these un-democratic tendencies by witnessing to a marginalization of their political claims and a general lack of co-operation with the state. Thus, their navigation towards state politics as corrupt and un-democratic was the second most apparent diagnostic framing. The respondents affirmed that there is no general knowledge on women's rights issues and no "real" political will to improve the position of women. This diagnostic frame was manifested through several examples of government corruption in which the respondents brought forth that the government as well as different political parties has "their own" NGOs that they support so as to become the extensions of their politics. Hence, respondents provided me with the latest example of state corruption in relation to civil society:

We had this instance recently, where the minister for social affairs financed his own NGOs. The sum to be distributed was huge, aimed for the civil society sector, and many women's NGOs had the ability to seek these grants. However, it was revealed that the NGOs that received the grants sum were founded some 2 days before the grant was announced! You see? ... And then when everyone started raising questions, he decided to withdraw all the money and transfer it to a foundation for children's diseases. (NGO Pescanik)

Several respondents also accentuated the governments "double face", on the one hand establishing mechanisms for gender equality but on the other never dealing with the threats and hate crimes experienced by many women's rights activists (Dah Theatre; WIB; Out of Circle). Also, AWC asserted that they have experienced allegations of being "foreign agents" because of their cooperation's with women's foundations and organizations outside of Serbia. All respondents stressed that the EU accession process has meant ratification of relevant treaties related to gender equality, yet no implementation of these agreements has taken place, several respondents using the

---

[4] The current party in power is the *Serbian Progressive Party* (SNS), a national conservative party with roots in the *Serbian Radical Party* (SRS) that was formed in conjuncture with the wars and is usually described as a nationalist right-wing party. For an analysis of SRS, see Irvine, J. & Lilly, C. (2007). Boys Must be Boys: Gender and the Serbian Radical Party, 1991-2000. *Nationalities Papers*. 35(1), 93-120. They argue that SRS succeeded in shaping the transition period towards nationalism and a retraditionalisation of gender roles by promoting a popular "political nostalgia".

metaphor "cosmetic change" to describe this (WIB; Out of Circle, Women's Studies BG; SOS Women's Centre). Furthermore, a general indifference towards politics among Serbs was conceived as a problem, a problem for which the politicians were attributed blame. This was referred to as a "lack of dialogue in all segments of society" (NGO Pescanik) or as a form of state-issued violence towards Serbian citizens; "I think that what is happening here is state violence towards its citizens" (SOS Sombor). According to respondents, the politicians in power have roots in fascist groupings and allow a discriminatory culture towards all those deemed different. In addition to flirting with fascist right-wing groups, most respondents highlighted that the current government also supports the Orthodox Church, a contentious issue for the women's movement because of its link to the question of abortion (AWC). In fact, respondents saw abortion as an unquestionable right and in the same vein delineated their activism from involvement in women's NGOs aiming to "preserve the Serbian culture"; such organizations were considered nationalist (AWC; WIB; Women's Studies BG, Women's Studies NS). Consequently, there is some evidence to a split between factions of NGOs - those identifying as feminists and those employing other claims, for example in relation to abortion or on standpoints related to "nationalism". However, the shared frames among the respondents of this study reveal a common ground in relation to feminism and it is this very identification that puts them in a marginalized position vis-à-vis the government. One respondent provided an illuminating example:

When we wanted to mark the anniversary of our Centre, we received some funding when we wrote that we wanted to make an investigation marking the life of some professors at this university, but not the first time we applied, when we explicitly formulated in the application that it was about the work of the Gender Studies Centre. (Women's Studies NS)

Framing the Solution: Feminist Solidarity, Non-violence and Reconciliation

As the master frame within the movement was a contrasting of nationalism and militarism to feminism, it is not surprising that most of the solutions were articulated with reference to feminism. All respondents expressed the wish to cooperate with any women's organization that shares their over-arching goals in relation to women's discrimination. As domestic violence was seen as a question of gender oppression the main prognosis, in addition to providing direct help and social services to battered women, was related to empowerment, awareness-raising and different preventive measures and educational programs directed towards the general public as well as governmental agencies and authorities. These measures were sometimes also directed towards women in a "particularly vulnerable position", such as rural women or women in Roma communities (NGO Pescanik; Women's Space). Furthermore some organizations outside the field of domestic violence sought specifically to highlight the multiple discriminations women

experience, and their prognostic framing was above all related to spreading knowledge surrounding the specifics of this discrimination, be it lesbian, Roma- or women with disabilities (NLO; Women's Space; Out of Circle; Women's Studies NS). Interestingly, as previously stated, many respondents referred to violence against women in their framing, not only those involved in organizations to combat domestic violence. As violence against women on micro (private sphere) and macro (through nationalist politics) level were interpreted as violations to the bodily integrity of women, respondents sought to frame this violence as a social problem in line with (radical) feminist framings of "patriarchal structures" (Gemzöe 2002). Thus, the prognosis revolved around a discourse of non-violence and awareness-rising activities was on the agenda of every organization.

The divergence with regards to diagnostic and prognostic framing seem related to a generational gap as well as a tension between grass-roots activism and what was defined as "mainstream activism", i.e. organizations that are more professionalized in terms of organizational structure (cf. Vráblíková & Cisar 2010). The generational divide was expressed firstly through some of the older organizations (and respondents) being clearer on "dealing with the past" and reconciliation as the main solution (WIB; AWC; DAH Theatre), while some of the younger organizations focused on women's rights per see conveying a more forward-looking analysis (SOS Women's Centre; NLO; SOS Sombor; Women's Space). Their agenda was less directed towards topics such as the genocide in Srebrenica, war criminals and other symbolic political issues. Similarly, some of the older organizations expressed frustration concerning the need to fight for the same issues all over again, carrying certain "Yugo-nostalgia". The same respondents mentioned the gender pay gap and women's discrimination in the labor market as a relatively "new" type of problem (Women's Studies BG; AWC). NLO consisted of, in contrast to many of the other organizations, non-hierarchical grass-roots activists that strived to create a "safe space" for the lesbian population of Novi Sad. They indicated, together with a respondent from Out of Circle, that the "mainstream" activism of Belgrade-organizations receives all the funding and is donor-driven, thus demarcating against the tendency of organizations to act opportunistic and adjust to available frames and opportunities. The case of NLO is interesting as they, more than others, frame their cause as "true activism" claiming to be marginalized by donors since they are a small organization and occasionally marginalized within the movement since they try to raise questions of multiple discriminations. In general, the younger organizations (2000s) as well as activists seemed more inclined to include multiple discriminations as part of their diagnostics and were less articulate about notions such as reconciliation.

Framing the Motivations: Feminist Cooperation, Transnationalism and a "European" Belonging

Above all, movement actors motivated their struggle in terms of the need for social change, as the repressive politics of the Serbian government was defined if not downright fascist, then at least "non-democratic". In line with this, the respondents longed for "a more open Serbia", "ethics of responsibility", "alternative discourse", "a break with the cultural isolation" and so on. As shown above, there was a clear "we" here, a presupposed feminist identity. Many respondents were convinced that they, as women's NGOs, were the only ones pursuing change:

For these issues, even before the 1990s, women are the ones handling this. The struggle for peace, for anti-nationalism and anti-militarism. Dealing with the past, that concept has not been highlighted in any serious way outside the civil society sector. (Women's Studies BG)

"Speaking truth to power". That is basically what we try to do. And it is very interesting, all women's NGOs or NGOs consisting only of women… It seems as if only women are interested in societal transformations. (Dah Theatre)

These quotations illustrate that they see themselves as the ones who try "dealing with the past". Describing a political, economic and discursive marginalization on behalf of the state, most organizations put forth their involvement in different women's networks and cooperation's as the main strength and characteristic of the Serbian women's movement, indicating that the national networks[5] are not merely strategic responses to restricted resources but ways of containing the "Yugoslav feminist spirit" (AWC). National as well as transnational co-operation was seen as necessary in an environment where their feminist frames don't resonate with government politics. Thus, it was not surprising that respondents were positive with regards to seeking transnational allies and expressed closeness to a European identity:

Our integration with Europe is from the beginning of the year 1991. We are connected to alternative movements for change, peace and feminist initiatives. For me it is important to be part of that movement. I'm interested in that Europe, in the people and movements of Europe… (WIB)

Some respondents, furthermore, witnessed to having strong relations with similar women's NGOs across Europe (AWC; WIB; Women's Studies BG; Women's Studies NS). In the case of NLO, who experienced that their claims were marginalized also within the movement, cooperation with similar organizations in Slovenia and other European countries was put forth as a motivational framing. Likewise, the respondents welcomed the EU accession process from the point of view of providing political opportunities and exerting pressure on the Serbian state. The orientations towards Europe

---

[5] Network for Women in Black, Network for the European Women's Lobby, Network for combating violence against women, Roma Women's Network, Network for SOS phone Vojvodina.

were quite explicit, such as in the case of DAH Theatre, citing the Serbian government's inability to choose a "clear pro-EU path". In fact, all respondents asserted that "European values and norms" would do Serbia good. On the other hand, some were critical towards EU as a donor, partly because of the inaccessibility of EU funds and partly because they perceived that EU affects the agenda of local organizations that will risk "losing their activism" (Out of Circle, Women's Space; NLO; NGO Pescanik, SOS Sombor; SOS Women's Centre; WIB). Most respondents expressed an understanding of being in some kind of "moment of change" as their NGO could no longer function as a radical grass-roots organization but was neither evolved into a professionalized NGO (cf. Vráblíková & Cisar 2010). In relation to this, they welcomed EU influence through the accession negotiations while at the same time criticizing the EU for organizing their assistance so as to make local NGOs dependent on the Serbian government in receiving grants, something that was perceived to hinder their collective action instead of promoting it. These results are in line with previous findings on the ambivalent nature of EU accession assistance for women's organizations in CEE countries and how EU as a donor ultimately affects both the agenda and the strategies of local women's NGOs (Roth 2007; Haskova & Krizkova 2008).

The Framing of Gender Equality and Social Change in EU Enlargement Policy
As will be argued below, EU policy *could gain leverage to movement claims* in three main ways: firstly by emphasizing the prevalent corruption and through promoting deepened regional cooperation. Secondly through emphasizing and acknowledging the "hostile climate" for civil society organizations and thirdly by calling for implementation and political commitment in the area of human rights legislation. At the same time, however, EU policy could *constrain* movement framing through not providing detailed and corresponding prognosis in gender equality policy; concrete formulations on the level of adjustment to EU standards are generally left out. There is also a general lack of gender mainstreaming throughout the policy documents as well as a narrow definition of gender equality, which risks undermining the (Serbian) political commitments to gender equality.

Corruption and Regional Cooperation
Public administration reform is accentuated by EU policy as a solution to many problems associated with the prevalent corruption in Serbian society. The consistent emphasis on stable and transparent institutions discloses administrative reforms as intersecting to all other negotiations (2014a:20). The diagnostic framing in this area identifies for example how "laws are often passed without a sufficiently comprehensive assessment of the policy and budgetary impact, resulting into inefficiencies in the implementation and enforcement of legislation" (2014b:9). Prevalent

corruption in the Serbian society is largely framed as a problem of institutional quality that affects citizens' access to public services such as education or health (2014a:11). The report also provides examples of lacking implementation of relevant anti-corruption strategies. One part of this framing concerns that politicians need to "fully enforce" the legal framework on corruption and also back these reforms with "appropriate resources" (2014b:12), another prognosis concerns the need to strengthen the capacities and resources of the Anti-Corruption Agency as well as establish "whistle-blowing protection mechanisms" (2014a:33). Overall, the COM pressures Serbia in regards to 'build up a credible track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions in cases of organized crime and corruption' (2014a:19). Furthermore, the fight against corruption is described in relation to governing parties and the report brings up the failure of political organizations to provide information on expenses for the 2012 election campaign as a major problem (2014b:43). Similarly, another recurring diagnosis in the report was the unfavorable conditions for "independent regulatory bodies". Here, some blame was attributed to the parliament as the report asserts the need for the parliament to improve its relationship to independent bodies (2014b:7). Nonetheless, a great deal of blame was directed towards the government for not enabling an effective work of independent regulatory bodies by systematically following up their recommendations (2014b:8). These assessments resonate with respondents' description of corruption in Serbian society.

In emphasizing regional cooperation and "good neighborly relations" as essential parts of Serbia's progress towards EU (2014a:34), the report to some extent resonates with activist diagnostic framing of Serbia's inability to handle the past. Although the general assessment is that Serbia actively participates in cooperation with the *International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia* (2014b:16), the report underscores that Serbia needs to continue to actively participate in various initiatives relating to regional cooperation and "high-level dialogues". The COM also stresses that the normalization process with Kosovo has slowed down and is in need of "new momentum" (2014b:6). In accentuating the importance of regional cooperation as a stabilizing force, the report possibly supports, quite indirectly, the anti-nationalist frames of Serbian feminist organizations. In the assessment of Serbian "war crimes jurisdictions", the report announces that "the number of investigations against high-level officers still remains low, and courts continued to pass lenient sentences in such cases" (2014b:42-43). This quote indicates that the COM is aware of problems pertaining to "nationalist politics" in relation to reconciliation with the past.

The Inclusion of Civil Society Actors and Implementation of Human Rights Legislation
Another possibility for frame resonance is the COM criticism of government officials for not fulfilling their commitment to ensure the involvement of civil society in the accession process. A strong civil society is framed as crucial for the strengthening of democracy and political

accountability (2014a:20). If Serbia manages to increase the consultation of civil society actors throughout the reform process (2014b:11) it is thought to promote a smooth harmonization to EU standards within the political criteria. The environment for human rights defenders and CSOs is described as "hostile" especially for those articulating critical views (Ibid) and the report states that Serbia needs to address the problem of NGOs receiving threats from "extreme right-wing organizations" (2014b:47). These policy frames to some extent shed light on the marginalization of NGOs with critical voices, a fact that corresponds a great deal with activist diagnostic descriptions of the undemocratic tendencies of the Serbian government, exemplified by their exposed situation to extremist organizations. Overall, in relation to civil society, the COM compels Serbian authorities concerning the inclusion of CSOs as important "stakeholders" in the accession process by calling for a more "visible political commitment to promoting a culture of respect" and by ensuring that already existent instruments for including the civil society in the legislative process are actually implemented (2014b:11). This suggested prognosis might facilitate a greater visibility of CSOs in the implementation of EU standards since the report invokes the seriousness of the issue by highlighting the government's aversion to critique.

Furthermore, EU policy provides decisive accounts on the need to implement human rights legislation (2014a:13). Implementation issues are pointed to as particularly severe on local level and the assessment generally concludes the need for the anti-discrimination law to be further aligned in Serbian national laws (2014b:38). Likewise, the COM directs critique on the lacking follow-up of the *Ombudsman* (mechanism for protection of human rights) offices' recommendations, identifying how especially those recommendations that require systematic changes are ignored by Serbian authorities (2014b:10). For this problem a specific solution is formulated: "the constitutional position of the Ombudsman needs strengthening, should be allocated sufficient resources and in general the offices independence need to be better respected and understood" (Ibid). The report, furthermore, recommends Serbia to issue an action plan for the implementation of the *Istanbul Convention* (preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) (2014b:47). On these points (i.e. implementation in practice) EU policy resonates with activist claims on the "cosmetic" and rather superficial change of the Serbian government. EU discourse indicates, to a varying extent, that Serbian administrative capacity is weak in the implementation of gender equality *because* of the governments lacking will for change. However, on the other hand, the report only in bypassing states that the previous *Directorate for Gender Equality* has been "dismantled" and replaced by "a unit for gender equality" under the *Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Policy* (2014b:38). Serbian authorities thus managed to abolish the directorate as the main mechanism for gender equality, without EU policy condemning so.

Anti-Discrimination, Gender Equality and Human Rights

In monitoring Serbian progress with regards to implementation of gender equality *Acquis* (chapter 19 and 23) the lack of a detailed diagnosis and prognosis indicated that the assessment was overall positive. In chapter 23, for example, emphasis was put in areas related to the enforcement of an effective independent judiciary as well as the fight against corruption, whilst less attention was paid to the assessment of "fundamental rights", which includes sections on women's rights. In evaluating the "institutional compliance" (cf. Bretherton 2011) of gender equality *Acquis* the report accentuated the need for legislation to be "systematically enforced" with regards to preventing the dismissal of pregnant women, women on maternity leave or inequality in relation to employment and salaries (2014b:38). Nonetheless, the report also identified violence against women as an issue of gender inequality noting that the number of women being killed by their partners has increased (2014b:47). In relation to anti-discrimination and human rights, the report brings forth the holding of the pride parade as a "substantial step towards the effective exercise of human rights in general" (2014b:51). At the same time it also identified problems such as the prevailing discrimination of the LGBTI-community, in employment as well as in the society in large (2014b:48). With regards to Roma rights, Roma women and children were brought forth as the most discriminated against both in the labor market as well as in their families as violence repeatedly goes unreported (2014b:50). Areas such as education, housing and employment were particularly highlighted here and Serbia was recommended to improve the situation of the Roma minority by implementing the "Roma strategy*"* as well as strengthening "operational cooperation between the various ministries and bodies relevant for Roma inclusion" (Ibid). Thus, in highlighting Roma rights and LGBTI-rights gender aspects of these discriminations were generally excluded, with the exception of Roma women and girls being mentioned as the most discriminated against (2014b:50). The report identified the need to raise awareness on issues of discrimination against Roma, the LGBTI community as well as persons with HIV (2014b:37-38). EU policy thus recognizes the discrimination of Roma in various fields of social life and this is the case, although to a lesser extent, also for the LGBTI community. However, women were not portrayed as belonging to these "vulnerable groups" and few connections were drawn between these discriminations.

The Implications of EU Enlargement Policy – Resonance and Discursive Opportunities?

Radical Feminist Frames and the Discourse on Violence

Movement actors framed the depoliticized environment of Serbia, resulting from poverty and a struggle to survive on a day-to-day basis, as political violence exerted by the state. Thus, what respondents described was to some extent lacking citizen rights. The oppression was seen as

twofold, both (patriarchal) oppression on "women" as a group but also an (authoritarian) oppression of Serbian citizens in general. In the Serbian case, patriarchy seems deeply interwoven with the experience of authoritarianism and nationalism. This is because, as claimed by Papic (2002), both genders have experienced similar processes of "disempowerment" since the beginning of the 90s. In fact, Papic (2002) has argued that the increased violence against women in the private sphere, which follows the same trend identified by Pollert (2003) in some CEE countries after 1989, is a result of the "equal" oppression of men and women in the public sphere where both genders became economically, legally and institutionally disempowered, i.e. the "equality" of living in a state of "despotic powerlessness" (2002:130). The discourse thus seeks to draw connections between the abuses of a women's body in the home with the abuse of the symbolic representation of "women" in nationalist politics. The experience of war has undoubtedly complicated the "transition" experience in Serbia as well as the feminist framing of issues concerning violence against women.

As there was more or less a consensus among respondents in viewing the state as a "common enemy" (cf. Gamson 2013), even among the more institutionalized forms of organizing (for example both of the Studies Centre's who functioned as NGOs as well as institutionalized research centers), movement actors had indeed chosen a radical rather than resonant framing of claims (cf. Ferree 2003). The evidence of a master frame within the movement might be connected to some organizations perceiving that their issues, articulated with reference to more liberal ideas of empowerment and identity politics, were marginalized. The most obvious case here was NLO who organized activities to support the creation of a lesbian community – they felt marginalized in a Serbian context both because of the general culture but also because their claims did not always fit with the agenda of the women's movement. Thus, although all respondents experienced their domestic political and discursive opportunities as closed, there were different types of radical claims articulated within the movement and the claims that did not resonate with the feminist frames on violence tended to be suppressed as a result of movement-internal power dynamics (cf. Ferree 2003).

Boomerang Patterns despite Skepticism and Professionalization?
Notwithstanding the low capacity and small size of their organization that the respondents testified to, they did put some hope to EU policy being able to offer new opportunities. This was manifested by their positive view on increased transnational cooperation and their existent involvement in "transnational advocacy networks" (Keck & Sikkink 1999) such as the EWL or the EU itself. AWC was among those organizations that regularly visited Brussels and as one of the largest women's organizations took part in the process of issuing shadow reports. However, most organizations did not see lobbying towards the EU as their priority, primarily because a lack of capacities but also, I

would argue, due to a lacking awareness of the possibilities for change created by the accession process. Even though most respondents were unambiguous as to their positive assessment of a potential EU membership they exerted skepticism towards EU as a donor but also as a political entity, mainly because the EU was perceived to lack understanding of their context. Some hopes were, however, formulated on the accession process being a possibility to achieve increased visibility of their collective action frames, despite the process of professionalization that EU contributes to. Furthermore, there is some evidence of the respondents using EU to influence national politics in what has been called "boomerang patterns" (Keck & Sikkink 1999), despite their occasional skepticism towards the process. The case of domestic violence is illustrative here: the fact that it is mentioned in the progress report for Serbia is possibly a result of the lobbying of organizations such as AWC but also of violence against women being on the agenda of the EWL. The reframing of violence against women as an issue of human rights instead of as a feminist issue (Roth 2007) might explain that it is included in the enlargement agenda as the only area of "soft" gender equality policy. According to Roth (2007:470), there is a connection between this reframing of violence against women and the wave of NGOs created across CEE countries to handle the issue. The case of Serbia seems to be no exception. As Serbian women's NGOs are involved in networks for combating violence against women both nationally and transnationally, it is no coincidence that the most noticeable boomerang pattern is within the field of domestic violence.

EU Enlargement Policy - Discursive Opportunities versus Constraints

In general, the narrow understanding of gender equality is illustrated by the lack of EU gender equality policy outside of *Acquis* "hard" legislation, a finding that is in accordance with earlier literature (Bretherton 2011; Haskova & Krizkova 2008). One important exception is the area violence against women, which can be seen as a point of resonance as well as a discursive opportunity that movement actors can make use of in order to pressure their government on issues of practical implementation, since EU policy explicitly states the need for implementation of relevant mechanisms within this area (COM 2014b:47). While the fact that the issue is raised at all signals its importance, the COM does not attempt an analysis as to why the number of women killed by their partners has increased. The section on violence against women can be seen as symptomatic for the way EU frames gender equality issues as instances of human rights. In Roth's (2007:470) understanding, the reframing of violence against women as a human rights issue risks undermining its political potential since the structural understanding of patriarchy is lost, which would be in line with arguments of gender equality objectives being "co-opted" by other policy priorities (Stratigaki 2004). The lack of a structural understanding of women's position was also illustrated by the differences with regards to framing the political versus the economic criteria in enlargement policy;

the latter was more consistent in articulating a corresponding diagnosis/prognosis while both diagnosis and prognosis were vaguely formulated within the political criteria. This was also found in the case of Czech Republic where EU evaluation placed particular weight on economic reforms (Haskova & Krizkova 2008:169). The lack of a comprehensive analysis of gender inequality problems in the Serbian context can be seen as connected to the scarce application of gender mainstreaming, which also leads to vague prognosis in formulating EU conditionality. The report brings attention to minority rights, LGBTI-rights and women's rights in varying degrees but the main problem is that it fails to draw connections between these discriminations. Yet, the fact that EU discourse has a clear stance on pressuring Serbia to implement anti-discrimination and gender equality legislation into national law does provide discursive opportunities for Serbian women's organizations in lobbying their government.

Outside the field of gender equality and anti-discrimination, the discursive opportunities offered local women's NGOs are primarily those highlighting the "hostile" climate for Serbian civil society actors and those related to the framing of corruption as a huge problem. Policy frames and movement frames converged particularly concerning the inability of the government to handle critical views, which offers credit to activist claims of being marginalized by the state. The policy framing of civil society as crucial for a democratic development included increased cooperation between governmental bodies and civil society actors. As indicated above, some respondents were not convinced as to this "opportunity" since they viewed the promotion of cooperation between NGOs and governmental bodies as counter-productive. The movement actors witnessed to a tendency of governmental bodies to "put on a show" and use their expertise when EU is around, whilst in practice their suggestions and claims are continuously ignored. However, EU policy, in stressing the need to strengthen the role and capacities of CSOs, provides discursive opportunities for movement actors in criticizing their government for lacking interest and lacking capacities. Serbian women's organizations can draw attention to the discrepancy between the discourse of the government and its practice – what Keck & Sikkink (1999:95) call "accountability politics" and EU policy frames can thus work in the direction of supporting these movement claims discursively. Consequently, movement actors have the opportunity to draw on the reports conclusion of corruption and lacking implementation of adopted legislation in order to expose the "cosmetic change" of the Serbian state in a typical boomerang pattern (Keck & Sikkink 1999). Furthermore, EU discourse to some extent also legitimates movement claims of Serbia having unresolved issues with the past. The tendency in the progress report to highlight the political criteria, in which good neighborly relations are seen as central for further negotiations, might be a sign of EU understanding the nationalist context and women's organizations can possibly make their claims of

"dealing with the past" more effective by drawing on these discursive opportunities. In sum, the possibility of movement actors to draw on EU discourse to promote their own claims is related to existent EU gender equality legislation, but also on policy frames on Serbian corruption, policy frames on the need to strengthen the role and capacities of civil society actors as well as policy frames on the need for deepened regional cooperation.

Conclusions

This paper has engaged with social movement framing analysis to explore, on the one hand, claims among contemporary Serbian women's organizations and, on the other hand, how EU enlargement policy could support the framing of claims made by movement actors. The analysis found that the EU enlargement strategy and progress report for Serbia on several points resonates with movement collective action frames. Above all, the EU discourse can gain leverage to the frames brought forth by Serbian women's organizations concerning the prevailing corruption and the "cosmetic change" of the Serbian state, which is connected to its lacking will for change as also illustrated by the lacking cooperation with civil society actors. Additionally, EU enlargement discourse in highlighting the need for regional cooperation and reconciliation with the past, possibly supports the overall understanding among Serbian women's groups of the nationalist political context. Thus, this paper has found that the EU is an important *discursive opportunity structure* for Serbian women's NGOs, a concept that has only played a marginal role in analyzing the impact of EU candidacy for women's movements. My findings show that frame analysis combined with a perspective of discursive opportunity structures can shed light on the broader cultural context for movement claims-making and how a transnational force such as the EU accession context, might facilitate movement framing and claims-making. As movement frames and EU policy frames resonate on several points, movement actors could draw on EU discourse in order to promote their own frames in their national context, in what has been described as boomerang patterns (Keck & Sikkink 1999).

The empirical contribution of this paper is to shed some light on contemporary women's organizing in Serbia, which has not been analyzed in relation to EU enlargement policy or from a social movement perspective. Serbian women's organizations shared similar claims and their collective action frames were produced with reference to a radical feminist ideology. These feminist frames put them in a marginalized position vis-à-vis the state. The radical framing of claims was connected to many of the organizations' and activists' roots in anti-war activism (cf. Visnjic 2015) that has had a structuring effect (Bilic & Jankovic 2012) on contemporary feminist activism in Serbia. Due to the presence of a master frame, in the form of a feminist positioning against nationalism and militarism, some more liberal organizations focusing on issues of empowerment felt marginalized within the movement. All movement actors were however in great accordance in

viewing the state as an enemy, a fact that signals the need to make better use of transnational advocacy networks (Keck & Sikkink 1999) such as the EU. Even though movement actors were open to transnational cooperation as well as "European norms and values" they also exerted a skepticism towards EU, which risks putting them in a position of not taking advantage of and adjusting their framing to available discursive opportunities. Consequently, a suggestion for further research is to explore to what extent radical women's groups in Serbia or other former Yugoslav countries make use of the EU or other transnational advocacy networks in order to facilitate their claims. Moreover, further research is needed in order to fully explore the characteristics of the Serbian women's movement, their framing of claims as well as their strategies for survival, which would also be interesting to compare with women's movements in other former Yugoslav countries as well as in comparison with other EU candidate countries in general.

References

Bagic, A. (2006). Women's Organizing in Post-Yugoslav Countries: Talking about 'Donors'. In: Ferree, M. M. & Tripp, A. M. (ed.) *Global Feminism: Transnational Women′s Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*, New York: University Press, 141-65.

Benford, R. & Snow, D. (1992). Master Frames and Cycles of Protest. In: Morris, A. D. & Mueller, C. M. (ed.) *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. New Haven, Conn. Yale University Press.

Benford, R. & Snow, D. (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611-39.

Bilic, B. & Janković, V. (ed.) (2012). *Resisting the Evil: (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Contention.* Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Bretherton, C. (2011). Gender Mainstreaming and EU Enlargement: Swimming Against the Tide? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 8(1), 60-81.

Burri, S. & Prechal, S. (2010). *EU gender equality law update 2010*. [online] Available at:http://ec.europa.eu/justice/genderequality/files/dgjustice_eugenderequalitylaw_update_2010_final24february2011_en.pdf [Accessed 1 Dec. 2015].

Císař, O. & Vráblíková K. (2010). The Europeanization of Social Movements in the Czech Republic: The EU and local Women's groups. *Communist and Post-communist Studies*, 43(2), 209-19.

COM. (1996). Communication from the Commission. *Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women and Men into All Community Policies and Activities*. COM(1996) 67 final.

COM. (2010a). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015*. COM(2010) 491 final.

COM. (2010b). Commission Staff Working Document. *EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010*-2015. SEC(2010) 265 final.

COM. (2014b). Commission Staff Working Document. *Serbia 2014 Progress Report*. SWD(2014) 302 final

COM. (2014a). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-2015*. COM(2014) 700 final.

Della Porta, D. & Diani, M. (1999). *Social Movements: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

EU. [European Union]. (2012). Offical Journal of the European Union. *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.* 2012/C 326/392.

Ferree, M. M. & Merill, D. (2000). Hot Movements, Cold Cognitions: Thinking about Social Movements in Gendered Terms. *Contemporary Sociology,* 29(3), 454-62.

Ferree, M. M. (2003). Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debates of the US and Germany. *American Journal of Sociology*, 109(2), 304-44.

Ferree M. M. & McClurg Mueller C. (2004). Feminism and the Women's Movement: A Global Perspective. In: Snow, D., Soule, S. and Kriesi, H., ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, 1st ed. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Fridman, O. (2011).'It Was Like Fighting a War With Our Own People': Anti-War Activism in Serbia during the 1990s. *Nationalities Papers,* 39(4), 507-22.

Gamson, W. A. (2013). *Injustice Frames.* The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements. Blackwell Publiching Ltd.

Gemzöe, L. (2002). *Feminism*. Stockholm: Bilda.

Haskova, H. & Krizkova, A. (2008). The Impact of EU Accession on the Promotion of Women and Gender Equality in the Czech Republic. In: Roth, S. (ed.) *Gender Politics in the expanding European Union. Mobilization. Inclusion. Exclusion*. New York: Berghahn, 155-78.

Haughton, T. (2007). When Does the EU Make a Difference? Conditionality and the Accession Process in Central and Eastern Europe. *Political Studies Review*, 5(2), 233-46.

Hughes, M. D. & Foster, K. (1996). War, Nationalism and Rape: Women Respond by Opening a Centre against Sexual Violence in Belgrade. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 19(1-2),183-4.

Hughes, M. D., Mladenovic, L. & Mrsevic, Z. (1995). Feminist Resistance in Serbia. *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 2(4), 509-32.

Iveković, R. (1993). Women, Nationalism and War: "Make Love Not War". *Hypatia*, 8(4), 113-26.

Keck. M. E. & Sikkink, K. (1999). Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics. *International Social Science Journal*, 51(159), 89-101.

Lukić, J. (2011). Protected by Friendship and Caring: Women and Peace in the Former Yugoslav Countries. *Signs*, 36(3), 532-41.

Marks, G. & McAdam, D. (2009). On the Relationship of Political Opportunities to the Form of Collective Action: The Case of the European Union. In: Della Porta, D., Kriesi H. & Rucht, D. (ed.) *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*, Palgrave Macmillan, 112-31.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing Qualitative Research*. 5. ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

McCammon, H., Newman, H. D., Sanders, M. C. & Terrell, T. (2007). Movement Framing and Discursive Opportunity Structures: The Political Successes of the U.S. Women's Jury Movements. *American Sociological Review*, 72(5), 725-49.

McCammon, H. (2013). *Discursive Opportunity Structure*. Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Milić, A. (2004). The Women's Movement in Serbia and Montenegro at the Turn of the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Women's Groups. *Feminist Review*, 76(1), 65-82.

Miskovska Kajevska, A. (2014) *Taking a Stand in Times of Violent Societal Changes: Belgrade and Zagreb Feminists' Positionings on the (post-)Yugoslav Wars and Each Other (1991-2000)*. PHD. University of Amsterdam.

Mladenovic, L. & Litricin, V. (1993). Belgrade Feminists 1992: Separation, Guilt and Identity Crisis. *Feminist Review*, 45(3), 113-19.

Morokvasic, M. (1998). The Logics of Exclusion. Nationalism, Sexism and the Yugoslav War. In: Charles N. & Hintjens, H. (ed.) *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies,* London: Routledge, 65-90.

Papić, Z. (2002). Europe after 1989: Ethnic Wars, the Fascistization of Civil Society and Body Politics in Serbia. In: Griffin, G. & Braidotti, R. (ed.) *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women's Studies*, 1st ed. London: Zed.

Pollert, A. (2003). Women, Work and Equal Opportunities in Post-Communist Transition. *Work, Employment & Society,* 17(2), 331-57.

Rek, M. (2010). Europeanisation of Civil Society Sector in Central and Eastern Europé. *Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences*, 3(1), 60-86.

Roth, S. (2007). Sisterhood and Solidarity? Women's Organizations in the Expanded European Union. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 14(4), 460-87.

Slapsak, S. (2008). The After-War War of Genders: Misogyny, Feminist Ghettoization, and the Discourse of Responsibility in Post-Yugoslav Societies. In: Bahun-Radunović, S. & Rajan, J (ed.) *Violence and Gender in the Globalized World: the Intimate and the Extimate*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.

Sloat, A. (2005). The Rebirth of Civil Society: The Growth of Women's NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe. *European Journal of Women's Studies,* 12(4), 437-52.

Spehar, A. (2012). Women's Movements as Agents of Change: The Politics of Policymaking and the Reform of Domestic Violence Laws in Croatia and Slovenia, 1991–2004. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 33(3), 205-38.

Stratigaki, M. (2004). The Cooptation of Gender Concepts in EU Policies: The Case of "Reconciliation of Work and Family". *Social Politics*, 11(1), 30-56.

Swedish Research Council, 2002. *Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk samhällsvetenskaplig forskning.* Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet.

Visnjic, J. (2015). *Feminist Practices in Contemporary Serbia*. [online] Available at: https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2015-04-anti-gender-movements-on-the-rise.pdf#page=96 [Accessed 23 Oct. 2015].

Zarkov, D. (2003). Feminism and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia: On the Politics of Gender and Ethnicity. *Social Development Issues*, 24(3), 1-19.

Appendix - List of conducted interviews

- Autonomous Women's Centre *(Autonomni ženski centar),* Belgrade.

- Women in Black *(Žene u crnom),* Belgrade.

- Out of circle Vojvodina *(Iz kruga Vojvodina),* Novi Sad.

- SOS Women's Centre *(SOS Ženski Centar),* Novi Sad.

- Women's Space *(Ženski Prostor),* Niš.

- SOS Sombor, Sombor.

- Novi Sad Lesbian Organization *(Novosadska lezbejska organizacija),* Novi Sad.

- Women's Studies *(Centar za ženske studije),* Belgrade.

- Women's Studies *(Ženske studije & istraživanja),* Novi Sad.

- Dah Theatre Research Centre *(Dah teatar za pozorišna istraživanja),* Belgrade.

- NGO Pescanik *(Udruženje žena peščanik),* Kruševac.