

# AN AGENDA FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS

From Elite Politics  
to Social Sustainability



Nikolaos Papakostas  
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Change was the basic element of the creative process of this edition as change is in the epicentre of the research of social phenomena. So, as according to Heraclitus "*all entities move and nothing remains still*" we attempt to grasp and harness this change.

Nikos Papakostas and Nikos Pasamitros, May 2014

## List of Abbreviations

BiH:	Bosnia & Herzegovina
BIT(s):	Bilateral Investment Agreement(s)
CCP:	China Communist Party
CEE:	Central & Eastern Europe
CEFTA:	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CFSP:	Common Foreign and Security Policy
DoI:	Declaration of Independence
DOP:	Department for Organic Production
DPA:	Dayton Peace Agreement
EBRD:	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC:	European Commission
ECFR:	European Council on Foreign Relations
ECHR:	European Court of Human Rights
ECLO:	European Commission Liaison Office
EEAS:	EU External Action Service
EPS:	Electric Power Industry of Serbia
EU:	European Union
EUFOR:	European Union Force
EULEX:	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EUPK:	EU Perspective in Kosovo
EUPM:	EU Police Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina
EUSR:	European Union Special Representative
F.Y.R. Macedonia:	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
FBiH:	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FIQ:	Forum for Civic Initiatives
FIT:	Feed-in Tariff
FRY or FR Yugoslavia:	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
GAC:	General Affairs Council
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ:	German Society for International Cooperation
ha:	Hectares
ICJ:	International Court of Justice
ICO:	International Civilian Office
ICTY:	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
KFOR:	Kosovo Force
KIPRED:	Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development
KLA:	Kosovo Liberation Army
KSF:	Kosovo Security Forces
LDK:	Democratic League of Kosovo
LDK:	Lidhja Demokratike e Kosoves (Democratic League of Kosovo)
MAFWM:	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NMBH:	National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina
OFDI:	Outward Foreign Direct Investment
OHR:	Office of the High Representative
OSCE:	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OZNA:	Department for the Protection of the People
PASOS:	Policy Association for an Open Society
PDK:	Partia Demokratike e Kosoves (Democratic Party of Kosovo)
PIC:	Peace Implementation Council
PIC-SB:	Peace Implementation Council Steering Board
PISG:	Provisional Institutions of Self-Government
POS:	Political Opportunity Structure
PRC:	Peoples Republic of China
RC:	Republic of Croatia
RES:	Renewable Energy Sources
ROSU:	Special Police Forces
RS:	Republika Srpska
SAA:	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAP:	Stabilisation and Association Process
SE:	South-East
SEWEA:	Serbian Wind Energy Association
SITF:	Special Investigative Task Force
SOE:	Special Operations Executive
SOE:	State Owned Enterprises
UCK:	Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosoves (Kosovo Liberation Army)
UDB:	Secret Police Organization
UK:	United Kingdom
UNCTAD:	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEP:	United Nations Environment Programme
UNMBH:	United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina
UNMIK:	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNSCR:	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSG:	United Nations Secretary General
VMRO-DMPNE:	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization— Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity
VV:	Levizja Vetevendosje!
WB:	Western Balkans
WMO:	World Meteorological Organization

**An Agenda for the Western Balkans—Foreword**

**Introduction**

Southeast Europe has diachronically been a favorite subject-matter for stereotypes and misreading. Popular perceptions and narratives related to the exotic harshness and backwardness of the region and its peoples have played a role in creating and maintaining a dividing line between the core of Europe and the area often referred to as "the Balkans". In recent years, while this imagined region has contracted and is mostly identified with the Western part of the peninsula, the perceptions that come with its infamous brand name hardly differ. The remaining group of states is considered by the mainstream "Western" imaginary to be a place of low development and inherent instability, commonly identified with the conflicts of the 1990s.

Conversely, the post-Cold War domination in political, economic and cultural terms brought about an exaggerated notion of "the West" as a singular and elusive concept. The reunification of the two parts of the Iron Curtain and the disintegration of the Soviet Union fostered a unipolar international environment that called for continuous integration of markets, states and people and growing detestation for statism, nationalism and populism. In that context, the Western Balkans habitually abided to the narrative of being a problematic region that needed restructuring and of the "West", primarily the European Union, as morally bound to take up the formidable task of "saving" it of its gloomy fate. At the same time, specificities of the Western Balkans were handily narrowed down or exaggerated according to the occasion by both local and international policy makers.

The resulting state of affairs created more profound problems than the ones it attempted to solve. On the one hand, it sustained a counterproductive self-image of defeatism and specialness of the Western Balkans and its peoples. On the other hand, it reinforced the EU's habit of promoting inherent defects (lack of leadership and political unity, growing bureaucratization, absence of a common foreign policy and a European demos) as competitive advantages and one-way paths to European integration. Thus, it seriously undermined bottom-up approaches, regional cooperation and the prospect of internally-driven reform efforts.

While these images of the region, reinforced by a particularly troubled transition period continued to prevail, the "Western" orientation of the region was confirmed through the Thessaloniki Declaration signed in 2003. The European Union, a place of political stability and economic growth at that time, effectively pursued the role of the main value exporter in the region. The application of turbo-charged conditionality, characterized by increasing asymmetry in the relations between the EU and the candidate states and uncertainty as to the final outcome of the accession process<sup>1</sup>, constituted an effective tool for fostering reform. In that way, the EU managed to promote reform without making any further radical commitments to the countries in the region as regards membership in the EU.

However, five years after the escalation of the European crisis, the stakes for the region and for Europe are rather different. The Union's attractive power is undermined by regression in the integration process, economic crisis and the rise of assertive competitive powers in the region. Technocratic standards appear increasingly simplistic and single-dimensional. The puzzle put forward by the conflict experience and the consequent questions of stateness and actorness seem to exceed the capacities of conditionality and necessitate political solutions and cross cutting approaches.

Finally, the case of the Western Balkans carries significant explanatory power and offers important lessons for the self-conception of the Union as well as for the functionalist viewpoint in general. The necessity to question imposed solutions and ineffective elite politics, and additionally to highlight the inclusion of people and their needs as an integral component of contemporary policy making, appears to be essential for the attainment of long-term solutions and social sustainability.

### **European Union's agenda for the Western Balkans: A critical appraisal.**

A lot of ink has been spilled on the involvement of the EU in the Western Balkans. From the Bosnian regime issue to the Albanian insurgency in F.Y.R. Macedonia and from the accession of Croatia to the Kosovo case, the Union has been harshly criticized; sometimes for being too interventionist, in other instances for being too passive and in some others for interfering in

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<sup>1</sup> In Heather Grabbe's (2003) typology.

the wrong manner or in bad timing. In any case, inner EU disagreements have so far ensured some kind of relative neutrality in its involvement in the specific region.<sup>2</sup>

Closing up on the second decade past the Dayton Agreement, 15 years after the end of the conflict in Kosovo, more than a decade from the Ohrid Framework Agreement in the FYR Macedonia and the Thessaloniki Summit, Western Balkans' politics and societies are, nowadays, considerably different. The prospect of armed conflict is unlikely, democracy is recognized as "the only game in town"<sup>3</sup> by all major players, and the first phase of the countries' economic transition has been concluded. However, in most cases the achieved progress has not resulted in concrete steps towards integration in "Western" institutions.

This delay highlights the lack of a common plan and unanimous EU agenda for the region. The enlargement fatigue and the widening vs. deepening discourse preponderated in the EU throughout the 2000s until the eruption of the crisis. This seemed to have been an unavoidable part of a generalized introversion process. However, the EU's wavering has at times deprived Western Balkan countries from a clear orientation to the future and has given power to forces of populism and nationalism. Thus, it has obstructed sustainable advancement towards political stability, social cohesion and economic growth.

Opposite to this pattern, in July 2013, Croatia became a fully-fledged member of the European Union while Serbia initiated negotiations for accession in January 2014. Those events seem to have reinvigorated the enlargement process that had been stagnant for some time. They also carry great symbolic importance for the region and for the continent in general. The visible prospect of 'reunification' of the former conflicting countries in the EU promulgates, apart from new and significant prospects for development, the irrevocable end of the imagined region of the "Balkans".

Recent mobility in the enlargement process manifests a renewed readiness of the EU leadership to be more dynamically involved in the region in order to avoid the uncertainty of an increasingly complicated international landscape. On the other hand, it indicates the narrowing

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<sup>2</sup> This of course does not mean political neutrality since the interventionist approach is a policy choice per se.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase is borrowed by the classic "Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation" of H. Linz and Al. Stepan (1996)

distance between the EU and the Western Balkan countries and, thereof, the relative effectiveness of the principle of conditionality in both economic and political terms despite the crisis instance. Successful conception, formulation, implementation, evaluation and duplication of conditionality-driven reform can impact strongly on the enlargement process and the international image of the EU.

Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go. Moving further from the present-day political discourse, the countries' progress towards EU integration is undermined by the legacies of authoritarianism, interethnic conflict and centrally planned economy. As regards political conditionality, these legacies have preserved what North, Weingast and Wallis (2009) referred to as "closed access governance" regimes. Closed access governance regimes are characterized by varying access to state resources based on individuals' closeness to a leader (patrimonialism) or to a faction, usually a political faction (competitive particularism). In turn, unequal access to state resources perpetuates uneven social equilibria that avert universal agreement on means and ends in the respective societies.

Particularism, in the case of the Western Balkan countries, constitutes an underlying cause of other social symptoms such as corruption and organized crime, low social capital, dysfunctional public administration etc. In turn, these pose impediments to political stability and, therefore, to the candidates' attractiveness for EU accession. Moreover, "closed access governance" order is reinforced by the legacy of conflict. Social mobilization along ethnic lines or formerly conflicting parties, undermines not only the quality of governance but also social cohesion and interethnic relations as it aggravates mutual feelings of victimization and stirs questions of stateness. Clearly, those deep-seated, cross-cutting and self-maintaining realities cannot be confronted through conditionality; a strategy whose nature is largely reactive.

As regards economic criteria, the Western Balkans entered the open market arena rather late. By the time the first phase of economic transition was concluded, the "competitive" economies of Central and Eastern Europe were already full members of the European Union and were presented with all the potentials for foreign investment and mobility that came with it. This delay seriously undermined the functioning of the countries' markets and, therefore, their attractiveness for investments during the 2000s.

However, following the escalation of the economic crisis in Europe and the rise of new players in the region, this competitive disadvantage could be reversed. The region's current socioeconomic condition provides increased investment potentials while political risk is permissible. Importantly, the economic potentials of the region deriving from the "East" come with no strings attached in the form of conditionality. Thus, the application of economic conditionality can boost the countries' economic development only if it is kept free from excessive interventionism and unnecessary antagonisms between major international players. In that way, it can increase the attractiveness of accession while positively contributing to EU's competitiveness.

As previous enlargements have manifested, the accession or non-accession in the Union is, utterly, subject to political decisions<sup>4</sup>. Thus, apart from conditionality-driven policies, the European Union's indirect involvement in the region is equally important. EU accession constitutes a top priority for all Western Balkans' governments. Political discourse is centred on the integration process while, for an important part of the electorate, governmental effectiveness is assessed according to the countries' progress towards accession. All countries in the region are ruled by pro-EU parties while political rhetoric and agenda are being shaped by the necessities set by the membership prospect.

In that context, the level of trust in political institutions is a decisive factor for the progress of the countries towards integration. The European Union is more trusted than national political institutions in all Western Balkan countries. In addition, with the exception of Bosnia, where the long involvement of the EU has gradually eroded its political capital, the Union is among the most trusted institutions, in general (see for instance: PASOS 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> This was apparent in many of the cases during the 2004 enlargements when a highly diverse group of countries with different levels of effectiveness at transposing EU standards and different capacities of implementing EU norms was integrated simultaneously. Another example is the fast progress of Serbia towards EU integration after the apprehension of war crimes' suspects that is after the fulfillment of a criterion that clearly exceeds the alleged technocratic nature of the pre-accession procedure. A third prominent case would be the stalling of the integration process of FYR Macedonia due to the name-issue dispute with Greece, an issue of symbolic and political nature.



This role does not come without responsibilities and risks. All candidate Western Balkan countries that were surveyed for the latest Eurobarometer feature a dramatic lack of trust in all institutions, be it national or European (European Commission 2014). More importantly, the research highlights that, while higher than national, trust in EU institutions has been significantly contracting in all countries. This is partly related to the damaged international image of the European Union following the escalation of the crisis and partly to its inability or unwillingness to give tangible political rewards to the countries that struggle with the continuously toughening standards set by the EU.

The eruption of the crisis in Europe in 2008 manifested significant structural deficiencies of the EU. Dramatic delays in decision making, overly bureaucratic and phobic confrontation of economic challenges led to unfair and uninspired solutions that failed to take into consideration the conceptual principles of the European Union, to grasp the imagination of the European peoples and to involve them in the decision making process. Yet, while the trust and enthusiasm for EU integration among Western Balkans' peoples seem to have decreased, support for EU accession in quantitative terms is hardly disturbed. The lack of sound alternatives, the large gap between living standards in candidate states and EU member states, as well as the psychological importance of belonging in a traditionally powerful group of countries outshined the negative externalities of the crisis.

Nevertheless, taking into consideration the changing international landscape and the EU's continuous inability to give convincing answers to its own challenges, this pattern is not irreversible. While the application of conditionality is significantly more efficient than in previous enlargements, its dynamics are gradually fading. Political decisions are integral to any sustainable agenda for the Western Balkans. To that end, factoring in regional specificities and peoples' needs appears to be mutually beneficiary for the EU and the countries of the region.

### **A laborious path to the future**

Beyond the attempts to stabilize the region, the EU also acts as a value exporter for candidates, potential candidates and negotiating states. And although the enlargement process progresses according to the Copenhagen criteria and the *acquis communautaire*, due to constant transformation in the

European structure, there are serious impediments in the accession procedure that do not stem from the inability of the states to apply norms but rather from intrinsic EU glitches. Admittedly, the EU is a candid value exporter but at the same time, shows a striking lack of flexibility and adoptability. The same often applies for local governments that attempt to modernize and move away from their unwieldy past.

As Stefan Četković, in *The Challenge of Promoting Green Sectors in Serbia* shows, technocratic approaches in many cases fail to see local needs. Of course, one can argue that the decision-makers sometimes know what is good for the people before the people realize it for themselves and that leaders, in many instances, have the charisma to lead through the right path. On the other hand, some may say that the neglect of people's needs by the elites creates social discontent. Lasting denial of needs can generate social inequalities and deep cleavages that may scar societies and foster latent conflict. And while human needs can hardly constitute navigation points for governance (Groom 2007), yet, they have to be kept in mind since Needs Approaches seem to contain some empirical truth; the denial of needs like safety, security, identity, respect and participation is likely to generate popular reactions and in extremis violent responses. In many cases, while some needs are not met, people who are experiencing gratification of some other needs are not willing to engage in radical movements or revolutions for fear of losing what fulfilment they are relatively assured of under an existing order (Sites 1990). As Alma Vardari-Kesler shows in *Statehood without Sovereignty*, there seems to be a need for the peoples of the region to be included in the advancement process; especially when it concerns huge social change like state-building or EU accession.

In the case of F.Y.R. Macedonia, we have the building of a state, based on the Slavic-Macedonian identity hype and the marginalization of the Albanian one. Top-down identity politics based on the creation of an archaic national image along with the opposing foreign policies of Greece and Bulgaria create a scabrous equation for the EU to solve. As Dr Nicholas Rossis argues in *The consequences of the political focus on identity and its effect on Balkan politics and the European integration process: a case study of Macedonia*, sooner or later the EU will have to face the identity politics riddle and face up, irredentist aspirations and ethnocentric voices in the region. This task seems even more challenging given the fact that the Union

cannot effectively contain similar phenomena of nationalism and populism within its own range.

Dr Bilge Yabanci in *The EU Democratization and State-building in Kosovo* shows that future member-states have been offered an overdose of top-down, technocratic Europeanization policies. Even if the active involvement of the peoples in such processes seems an overambitious and unreachable plan, local agency needs to be treated as an instrumental part in a convergence process. The neglect of such primary actors in the democratization procedure leads to irreconcilability between the EU agenda and the local priorities and expectations. The Kosovo case shows that the public and the non-state actors perceive the EU focus as irrelevant to their urgent needs and expectations such as employability and security.

In other more complex cases, there is striking lack of will from all the parties involved, to implement change. Dr Miruna Troncota, in *Still "waiting for Godot" in Sarajevo?* analyzes the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the role of international and local actors in the slow Europeanization process and the non-application of reforms. The "Blame Game" between local and international actors (mainly the EU) supports the preservation of the status quo and the delay of the Europeanization process. Once again, BiH demonstrates the fragmentation of local agency, the EU approach inflexibility and the long-term stalemate imposed solutions produce.

Moreover, the Balkan "troublemaker" image and self-image constitutes in itself an obstacle towards the EU integration. The case of Croatia studied by Jennifer Titanski-Hooper in *(B)ordering in the EU*, shows a gloomy reality; Western Balkan states, for external and internal purposes, need to shake off their Balkan geographic imaginary and shift to a European one. This is because the EU, through a process of (b)ordering, increasingly defines the who, what and where of being 'European'. This procedure is highly linked to geographic imaginaries, which are based in historical, cultural and political experiences and perceptions of place and identity. The geographic imaginary of the Balkans as the underdeveloped, and unstable 'other' in Europe continues to frame, at least in part, the expansion of the European Union into the region. The fervent attempt to throw away the Balkan notoriety raises identity issues. The willingness to disacknowledge the Balkan legacy for the EU prosperity may be a functional choice in the short-run but sooner or later, the chickens will come home to roost. Thus, social

sustainability calls for confrontation, introversion and self-criticism of past issues for the establishment of a promising future. The same applies for the EU which is, once more, called to show increased flexibility.

As the Image Theory urges, the human mind can only bear a certain degree of complexity and when complexity becomes unbearable, it retreats into symbolic images (Boulding 1973; Lippmann 1922). These simplified images can be positive or negative and concern both individuals and groups. On the group level these images create a dichotomy between us (in-group) and the "other" (out-group). Negative self-images in some instances entrap peoples into the victim mentality and lead them towards pessimism, passiveness and self-blame. In others, the tough conditions the peer group is experiencing lead to the victimization of a supposedly hostile "other" and make the public opinion vulnerable to populism and nationalistic cries.

The images of the self and the other are shaped by the habitus (Rieber & Kelly 1991) namely the familiar environment in which one moves inside (the family, the school, the peer group and the media etc.). One of the basic factors that form these images is history as transmitted through the oral historical heritage, schooling and the written word. As Dr Tonka Konstadinova analyzes in her, *Reinventing the past: politics of memory in the post-conflict reconstruction of cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, in many occasions, new constructed cultural narratives replace old ones in an attempt to reconstruct the past for the legitimization of power.

Beyond the EU borders, the Western Balkan countries attempt to present a positive international image and to re-brand the region and boost extraversion. A colossal actor like China could not stay outside the process of economic growth of the region. Even if the penetration is of secondary concern for the Chinese side, its economic size cannot be unimportant for the Western Balkan states. Anastas Vangeli in, *On the growing cooperation between China and the Western Balkans*, explains the Chinese presence in the Western Balkans and illustrates why an EU future would further forward economic relations between the Asian economic giant and the region. Vangeli points out that EU and China are not competitive forces in the Western Balkans but rather supplementary economic actors.

As regards the "exportable" image of the Western Balkans to Western Europe, despite the huge effort of the Western Balkan countries to change it, Western perceptions still highly rely on stereotypes and generalizations on the Balkan cultural heritage. Dr Tom Philips lively illustrates the

persistence of such stereotypes in the final chapter of the collection (*Western Europe, Western Balkans: Barriers to Cross-Cultural Encounter*).

## Conclusions

*An Agenda for the Western Balkans* emphasizes on three wide and interconnected concepts that are being examined through various disciplines: images, actorness and sustainability. It attempts to show that while both domestic and external solutions applied in the region are potentially effective, there is a need for more cross-cutting and bottom-up approaches. An internally driven, inclusive reform process is essential for creating a promising future for the peoples. A second underlying notion of this volume is that political solutions can never be free of reaction and that there is no such thing as a neutral involvement. Finally, the collection draws attention to the fact that cost-benefit calculations and values systems divergences are not the only frameworks for conceiving decision making. Distorted images of self and other are also important factors for understanding relations of nations and peoples.

Viable living environment presupposes upholding human needs in the process through all available channels. Thus, if there is something to be imposed on the Western Balkans societies is not top-down, remote guidelines, but the active involvement of the citizens in shaping their own lives. Obviously, this is a time and resource-consuming involvement. However, it is rather questionable whether global actors and primarily the EU have real alternatives in an instance of crisis and growing political and economic competitiveness. The current state of affairs seems to be unprecedented for Europe and the EU and it would probably be for the long term stability and prosperity of the region and the continent to be evaluated as such.

In any case, constructive critique and the offering of proposals is the best way to re-involve those interested in the future of the Western Balkans. This is exactly the goal of the contributors; to set the foundations for an innovative debate for the region. This collection of articles is neither a wish list for the Balkan neighborhood, nor a purely theoretical text. It is a grounded set of research and proposals that aims at contributing to the ongoing academic effort of building an alternative conceptual framework for the region and its peoples. At the same time, the volume attempts to give the reader tangible answers to the puzzling questions that stand

between the region's past and the aspired goal of social sustainability with the underlying aim of bridging the two in a constructive and fruitful way.

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**The EU Democratization and State-Building in Kosovo:  
An Analysis Through the Fragmented Local Agency**

*Despite the continuously increasing research on conditionality, socialization and compliance dynamics of the local political leaders in the Western Balkans, the fragmented local agency and its complex relations with the EU remains an under-researched topic. This paper aims to fulfil this gap by offering a systematic analysis of 'the local' through the case of Kosovo. It aspires to complement the top-down Europeanization/socialization and rational adaptation perspectives with a critical perspective. The paper argues that a systematic analysis of the local agency and domestic dynamics would improve our understanding of some of the persistent problems of state-building and democratization efforts in the Western Balkans by explaining why some norms and policies are resisted, and some others are supported under certain conditions. The investigation is based on the relevant literature, semi-structured interviews conducted in Kosovo and the analysis of policy documents, civil society reports and local newspaper archives. The findings show that the uneasy relations between the local groups and deeper problems of state weakness, such as lack of legitimacy, constantly pressurize the EU to redefine its state- and democracy building agenda in line with irreconcilable local priorities and expectations.*

**Key Words:** Europeanization, state-building, Kosovo, local agency.

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## **Introduction**

The Western Balkans is a longstanding focus for the EU's state-building and democratization agenda through the export of EU norms. This agenda is closely linked to political conditionality and membership prospect, which provides the Union with leverage to directly influence the local context through offering incentives or disincentives. The EU considers the holistic framework based on promotion of state-building, democratization and membership prospect in the region as 'the ultimate conflict prevention strategy' (European Commission 2006) which gives the Union a



'comparative advantage', over international institutions in terms of facilitating democracy, good governance and state-building (Bechev and Andreev 2005).

The EU's commitment to democratization, state-building and conflict resolution through norm transfer and conditionality (i.e. providing or withdrawing incentives) in the Western Balkans has created an ever growing body of literature supported by theoretical and empirical research. Despite this continuously growing body of literature analysing conditionality and compliance dynamics of the local political leaders in the Western Balkans, the fragmented local agency and its complex relations with the EU remains an under-researched area. This paper aims to fulfil this gap by offering a systematic analysis of the local agency (political elites including the opposition, non-state organizations and public) in the Western Balkans through the case of Kosovo. I argue that the Western Balkans requires a more refined approach than a simple extension of the first and second generation Europeanization literatures which are biased towards the local actors and prioritize (to different extents) the role of the EU incentives and norms. The paper aims to inquire the impact of the fragmented local agency and deep seated problems of stateness in terms not only of lack of capabilities and weak institutions, but also the lack of legitimacy of the state and the ruling elites for the local population.

The first section problematizes a dominant tendency in the Europeanization literature by briefly outlining the main assumptions and findings that underlie the research agenda of Europeanization scholars. The second section discusses the necessity of an alternative analytical perspective focused on local dynamics. It argues that the Europeanization literature focuses on the EU's incentives and norms, while local resources, actors and institutions are treated as passive recipients with limited ability to resist or change the EU agenda. The local agency is analyzed only through political leaderships and as reactionary (acting as spoiler) to the EU norms and policies in the literature. In the third part, the critical analytical perspective is applied to the case of Kosovo. The investigation is based on the relevant literature, semi-structured interviews conducted with the Kosovar political elite, civil society representatives and journalists in Kosovo in May 2011, reports and policy documents of the Kosovo government and local civil society organizations and the local newspaper reports.