EU Enlargement and Civil Society in the Western Balkans

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Abstract:
The talk discusses civil society empowerment in the context of the EU enlargement process. Building on extensive fieldwork, it compares NGO mobilisation around rule of law issues in Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Moving beyond the traditional focus on the top-down impact of EU support, it demonstrates NGOs' agency and analyses their shifting strategies throughout the membership negotiations. At the same time, it cautions against overestimating the potential for civil society empowerment in a context of shrinking space for NGOs and declining democratic standards in the Western Balkans.