

## **The Europeanisation of territoriality and its manifestations in EU member states**

### **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the emergence of new levels of governance in the process of European integration. It is focused on EU cohesion policy, specifically on its 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming periods. During these periods, new types of region – in particular, agglomerations, metropolitan areas and thematic regions – emerged in member states as part of the ‘territorial dimension’. For many reasons, these new actors provide topical research subjects, because they disrupt the stable governance systems of member states, are a matter of dispute among existing actors of governance, and, most importantly, can transform our understanding of the territoriality of the state.

The specific objective of this thesis is to present the concept of the Europeanisation of territoriality and to demonstrate how it operates in selected countries – Czechia, Slovakia, Germany and Italy – that have substantial experience of using EU structural funds, offer a broad gamut of approaches to the implementation of EU law, and present very different outcomes in terms of the Europeanisation of territoriality. The work is based on the author’s long-term study of EU cohesion policy. Beyond drawing on the author’s existing articles published in leading scholarly journals concerned with European studies and urban studies, the thesis is based on an original gathering of data in the four selected countries. Methodologically, the thesis relies, in the conceptual section, on an extensive literature review; in the empirical section, case studies that partially employ the method of outcome-explaining process-tracing serve to uncover the causal mechanism in the process of Europeanisation. Using a ‘most-similar-systems-design’ (MSSD) comparison of Czechia and Slovakia, the author identifies the variables that cause disputes among actors of governance.

The work makes several contributions to the ongoing debate. First, it systematically describes the process in which new territorial actors emerge – from the stimuli provided by the European Commission to start the process, to the pressure to adapt exerted by the Commission, to an analysis of how change agents and veto actors work, to an examination of domestic change, i.e. the specific change wrought by Europeanisation in a member state. Unlike the classic scheme of Europeanisation as proposed by Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001), the concept presented in this thesis adds the initial step of Europeanisation – the motivation of the European Commission to pursue change in the territorial arrangements of member states – and also examines the issue of the externalities of Europeanisation, that is, its consequences on relations among actors of governance. The findings are discussed in the contexts of the institutionalist paradigm as well as the prevailing concept of European integration – multi-level governance (MLG). Among other things, the thesis argues that, under the current setup of EU cohesion policy, tensions among the levels of governance are and will continue to be inherent to the future of MLG. This is caused by a combination of the very stable and conservative setups of governance systems in member states and the pursuit of competitiveness that the European Commission seeks to introduce into the system with the aim of improving governance efficiency.