

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University	
Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Procedure field	Political Sciences
Applicant	Mgr. Vratislav Havlík, Ph.D.
Applicant's home unit, institution	Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University
Habilitation thesis	The Europeanisation of territoriality and its manifestations in EU member states
Reviewer	Prof. Dr. phil. Heinelt, Hubert
Reviewer's home unit, institution	Institute of Political Science, Technische Universität Darmstadt (Germany)

In his habilitation thesis, Vratislav Havlík deals with a current issue of Europeanization – namely the question of how the strengthening of the ‘territorial dimension’ of EU cohesion policy has been applied in selected member states (see pp. 13 and 142). The selected EU member states are the Czech Republic and Slovakia as well as Germany and Italy. This selection is convincing because the Czech Republic and Slovakia were both parts of a unitary political system, but developed differently after their separation, and Germany can be considered a special federal system and Italy a classic regionalised political system.

The introduction (Chapter 1) not only concisely outlines the research question and the structure of the thesis. Here (in sections 1.2 and 1.3) the research question is already conclusively derived from the scholarly debate and the relevance of the answer to this question is made clear.

Chapter 2 is devoted to what is understood by the ‘territorial dimension’. Vratislav Havlík reconstructs very knowledgeably in this chapter the argumentation (storylines) developed at the EU level of why cities should become drivers of growth and why (in addition) functional territorial units are considered necessary to achieve competitiveness and efficiency of the financial means used for achieving this political goal. This demonstrates how familiar Vratislav Havlík is with the debates that have made this argumentation (these storylines) hegemonic at the EU level since the year 2006. This positively appreciated reflection of the scientific and political debates stands for an impressive exploration of the thematically relevant literature.

This also applies to Chapter 3, which deals with the debate on Europeanization. Consequently, Vratislav Havlík succeeds in highlighting gaps in research on Europeanization and the relevance of dealing with the ‘Europeanisation of territoriality’ to close these gaps.

Chapter 4 constitutes the empirical core of the work, because it looks at the selected countries in terms of whether and how the new ideas prevailing at EU level for reshaping the territorial dimension of EU cohesion policy have been adopted. This is again done in a very knowledgeable way and, above all, in a remarkably structured manner (the sections on each country follows the same structure). This structured presentation prevents Vratislav Havlík from giving an excessive description of interesting individual findings, but from losing the thread (which unfortunately often occurs in similar works). The reflections on the four selected countries are complemented by references to developments in other EU member states (Finland, Poland and Romania). The comparison concluding this chapter (in section

4.6) is relatively general, if not trivial, given the very interesting findings presented as a result of the analysis of the selected four EU member states. This applies particularly for the final sentence of this section where it is simply stated (p. 111): 'Overall, the comparison of the four countries shows that the crucial variable influencing the course and the outcomes of the Europeanisation process is the territorial/administrative arrangements in the given country and especially their traditions, because there is no question that path dependency plays a substantial role. A similarly strong variable is the size of the ESIF [European Structural and Investment Funds; H.H.] allocation in the given country, which largely decides whether new regions will be created and how strong their position will be'.

This (weak) conclusion of chapter 4 could probably have been avoided if the comparative analysis of the presented case had been linked to what is discussed in chapter 5 – namely reflections (particularly based on those of Van der Zwet et al. 2014; see pp. 114-119) on how to explain the findings. This is particularly well achieved (in Section 5.2) when comparing the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In this section it is convincingly shown, that (a) administrative capacities, (b) political challenges and (c) the existence of a shared understanding of challenges play a crucial role in the adaptation of ideas prevailing at the EU level in a domestic context. In order to check whether other contextual conditions than those found in the Czech Republic and Slovakia may be relevant for the applicability of prevailing EU ideas in a domestic context, a look is taken (in Section 5.3) at Germany and Italy. As convincingly as this has been done for Italy, the same cannot be said for Germany. For Germany, it is simply overlooked that the position of the federal states in German federalism is unchangeable – and this solely in terms of the constitution, because the special form of federalism and thus the position of the federal states is guaranteed for eternity under the Basic Law (*Ewigkeitsgarantie*), i.e. it cannot be changed by anything (such as a majority decision) or by anyone (a representative body or a referendum). Although not in the same fundamental form, the right to self-government of local government is protected also by the German Basic Law – which means that de facto new territorial units (from metropolitan regions to special-purpose associations) have only been formed with the consent of the local governments concerned. With regard to the debates on Europeanisation, it is simply a question of 'goodness of fit' in this case.

In chapter 6, Vratislav Havlík tries to place his work and its results in the context of the debate on the explanatory power of different (neo-)institutionalist approaches. What he says about historical, sociological and rational choice institutionalism is quite conclusive. However, it remains to be asked why he has not considered the 'discursive institutionalism' introduced by Vivien A. Schmidt as a 'fourth "new institutionalism"' (see Vivien A. Schmidt 2008: Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 11, Nr. 1, 303-326; Vivien A. Schmidt 2010: Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously: Explaining Change through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth 'New Institutionalism'. *European Political Science Review*, Vol. 2, Nr. 1, 1–25). It is astonishing that this approach (which was developed not least with empirical references to the EU) has not been taken into account by Vratislav Havlík, because this approach would have fitted in well with the approach advocated by him, which is about certain ideas and the storylines through which they are shaped and disseminated.

Finally, Chapter 6 addresses the question of what the findings mean for the current debate on multi-level governance. In this context it is convincingly shown that some results of the 'Europeanisation of territoriality' can lead to a dominance of 'administrative decisions', which raise legitimacy problems, because they can only refer to effectiveness and thus to output legitimacy.

Chapter 7 succinctly summarises the findings presented and lists open questions that future research should address.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence

As I unfortunately cannot take part in the habilitation thesis defence due to the Corona pandemic, I will not raise any questions.

Conclusion

Despite my partly critical comments, the habilitation thesis entitled "*The Europeanisation of territoriality and its manifestations in EU member states*" by *Vratislav Havlík, Ph.D.* undoubtedly **fulfils** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of political science.



Date: 20/10/2020

Signature: