

Europeanization via Discursive Practice – Articulation of EU Norms in the Domestic Policy Debate on Territorial Reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

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Abstract: This article utilizes a poststructuralist reading of the Europeanization process to study the link between EU norms and territorial reforms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. More specifically, the analysis looks at the constitutive significance of the EU, defined as a discursive formation, for the conceptualization of territoriality within the domestic policy debate. Poststructuralism proves to be a useful tool in deconstructing some of the established maxims within Europeanization theorizing, in particular the analytical neglect of the agency stemming from the neoinstitutional theoretical embedding. Consequently, Europeanization is conceptualized as a twofold process where EU norms, while constituting the domestic policy debate, are simultaneously being constituted by the very same debate. This explains the divergent framing of EU norms in connection to territoriality in the Czech and the Slovak debate. Whereas both cases juxtapose a multileveled understanding of territoriality within the EU with the state-centricity of the communist times, the Czech discourse proves to be more economy-centered in comparison to the much politicized tone of the Slovak debate. Whereas the Czech debate frames the EU's multileveled governance in line with broader meta-discourses of progress and modernity, the Slovakian case connects it to questions of state sovereignty and national identity.

Keywords: Europeanization, EU accession, poststructuralism, territoriality, the Czech Republic, Slovakia