

- Chloé Senecat, PhD Student, CY Cergy Paris University – ***The European Union and urban development policies: a redefinition of the governance of cities? - The examples of Paris, Berlin and Warsaw***
- Thursday, 20.04.2023, 11:30-13:00
- ZOOM

Urban areas, places of challenges and positive opportunities, are at the forefront to deal with contemporary issues, especially the ecological crisis. The European Union (EU) is developing programs to promote sustainable urban development as part of its Cohesion Policy. The EU, through this urban dimension, show the ambition to become a new actor in urban policies, not limiting itself to a role of funder by financing projects but accompanying cities through networks for their cooperation. But the EU has no formal competence to do this: the principle of subsidiarity applies, urban development remaining a national competence. Theoretically, the EU cannot be involved in this field. It is from this paradox that the research questions presented arise.

The aim of the presentation is to give an overview of the functioning of the urban dimension of the European Cohesion Policy and, from this point, to draw some conclusions, in order to answer the following questions: why and how do the EU institutions decide to take over that field, without having a formal competence? To what extent is the urban dimension of the EU policy leading to a redefinition of governance methods within European cities? Does the EU really manage to become a player in a multi-level urban governance and what are the impacts on the urban territories?

To answer these questions, we will use the following methodology: A comparison of Paris, Berlin and Warsaw, capital cities where all the levels of governance overlap, will lead to analyze the impact of these European policies on territories with peculiar needs and different political systems, and to obtain an overview of the European involvement in urban development. To answer the questions above, we will use documents made available by the European institutions - reports, regulations, studies, etc. - which we will cross-reference with academic research studies. We will complete this research with fieldwork consisting of interviews with urban development actors in the three cities studied, at different levels of governance - local, regional, national, European, etc.

We will present the first results and some hypotheses of this PhD thesis: The EU and its institutions seem to influence the governance of cities by overcoming the paradox of the principle of subsidiarity. The European Commission, specifically, is creating “urban labs”, to develop a discourse on innovation and experimentation and to address needs arising from contemporary issues impacting cities. Through these means, the EU institutions are influencing a phenomenon of transition towards a multi-level governance model.

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