

DEMANDE D'ALLOCATION DOCTORALE DE RECHERCHE DE L'ED CST
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SUJET DE THESE

1. LABORATOIRE

Nom ou sigle : LLSETI
Statut : EA3706

2. DIRECTION DE THÈSE

Directrice de thèse (HDR) : Emma BELL (USMB) (50%)
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Laboratoire partenaire ou collaborations éventuels :

Scuola di dottorato dell'Università di Torino/ Dipartimento di Culture, Politica e Società, Università degli Studi di Torino

3. SUJET DE THÈSE

Titre : Le « réinvigorationnisme politique » comme réponse au populisme dans les lieux « laissés pour compte » : une étude comparative de l'Italie et du Royaume-Uni

Using Reinvigorationist Politics to Respond to Populism in 'Places that Don't Matter': A Comparative Study of Italy and the United Kingdom

4. RESUME

(Français et Anglais)

Les inégalités croissantes remettent en question la notion de citoyenneté, privant ceux et celles qui vivent dans les lieux « laissés pour compte » de la participation économique et sociale. C'est dans ces territoires que le populisme exclusif prend racine. Ce projet cherche à analyser comment faire face à cette tendance en prenant au sérieux les revendications populistes pour une démocratie plus participative. Il adopte ainsi une approche dite « réinvigorationniste » de la politique qui cherche à favoriser la participation populaire. Il propose d'étudier comment un modèle économique innovant – *foundational economy* – jusqu'alors relativement peu étudié pourrait promouvoir la gestion collective des services et des biens de première nécessité, favoriser la diversité et valoriser les régions marginalisées. Ce projet adopte une approche résolument interdisciplinaire, se situant à la croisée de la science politique, de la sociologie et de la géographie. Son originalité se trouve notamment dans son approche comparatiste. Il dépassera la théorie pour mener deux études de terrain empiriques et qualitatives en Italie et au Royaume-Uni. Il est à espérer que le projet aura des retombées sociales et politiques importantes dans la mesure où il cherche à dépasser l'analyse d'un problème afin d'étudier en profondeur les solutions qui peuvent y être apportées. Il identifie le problème comme étant une marginalisation économique et sociale de certaines régions qui a des effets politiques concrets, à savoir la montée d'un populisme exclusif qui refuse la diversité. La solution étudiée ici est un renouvellement économique de ces régions, fondé sur la gestion collective des services et des biens de première nécessité, qui pourrait faire travailler ensemble des personnes provenant de milieux divers avec un objectif commun. Ceci renforcerait leur confiance réciproque et améliorerait la compréhension mutuelle, faisant ainsi obstacle au populisme exclusif.

Growing inequalities call into question the very notion of citizenship, depriving those who live in 'places that don't matter' from social and economic participation. It is in these areas that exclusive populism takes root. This project seeks to understand how it might be possible to counter such trends by taking seriously populist demands for a more participatory democracy. It thus adopts a 'reinvigorationist' approach to politics which seeks to encourage popular participation. It proposes to analyse how an innovative economic model – that of foundational economy – which has to date been relatively understudied, might promote the collective management from below of basic goods and services, foster diversity and make marginalised regions matter. This project adopts a resolutely interdisciplinary approach, drawing on political science, sociology and geography. Its originality lies notably in its comparative approach. The project will go beyond a theoretical approach, carrying out qualitative empirical field research in Italy and the UK. It is to be hoped that the project will have a significant social and political impact to the extent that it aims to go beyond analysis of a problem to study in depth the solutions that can be brought to it. It identifies the problem as the economic and social marginalisation of certain regions which has concrete political effects, notably the rise of an exclusive populism that rejects diversity. The solution studied here is the economic renewal of these areas through the collective management of the foundational economy which could bring together people from diverse backgrounds in a common objective, thus reinforcing mutual trust and understanding which could act as a bulwark against exclusive populism.

5. PROJET DE RECHERCHE DETAILLE

- Which places can be considered “places that don’t matter” in Italy and the United Kingdom?
- How susceptible are those places to exclusionary right-wing populism?
- Are there sufficient local commons in those areas? Is there any relationship between the absence of local commons and a place being a “place that doesn’t matter”?
- Would a reinvigorationist approach be a way to address populist sentiment and make those places matter? How can the foundational economy contribute to this approach?

In the 21st century and onwards, many regenerative public development policies could be said to have failed as regional inequality increased significantly (Dorling, 2015). This situation created a socio-economic phenomenon known as ‘places that don’t matter’ (Rodriguez-Pose, 2018): places characterised by persistent poverty and economic decline. Conventional market economy development policies seem not to have adequately addressed the issues observed in the ‘places that don’t matter’.

During the *Trente Glorieuses* and onwards, today’s advanced economies, such as Italy and the United Kingdom, adopted state-directed control policies underpinned by capitalist economic models (Barbera et al., 2018). By implementing such policies, mass production gained momentum, which led to the emergence of industrial districts solely focusing on production and lacking any meaningful social environment (Barbera et al., 2018). Although governments tried to modernise these places by turning them into hubs and techno-parks, the lack of social environment led only to ‘unliving’ places. Under the rule of neoliberalism, the capitalist market economy focused only on specific industries such as retail, finance, and banking, creating lagging-behind sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, and medical care.

In many of the recent elections in Europe and the US, right-wing populist candidates either won or increased their votes in significant portions in ballot boxes from economically lagging-behind regions. The examples include 2019 United Kingdom General Elections (Cutts et al., 2020), 2017 French Presidential Elections (Evans et al., 2019), 2017 Austrian Presidential Elections (Gavenda & Umit, 2016), and 2016 United States Presidential Elections (Monnat & Brown, 2017).

The model of ‘foundational economy’ has recently been proposed as a solution to many issues created by the current capitalist market economy model. Foundational economy defines the primary role of public authorities as supplying the basic goods and services to all citizens in a socially responsible way, not for gaining political support but only because the recipients are equal citizens (Collective, 2018). Therefore, what is to be provided to the citizens may include infrastructure and healthcare, which keep the citizens safe regardless of their residency status. These types of policies started to grab the attention of public officials, especially in the European Union and the United Kingdom in the 2010s (Bentham et al., 2013) and that attention grew exponentially in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Collective, 2020).

For instance, in the United Kingdom, the Welsh Government recently created a £4.5m ‘Foundational Economy Challenge Fund’ to ‘support a series of experimental projects’ that will enable it to test how it can “*best support the foundational economy and which Government interventions work best*” (Welsh Government, 2019).

Although the foundational economy model is quite promising, it is still understudied in academia due to its relative novelty. Therefore, the project intends to study this model and propose a set of its possible applications as a solution to the issue of ‘places that don’t matter’ and counter the right-wing populism that often characterises them. In this sense, there are many reasons to believe that the foundational economy model can be the way to make ‘places that don’t matter’ places that matter, as explained below.

As stated by Ricci *et al.*, (2019), ‘places that don’t matter’ are usually located in the mountainous and inland parts of Europe. Therefore, without an intentional, planned approach, those places would be doomed to abandonment as the social and environmental costs are often considered to be ‘too high’ for a capitalist economy.

Therefore, the project postulates that making ‘places that don’t matter’ matter can be achieved by adopting new understandings of development strategies on a governmental scale. One of those new understandings is that of ‘reinvigorationist’ politics which are capable of responding to populist sentiments concerning the loss of political control. Contrary to conventional populist policies, those reinvigorationist policies aim to be pluralistic, inclusive, progressive, and, above all, democratic.

Originally coined by Lynne Copson, the term ‘reinvigorationism’ corresponds to “a normative project of social democratic change” (Copson, 2016, p.3). The current form of policymaking in most countries is defined as ‘insulationism’ by Copson (2016) as it tends to be ‘insulated’ from popular scrutiny in favour of elites. This is a common response to populism. However, based on observations from the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014, Copson (2016) identifies a need for novel methods of “*producing and utilising expert knowledge as a means of creating ‘spaces of hope’*” (Copson, 2016, p.4). The reinvigorationist approach proposed by Copson (2016) suggests the inclusion of the public in democratic decision-making processes. Moreover, the reinvigorationist approach is considered as a better response to exclusionary populism which tends to be against pluralism, promoting instead the personalisation of power (Mouffe, 2019).

It is further proposed that the 'local commons' would help underpin reinvigorationist policies as part of a foundational economy approach in places that don't matter. Barbera et al., (2018) refer to Araral (2014) for the definition of commons: "the things common to all, that is those things which are used and enjoyed by everyone... but can never be exclusively acquired as a whole" and frames the adjective "local" as "the role – actual and/or potential – played in their defence and management by the citizens of a given local area in the course of their daily life activities."

Again, as pointed out by Barbera et al., (2018), the development of societies is powered by "*individual initiative*" and "*collective infrastructures that belong to everyone*". For them, within the framework of the foundational economy, local commons are framed as "*civic infrastructure*", which consists of goods and services satisfying fundamental needs that ought to be "*de-commodified*". They propose that the connection between local commons and such civic infrastructure (i.e., foundational goods and services) creates Durkheim's "collective effervescence", which provides room for collectivism to heal the wounds inflicted by the capitalist market economy's modern, industrial citizenship (Durkheim, 2008). It is thus possible to avoid a proliferation of places that don't matter, a world of mega-cities of lonely individuals faced with perpetual economic and social crises.

The project seeks to test the hypothesis that utilising the unattended 'natural' local commons and building a civic infrastructure of local commons in 'places that don't matter' would not only make such places 'places that matter' but also result in a better post-industrial model of citizenship as a manifestation of social democracy which is "assertive – not merely defensive" (Barbera et al., (2018)).

There would be policy implications to suggest in this context, including incentivizing individuals with the know-how to take part in the infrastructural development of such places using local commons (e.g., bazaars for local agricultural production and public areas representing local culture), know-how transfer to the people living in such places on matters such as means of efficient local production (e.g., eco-friendly and efficient communal production local food or souvenirs using local resources), and the transfer of green technologies (e.g., renewable energy used/production and environment-friendly production methods) to the extent that they are suitable to the characteristics of those places.

The above being said, the questions of 'why', 'how', and 'where' still need to be answered. To do so, it is necessary to adopt a comparative approach. This will entail analysing the local development levels and characteristics of selected regions in Italy and the United Kingdom. The focus will be on Wales in the United Kingdom, and Mezzogiorno (Southern Italy). There are two reasons for choosing Wales and Mezzogiorno: First, both regions are widely accepted as 'places that don't matter' due to their lagging-behind status in terms of economic performance (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018); Second, the choice of culturally and geographically unrelated locations will allow us to test the hypothesis that the existence of 'places that don't matter' is a universal phenomenon and that reinvigorationism is a universal approach to address the phenomenon.

The general framework of the methodology, subject to case-based adaptations mentioned above, would be as follows:

Firstly, a qualitative approach, given that the phenomenon of 'places that don't matter' and the proposed solutions are too complex for a quantitative approach. Moreover, as most places that don't matter are sparsely populated rural areas, it would not be possible to find or collect meaningful data to work with.

Secondly, in employing such a qualitative approach, the study benefits from ethnography through participant observations made through taped and transcribed in-depth interviews, field notes, and surveys. In particular, the project will be conducted in the region of Conwy and Calabria. There are several reasons for choosing those regions: Right-wing populist parties scored electoral gains in both regions in their respective most recent elections; both represent the lower end of per capita income levels; both are considered as economically lagging-behind areas (Jones, 2019); and, despite their marginalised economic status, both have promising tourist attractions that can be used as 'local commons' to facilitate economic growth. Moreover, during the field survey, contact will be made with the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISER) as well as the Community Local Urban Development and Regeneration Laboratory of the Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria.

Thirdly, a reflexive approach needs to be adopted to contribute transparency and objectivity to the data collected. For that purpose, peers will be made aware of possible biases by including an in-depth social and economic background of the researcher.

This research project fits perfectly with the European project UNITA with its focus on Europe's cultural heritage. Beyond doubt, democracy and democratic institutions are among the core values of European culture and ideals. Today, as the tradition of liberal democracy faces threats posed by rising populism all around the world, it is of utmost importance to contribute to the public debate on democracy's current failings and possibilities. More specifically, this project will be part of the UNITA project "Experiments in Democracy" led by Emma Bell and Filippo Barbera.

Moreover, this research project also fits perfectly with Team 3, Theme 2 of the LLSETI as its aims are strongly related to the freedom of expression from an angle of political inclusion (through economic inclusion) in different geographies. Moreover, its focus on British and Italian cultures is yet another fitting angle. Last but not least, this study aims to better understand the modern challenges stemming from social and political change and to propose solutions to those challenges

in parallel with Theme 2.

6. CANDIDAT RECHERCHE :

Le ou la candidat.e recherché.e devrait :

- Être capable de rédiger sa thèse et présenter ses recherches en anglais.
- Avoir de solides connaissances des contextes politiques britannique et italien ;
- Être capable de mener des recherches de terrain dans les deux pays ;
- Adopter une approche interdisciplinaire pour le projet de recherche ;
- Inscrire son projet dans le nouveau projet de recherche UNITA « Experiments in Democracy »

7. FINANCEMENT DE LA THESE : *Le contrat doctoral fixe une rémunération principale, indexée sur l'évolution des rémunérations de la fonction publique. L'arrêté du 11 octobre 2021 modifiant l'arrêté du 29 août 2016 fixant le montant de la rémunération du doctorant contractuel - Article 1 - L'article 1er de l'arrêté du 29 août 2016 susvisé est remplacé par un article ainsi rédigé : « Art. 1.-La rémunération mensuelle minimale des doctorants contractuels est fixée ainsi qu'il suit, sous réserve des dispositions prévues à l'article 2 du présent arrêté «-contrats conclus avant le 1er septembre 2021 : 1 758 euros brut ; «-contrats conclus à compter du 1er septembre 2021 : 1 866 euros brut ; «-contrats conclus à compter du 1er septembre 2022 : 1 975 euros brut. ».*

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8. CONTACT :

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