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Workshop « A comeback of the 'Europe of regions'?", 14/3/2014

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2014 marks the twentieth birthday of the Committee of Regions. In the nineties, the hope was to see regions play the missing link between European institutions and citizens, Disappointment prevailed as expectations were not met. What is the state of play today? Four hypotheses can be formulated. Firstly, a **Europe of regions** may mean a comeback of the Europe of regions may be understood as a renewal of the empowerment of local actors to counterbalance the loss of grasp of national powers. Secondly, a **Europe with regions** can be conceived as a more modest partnership between supranational and local levels in European multi-level governance? Thirdly, a **Europe against regions** (or regions against Europe) may refer to Euroskeptic resistances and mobilizations and suggest possible oppositions between the rise of territorial identities and Europeanization. Fourthly, a **Europe without regions** can suggest that the two entities, Europe and regions, are simply disconnected and evolve in parallel without much significant interactions.

The contributors highlighted several salient variables in this debate.

The role of the market

The market has a major influence on the couple Europe-regions. It includes the role of the economy as a general background for the Europeanization of regional politics or regionalization of European politics; the impact of economic and fiscal policies, both at the European and national level; the game of interests, as incentives or obstacles for the alliance between regions and the EU.

Elections, representation and accountability

Representative democracy remain the main – even if contested and insufficient – source of legitimacy in Europe. That is the reason why scholars must analyze further regional

mobilizations for European elections and at the European Parliament. The purpose is to know to which extent European arenas are structures of opportunity to build transnational coalitions between regional actors. Another research question is the influence of voting systems and regimes in the framing of the relationship of the local with Europe.

Identity mobilizations

Are regional identities regionalisms or nationalisms in the making? European identity may be both a containment or a framework of emancipation for regional identities. What is also at stake is the nature of the European political community.

Political model

An important question is whether it is possible to see the emergence of a stabilized model of relationships between Europe and regions in the last twenty years. Looking from abroad, a stimulating research agenda is to establish if there is a European supranational governance of regions which is used as a source of inspiration in other parts of the world. Looking across policy sectors, similar patterns (in terms of policy design, search for legitimization, etc.) could be compared with the framework of the Europe of regions.