

UACES Scholarships 2010

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Outline of project

The research project examines the role of transnational Socialist party networks in European Community (EC) policy-making in the 1970s. Normally, this decade is seen as a period of "Eurosclerosis" with limited institutional change. In contrast the project argues that these years were a crucial take-off period for a greater role of networks in European governance. Furthermore, political science literature usually assumes that transnational policy networks have only played a major role in EU policy-making since the 1980s. This project challenges these assumptions with the objective of fostering serious diachronic research on temporal change in European governance, and the role of political parties within it. The project hypothesizes that informal network-type relations of party leaders and EC policy-making elites as part of larger emerging networks played a crucial role in advancing new policy agendas before the 1980s. These assumptions are tested in two empirical case studies: EC monetary and development policy.

Academic achievements

Historical research on transnational party networks in the context of the European Integration process is confronted with several methodological challenges. In particular, historical sources on transnational party networks are highly fragmented. Thus, the informal dimension of transnational socialist party networks has to be reconstructed on the basis of many different holdings of socialist records. The research stays in Paris and Brussels have enabled me to work out the role of the French Socialist Party and of the Belgium Socialist Party in informal transnational party networks and, furthermore, their role in partly institutionalized party networks such as the Socialist International and the Confederation of the Socialist Parties in the EC. Additionally, I could work out some historical connections between the actors of the Socialist party networks and the European Commission, especially in the field of EC development policy.

Use of sources

With the support of the UACES Scholarship, I have investigated holdings in the following archives and institutes: the 'Archive Socialiste' (French Socialist Party), the private papers of François Mitterrand hold by the 'Institute Francois Mitterrand, the archives of the Belgium Socialist party and of the Emile Vandervelde Institute, closely related to the Belgium Socialist Party, hold by the Amsab-Institute for Social History in Ghent as well as the European Commission Historical Archives. Furthermore, I have conducted several interviews with former European Socialist politicians in order to compensate the fragmentation of the historical sources.

Positive and negative aspects

The UACES Scholarship was essential for the successful completion of my thesis and provided me with rich information on the role of two important Socialist parties within the transnational party networks. Thus, the research stays were an important part of my research project. Moreover, I could establish many and valuable contacts to colleagues working on the history of the European Socialist Parties in context of the European Integration process.

I would like to thank the UACES committee and the European Commission for granting me the scholarship.