

## Call for Papers

# Territorial Politics in Europe: Did the Covid-19 pandemic lead to a centralisation or decentralisation of power?

Academic Workshop (in-person)

*Jean Monnet Chair, Department of Social Sciences at the University of Wrocław, Poland*

*Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> – Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023*

The Covid-19 pandemic has put multi-level governance systems across Europe under pressure. In *Germany's* highly federalised system, the initial success in managing the pandemic through new modes of intergovernmental cooperation soon gave way to somewhat diverse strategies among sub-state (Länder) governments and even local authorities. In *Poland's* unitary system, meanwhile, we have observed an increase of executive power at the national level as well as growing tensions between the national government led by the PiS party and regions governed by their political opponents, with knock-on effects on cross-border cooperation with Germany. In the *UK*, tensions over the allocation of competences and existing coordination mechanisms between the national government, devolved administrations, and regional leaders have increased. In *Italy* and *Spain*, both shaped by asymmetric regionalism, disagreements over the response to the pandemic has further intensified centrifugal and separatist tendencies. In the EU, the establishment of the Next Generation EU triggered further steps towards the economic and budgetary integration, although the long-term implications of this may not amount to the “Hamiltonian moment” suggested by Olaf Scholz.

The workshop is keen to explore the nature of changes to territorial politics which were brought about during the pandemic. Have these endured? To what extent have we seen lasting change? In detail, we aim to consider, amongst others, these four key questions:

- Were there changes to the political system in relation to territorial politics that were made in the Covid era and have they brought any lasting consequences? Or were there any changes to the “way of doing territorial politics” stemming from this period?
- Were new modes of intergovernmental cooperation established during the Covid-19 pandemic, or new financial and/or political responsibilities transferred between levels of government? How durable have these interactions proven to be?

- Did the Covid-19 era lead to any lasting impact on democracy, democratic legitimacy or shifts in the party system (in relation to territorial politics, for instance the strengthening of territorially based cleavages or the rise / decline of regionalist parties) or public opinion in relation to territorial questions?

We invite paper submissions which reflect on these questions on a national or on a cross-national basis, and study the interaction between substate, national and supranational levels of political authority in Europe during and since the pandemic. We would also encourage proposals from those working outside academia, in government, research institutes, think tanks or the charity and voluntary sectors. We propose to publish the papers from this conference in two outlets: an edited volume and/or a Special Issue of a leading journal, alongside a collection of short policy discussion papers, to be published in collaboration with a major UK-based think-tank partner, for broader dissemination.

We appreciate contributions from scholars from diverse backgrounds to gather a wide range of perspectives on the future of territorial politics. Early career scholars, including PhD researchers, and scholars belonging to groups underrepresented in academia are particularly encouraged to apply.

Participants will be expected to circulate a written version of their paper at least two weeks before the workshop.

The workshop will take place at the University of Wrocław, Poland. It is part of the three-year international research project “Shifting Territorial Politics after the Pandemic in Germany and beyond” (2022-2024) led by the Aston Centre for Europe (ACE) and generously funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

The event will be spread over two days, timetabled to allow participants to arrive in Wrocław on Thursday morning and return home on Friday evening as far as possible.

**There is no participation fee.** Accommodation and food will be provided to all participants and the funding from DAAD means we are able to fund travel unless participants have their own budgets on which they can draw.

Please submit proposals, including a paper abstract of no more than 300 words and full details (name, title, affiliation, email address), to Dr. Carolyn Rowe, [c.s.rowe@aston.ac.uk](mailto:c.s.rowe@aston.ac.uk), by **10th October 2023 2023**.