Cognitive Europeanisation and the territorial effects of multi-level policy transfer. The Case of Local Development in French and Spanish Regions

Abstract:

This paper aims to explore the cognitive Europeanisation of territorial policies and its influence on multilevel governance. For the past two decades, several European spatial programmes have developed similar norms of action at the local and regional level. Focusing on the interactive character of the Europeanisation process, the author considers sub-national actors as key elements in the adaptation of domestic political systems to European norms. From a comparative study of territorial policies in France and Spain, he studies how the policy transfer of EU-level norms is producing structural changes in territorial governance. Socialized to a European model of local development, regional actors and institutions are Europeanising their policies without Brussels.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to explore the cognitive Europeanisation of territorial policies and its influence on multilevel governance. For the past two decades, several territorial European policies (e.g. Structural Funds, Leader, Interreg or Urban programs) have developed similar norms of action at the local level: vertical partnerships between levels of administrations, horizontal partnerships between the public sector and the civil society, networking of the “best practices”. In the same time, regional institutions in France and Spain developed new territorial policies based on very similar norms, structuring new intermediary levels between the commune and the province, called “pays” in France and “comarcas” in Spain (Leurquin, 1999; Vasquez Barquero and Precedo Ledo, 1993). These innovating policies have transformed territorial governance by structuring local institutions, territorial references and rules of collective action in novel ways.

My hypothesis is that sub-state institutions, and particularly regional institutions, participate to learning processes through a multi-level transfer of EU norms. This migration, based on the diffusion of new values and practices of territorial governance, is building a new territorial policy “model” and producing structural changes in the territorial governance of the EU member States. Indeed, territorial domestic structures are not passive receptors of stimuli from Europe. Local and regional actors and institutions use the European policy norms as cognitive resources to elaborate and implement their own territorial policies. We clearly observe here a policy transfer process in which:

“Knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc. in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place.”

(Dolowitz and Marsh: 344)
This cognitive Europeanisation is a rebound process where regional actors and institutions, socialised to a European model of local development, are Europeanising their policies without Brussels. It depends on the diffusion of formal rules but also on dynamics of appropriation and learning (Cowles et al.; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003). EU institutions effectively diffuse new rules of action, practices, beliefs and policy styles. But sub-national actors integrate these new norms of behaviour according to their preferences, strategies and domestic interests (Olsen, 2002).

The early effect of Europeanisation on sub-national governments as implementers of EU policy in the 1980s - e.g. regional policy - is well documented. Europeanisation has been notably analysed as a structure of political opportunity, which provides new resources to some regional actors and institutions, while constraining others (de Rooij, 2002; Goldsmith, 1993; Jeffery, 1997; Hooghe, 1996; Keating and Loughlin, 1997; Marks, 1996; Pasquier, 2003). More recently, this resource-dependency approach has been completed by important neo-institutionalist contributions, focusing on the impact of European Union norms and rules within domestic political multilevel frameworks, and notably on states-regions relations (Börzel, 2002, Gualini, 2004). Following Peter Mair (2004), we think that there is no “grand theory” of Europeanisation, this concept fundamentally recovering two distinctive faces: (1) the institutionalisation of a distinctly European political system with the creation and consolidation of supranational institutions, that is what we could also call European integration; (2) and the penetration of European rules and norms into the otherwise differentiated domestic spheres. We essentially here deal with the second dimension, focusing on the interactive character of Europeanisation and its logics of multilevel re-appropriations (Bomberg and Peterson, 2000). In our case the multilevel transfer of local development policy norms in French and Spanish regions concerns several categories of actors, essentially civil
servants, elected officials and policy experts, at different levels of governments (European, national, regional and local) and for more than one decade (Bennett, 1991; Rose, 1991). The diversity of the actors concerned in this diffusion of policy norms explains the hybridisation of the European model and the reason why there are contradictory effects according to territorial domestic structures. Sub-national actors and institutions also shape the paths of Europeanisation and its capabilities of change.

To analyse these dynamics, I have adopted a comparative methodology based on contrasted case studies. It is well known that the French and Spanish territorial models are very different. The first does not establish a hierarchy between its territorial levels, the second gives to the regional level a real political autonomy with a legislative power. However, regional institutions in France and Spain have developed very similar territorial policies since the second half of the 1990. From a comparative study of these territorial policies in one French region, Brittany, and one Spanish region, Galicia my analysis is organized in two directions: (1) the regional adaptations to a “European model” of local development, (2) and the impact of this cognitive Europeanisation on the territorial governance. First, I analyse how these policies have been clearly influenced by a European model of local development. Since the 1980s, this model has diffused similar norms of actions to local and regional actors through varied programs as for example Leader. Since the beginning of the 1990s, regional institutions in France and Spain take this European inheritance to implement similar territorial development policies: the policy of “pays” in Brittany and the policy of “comarcas” in Galicia. Secondly, following Peter Mair’s recommendations on the interactions between Europeanisation and politization (2004: 343), I assess the political effects of this cognitive Europeanisation on the territorial governance in the two countries. The “pays” in France and the “comarcas” in Spain are more or less institutionalised according to national and regional context. They progressively become the main local interlocutors of French and Spanish
regional administrations about different issues such as economic development, public investments, environmental or tourism programs. However, their institutionalisation has produced many conflicts between different levels of governments. In France and Spain, the “conseils généraux” and “diputaciones”, but also the central administrations, try to limit the emergence of these new local spaces and institutions.

THE EUROPEANISATION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: A POLICY TRANSFER PROCESS

In France and Spain, regional institutions are intermediary levels, that is to say they are both in charge of local problems and partners of national and European administrations (Pasquier, 2004). This strategic location for local development explains why French and Spanish regional institutions have gradually elaborated and implemented new territorial policies. Socialised to the implementation of national and European programs in territorial development, French and Spanish regional actors have progressively used this inheritance to elaborate and implement their own policies.

The national and European inheritance

The paradigm of local development has a long history. Its theoretical origins came from the criticism of productivist logic during the 1950s and the 1960s (Joyal, 1987; Pecqueur, 1989). At the end of the 1960s, theorists from the Left adopted this paradigm whenever new problems and new needs emerged in towns and campaigns of West Europe (Le Galès, 1993). Gradually, since the beginning of the 1970s, local development policies have been
implemented by different authorities in order to face the crisis of centralist regional planning policies (Madiot, 1996).

In France, agricultural trades unions first promulgated this paradigm in the rural environment during the 1960s before it being diffused in urban areas. In this way, in the first half of the 1970s the French central administration through the DATAR (Délégation à l’aménagement du territoire et à l’action régionale) implemented the contracts of pays to resolve rural exodus reinforcing solidarity between actors of the local society (DATAR 1977). At the end of the 1970s the pays fashion declined but, from the beginning of the 1980s, the decentralisation facilitated the implementation of new experiences of local development soon as, in 1983, the “inter-communal charts of development and planning” (Chartes intercommunales de développement et d’aménagement) or “tourist contracts at county level” (contrats de pays d’accueil). In Spain, this paradigm was first diffused during the democratic transition in the regions in which identity was strong as it is in Catalonia. In these regions, local development was perceived as a means to struggle against the centralism inherited from Francoism (Vazquez Barquero, 1996; Peres Andres, 1998). Spain’s 1986 entry in the European Community has increased the diffusion of the local development paradigm. Local and regional actors have been incited to organise themselves in order to benefit European funds. In this way, Institutes of community development (Institutos de desarrollo comunautario) were created in different Spanish regions (Madrid, Catalonia and Galicia).

Since the 1970’s, the European administration, particularly the regional policy directorate and the agriculture directorate, have been very interested by these national experiences of local development. In 1978, the French department of Lozère was one of the first territory to experiment an innovative territorial European program, the “integrated development policy”, which tested new policy norms of local development. At the end of the 1980s with the reform of the structural funds, the European Commission generalised its local development
programmes. New community initiatives programmes as Leader, Interreg, Urban or Equal, progressively developed and/or systemized a policy model based on partnership, development project and experimentation (Bache 2000; Geddes 2000). For instance in rural development, which is crucial for the two regions under study here (Brittany and Galicia), Leader program incited local actors to co-operate around a territorial development project. “Local action groups” were selected to implement Leader programs by gathering social, economic actors and administrative authorities (Smith 1996). Leader 1 (1991-1993), Leader 2 (1994-1999) and Leader + (2000-06) have been a great success in the European Union, particularly in France and Spain. Moreover, the Leader programme, as with other community initiatives programs, develops a transnational dimension. A Leader network links all the “Local action groups”, giving birth to a “European problematique of local development” (Muller 1996: 312). The European association for information on local development (EAILD), financed by the European Commission and based in Brussels, gives life to this network, which has now national and regional organisations. Leader + is notably increasing the development of regional networks to empower the diffusion of this European methodology of territorial development. Seminars and training periods are organised for local animators, thus facilitating the emergence of common repertoires. The networking dimension is a crucial element in the process of policy transfer. The European administration use these networks to diffuse its own norms of action, policy methods, and “best practices”.

*Regional configurations and the logics of appropriation* 

However, from this inheritance, the logics of fit vary according to each regional configuration (Pasquier, 2004). The regional political agendas, the elites strategies and the policy styles
influence the territorial reception of European norms and policies. In the two case studies, Galicia and Brittany, two distinct dynamics can be distinguished: adaptation and reactivation.

In Galicia, the socialisation of regional actors to territorial development norms is largely due to their adaptation to European policies. Since the mid of the 1980’s, Spanish policies has had to adapt to European norms (Goma and Subirats, 1998). The regional government of Galicia – the Xunta – quickly reacted to this new situation. Many regional civil servants went to Brussels to familiarize themselves with European policies. In 1986, the Institute of community development was created in Galicia to help local actors to manage European programs. However, the local development paradigm was really imposed in the regional political agenda when Manuel Fraga Iribarnevi became president of the Xunta in 1989. Indeed, he centred its political project on the reconquest of Galician identity and economic development. This policy, as a linguistic policy, was a means for the regional government to occupy the political space of the nationalist party – the Galician nationalist Bloc - (BNG/Bloque nacionalista galego). This party, which is the second regional political force, centres its discourse on the reconquest of regional identity. So, as the comarca has been a traditional claim of nationalist parties in Galicia during the twentieth century, this territorial policy translates into the regionalization of the regional government repertoires (Yebra Martul-Ortega, 1993). So, Fraga and its staff and the regional government have imposed the “comarca” as the new space of local development to notably demonstrate its interest to develop the singularity of the Galician identity defended by the BNG. In this perspective, the regional government instituted, in 1991, a general secretaryvii for the development of comarcas.

In Brittany, the situation has been different. The European policies already had a long history in this region. At the beginning of the 1990’s, these programs came in to reactivate an old inheritance of regional mobilizations around local development. Indeed, through the
action of the “Comité d’Etudes et de Liaison des Intérêts Bretons” (CELIB) since the 1950’s, the Breton political and economic elites had been socialized to European stakes at an early stage. The CELIB has promoted regional economic development in Brittany for more than 20 years and developed relations with the European Commission since the 1970’s, creating notably in 1973 the “Conference of peripheral maritime Regions of Europe” which is today one the most powerful territorial lobby in the EU. In a region which is very sensitive to local development and European policies, the regional council took this opportunity to relaunch the regional territorial policy at the beginning of the 1990’s. In 1993, an expert’s regional report proposed the division of the regional territory in 24 “pays” to institutionalise a new level of local development closer to inter-communal structures. In Brittany, the regional policy aims to structure new territorial spaces of local development to concentrate regional, national and European funds.

European convergence of local development norms?

According to Theodor Lowi typology (1972), these new territorial policies can be defined as “constitutive policies”, that is to say policies defining rules of the game between legitimate actors to deal with a specific problem. There are the “programmes régionaux d’aménagement du territoire” (PRAT) in Brittany and the “Planes de desarollo comarcal” (PDC) in Galicia. These territorial policies have two common objectives, territorial planning and territorial organisation. Comparative analysis demonstrates that French and Spanish regional administrations implement territorial policies, which display very similar principles of action: (1) new territorial spaces for local development; (2) stabilised partnership (3) and development project.
The convergence of these rules of action in differentiated regional configuration indicates the Europeanisation of territorial development policy instruments in France and Spain. A European model of local development is emerging.

New territories for local development

Regional administrations contribute through these policies to shape new territorial communities by integrating several municipalities and creating intermediary levels between communes and province, the pays in France, the comarcas in Spain. For instance, in Galicia, the county development act (Ley de desarrollo comarcal) adopted in June 1996, defines the comarca as “an intermediary territorial framework between the municipality and the province shaped by a set of nearby municipalities which have an internal coherence based on historical, economic or functional facts”. In Brittany and Galicia regional administrations define territorial spaces respecting or creating local uses of co-operation. Moreover in the three regions, the territorial spaces have to be economically viable and to show a quite important social unity. So, they try to associate one urban pole to the rural environment by adopting inter-communal spaces as a territorial frame. The pays and the comarcas also take into consideration a specific demographic threshold. Counties have to represent a sufficient socio-economic space to permit local development. Actually Brittany is divided into twenty one counties. To delimit these territories, the regional administration co-operated with the State administration. In Spain, the situation is different because the regional governments have more administrative prerogatives. In 1991, the Galician government has created a specific administration, the “sociedad de desarrollo comarcal” (SDC) which has been charged to divide the Galicy into counties. In 20 February 1997, a regional decision officialized the Galiciy’s parcelling into 53 comarcas (Precedo Ledo, 1997).
A stabilised partnership

French and Spanish regions do not only limit new territories for local development but they also organise economic and political local actors. Regional administrations institutionalise a partnership with local actors. If the degrees of institutionalisation of this partnership vary among the regions, two constant elements compose it: administrative structures and development agents.

In Brittany, the policy implemented by the regional council is the least institutionalised. The PRAT program is based on a great density level of local inter-communal structures and economic development agencies which have been diffused co-operation norms since the 1960s (Allain and Baudelle, 1995). In each territory the regional council is associated with a partner structure which implement local development project. It can be an association (the GALCOB in the west centre Brittany), an urban district (county of Lorient in the south of Brittany) an inter-communal structure or a local development agency (territory of Lannion in the north west of Brittany). Moreover, the regional council imposed the shaping of informal structures, named “local committees of co-ordination”, which group local politicians and local socio-economic representatives. One regional councillor manages these committees. In Galicia the policy is more institutionalised. The SDC created county foundations (fundaciones comarcales) in each comarca. In these foundations, the director organ is composed of one regional deputy, one provincial deputy, all the mayors of the comarca, one representative of the SDC and socio-economic representatives. Last, a development agent is charged to implement the development project of the comarca. In 2004, 33 county foundations had been already created (Barreiro Rivas, 1997; Precedo Ledo, 1997)
Territorial development project

The last common policy principle is the development project. All regional territorial policies have the same objective, the struggle against territorial economic inequalities. To realise this aim, regional institutions do not use sectoral programmes but a global strategy of development very similar to the integrated methods recommended in European policies. With this principle of project development, regional institutions try to give development tools to each territory in order for them to create territorial project communities. These territorial project communities seem to be able to generate endogenous development.

So, regional administrations and local actors jointly elaborate regional programmes of territorial planning in Brittany, and the county development plans in Galicia. Each programme is based on a demographic and economic territorial balance from which development priorities emerge for a plurianual period. For a period of years, regional administrations have moved away from a policy sectoral logic to adopting a project-based logic. Thus, the flexibility of these programmes permits the actors to deal with differentiated problems. Each territory, each pays, each comarca by evaluating its own priorities, by shaping common interests tend to build new territorial communities.

COGNITIVE EUROPEANISATION AND ITS POLITICAL EFFECTS: THE NEW TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE IN FRANCE AND SPAIN

Peter Mair (2004) underlined that Europeanisation studies has not really tackled the question of politization and political conflict. The dynamics of cognitive Europeanisation participate to the reshaping of territorial governance in France and Spain. They have allowed the regions to stabilise relations of co-operation with local actors organised into supra-communal spaces.
However, in these two countries, these innovative policies have also produced institutional conflicts at two levels: at the regional level but also at the national level where central administrations seek to influence current developments. These institutional conflicts also reflect the reshaping of national territorial organisations in France and in Spain.

*Innovating policies and institutional conflicts at the sub-national level*

These new territorial policy principles have created new frameworks of interactions, which participate in the “modernisation” of Local Government. Indeed, by institutionalising new territorial spaces, regional elites try to establish new relations between regional administrations and local actors and are transforming traditional territorial exchanges.

Regional political leaders who support these policies possess similar characteristics. In Brittany, regional councillors who support these policies cross the left-right cleavage. They have the same political repertoires based on their socio-economic know-how and their capacity to control public policies at different levels: local, regional, national and European (Genieys Ballart and Valarié, 2004; Grémion et Muller, 1990). They appear as the political elite of the new territorial governance in France and Spain. They are also regionalist, that is to say they want to increase the regional political capacity. It is notably the case in Galicia where the regional government consists of the Galician popular party (PPG). It opposes to other sectors of this party who are attached to a territorial organisation bases on the province. So, in the two regions under study, these policies produce sub-regional conflicts, which put in opposition regional institutions and provincial institutions. The effect of these regional policies are all the more important because they interact with European policies. If the regional policies have been influenced by the European model of local development the new
regional structures try now to attract European resources. Regional policies and European programs are in continuous interaction.

In France, the emergence of the pays produces conflicts between regional councils and provincial councils (conseils généraux). However, the intensity of conflicts varies among regions. In Brittany, the local co-operation was already developed and general councils accept the regional council leadership in territorial policy. In contrast, in other regions as Centre for example, the general councils have been opposed to the similar regional policy. In this region, the municipal fragmentation has always reinforced the territorial domination of the provincial council (Never, 1998).

In the same way, in Galicia, the regional organisation of counties represents a risk for the territorial domination of provincial councils (diputaciones provinciales). Provinces remain the main financiers of rural municipalities through provincial plans of equipment (Alvarez Corbacho, 1995). As the county policy generates municipal regrouping and public rationalisation, this policy deeply transforms territorial exchanges and the role of provincial councils. So, even if this policy is one of the emblematic programs of the regional government, it will allow for some flexibility. Initially, this policy should have institutionalised the comarca as a new scale of public administration with legal status as in Catalonia (Cassasas, 1993). But the regional government has been constrained to choose another solution under the pressures of the provincial councils and by some barons of the Galician popular party (PPG), that is to say the party in power. The county development act recognises the comarca as an historic entity but does not give it an administrative existence. It is only a new space for local development and the co-ordination of local and regional programmes. This opposition between regional government and provinces continued during the delimitation of the comarcas because they did not respect some political territories. During the process of county’s delimitation 49 comarcas were initially drawn by the SDC.
However, the final result has been quite different with the officialization of the county map composed of 53 comarcas, because some political leaders forced the regional administration to respect their political territory.

*Europeanised regional policies and central regulations*

Faced to these territorial changes, central administrations in France and Spain have developed distinct strategies. These attempts to influence the current territorial transformations reveal national policy styles, i.e. two territorial domestic models.

In France, the central administration is regulating the local and regional experiences by law. The central State pursues its historical role of ‘great regulator’ of the territorial relationships. Indeed, since the beginning of the Fifth Republic, some French politicians and high ranking civil servants would like to transform the French territorial administration at two levels, the regional level and the county level, both by eliminating provinces and regrouping municipalities (Le Lidec, 1997; Le Sauté, 1997). The regionalization referendum in 1969 and the municipal fusion law in 1971 were the first such attempts (Novarina and Martin 1988). So, as it was very difficult to reform the administrative map, particularly the municipal map, with voluntary acts, the French central administration prefers now to create gradually co-operation tools, which have already been experimented at the regional level. The central government is trying to use these new territories to promote a long-term administrative reshaping of territorial organisation. The aim is to gradually make municipal amalgamation and to have a better balance between administrative territory, economic space and public policy (DATAR 1996).

Since the beginning of the 1990s several Acts have been voted in this way. The LADDT act, named Voynet’s Act regionalized the emergence of the pays. A regional
conference of territorial planning composed by State administration representatives and regional councillors is tasked with controlling the formation of the “pays” (Leurquin 1999). Moreover, regional councils and the central government co-finance the building of county and agglomerations structures through the 2000-2006 State-region planning (Contrat de plan Etat-régions). For instance, in Brittany, the regional council and the central administration co-finance the institutionalisation of the pays respectively with 60 millions euros each.

In Spain, the central administration strategy has been completely different, trying to limit the growing influence of regional governments in the territorial relationships. The central government has not really accepted the regionalization of local government and its territorial organisation. For this reason, the central government is promoting a new reform, the Local Pact (Pacto local). Negotiated in 1997-1998 between the central government and the Spanish federation of municipalities and provinces (Federación española de los municipios y de las provincias FEMP), this reform aims to bring back into balance the relations between Autonomous Communities and Municipalities (Rodriguez Alvarez 1999). In April 1999, several Acts were voted in order to empower municipalities and provincial councils: reinforcing of mayor role; constitutional possibility for local governments to preserve their autonomy; and delegation of some competencies from to the State to local governments.

However, the future of the Local Pact depends on Autonomous Communities. Indeed, they have the majority of competencies, which could be devolved to local governments. So, the central government objective is the conclusion of Local Pacts in each Autonomous Community. As in many public sectors in Spain, the regulation by political parties is very strong (Pasquier 1999). All depends on the capacity of central politics parties the Socialist party (PSOE) and the Popular party (PP) to impose the Local Pact on political regional agendas. This process varies among regional configurations and the permeability of regional political agendas to national stakes. For instance, in Galicia, the regional government tried to
transform the Local Pact. The regional administration tends to limit the devolution of competencies to municipalities and to empower through these negotiations the shaping of urban counties. The regional government aim is to always control the local development policies.

4. CONCLUSION

From a comparative study in French and Spanish regions, I have analysed how the cognitive Europeanisation of local development policies affects territorial governance in these two countries. This process is based on the appropriation of similar policy norms by territorial domestic political structures. The slow diffusion of European policy norms such as vertical partnerships between levels of administrations, horizontal partnerships between the public sector and the civil society gives to regional actors and institutions new cognitive resources to implement their own policies. In our cases, comparative analysis demonstrates that French and Spanish regional administrations have institutionalised new policy levels between the commune and the province, called “pays” in France and “comarcas” based on very similar principles of action: (1) new territorial spaces for local development; (2) stabilised partnership (3) and development project.

This cognitive Europeanisation tends to politicize the territorial governance in the two countries. The “pays” in France and the “comarcas” in Spain are more or less institutionalised according to national and regional context. However, they progressively become the main local interlocutors of French and Spanish regional administrations about different issues such as economic development, public investments, environmental or tourism programs. Their institutionalisation has produced many conflicts between different levels of governments. In
France and Spain, the “conseils généraux” and “diputaciones”, but also the central administrations, try to limit the emergence of these new local spaces and institutions.

The migration of norms, values and cultures of governance from EU-level to local and regional levels is a key variable to a better understand of the transformation of territorial governance in Europe. The cognitive Europeanisation is indeed a rebound process where regional actors and institutions, socialised to a European model of local development, are Europeanising their policies without Brussels. This focus permits to evaluate indirect dynamics of change on a long period. In our case the multilevel transfer of local development policy norms in French and Spanish regions concerns several categories of actors, essentially civil servants, elected officials and policy experts, at different levels of governments (European, national, regional and local) and for more than one decade. The diversity of the actors concerned in this diffusion of policy norms explains the hybridisation of the European model and the reason why there are contradictory effects according to territorial domestic structures.

Consequently this process of cognitive Europeanisation does not mean convergence Sub-national actors and institutions also shape the paths of Europeanisation and its capabilities of change.

NOTES
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i At the beginning of the 1970s, the francoist central administration also studied the extent to which it would be possible to use the “comarca” as an instrument for an administrative reform.

ii For Leader 1 (1991-1993), the European Commission selected 217 projects in the European Union from which 52 were in Spain and 40 in France. For Leader + (2000-06), the European Commission selected 938 projects from which 145 were in Spain and 140 in France.

iii So, each European programme on territorial development has its transnational network: Interact for Interreg (community initiative for interregional cooperation) Urbact for Urban (community initiative for sustainable development in the troubled urban districts).

iv The European Commission finances other networks as for example the European association of local development agencies, the association *Innovating regions* etc.

v See for example the EAILD website (http://www.aeidl.be/fr/).

vi Minister during the Franco regime, Manuel Fraga Iribarne is the historic leader of the Spanish right. Since 1989 he has been president of the Xunta and the Galician popular party (*Partido popular gallego*, PPG).
Andres Precedo Ledo, well known geographer, became its new general secretary.

At the end of the 1960s, in Brittany, various political and economic actors structured committees of local development on the CELIB model: the “Société d’économie mixte d’études du nord-Finistère” (SEMFEN) in 1963 by Alexis Gourvennec, the “comité d’expansion économique de Cornouailles” in 1964 by Louis Le Pensec, the “comité d’expansion du Mené” (CEM) by Paul Houée in 1965, the “comité de coordination et d’aménagement du pays de Redon” (COCAPAR) in 1969 and the “comité interdépartemental de développement économique du centre-ouest Bretagne” in 1970.

This service consists of geographers, urbanists and economists staff administered by the “secretario general de la planificación y del desarrollo comarcal”, Andres Precedo Ledo, himself directly linked to the presidency of the regional government (the Xunta).

It is in Brittany that the first community of municipalities was born in France (Nevers 1998).

In Centre, only 9% of the municipalities are integrated into inter-communal structures with their own taxation (EPCI) against 64% in Brittany, the national French average being 31.4%.

The Regional and Territorial Administration Act in 1992 (loi ATR), the Regional Planning Act in 1995 (loi d’orientation sur l’aménagement du territoire LOADT) and in 1999 (loi d’orientation sur l’aménagement durable du territoire). The debates of each law, as the recent debate around the decentralisation reform led by the Prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, have shown the opposition between politicians who are in favour of inter and supra-communal cooperation and those who are status quo followers.

In 2004, Spanish local administration (municipalities and provinces) expenditures amounted to 13.6% of all public expenditure against 26.1% for autonomous communities.