

Interview with Elisa Bellè, post-doctoral researcher, beneficiary of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions individual fellowship

Can you present your background?

I started my PhD at the University of Trento (Italy) in 2011. It's an important part of my experience that underlines the mixing of approaches and theories that I experienced. I started working on political organizations, political parties and social movements but was surrounded by experts on gender and organizations. So, at the very early stage of my formation I learned to mix debates, conceptualize tools, to conceptualize political phenomena, and to pay attention in the organizational dimension. That was the beginning of my PhD research about political ethnography on the Italian party called the Northern League.

It was in-depth research on two case studies of local branches situated in two very different social political contexts. So, from the beginning, I was interested in comparing the interplay between nationalism, localism and territorial politics and of course on gender as relevant dimensions over politics.

What is the focus of your Marie Curie project?

My project is called ERRANT – Ethnography of Radical Right Across Nations and Territories.

I'm still working on the populist radical right there and still working comparatively. However, now the level of difficulty is a bit higher because the project proposes an in-depth and comparative study of two leading actors of European populist radical right: the Italian Lega and the French Rassemblement National (RN).

The idea is to go there where these two forces are already in power and somehow already mainstream forces digging into the world in profound problems. I'm observing the context of the small, medium cities where the party is strong in terms of institutional power, so local government, electoral scores and culture.

This is the most important in terms of contribution to the debate, because the radical right has been studied so far more in terms of electoral scores and less in terms of culture. So I want to analyze the life of these two organizations. From the point of view of the militants and of the local dealers, to take part in today's everyday life and the way in which they organize the party.

The second goal is to analyze the interplay between local and national: the local anchorage of the parties, the political decision, the political management of the territory and also the ideological interplay between nationalism and local attachments.

Why did you choose Sciences Po and more specifically the CEE as part of the Marie Curie Actions Program?

I discovered the CEE when I came here in 2018 as a visiting fellow. It was a particular moment in my scientific work because I was a bit confused on the direction to follow and how to pursue my journey into the study of politics and I have to say discovering here the entire life of the centre and debating with the colleagues was enlightening to conceiving the project.

So I started to write here the first draft of the proposal and I decided a little framework: the research questions, the methodology. It was absolutely a natural step.

Furthermore, considering the strong research tradition here about the parties of the radical right and comparative approaches, the connection is strong. Also regarding more recent developments, such as when the Centre invites researchers in the social organization and around dividing issues such as gender.

Interview : Myriam Sefraoui,