

**\* Call for Papers \***

**Public Policy and Social Conflict:  
How Gradual Policy Changes and Mobilizations Interact**

Université du Québec à Montréal

**7-8 October 2021\***

Conference Organized by

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The privatization of public services, rooted in neoliberal ideology, has largely spread across the world over the last decades, but has taken different forms (Clark, 2002; Furlong, 2010; Herrera and Post, 2015; Lee Mudge, 2008; Lorenz, 2012; Murillo, 2009). It may come in as abrupt policy changes, but may also operate more gradually. Initially, the historical neo-institutionalist literature suggested that welfare states were largely path dependent and, therefore, that change was either minor and relatively continuous or major and disruptive (Pierson, 1994; 2000). Yet, it has since been argued that gradual change can also be transformative and lead to profound changes (Hacker, 2004; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Streeck and Thelen, 2005). When privatization reforms take place gradually, different measures may unravel at various levels to reconfigure institutional and public responsibilities and equilibria: legislative framework and social policy modifications, political and administrative reforms, public-private partnership (PPP), creation of new programs in public sectors, mergers, extensive reorganization of personnel, and so on.

The pace of public policy reform can serve different agendas. For example, it has been argued that privatization and neoliberal reforms could be put in place gradually specifically to limit the risk of social mobilization and protest against them (Hacker, 2004). However, the impact of gradual reforms on social opposition may not be as straightforward and unidirectional as it seems. One can for instance expect that extending the period during which the privatization and neoliberal reforms develop could have other effects, like giving social actors time to organize (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) and build broad, multisector coalitions (Giugni and Grasso, 2015). Causality can also be reversed: reforms can be the product of mobilization and foster a process of demobilization. Policy change can also be gradual or slow precisely *because* opposing social actors are mobilized and engaged in protests or because of a lack of mobilization from supporting social actors.

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\* If sanitary conditions allow. Otherwise, the event will be either rescheduled or moved online.

Furthermore, instead of depicting the phenomenon as linear, it could make more sense to think about public policy and mobilization as regularly interacting over time (Dufour and Ancelovici, 2018).

This conference aims thus at focusing on this point or process whereby mobilization and public policy meet and shape one another. Rather than studying *either* public policy *or* mobilization, **we would like this conference to propose frameworks and studies for thinking about these two dimensions of politics *in conjunction*.**

We seek contributions that address the following questions:

- What are the effects of gradual, as opposed to abrupt, privatization on social mobilization? Do the same actors mobilize against it? Do they do it in the same way?
- To what extent can mobilizations shape the provision of public services? What opportunities and/or obstacles do they encounter in doing so?
- To what extent and how do mobilization and public policy shape one another over time?
- What are the differences between the coalitions that advocate and mobilize for policy change and the ones that resist it?
- Can we make sense of policy coalitions in terms of social movements?

We welcome propositions addressing the following policy areas or struggles from around the world, with a specific focus on the conjunction, or points of articulation, between mobilization and public policy:

- Healthcare and social services;
- Education;
- Social security and income support;
- Housing;
- Public utilities;
- Prison and detention centers;
- Natural resources.
- Covid-related protests;
- Student movements;
- Mobilization to fight poverty;
- Antigentrification protests;
- “Yellow Vests” in France;
- Black Lives Matter;
- Climate Justice Marches.

### **Participants’ Instructions**

We accept **proposals in English and French**. The conference will be public and followed the next day by a private workshop for authors to discuss the papers and a potential publication in English. Translation from French to English will be provided if needed during the conference, but **all participants are expected to understand English** to facilitate formal and informal exchanges and discussions.

Abstracts of **500 words** are expected by **March 1, 2021**, and have to be submitted to the following email address: [policyandprotest@gmail.com](mailto:policyandprotest@gmail.com)

Decisions will be communicated by **April 16, 2021**. A limited number of small grants will be awarded to support the participation of doctoral and post-doctoral students.

The selection of abstracts will be made by the conference organizers and an international Scientific Committee:

- Emmanuelle Barozet (Sociology, University of Chile, Chile)
- Daniel Béland (Political Science, McGill University, Canada)
- Pascale Dufour (Political Science, University of Montreal, Canada)
- Françoise Montambeault (Political Science, University of Montreal, Canada)
- Julien Talpin (Political Science, University of Lille 2, France)

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## References

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