



CALL FOR PAPERS

## **Protest Movements and Social Mobilizations in European Integration History**

Conference of the Jean Monnet Chair EU-CONV

Sciences Po Rennes, 9-10 April 2026

The history of protest movements and social mobilizations in Europe and the history of European integration have long been written separately from each other and largely disconnected. Yet the construction of the European project has been debated very early on, leading to mobilizations from the 1950s to the present day. These mobilizations accompanied the process of economic, social and political convergence of European societies and helped to shape, redirect or accelerate it. This was the case from the first protests against the Common Agricultural Policy to the transnational environmental mobilizations of the 21st century, including movements of road hauliers and railway workers, and social conflicts such as the Renault-Vilvoorde strike and the demonstrations against the Bolkestein Directive. These mobilizations shaped the contours of a 'Europe from below', reflecting the growing role of civil society in European integration. They also contributed to the acceptance and legitimisation of European economic and social compromises.

The conference organised by the Jean Monnet Chair EU-CONV aims to make an **interdisciplinary contribution to the current revival of the social history of the European project** by analysing these various protests and mobilizations over the long term, from the 1950s to the present day. Sociology and political science have extensively explored the issue of the Europeanisation of collective action, focusing in particular on social movements, lobbies and interest groups since the 1980s and 1990s (DELLA PORTA/CAIANI, FILLIEULE/ACCORNERO, MARKS). They highlighted the growing importance of Europe in social movements (BALME/CHABANET, CRESPIY, IMIG/TARROW) and the structural limits of this process, starting with the absence of a European public sphere (RUCHT). For its part, the comparative and transnational history of European protests and social movements (HORN, KLIMKE/SCHARLOTH) focused on a global approach that paid less attention to the European project. As a result, there is a **lack of long-term approaches studying the rise and limits of protest movements and social mobilizations related to the European project since its origins**. Most importantly, while movements and mobilizations are generally considered in terms of their own Europeanisation or their direct contribution to European debates, it seems important to **also**

**take into account the various mobilizations resulting from the different European policies and integration processes.** European public policies or transnational industrial plans at EC/EU level provoked national or local mobilizations in response, but were also sometimes fostered by them. Similarly, the major processes of economic integration (Common/Single Market, EMU, enlargements), social integration (social and environmental Europe) and political integration (union of values) shaped national policies, indirectly giving rise to social mobilizations. This applies in particular to the processes of convergence of European societies towards a **specific regulatory model of liberalism** (liberalisation, external openness, competition, external constraint). Protest movements have also been privileged occasions for imagining Europe and proposing **progressive or populist additions or alternatives** to the European project under construction. Finally, the relatively low level of social mobilization in the strategies of collective actors, particularly political parties and trade unions, also deserves examination in order to understand the factors that explain this '**absence of Europe**', but also the strong capacity of the European institutions to legitimise their action.

These issues open up a vast field of research, which will be delimited by a **repertoire of collective action based on the notions of 'protest movements' and 'social mobilizations'**. While the social mobilizations studied here will mainly be protests, other types of mobilization, non-contesting and/or using other forms of collective action, will also be taken into consideration. These notions will be associated with a repertoire of action that goes beyond strict elitist lobbying by **mobilizing broad social groups** (demonstrations, strikes, petitions, occupations, blockades, collective meetings, symbolic collective actions, etc.). It will highlight the specific features of the repertoire of action related to European integration, as well as the preferred strategies for addressing 'Brussels'. Analysing this repertoire will also lead to study the diversity of projects for Europe proposed by the various players involved in the actions. The scope will not be limited only to transnational mobilizations explicitly claiming a direct link with European integration. Specific attention will be paid to the role played by the European integration process in national or local mobilizations that have no explicit link with Europe, but for which Europe is an underestimated or even ignored factor.

The conference will examine the transformation of the European project as a breeding ground for protests and mobilizations by focusing on four main issues:

- 1) **Direct reactions to Community policies** (CAP, CFP, competition, industrial, transport, and trade policies) are the aspect of the subject that has been best highlighted. The focus will be placed on the process of Europeanisation and/or the transnational dimension of the movements over the long term, in particular in an evolutionary logic highlighting the major chronological phases in the history of the Communities (ECSC, Euratom, EEC, and EU) and the development of Community policies.
- 2) **Indirect mobilizations or movements disconnected** from European policies, but indirectly linked to the integration and convergence processes. Here we refer in particular to the enlargements and the multiple mobilizations that occurred during the phases of accession to the EC/EU. Contributions highlighting an indirect link between protest movements and the processes of economic and social convergence (Common/Single Market, EMS, EMU, and Stability Pact) will be particularly welcome.
- 3) **Mobilizations promoting EC/EU projects or alternative projects** in the economic, social, environmental or political fields. Specific attention will be paid to the emergence

of social or political alternatives generated or supported by social mobilizations. Projects promoted by political movements, trade unions, and non-governmental organisations will be particularly scrutinised, but this will also be the case for projects promoted by the ‘new social movements’ (ecology, feminism, regionalism) to go beyond or bypass the national level.

- 4) **The factors behind the ‘absence of Europe’** or the lack of social mobilizations to address European issues will also deserve clarification. This will be the case in particular for the strategies of the trade union organisations and of the main European political currents (communism, social democracy, nationalism). From another perspective, the underestimation of the Community scale in social mobilizations may also result from the fact that the European institutions present the social impact of their action as limited. The reactions of the EC/EU to protest movements and the processes of legitimisation that accompany them will also be analysed.

Priority will be given to contributions including an **evolutionary and/or comparative and transnational dimension between several mobilizations**, rather than case studies centred on a particular event. The aim is to highlight the gradual awareness or integration of the European dimension into social mobilizations.

#### Proposal submission

Proposals from all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences will be submitted in English (2000 characters maximum) with a short biography (one page maximum) to the address below. The submission deadline is **20 September 2025**.

[mathieu.dubois@sciencespo-rennes.fr](mailto:mathieu.dubois@sciencespo-rennes.fr)

#### Conditions of participation

Confirmation of participation will be sent to participants in October 2025. The language of communication will be English. The Jean Monnet Chair will cover travel costs within Europe and accommodation in Rennes. A publication of the contributions will follow in a collective volume.

#### Scientific committee

Manuela CAIANI (Associate Professor in Political Science – Scuola Sup. Normale of Florence)

Amandine CRESPI (Professor in Political Science – Université libre of Brussels)

Gerd-Rainer HORN (Professor in History – Sciences Po Paris)

Lorenzo MECCHI (Professor in History – University of Padua)

Kiran PATEL (Professor in History – Ludwig-Maximilian Universität – Munich)

Laurent WARLOUZET (Professor in History – Sorbonne Université – Paris)

#### Conference organisation

Mathieu DUBOIS, Associate Prof. in History at Sciences Po Rennes, Jean Monnet Chair Holder

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