# W05 / Shaping Policymaking from the Ground Up: Activism and Governance in Multi-Level Institutional Settings

**Topic :** Policy & Politics

**Chair :** Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

**Second Chair :** Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

This workshop aims to offer a fresh theorisation of activism's impacts on policymaking in multi-level jurisdictional contexts. Its ambition is to attract, and promote meaningful dialogue among, policy scholars with diverse:

- Disciplinary backgrounds (e.g. political science, sociology, geography, anthropology, history)
- Epistemological perspectives (e.g. interpretative, post-positivist)
- Scientific aspirations (e.g. empirical, theoretical, methodological)
- Methodological approaches (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, network analysis)
- Research design (e.g. comparative, single-case)
- Geographical provenance and focus (Global North and South)
- Sectorial interests (e.g. environment, immigration, urban, welfare, etc)

The following is a non-exhaustive list of topics that this workshop seeks to address:

§ Multi-level governance, federalism, and authority dispersal: How do different institutional settings influence activists' chances to shape policymaking? What is the role of different government systems (federal, unitary, other) in affecting activists' success and failure? What are the opportunities and constraints that authority dispersal across multiple policy venues offer to those mobilising from the periphery of power relations? How does activists' influence vary across different policy sectors?

§ Social movements' organisation, strategies, and outer environment: How do activists navigate opportunities, constrains, and dilemmas in different jurisdictional landscapes? What is the role of institutional allies in empowering and/or co-opting social movements? How sustainable is activists' influence over time and how does it vary across different stages of the policy process? Are social movements seeking policy change more/less influential than those seeking to maintain the status quo?

§ Cities, space, and scale: How can activists harness the urban scale to produce policy change, locally and beyond? What is the role of geographical settings in shaping activists' influence? How can coalitions involving activists and local officials prevent or redress unwanted policies adopted by regional, national, or supra-national authorities? What are the possibilities and limitations of municipalism for the pursuit of transformative policy change?

Bridging insights from complementary yet so-far disconnected theoretical perspectives, the workshop will push the boundaries of the scholarly debate on policymaking and activism.

## ABSTRACT

Social movements often mobilise to produce or prevent policy change. The question of their power is ever more relevant in today's divided societies. With political contention on the rise, fresh forms of activism have emerged around the defining issues of our time, such as climate change, immigration, race, social welfare, and LGBTQ+ rights. These highly politicised policy domains, moreover, stretch across multiple geographical scales and government levels, urging both activists and policymakers to navigate opportunities and constraints in complex, fragmented, and uneven institutional landscapes.

The aim of this workshop is to understand when, why, and how activism can shape policymaking processes in multi-level institutional settings. This question has animated extensive research in the fields of public policy analysis, social movement studies, and political geography, giving rise to a vibrant yet siloed debate. First, scholarship on multi-level governance and federalism highlights that the devolution of policymaking powers to assorted sites of authority has led to a greater involvement of grassroots organisations in the production of public goods, offering them notable opportunities to change policies from below. Second, social movement scholars stress that grassroots demands are more likely to make political headway when

sympathetic office holders work as access points to the institutional space, but often conceptualise mobilisations as unfolding within jurisdictional containers. Third, geographers and urban scholars emphasise that cities are strategic sites for the mobilisation of marginalised groups, allowing them to produce policy outcomes far beyond the immediate local contexts in which activism originated.

Bringing together experts and insights from these different scholarships, the workshop will make a path-breaking contribution to the study of public policy in times of political polarisation and institutional rescaling.

# W05 / Shaping Policymaking from the Ground Up: Activism and Governance in Multi-Level Institutional Settings

**Chair :** Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

**Second Chair :** Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

## Session 1

Wednesday, June 26th 10:15 to 12:00 (AULA 11)

### Adapting to protest as a form of public policy restructuring.

Charlotte Halpern (Sciences Po Paris - Centre d'Etudes Européennes (CEE))

This paper contributes to the panel's objective by examining how evolving relationships between contentious politics and public policy processes contribute to the restructuring of political regulation in different urban governance contexts (Dupuy & Halpern, 2009). It draws on the work done on contentious activities focusing on policy outcomes (Amenta et al. 2019; Della Porta, Diani, 2020), to highlight the way action repertoires enfold over time and shape (enable, constrain) policy dynamics. By contrast to the work done on how social movements impact specific policy sequences, such as agenda-setting, or how to assess for their impact on policy processes by focusing on the adoption of a new regulation or budget (Giugni, 2004; Bosi et al., 2016), this paper takes a broader view to examines how evolving relations between public policy processes and their challengers impact forms of governance in a given context.

It does so by focusing on street space contestation. Streetspace contestation is linked to the idea that the purpose of urban road networks is not solely to enable traffic anymore but also to accommodate a wider range of transport modes and activities (Ancieas, Jones, 2020). It is strongly connected to the development of new vehicles, services and technologies in transport as well as the efforts made by urban elites worldwide to raise their city's profile through place-making strategies. While transport historians mainly focused on competing modes of transportation (Flonneau, 2006; 2007), it later shifted to incorporate other actors and modes such as cyclists and pedestrians (Norton et al., 2009; Reid, 2017). How these actors viewed and contested car-oriented policies became a point of interest (Miller, 2018). Scholarly work also focused on the transformation of the material environment by transport policies geared toward the easy circulation of the automobile (Wells, 2013). Urban history highlighted the role of social claims and epic battles between different users' groups seeking to influence decision-making processes in shaping urban road futures (Longhurst, 2015; Reid, 2015; Shelton, 2017). What is new, however, is the growing use of the action repertoires formerly developed jointly by contentious groups (Barnes, 1979; Tilly, 1986) and urban authorities and experts to challenge national regulatory frameworks and enhance urban governance (Halpern, 2021).

Drawing on an original qualitative dataset comparing streetspace contestation across large cities in Europe, this paper argues that adapting to protest constitutes a form of urban policy restructuring. The notion of street space contestation is purposefully used in order to examine conflicts and resistances, as well as the strategy developed by local authorities in order to address these demands. First it considers how contestant's action repertoires enfold over time, resulting in street space contestation taking several forms over time, including events and communication to inform or/and mobilise the general public, discussions with public bodies and the government, legal tools, and illegal or nonviolent radical direct action. Second, it examines how tactical alliances between contentious groups and urban authorities are developed to oppose state/region-led schemes. Insofar as it fosters the framing urban road networks as public spaces and the selection of alternative policy solutions, street space contestation contributes to the emergence of new forms of urban governance and to the restructuring of public policy making.

### (Virtual) Fighting Italian Labor Exploitation from the Ground Up

Isabella Clough Marinaro (John Cabot University)

This proposed paper examines the extent to which Italian civil society groups have been able to shape the country's policies and practices concerning labour exploitation in agriculture. In recent years, social

movements have successfully raised public awareness about the deep-rooted and geographically expanding problem of *caporalato*: the illegal recruitment and abusive conditions of mostly migrant workers in farms and the connected exploitation of their housing, food and transportation needs. Various civil society actors have already been central in drafting recent legislation that both punishes and seeks to prevent such crimes. Recognizing that repression is not enough to deter exploitation of workers, a novel model of governance-though-civil-society (Torfing, 2020) has been designed which aims to empower grassroots actors to proactively tackle the cultural and socioeconomic causes of these crimes. Three years since this collaborative governance approach was first activated, the study assesses the extent to which it is proving able to achieve its ambitious goals. The analysis draws on in-depth interviews with trade unionists, anti-mafia organizations, migrant and labour rights activists, and members of alternative food movements. By unpacking the multiple institutional layers involved (ministries, law enforcement agencies etc) and bringing together the perspectives of diverse grassroots actors, the presentation identifies some of the initial successes but also highlights some significant challenges that have emerged. These particularly concern the uneven voice and influence that different stakeholders are afforded in the negotiations between state and civil society levels. Among these is the continued difficulty of migrants to be included and considered credible experts. Obstacles to network- and alliance-building remain a core problem that is further aggravated by geographic disparities, with large areas of the country effectively outside the web of information-gathering and service provision that the strategy envisions. The paper concludes with recommendations that address the weaknesses identified in order to avoid the danger of tokenism and ensure the project's long-term sustainability.

References:

Torfing, J. (2020). Governance through civil society. In Oxford research encyclopedia of politics. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1415

# W05 / Shaping Policymaking from the Ground Up: Activism and Governance in Multi-Level Institutional Settings

**Chair :** Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

**Second Chair :** Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

## Session 2

Wednesday, June 26th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 11)

### (Virtual) Interests without implementation; implementation without interests: Land policy in Amazonia

Gabriel Suchodolski (University of California, Los Angeles)

If land policy implementation is an expected outcome of state autonomy (Scott 1999:49; Evans 1995), state-society alignment of interests (Emigh et al. 2019), or peasant-inclusive politics (Albertus 2021), why would similar land bureaucracies fail where elites and peasant-inclusive coalitions agree with its land titling policy (western Pará) and succeed where elites are uninterested and peasants have little political say (Amazonas state)? I employ comparative-historical analysis and ethnography in land bureaucracies and rural communities to explain land titling differences in western Pará and Amazonas, Brazil. In both jurisdictions, federal agencies have controlled massive lands since 1970 and created dozens of new settlement projects since 2000. Western Pará has been a priority target for land titling yet still lags far behind Amazonas. I compare elites, social movements, and their influence on land bureaucracies' functioning and on the bureaucracies' relationship with land claimants. In Pará, a strong but fragmented civil society and clashing elites (politicians, agribusiness leaders, and public prosecutors) derailed the regional land bureau's operation. While rural elites publicly supported private property rights, behind the scenes they meddled with state legibility to advance illicit land use. In response, environmental litigation and protests unintendedly weakened bureaucracies further. External interventions, social movements included, imprinted partisan polarization onto bureaucrats and corroded organizational capacity. Few Pará smallholders received property titles, notably through political patronage. In Amazonas, a weak civil society and disinterested elites enabled the regional land bureau to function. Absent elite intervention, partisan bureaucrats increased organizational effectiveness by collaborating with smallholder civil society groups. Most Amazonas smallholders received property titles, especially in traditional communities with local knowledge. The paper argues that weak bureaucracies require shelter from (rather than support of) political elites to operate effectively. Bureaucrats' polarization erodes organizational capacity, but moderate partisanship can foster collaboration with civil society to enhance organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, I argue that cooperative labor (rather than litigation and protests) enables local communities to achieve land legibility and environmental governance. The paper highlights social movement effects and unintended consequences at different moments of the policy process.

### Addressing the political influence of non-contentious and emerging social movements: the case of energy communities in Barcelona

Marta Tramezzani (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po))

In 2019, the European Union unveiled two directives introducing the concept of "energy communities," encouraging their proliferation across Europe.

Scholars, drawing from the Multi-Level Perspective and Strategic Niche Management, regard energy communities and cooperatives as grassroots sociotechnical innovations (Capellán-Pérez et al., 2018; Dóci et al., 2015; Pellicer-Sifres et al., 2018), exploring their transformative potential within the energy regime (Brummer, 2018; Kooij et al., 2018; Seyfang et al., 2013; Wokuri, 2021). While existing research often underscores their transformative influence nationally, we propose a scale-shift to the local level, particularly within the city of Barcelona.

Conducting a five-month fieldwork study, we engaged in semi-direct interviews and participant observations within six energy communities, alongside discussions with municipal authorities.

We propose to analyze energy communities through the lenses of social movements, framing them as emerging and "autonomous movements" within the Barcelona context (Flesher Fominaya, 2015). Because of their emergent and ephemeral nature, and due to their autonomous character, they do not actively seek policy change. However, we argue that by aiming to modify the urban space, they impact public policies trough routine interactions and daily negotiations, instead of contentious action.

Various theories and concepts attempt to explore the interplay between public policies and collective action. Traditional policy analysis often treats social movements as external factors impacting policy processes. Network approaches, like the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier, 2007), lack the scope to assess the political impact of emerging and autonomous social movements due to their long-term perspective requirements. On the other hand, social movements studies delve into the “organizational resources, structures, claims, and tactics that are likely associated with success” (Meyer, 2003). The structure of political opportunities (Fillieule et al., 2020) highlights the role of the political system in fostering or inhibiting social mobilization but fails to elucidate the mechanisms through which social movements influence policymaking.

Thus, we propose to explore the political influence of energy communities by examining their everyday interactions and negotiations for coexistence within the urban space. Our analysis reveals that energy communities exert influence across various stages of the policy process (Howlett et al., 1995), including agenda-setting, policy implementation, and the co-construction of social services.

### Climate Justice Curtailed: Examining the Role and Influence of Local Community Stakeholders in California’s Transformative Climate Communities Program

Emma French (University of California, Los Angeles)

Climate change represents a wicked problem facing the world. Due to their proximity to climate impacts and understanding of context-specific vulnerabilities, local governments are increasingly viewed as critical change agents in addressing both the impacts and the causes of climate change. Global injustices related to climate risk and responsibility are mirrored at the local level, where marginalized urban residents that have contributed least to the problem are most at risk from its consequences. As awareness of the complexities of climate change and the potential for responses to have unintended negative consequences has grown, local governments have begun experimenting with participatory and collaborative approaches to climate governance.

Community-led climate planning and policy making approaches are being promoted as a way of addressing persistent injustices in local climate governance processes and outcomes by shifting both resources and decision-making power to those most impacted by climate change. These efforts seem to align with mainstream participatory planning theory and the demands of environmental and climate justice advocates who call for more meaningful engagement with frontline communities. However, given the plethora of research highlighting the gap between participatory ideals and practice, this recent rise in state-sponsored, community-led climate planning raises questions about the potential for these efforts to reproduce, rather than challenge, unjust processes and outcomes.

Building on theories of participatory planning and environmental and climate justice, this study investigates an ongoing experiment in state-funded, neighborhood-scale, community-led climate planning in California. I ask: How are impacted community stakeholders involved in and influencing local climate planning processes and likely outcomes? This question is addressed through a two-part analysis of the TCC Program, a prominent government-funded, neighborhood-scale climate planning program in California. Launched in 2016 by the State Legislature, TCC funds the design and implementation of climate mitigation and adaptation projects among the State’s priority populations, communities characterized by their disproportionate environmental and economic marginalization. Using qualitative document analysis and critical discourse analysis, I analyze the relationship between divergent understandings of community, strategies of involvement, and planning decisions through a critical environmental justice (EJ) lens.

I find that community based organizations representing some of the state’s priority populations played a key role in imagining and realizing the TCC program. At the same time, however, the scale and scope of the projects being funded make it difficult for historically marginalized communities to lead in their design and implementation on the ground. The comprehensive nature of the projects being funded, which is considered essential by environmental and climate justice advocates, makes community control much more challenging, if not inaccessible, ultimately curtailing the visions of climate justice being put forward by impacted communities.

# W05 / Shaping Policymaking from the Ground Up: Activism and Governance in Multi-Level Institutional Settings

**Chair :** Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

**Second Chair :** Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

## Session 3

Thursday, June 27th 09:00 to 12:15 (AULA 11)

### (Virtual) Scalar Inversion of Movement-Countermovements: A Case Study of Pro- and Anti-Immigrant Mobilizing in the United States

Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

Marieke de Wilde (University of Amsterdam)

This paper examines how opposing social movements have adopted inverse scalar organizational infrastructures structures. It does so through the case of pro- and anti-immigrant activism in Southern California during the late 2010s (response to the Trump Administration). Though both sides were embedded in the same multi-level jurisdictional field, they adopted inverted scalar organizational infrastructures.

The anti-immigrant side adopted a highly centralized organizational structure characterized by a handful of resource rich organizations located mostly in Washington D.C., strong coordination between federal officials and national organizations, weak local and mostly informal organizations, and top-down coordination between national leaders (officials and organizations) and local elected officials in conservative municipalities and counties. By contrast, the pro-immigrant side experienced some degree of centralization during the early 2010s, but national organizations played a marginal role in mobilizations against the Trump Administration. Instead, large regional organizations with statewide reach – mostly located in Los Angeles – coordinated campaigns with smaller organizations in municipalities across the state. Thus, the opposing sides adopted inverted scalar organizational infrastructures: one characterized by high centralization and weak territorialization and the other characterized by multi-nodal regional territorialization.

Scalar inversion was, we suggest, the result of strategies that responded to a multi-level jurisdictional field that presented markedly different threats, opportunities, and barriers. For the pro-immigrant side, the objective was to create territorial ramparts to protect undocumented immigrant residents from draconian federal policies. The territorial ramparts consisted of “sanctuary policies” passed at state, county, and municipal levels. As there were no political opportunities at the federal level, advocacy organizations moved into sub-national jurisdictions, employing the resources and capabilities of regional organizations in Los Angeles to build statewide and local coalitions. The territorialization of the organizational infrastructure enabled the pro-immigrant side to pass a range of sanctuary and pro-immigrant policies across subnational levels and jurisdictions of government. The anti-immigrant side employed a pincer strategy to counteract state and local defensive ramparts. Having almost no political allies in the state government, anti-immigrant forces employed federal-level institutions and resources to attack California’s newly enacted sanctuary law (Values Act) from above and below. From above, the Justice Department sued to nullify California’s sanctuary law and national-level advocacy organizations mobilized conservative municipal and county officials to sign the lawsuits “amicus brief”. From below, Trump allies (congressional representatives and national organizations) encouraged conservative municipalities (especially in Orange County) to pass ordinances to opt out of the Values Act and mount lawsuits against the state of California. Organizational centralization enabled anti-immigrant forces to mount a pincer strategy to block the state’s sanctuary law and dissuade progressive local officials from passing their own sanctuary policies. Thus, both sides mobilized to achieve competing objectives in a multi-level jurisdictional field, which precipitated contrasting strategies. Whereas the pro-immigrant side sought use state and local advantages to build territorial ramparts, the anti-immigrant side sought to break down those territorial defenses from above (federally coordinated lawsuit) and below (local ordinances and lawsuits).

## Working two states: Status for All organizing in Quebec and the cultural politics of regularization

Jessie Stein (CUNY Graduate Center, USA)

This paper examines recent migrant justice organizing in Quebec, the 'Status for All' movement, and the challenges and opportunities of migrant regularization programs in Canada's federated immigration framework. Regularization programs, or amnesties, bestow permanent residency to people who lack it. While important, they often have stringent eligibility requirements and can followed by border clampdowns, creating new precarities (McDonald, 2009). The pandemic and the visibility of migrant essential workers reopened the political grounds for regularization in Canada, reviving the decades-old campaign for a broad program known as 'Status for All'. Following organizing in Montreal, where many asylum-seekers were working in healthcare, the federal government proposed a regularization program for asylum-seekers working on the front lines. The program, known as 'Guardian Angels', was the subject of enormous debate, and its criteria ultimately narrowed in negotiations between the federal Liberals, and the nationalist immigration-restrictionist provincial Coalition Avenir Québec.

While migrant justice organizers may campaign for regularization as proponents of no-borders, the abolition of citizenship privileges, or to signal the illegitimacy of imperial or settler colonial sovereignty (Walia, 2013; Sharma, 2019), regularization operates in a liberal framework that reinforces the state's right to exclude, if through selected inclusion. Further, the debates and discourses that flow from the making of regularization policies, like other border operations, create spectacles that shape the wider politics of national and subnational membership (De Genova, 2013), with ambivalent consequences for future organizing. In Canada's asymmetrically federated immigration system, Quebec controls most of its immigrant selection, and has consultation powers for special programs. This adds yet a layer of complexity, as federal and provincial governments with competing immigration visions and electoral concerns challenge organizing in new ways.

Working the boundary between political and cultural geography, this research analyzes how the power-sharing agreement between Quebec and Canada shaped the possibilities and limits of organizing around regularization. How have the shifting terms of federalism shaped regularization in the past and how does this shape the present? Where and when has regularization been taken up, sidelined, contained, or appropriated? What cultural politics have been advanced through and in response to regularization struggles past, and how does that speak to the current conjuncture?

Drawing on three years of ethnography with the Status for All movement, interviews with organizers, archival research, and textual analysis, I analyze the interactions between organizing for regularization against the backdrop of the immigration agreements between Canada and Quebec since 1971. I consider the current Status for All movement and three earlier regularization programs that targeted Quebec 1973, 1981, and 2002. I argue that while organizing in a federated context is an ambivalent process, the passing of responsibility between federal and provincial states makes regularization programs doubly prone to cooptation and backlash. Despite these formidable challenges, Quebec's migrant justice efforts show savvy and resolve, and have provoked reckonings with the politics of belonging.

This work speaks directly to the workshop themes of urban social movements, federalism, and policy-focused organizing approaches. If selected, I would be delighted to attend the workshop in person.

## (Virtual) From borders to courts: The politics of litigation of sea rescue organisations

Federico Alagna (Scuola Normale Superiore)

Repression of mobility and solidarity is a widespread phenomenon in contemporary European migration politics. This has taken different forms, ranging from subtle intimidation and policing to overt criminalisation, and it has increasingly led to a pivotal role of the criminal justice system of the EU and of its member states (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; della Porta & Steinhilper, 2022; Fekete, 2018).

The judicial field has thus emerged as a crucial arena of political contention. People on the move and civil society actors acting out of solidarity, who had previously been criminalised, have in fact used this arena not only to defend the legality of their actions, but, more noticeably, as a space of claim-making and mobilisation.

In such way, their essentially defensive approach to the judicial arena has been progressively paralleled by a new, more offensive approach to litigation, in which the judicial system is proactively conceived as a space of political contention (Passalacqua, 2022; Pijnenburg & van der Pas, 2022). This has been particularly the

case for sea rescue organisations, which have used litigation as one of their main tactics of resistance against state-led repression (Alagna & Cusumano, forthcoming).

This contribution engages with migration and socio-legal scholarship on the topic, explaining why strategic litigation is critical to understand the counter-repression tactics of sea rescue organisations in the EU. Through literature review and desk research, this paper reflects on several theoretical and empirical aspects, which overall concern the dialectic relationship between sea rescue organisations and the law. In doing so, I engage in particular with the inherent multi-level setting in which this dialectic process takes place, critically discussing the diverse legal and political opportunities provided by international, European and national laws for the strategic litigation of sea rescue organisations.

### Socio-Legal Interventions: Clearing Centres and Health Activism for Uninsured Migrants in Germany

Ilker Ataç (Hochschule Fulda)

In Germany, migrants lacking health insurance, including irregular migrants and EU citizens facing unemployment or precarious employment, encounter significant barriers to accessing regular health services, despite international agreements safeguarding their healthcare rights. Control policies, social law exclusion, and economic considerations hinder the realization of emergency care rights. Consequently, civil society actors, welfare organizations and activists play a pivotal role in delivering healthcare to migrants without health insurance for decades, operating parallel to mainstream healthcare system. Dedicated volunteers and activists in various German cities serve as frontline advocates, building trust and facilitating access to free and confidential healthcare services to counteract exclusion, giving rise to novel forms of solidarity.

Over the past decade, activists have employed innovative strategies, framing health services for undocumented migrants as essential citizenship rights rather than a purely mere humanitarian endeavour. They have developed the concept of “clearing centres” as socio-legal contact points for people without health insurance, aiming to improve the health, social, and legal situation of those seeking advice through counselling. The focus is on realising existing entitlements to health insurance and other social benefits, thus creating access to appropriate healthcare. Activists negotiate with local and regional authorities to be funded by them, to receive public money and to be part of the regular municipal services. While most are funded by local or regional government, only short-term project funding is available to maintain these centres. To date, only two of the existing local clearing centres have been made permanent, with some being run by independent charities, others by associations and rarely by the public health service of local authorities.

The focus is on local initiatives, their organisation, outreach strategies, and collaborations with local actors. It will discuss the dilemmas faced by organisations and the strategies used to overcome problems when dealing with local and regional authorities once these organisations have been established. Not only the creation, but also the reproduction of the conditions of these organisations require new strategies from activists as they establish themselves at the local level. How do activists develop strategies and navigate dilemmas and opportunities on different scales? What processes of institutional alliances emerge? How sustainable is activist influence over time? This discussion will explore the practical implementation of political ideals, the social and institutional relationships utilized at the local and regional levels, and the ways in which activists challenge humanitarian policies. Drawing on interviews and participatory research, this presentation aims to shed light on the evolving landscape of health activism in Germany and its transformative impact through negotiating citizenship rights within the local context.

I am planning to present on-site.

# W05 / Shaping Policymaking from the Ground Up: Activism and Governance in Multi-Level Institutional Settings

**Chair :** Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

**Second Chair :** Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

## Session 4

Thursday, June 27th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 11)

### Deportation Defense Funds: Innovative or Continuing Inequalities?

Blanca Ramirez (University of California, Los Angeles)

Scholars have used various concepts such as “immigration federalism” and “multilayered jurisdictional patchwork” to highlight how laws aimed at addressing immigration at various government levels can simultaneously conflict (Gulasekaram and Ramakrishnan 2015; Varsanyi et al. 2012). The U.S. federal government has increasingly addressed immigration as a social problem that requires a legal carceral intervention: detention and deportation. The federal government’s draconian approach to immigration, however, has led other local governments to recognize this carceral intervention as an issue itself, especially with the perceived lack of due process. In particular, social movements and immigrant rights advocates, especially under the Trump administration, successfully pushed some local governments to increase accessibility to attorneys by funding deportation defense funds—or non-profit immigration legal service providers—in a bid to protect immigrants and their due process rights.

This paper considers the following research questions: (1) How did social movements use frames of legal representation to shape the passage and structure of deportation defense funds at the local level? (2) How did social movements use frames of immigrant deservingness and racialized illegality shape the passage and structure of deportation defense funds? I examine three case studies of deportation defense funds in the Los Angeles metropolitan region using semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (n=10), immigration attorneys (n=10), and content analysis of organizational and governmental data on the funds (n=185).

Taken together, I argue that deportation defense funds normalize divisions between those deemed deserving and undeserving and privilege immigration attorneys as an intervention to the deportation system affecting local communities. Ultimately, by opting to fight the law with the law—as is the case with deportation defense funds—I argue that these local interventions are a “carceral distraction,” defined as a distraction that strengthens and legitimates carceral logics, specifically exclusionary and punishing forces, despite the benevolence that these policies imply (Gurusami, García, and Bose 2022). In this case, deportation defense funds put forth frames that reinforce the primacy of legal interventions for a few savable immigrants and in doing so, further normalizing immigration enforcement’s injuries. How a local government intervenes in a social issue is an important mechanism and source of inequalities (Rodríguez-Muñiz 2017).

This paper offers *Shaping Policymaking from the Ground Up* workshop several discussion points of interest. This is a case study of multi-level governance and opportunity, demonstrating how local coalitions of activists sought to redress the unwanted hostile approach of the Trump administration. However, this intervention is still constrained; by opting to fight the law with the law, I argue that these interventions are still exclusionary and punishing forces, despite the benevolence that these policies imply, as they often excluded the majority of immigrants in need (Gurusami, García, and Bose 2022). I plan to present in person.

### Empowering public impact on policy-making and the role of public managers as gatekeepers

Emanuela Savini (University of Technology Sydney - Institute for Public Policy and Governance)

The paper mainly responds to the workshop topic: What is the role of institutional allies in empowering and/or co-opting social movements?

It will present findings from my PhD research, which explored the operationalisation of 'deliberative engagement practices' across 79 local governments in Victoria, Australia. Taking an institutionalist approach that examined rules, practices and narratives (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013), the research examined how public managers interpreted and applied the practices through interviews, surveys and document analysis. It investigated the dispositions of public managers, the institutional constraints and organisational cultures that impact how public participation is designed, who is invited to participate and how it is integrated into policy-making.

The research findings highlight public managers' consequential role in empowering public participation. It demonstrates how they act as gatekeepers and control which 'publics' are invited into policy-making processes and how much those publics inform decision-making. It challenges assumptions that public managers will diligently and capably support democratic innovations once their benefits are better understood and mandated by the authorising environment (Nabatchi, 2010; Smith, 2009). Instead, the paper will demonstrate how public participation can be circumscribed to meet organisational norms and, in some cases, reinforce business-as-usual approaches. As such, it provides evidence of how public participation can be co-opted.

Furthermore, the research suggests that rather than pursuing public participation for its emancipatory potential, public managers operate from distinct value propositions that centre around the instrumental value of involving the public in decision-making. As such, public participation can reinforce the legitimacy of government decisions or the status quo rather than create substantial shifts in policy decisions.

Finally, the paper will posit that understanding the role of institutional actors and the cultural shifts required is critical for deliberative engagement practices to be operationalised in a manner that is more likely to achieve the normative and epistemic aspirations they were conceived to address; without it, their practical application will inevitably contend with pragmatic constraints.

References:

Lowndes, V., & Roberts, M. (2013). Why Institutions Matter, The New Institutionalism in Political Science. Springer.

Nabatchi, T. (2010). Addressing the citizenship and democratic deficits: The potential of deliberative democracy for public administration. The American Review of Public Administration, 40(4), 376-399.

Smith, G. (2009). Democratic innovations: Designing institutions for citizen participation. Cambridge University Press.

### The Ambivalence of Government Decentralisation for Poor People’s Politics: The Case of Infrastructural Upgrading in a Buenos Aires’ Informal Neighbourhood

Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

Sam Halvorsen (Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London)

The power of the urban poor to achieve far-reaching policy reform has long been a central question in social science research. The policy domains having the most direct impacts on the lives of these populations, such as social welfare and urban planning, often stretch across multiple geographical scales and government levels. This paper aims to theorise the possibilities and limitations for marginalised city-dwellers to produce policy change in multi-level institutional settings. This question has animated extensive research in the fields of public policy analysis, social movement studies, and political geography. Scholarship on multi-level governance and federalism highlights that decentralisation offers marginalised groups opportunities to change policies from below, while also breeding political conflicts across government scales. Social movement scholars stress that grassroots demands are more likely to make political headway when sympathetic office holders work as access points to the institutional space. Geographers and urban scholars emphasise that cities are strategic arenas that allow the poor to produce policy outcomes at multiple scales; yet this scholarship also warns that local policymaking is not necessarily coordinated nor conducive to inclusive social change.

Combining insights from these disciplines, in this paper we contend that government decentralisation has

ambivalent effects on the power of the urban poor, buttressing grassroots mobilisation yet obstructing its policy success. We unfold this argument through the analysis of the upgrading policies enacted in Saldías, a small informal neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, Argentine. Upgrading policies—the development of urban slums' basic infrastructures such as sewage and drinking water—have gained momentum in Latin American cities and beyond for their promise to deliver social inclusion. Over the past decade, the neighbours of Saldías obtained significant victories, such as connection to water and electricity systems. These policy advancements, however, have been achieved at a slow pace, and many other demands have not been met yet.

Based on ethnographic research conducted in 2021-22, our findings show that these policy outcomes are the product of government decentralisation and its ambivalent impacts on grassroots mobilisation. On the one hand, the institutionalisation of *Comunas*—15 elective authorities at the sub-city level—in 2011 was a key turning point, allowing Saldías' neighbours to benefit from new, more proximate access points to the institutional space. While enjoying limited powers, the *Comunas* have become crucial for party politics; notably, elected officials started having a strategic incentive to embrace Saldías' demands as a way to boost their career and reputation. These officials, in turn, are well positioned to upscale popular demands, working as brokers with policymakers operating at higher levels of government. On the other hand, decentralisation has also led to a fragmentation of authority, thereby requiring different institutions and political parties to collaborate in pursuit of common objectives—an unlikely outcome in Argentine's highly polarised political landscape. As a result, infrastructural upgrading in Saldías could only be achieved through a "piecemeal" approach, with small-scale policy advancements achieved based on occasional, behind-the-scenes negotiations. Ultimately, these dynamics have spread feelings of inefficacy among the neighbours, leading to their demobilisation.

# W05 / Shaping Policymaking from the Ground Up: Activism and Governance in Multi-Level Institutional Settings

**Chair :** Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

**Second Chair :** Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

## Session 5

Friday, June 28th 09:00 to 12:15 (AULA 11)

### (Virtual) New municipalism and the limits of local government: municipal contestation in the case of rent regulation under Barcelona en Comú

Iolanda Bianchi (Universitat de Barcelona)

New municipalism has been theorised as a movement based on the articulation of social movement and institutional actors that uses the local scale as an entry point to achieve wider policy change. However, various scholars have highlighted the regulatory limitations of local government in relation to some of the most significant policy issues affecting cities, such as immigration, climate, and housing policy.

Bridging strategic-relational state theory and multilevel governance theory, this paper examines how new municipalist governments develop forms of contestation against national state policies and projects. Through an empirical study based on document analysis (press releases, newspaper articles, etc.), this paper examines how this contestation has played out in Barcelona during the two mandates of Barcelona en Comú in the context of housing policy and, more specifically, in relation to rent regulation.

The paper concludes by arguing that municipal contestation is a valuable instrument for new municipalist movements to circumvent the regulatory limitations of local government and promote change in nation-state policy domains. However, in order to be effective, this contestation needs to develop in a political environment where i) the policy issue is framed as a recognised public problem by social movements, progressive politicians and the press; ii) the contestation is also led by influential local politicians; iii) there is effective coordination between institutional and social movement actors, with the latter always pushing for changes that go beyond incremental ones.

### Dismantling municipal autonomy through water: a pragmatic genealogy of Polish remunicipalization and its perils

Borys Cieslak (Gran Sasso Science Institute)

New municipalism and remunicipalization are emerging as novel strategies for improving local democracies and public services. While the cases from Global North and South America are often analyzed the Eastern European perspective is lacking. In an attempt to add this geography this paper seeks to expand the hitherto understandings of municipalism and remunicipalization for, unlike in the Western and Southern instances where the focus is on bottom up initiatives and taking back formerly privatized entities into public ownership, in Poland municipal autonomy has been essential to establishing the new post-socialist democratic system, while its municipal companies were created from the assets and organizations formerly owned and managed by the centralized state bureaucracy. Revival of Polish local self-government is praised as its democratic transition’s biggest achievement, but it is currently threatened by a creeping centralization. By a way of pragmatic genealogy, this study deconstructs the concept of Polish municipal autonomy, draws lessons from the democratic achievements of Polish municipalities and shows how the emergence of municipal autonomy as a counter to the totalitarian socialist regime, along with constitutional safeguards, fuels the resistance to the state’s assault on self-government and the municipal right to set the prices of water and sewerage services. It explicates how the bottom-up alliances comprising municipal companies' management and employees, labor unions, mayors, city councilors, and NGOs opposed the subjugation of the local by national scale, of the municipal autonomy by the paternalizing state.

## (Virtual) Activists facing the implementation of housing policies in two European metropolises

Julie Pollard (University of Lausanne)

This contribution examines how activists intervene on the implementation of public policies in different multi-level institutional settings.

Despite its critical importance, the implementation phase is often overlooked in the literature on social movements' influence on public policy, especially when compared to the agenda-setting or decision-making phases. However, venue-shopping occurs not only between different levels of government, but also between different stages of policy processes. During implementation, mobilizations that took place at other levels or in other phases may continue. But new opponents may also emerge, and policy issues may be significantly reconfigured.

Empirically, the analysis focuses on the implementation of housing policies in the metropolitan areas of Geneva and Paris. Particular attention is paid to issues of housing production. These metropolises face similar challenges, including growing resistance to urban development. The mobilization of citizens around residential development is becoming a key issue, whether it is tensions over the construction of high-rise buildings, reluctance to densify suburban areas, or criticism of the creation of new (eco)neighborhoods. Moreover, similar actors - residents associations, environmental organizations, elected politicians - are mobilizing in both metropolises. However, the implementation of housing policies in these two metropolitan areas shows contrasting institutional and political characteristics. In the case of Paris, inter-municipal bodies and municipalities are the key actors in this stage, drawing up local urban plans and issuing building permits. They sometimes act under constraints and/or incentives from the central or deconcentrated State. For example, the central government sets quotas for social housing. And deconcentrated public administration plans the territorialization of housing production needs. In the case of Geneva, the canton is the key actor in the implementation of housing policy. It defines housing production targets in precise terms, decides on the launch of operations and approves building permits. Municipalities may agree with or resist this cantonal framework, but their room for maneuver is limited.

This paper seeks to understand *how challengers navigate multi-level institutional settings to try to shape implementation processes*. Empirically, three main dimensions are considered in the mobilization process: the targets of mobilization, which may include different levels of government or actors; the strategies and modes of mobilization; the networks of actors mobilized, and any political intermediaries involved in influencing the implementation processes.

Challengers mobilize differently in the two contexts. In the metropolis of Paris, litigation and legal expertise are central. In fact, much of the opposition to housing development is barely visible and comes from collectives or individual protesters who file appeals against building permits. In the metropolis of Geneva, politicization dynamics are key. Direct democratic mechanisms are crucial, through the launch of canton-wide referendums on neighborhood plans and housing developments. Interestingly, coalitions are sometimes formed between associations and local politicians. For example, as part of the protests against development projects planned by the cantonal government, some 50 residents' associations launched a popular initiative entitled "Pour un urbanisme plus démocratique" (*For a more democratic urbanism*), which aims to give more power to municipalities and residents (2020).

This paper is based on two types of material. Interviews with political and administrative actors at different levels of government, as well as interviews with private economic actors (real estate developers and lawyers specialized in urban planning law) and civil society actors (representatives of associations) form the core of the work (N=40 approximately). A systematic analysis of the local press is also used to identify cases of conflict and the repertoires of action mobilized.

# W05 / Shaping Policymaking from the Ground Up: Activism and Governance in Multi-Level Institutional Settings

**Chair :** Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

**Second Chair :** Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

## Session 6

Friday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (AULA 11)

**Conclusive Remarks and Prospective Projects**

Raffaele Bazurli (Queen Mary University of London)

Walter Nicholls (University of California, Irvine)

Conclusive Session