

**European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) General Conference,  
Innsbruck (Austria), 26-28 August 2020**

**Section Title:** Current research and challenges on political participation and mobilization

**Panel Title:** Social Movements and Human Rights: Mapping New Engagements

**Chair:** Michele Grigolo (Senior Lecturer, Nottingham Trent University, UK)

**Abstract:** Human rights are being increasingly questioned and undermined. The centrality of states as well as national identities and interests are being re-asserted in the current politics of 'souverainism,' at the expense of core human rights values of universality and equality. The same politics is threatening efforts at a more global scale to reverse climate change. The consequences of the financial crisis of 2008, coupled in some countries with the intensification of austerity policies, has had a considerably negative impact on people's economic and social rights, at the periphery and centre of capitalism. Eventually, with the development of more intrusive digital technologies, and their role in surveillance capitalism, new concerns about the respect, protection and fulfilment of a variety of human rights have emerged, from the right to private life to the right to health.

The panel aims to map and explore how social movements are engaging human rights under these new conditions. If there is a concrete risk that human rights lose relevance, then their flexible discourse and articulation of justice could offer an arena of resistance and transformation. A new generation of activists has joined and shaped movements which are claiming human rights, e.g. Friday for Future, the Italian 'Sardine,' or unions and collectives that are struggling for better working conditions against precarity. As social movements re-emphasise the place of human rights in a variety of policy arenas, human rights gain new visibility and relevance.

We are interested in papers that document how social movements currently speak, act and create human rights; engage theories and methodologies that can help make sense of these engagements; explore whether human rights make a difference towards achieving justice, in the Global North and Global South. We are open to contributions on a variety of topics, including (but not limited to): populism and nationalism, the environment, colonialism, digital technologies, cities and smart cities, and the right to the city. Theoretical and empirical papers are equally welcome.

**Please send your proposed paper title, keywords (max. 8) and a 500 word abstract to [michele.grigolo@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:michele.grigolo@ntu.ac.uk) by 10 February 2020.**