



Call for Paper
International Conference on *Individuals in Political Events*
September 16 & 17, 2016, Lausanne, Switzerland

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New Deadline for submission of proposals for papers: February 15, 2016

The 2011 cycle of mobilization triggered a frenetic wave of academic activity, and calls from all directions to “renew”, “revisit”, and “reframe” the debates, and to launch “new” research agendas. On this occasion, attempts at de-compartmentalizing (between anthropology, social movement theories, the study of democratic transitions, political economy, socio-history, etc.) were proposed to better understand these events. Yet, despite all these aspirations to create a dialogue between these different literatures, the individual level has been rather neglected: individual actors are sometimes subsumed, reduced to archetypes or dissolved in social categories (“youth,” “women,” “workers,” etc.), and, at times, merely invoked by way of example. Furthermore, the invitation to take macro, meso and micro scales into account in an interactive and process-oriented perspective rarely goes beyond a declamatory or prescriptive stage.

The goal of this conference is to bring together approximately twenty-five researchers from diverse scholarly and disciplinary backgrounds, working in different geographical and cultural contexts, to address the following question: how do individuals experience political events? The concept of a political event is “elusive” due to “its symbolic plasticity, its historical elasticity, and the weight of its subjective dimension” (Ihl, 2002, p. 138). In this symposium, we will focus on events which turn to be “transformative” after they happen (Sewell, 1996), which offer occasions for political socialization “through direct contact with a collective dynamic” (protest mobilization, revolution, and civil war (Ihl, 2002, p. 138).

Employing dense empirical data (direct observation, interviews, digital traces, life calendars, etc.), as well as longitudinal studies, the goal is to examine these experiences from two particular angles:

- The modalities in which individuals encounter the political event and deal with it, as well as the issue of the move to action; and
- The ways in which actors experience the event.

Such an investigation is at the juncture of two approaches:

- An “eventful” perspective, centred on the event, at the heart of the sociology of political crises, the process-oriented approaches of historians, such as Sewell and Tackett (1997), and the debate about biographical ruptures, bifurcations and turning points generated by direct participation in political events (Fillieule, 2001; and Bessin et al. 2009).

- An analysis based on the individual level, but a historicized individual, an individual acted upon, acting and interacting; which leads to question a number of issues and literatures:
 - The actors' predispositions, accumulated biographical experiences and pre-existing social links;
 - The move to action and its determinants, from the perspective of studies on rational choice, the cultural turn in social movements studies and the integration of emotions (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, 2001; Traïni, 2009; Sommier, 2010; Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, 2013; Latté, 2015; Bernard, 2015, etc.).
 - The experience of the event itself, the "emotions" it entails, issues of sociability, learning, experimentation *in situ*, and direct consequences of participation.

Four caveats:

1) Focussing on individual experiences does not exclude consideration of dimensions raised by Stéphane Latté in terms of the role of emotions during mobilization: "their collective character (a joint production rather than an individual creation), established (produced by inherited constraints associated with the role, observed and adapted), reflexive (with the actors as aware as the observers of the constraints and opportunities of various emotional registers) and relational (the meaning and weight of emotional prescriptions varying from one social configuration to another, from one context of mobilization to another)" (Latté, 2015).

2) While focussing on the *political* event, it is important, on one hand, to think of different modes and forms of politicization *simultaneously* and in terms of their connections and, on the other hand, to understand their entanglements with other spheres of existence.

3) In a group dynamic approach, it is a matter of considering the plurality of individual actors who participate differentially in the event (for example, protestors, members of security forces, spectators, etc.), with particular attention to their interactions, both nonviolent and violent.

4) Finally, one of the issues to be addressed by this conference is the promotion of "deep-rooted" comparativism, both in the disciplinary debates and in the field. This would encourage the provision of more detailed descriptions, an attention to vernacular vocabularies, and clarification of any methodological issues.

The papers presented will be based only on empirical investigations in various protest and political arenas. Interdisciplinarity and longitudinal studies combining a number of methods would be especially welcome.

Proposals should be between 3,500 and 4,000 characters, spaces included, may be written in French or English, in the form of an abstract describing the issue and the researched field, as well as a selected bibliography. **Funding for travelling and accommodation expenses shall be provided.** The abstracts should be sent to: mounia.bennani@unil.ch, olivier.fillieule@unil.ch and youssef.elchazli@unil.ch.

Key Dates

- Call for papers: December 2, 2015

- **New Deadline for submission of proposals for papers: February 15, 2016**

- Deadline for submission of papers: July 15, 2016

References:

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- Bessin, Marc, et al., (ed.), *Bifurcations*, Paris, La Découverte, 2009, pp. 23-35.
- Latté, Stéphane, “Des ‘mouvements émotionnels’ à la mobilisation des émotions”, *Terrains/Théories* [On line], 2 | 2015.
- Fillieule, Olivier, “Post scriptum : Propositions pour une analyse processuelle de l’engagement individuel”, *Revue française de science politique*, 51(1), 2001, pp. 199-215.
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- Goodwin, Jeff, Jasper James M., and Polletta, Francesca, *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Van Stekelenburg, Jacquélien, and Klandermans, Bert, “The Social Psychology of Protest”, *Current Sociology*, 61(5-6), 2013, pp. 886-905.
- Sommier, Isabelle, “Les états affectifs ou la dimension affectuelle des mouvements sociaux”, *Penser les mouvements sociaux*, Paris, La Découverte, 2010, p. 185-202.
- Sewell, William Jr., “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille”, *Theory and Society*, 25(6), 1996, p. 841-881.
- Tackett, Timothy, *Par la volonté du peuple. Comment les députés de 1789 sont devenus révolutionnaires*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1997.
- Traïni, Christophe (ed.), *Emotions... Mobilisation*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2009.