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Sociology of Urban and Regional Development

**De-Privatizing Municipal Services and Public Infrastructures: Instituting Urban Commonfare?**

Conference in Athens

**De-Privatizing Municipal Services and Public Infrastructures: Instituting Urban Commonfare?**

Call for Abstracts - Panel at the RC21 Conference in Athens

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For the past 40 years, public services and infrastructures, from public housing to water; health care, education to long-term care, have been targeted for privatization by neoliberal reforms and austerity measures. Several countermovements have contested this trend propagating a more democratic sense of public ownership (Cumbers 2012; O'Neill and Williamson 2012) that is inspired by ideas of instituting the commons (Dardot and Laval 2019). In this struggle, cities across the world have become frontrunners around remunicipalizing essential services, public procurement procedures, the promotion of circular economies and local economic development, the expropriation and socialization of housing assets, or the guarantee of social rights beyond citizenship status (Thompson 2020). This session invites contributions that offer a closer analytical look at the institutional struggles and municipal strategies as well as the consequences (intended or unintended):

- How has democratic decision-making around these services and infrastructures been mobilized? How has it been ensured on a long-term basis, ie. beyond the charismatic phase of the movement?
- What do we know about the class, gender and racialized positions of the participants in public-commons or public-civic partnerships? To what extent are intersectional strategies seriously engaged in such partnerships?
- How do city governments navigate the challenge of collaborating with civic initiatives, while also steering clear of nepotism and favouritism?
- In what ways do cities maintain a cosmopolitan ethic in a context where “local economic development” is to be prioritized?
- Where and under what conditions do these de-privatization efforts challenge the existing relations of property? And when they do, what can we learn from the struggle with powerful private property interests?
- How can we conceive of municipalities’ room of manoeuvre around de-privatizing and socializing essential services in the context of multi-scalar legal and political apparatuses and austerity regimes? What does it mean for city authorities to govern in order to disobey imposed rules and regulations (around public procurement, for example)? What kind of mark have inter-municipal contestations made on these regimes?

Deadline for paper abstracts: January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Further details on the conference and submission procedures, please check:

<http://www.rc21.org/en/rc21athens-call-for-papers-is-now-open/>