

# Between Conflict and Accommodation?

Christian-Democracy and the Rise of “new social movements”  
1960s-1990s



CIVITAS | Forum of Archives  
and Research on Christian Democracy

## CALL FOR PAPERS

LEUVEN ♦ 7-10 JUNE 2023

Starting in the 1960s and continuing over the 1970s and 1980s, a plethora of what were dubbed “new social movements” mushroomed across the world. This political activism put a variety of what were often seen as “new” themes and issues on the political agenda. A variety of organizations and movements staged campaigns on behalf of issues that ranged from solidarity with the Third World, anti-racism and pacifism to environmental pollution, fair trade, city development, and women’s rights. These movements were inspired by and projected a radical criticism of existing societal and political structures, advocated alternative forms of political representation and participation, and were part of a transnationally connected community of activists. “Immaterial values” such as solidarity and peace as well as alternative versions of Marxism offered ammunition to denounce prevalent societal and moral ethics, traditional party politics, Atlanticist foreign policies, consumerism, and free market capitalism.

The relation of these new social movements with Christian-democracy is marked by ambiguity. On the one hand, Christian-democratic movements and milieus – including political parties and Christian trade unions and related progressive social organizations – formed

a breeding ground for many of these movements and their constituency. This can be seen, for instance, in the trajectories of many individual activists and organizations that contributed to the rise of new social movements, or in the origins of the Green political family as it developed in many Western European countries. On the other hand, however, Christian-democratic parties and their leaders became an important target of protest campaigns developed by these social movements.

The aim of this conference is to analyze the relation, conflicts and exchanges, between Christian-democracy and the so-called “new social movements” from the 1960s until the early 1990s. It wants to adopt a reciprocal perspective, looking at the ways in which Christian-Democratic parties and related movements reacted in response to the emergence and development of these movements from the 1960s onwards, and, inversely, at the ways in which these “new social movements” were interconnected, in real and imagined terms, to Christian-Democracy. The geographical scope is not limited to Western Europe, but also includes other regions, most notably Latin America. The following themes might be addressed:

- To what extent and in what ways were Christian-Democratic movements a breeding ground for the development of social movements operating outside of “traditional” milieus of party politics and civil society? What can be said for a view of continuity and exchange?
- How did “new social movements” criticize and imagine Christian-Democracy? Was their criticism principled, or did it rather focus on policies and individual political leaders?
- How did Christian-democratic political parties and actors perceive and respond to the “rebellion of 1968”?
- What themes and topics caused uneasiness and even bitter antagonism between Christian-Democracy and the “new social movements” and, inversely, on which issues did their views interlink, even fostering collaboration?
- How did these “new social movements” deal with the religious legacy of Christian-Democracy and how did they relate to processes of deconfessionalization and re-confessionalization?
- What was the impact of the rise of “new social movements” on Christian-Democracy? How did it respond to them and to what extent were these answers developed and exchanged in international Christian-Democrat networks?

## PRACTICAL

This conference is an initiative of [CIVITAS-Forum of Archives and Research on Christian-Democracy](#). The conference will take place at [KADOC-KU Leuven](#) in Leuven (Belgium) from 7 to 10 June 2023.

## ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Prof. Dr. Kim Christiaens (KADOC-KU Leuven)  
Prof. Dr. Dries Bosschaert (KU Leuven)  
Dr. Godfried Kwanten (KADOC-KU Leuven)  
Drs. Sam Kuijken (KADOC-KU Leuven)

Please SEND a proposal of max. 500 words (including an abstract and title) as well as a CV to [Godfried Kwanten](#) **before 15 February 2023**. QUESTIONS can be directed to the same address. Notifications will be emailed to all submitters prior to 1 March 2023. Travels COSTS will be reimbursed and accommodation is provided for all invited speakers.

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