Sustainable Community Movement Organizations

OSE Lunchtime Session
Brussels
19 March, 2015

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Outline

• Political Consumerism and Sustainable Community Movement Organizations (SCMOs): the Research Project
• Research Questions and Dimensions of Analysis
• Worlds of SCMOs: A Typology
• Conclusion
The Research Project

- Special Issue of Journal of Consumer Culture (2014) devoted to «Sustainable Community Movement Organizations»

- Theoretical article (Forno-Graziano) plus empirical articles (Balsinger, Bossy, Carfagna and others, Parigi and Gong, Sage, Zamwel and others) on various types of SCMs
Broad research questions

• Are there new characterizing features in recent social movements focused on ‘sustainability’?
• Can we consider ‘sustainable community movement organizations’ linked by similar attitudes?
• If so, what are such common traits shared among various movements?
Political consumerism and SCMOs

- Political consumerism as a political action (not only individual behaviour) put forward by critical citizens through:
  - Boycotts
  - Buycotts
  - Organized socialization of consumption
- The *market* becomes the most important ‘battlefield’
• **Focus**: SCMOs as organized forms of political consumerism aimed at

• **Dimensions of analysis:**
  – origins
  – repertoire of action
  – targets
  – scale of action
Research strategy

Exploratory research – based primarily on secondary literature – with a typological goal, covering the following key issues:

• **Origins** - what is the link with the previous existing social movements?
• **Repertoire of action** - what are the main actions and strategies pursued?
• **Targets** - what are the goals in terms of mobilization?
• **Scale of Action** - what are the territorial levels of SCMOs?
Origins

• In 2000s, after the difficulties experienced by the Global Justice Movement (GJM), greater focus on consumption and the market as a forum for (organized) political action

• Strong cultural links with GJM, but differences regarding especially the repertoire of action, targets and scale of action
Repertoire of action

• Organization and promotion of ‘alternative’ or ‘anti’-consumption strategies (for example, gathering and communicating via internet specific information on products and production processes)

• **Policy-specific actions** (environment, urban policies and social justice issues are the most important areas of action)
Repertoire of action (II)

- **Events’ organization** (most frequently not *protest* events but *promotion* events)

- In sum: limited space for contentious politics, and articulated but different attitudes towards consumption (particularly relevant dimension of analysis)
Targets

• Consumers (as ‘citizens with purchasing power’ which may use such power politically)
• Civil society organizations (as possible partners for action)
• Markets (as arenas for political activities)
• Institutions (as actors which may ‘institutionalize’ new forms of consumption)
Scale of action

- Within the ‘glocal’ scale of action paradigm, SCMOs focus primarily on the local level of action, although different mixes of ‘local/global’ scale of action may be identified.
- From local communities (such as the Solidarity Purchasing Groups and AMAPs) to international trade relationships (Fair Trade).
- Second key dimension of SCMOs variation.
# Worlds of SCMOs

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<tr>
<th>Scale of action</th>
<th>Alter-consumerism</th>
<th>Anti-consumerism</th>
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| **Global**      | Global boycotts Organizations  
                 | Fair Trade Organizations  
                 | Clean Clothes Organizations  |
| **Local**       | Farmers’ markets  
                 | CSA Organizations  
                 | Community Food Networks  
                 | Slow Food  |
|                 | Degrowth Organizations  
                 | Simplicity Movement Organizations  
                 | Casseurs de pub  |
|                 | Time Bank Organizations  
                 | Transition Towns  
                 | Ecovillages  |
Conclusion

• SCMOs are original types of social movement organizations if we consider:
  – consumerist culture
  – predominant repertoires of action
  – hierarchy of targets
  – ‘glocal’ scale of action

• Future research: impact of SCMOs on policy process (especially at the local and urban level)