

OBJECTS OF POLICY, SUBJECTS OF POLITICS

Framing Social Movements in the Post-Colonial Global South

A workshop session in the conference

"Making space for Socio-Spatial and Socio-Ecological Justice in Research and Action Strategies"

Lesvos, 3-5 July 2017

Track 3: In the future action research will go underground
What is left of action research when institutional support disappears?

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Extended Summary

A central aim of this workshop is to re-contextualise the analytical features of Social Innovation (SI) and territorial development (Moulaert & Leontidou, 1994; Moulaert et al., 2001; Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005; Moulaert, 2009; Moulaert et al., 2010; Moulaert & Jessop, 2013) within the post-colonial Global South. The works on Social Innovation examines the roles of place-based and multiscale-connected governance structures that involve different forms of collective actions within or outside the spheres of state and market (Moulaert, 2009, 2010). The theoretical endeavours of SI seek to provide explanatory as well as normative frameworks, and especially for the latter SI stresses on two pillars of sustained and meaningful local development: institutional innovation and socio-economic innovation, i.e. the satisfaction of various basic needs of local communities (Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005; Moulaert et al., 2010). Institutional innovation includes creations of channels for cultural emancipation, interpersonal and intergroup communications, also people's preferences within decision-making mechanisms (Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005). With both interrelated innovation approaches to development, SI seeks to link short- and long-term community needs along with the efforts to influence the policy making at the greater urban scale.

The role of the 'good' state in guaranteeing a continuation of social innovative initiatives, as we learn it from the Western/North trajectory, does not exist within such context. To say it more correctly, in the so-called South there are different kinds of 'state' that are performing and transforming or coming into being (Lund, 2006, 2016) with trajectories that are completely different to where the SI was originally theorised (see also Balagangadhara & Keppens, 2009; Bhambra, 2014). While 'the state' is rather an abstract category to begin with, social movements could be the subjects of a critical research as they stem from particular social conflicts, not only seeking to ease the on-going problems or push some (technical) solutions, but also actively defining what 'the state' possibly could be. Territorial conflicts in the South are saturated with extreme poverty, political marginalisation within spatial development processes, and asymmetric policy making processes in which there is bigger room for neoliberal development strategies. While local political geometry keeps triggering conflicts among ethnic/religious groups, community aspirations and collective practices remain concentrated on survival household strategies, leave alone imaginaries on democratic environment for bettering the varying dimensions of life. But social movements emerge as responses to on-going conflicts, in which formal policy making processes and spatial development strategies are unsatisfactory, to offer different possibilities.

Through empirical cases of social movements, we think of three interrelated innovative analytical steps possible to carry on separately or in combination. *First*, we seek to understand how social movements re-define the SI vocabularies of 'human and social needs' into 'rights to be claimed'. The examination of 'rights' unfolds at the same time the complex categorisations of 'modern state' and 'citizenship'. In seeking to understand what citizenships in practice are, instead of what they should be (see Ong, 1996; Li, 2007; Eilenberg, 2012; Lazar, 2013; Wilson, 2015), this workshop highlights the role of territorial communities as the everyday agencies of social innovation. We would like to depart from seeing community as the concrete setting to enable the 'rights' within the given concept of nation-citizenship (see Moulaert, 2010), and further argue that the everyday innovative struggle itself constitutes the process of re-defining what 'universal' citizenship rights can be (in line with Lund, 2016; Lund & Rachman, 2016).

Second, we seek to demonstrate that linking short- and long-term community needs means linking short- and long-term as well as territorially-limited and wider struggles. Instead of being merely objects of policy, individuals and communities are also subjects of politics. Within social movements, we imagine that there are innovative moments –if not revolutionary (cf. Lazar, 2014), in which individual political subjects become collective agencies that institutionally matter for the desired changes (cf. Spivak, 2005). This workshop pays attention to both shorter-term and longer-term aims of collective actions within a wide varying range of social movements in the South: stemming from specific sectoral political economy (farming, mining, manufacturing industries, etc.) or from particular territorial conflicts in regards to land and resources or infrastructures (see among others Shiva, 2002; de Souza, 2006; Ranganathan, 2014; Lazar, 2015; Choplin & Ciavolella, 2016). Diverse characteristics of different-yet-connected social movements not only reflect the multidimensionality and multiscalarity of social conflicts and their territorialities (see also Brenner, 2001; González, 2006; Leitner, 2006; Loftus, 2009b, 2009a; Cook & Swyngedouw, 2012; Oosterlynck & González, 2013; Van Dyck & Van den Broeck, 2013; Walker, 2014; Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2015; Tulumello, 2016), but also express different meanings of community collective actions.

Third, we are curious to see if struggles within organised movements would be institutionalised within the existing statutory institutions. We also realise that they might provoke or accelerate new forms of statutory institutions. Perhaps it is the newly defined or newly emerged institutions that would serve the satisfaction of short- or long- term community needs. The empirical analysis, hence, needs to evaluate whether or not certain collective actions constitute public authority or carry some characteristics of it (see also Lund, 2006). We are particularly interested on urban planning and policy making as particular elements among different rubrics of state institutions. The subjects of innovation, who integrally are the subjects of politics, might disturb the stability of technical aspect and bureaucratic practice within the practice of planning (cf. Friedmann, 1987, p. 34). Through the processes of 'claiming rights', social movements influence the democratisation of the planning system by politicising it (de Souza, 2006).

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