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Sustainable Community Movement Organizations: Solidarity Economies and Rhizomatic Practices, edited by Francesca Forno and Richard R. Weiner, Abingdon, Routledge, 2020, 144 pp., £45.00 (cloth), £15.19 (ebook)

The past four decades and more have been dominated by the rise of neoliberalism, globalization of economic activities, financialization and the pursuit of profits. There have been major waves of protest against these trends and the upward movements of inequality such as the Occupy Wall Street and 99 Percent movements. There have been modest and generally underreported moves in the direction of public ownership to reverse trends towards privatisation with remunicipalisation and developments of co-operatives, mutuals and other alternatives to capitalist production. *Sustainable Community Movement Organizations* relates to these trends and seeks to weave “together a coherent series of contributions and case studies on emergent social-economic forms of alternative organizing.”

The editors open their Introduction by stating that “giv[en] the market’s increasing importance in shaping the (everyday) worlds of people across the globe, these movements move ‘from the streets to the market’—more and more often enacting politics through consumption (e.g., boycott, buycott platforms and apps, alternative/sustainable lifestyles).” A strong influence is the theoretical lines detailed by Elinor Ostrom which “may also be interpreted as inter-connectedness of reciprocal solidarity and endogenous trust for common resource stewardship.” Sustainable Community Movement Organizations (SCMOs) are viewed as a move to the creation of non-rivalrous common pool resources. And such organizations are “motivated by commitment to the creation of shareable resources along with the democratic governance of such resources to sustain people and the planet.”

Chapter 2 (Table 2.1) provides a categorisation of types of SCMOs: divided into alter-consumerism/anti-consumerism global/local. The alter-consumerism includes at the

global level fair trade and ethical fashion, and at the local level farmers' markets, slow food movement, community-supported agriculture, and rotating credit and savings associations (ROSCAs). The anti-consumerism at the global level includes groups promoting de-growth and the simplicity movement, and at the local level transition towns and intentional communities (e.g., Ecovillages, cohousing communities). This list indicates the diversity of alternative organisations in their objectives and structures. In the following chapter, SCMOs “focus on both the creation of ‘commons’ and *communing* of shareholder resources enabled by both collaborative culture and infrastructure of production and exchange as well as distributed/distributive digital networking” (37).

The five remaining and relatively short chapters over less than 100 pages are case studies of SCMOs. These are generally labelled “sustainable”—signifying that in various ways they involve what may be seen as a more sustainable (environmentally friendly) way of living, though the question whether the organisations themselves are sustainable in the sense of maintained over time and how such organizations are born and die is not addressed.

Chapter 3 (by Richard Weiner and Ivan López) is entitled “Operationalizing SCMO as a Socio-Economic Concept: The Case of Post-2008 Spain.” Much of the chapter is taken up with characterisations of an SCMO in a range of ways. For example, an SCMO is said to connote emphasizing “not only price and product quality but what can be called ‘political consumer behaviour’,” “experimenting beyond consumerist awareness,” “co-producing of social reassertion/insertion in mutually referent networks,” and “constituting eco-systems evolving towards sustainability as an open participatory process” (39). The chapter outlines a range of new initiatives which emerged as new spaces for social action, including what was labelled “15M” (refers to the date of May 15, 2011, when thousands of people—mostly from the 50% plus unemployed young people—occupied public spaces in major Spanish cities). A disappointing feature of this chapter is that there is no clear indication of the scale of these

SCMO initiatives (e.g., how many people were involved), how they came into being or how they were organised, and how they developed.

Chapter 4 (by Angelos Varvarousis, Viviana Asara, and Bengi Akbulut) on “The Making of New Commons in Southern Europe”) focuses on the “movement of the squares,” described as mobilization responses to financial and housing crises as social and political alternatives. The case-based study is focused on Athens and Barcelona and shows how the commoning practices of the square encampments gave rise to more enduring commons disseminated across the cities’ social fabrics. The study examines the movement’s unfolding following the end of the more visible cycles of mobilization and its decentralization. A crucial aspect of this evolution is viewed as lying in the creation of a social infrastructure of alternative (re)productive projects.

Chapter 5 (by Alice Dal Gobbo and Francesca Forno) uses a case study of GAS (Solidarity Purchase Groups) in Italy as an example of several contemporary social movement organizations which stress the contradiction between capitalist growth versus living conditions in the community. The chapter looks at how people self-organize to achieve socially and environmentally sustainable transitions.

In Chapter 6, Caroline Shenaz Hossein details how millions of Black people in Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, Haiti, and Toronto use informal cooperative banking systems in low-income communities known as ROSCAs. These are money pools embedded, organized, and managed by women known as banker ladies on the basis of peer to peer (P2) lending alongside conventional commercialized banking systems.

In Chapter 7, Raquel Neyra starts with how driven by economic growth policies, material and energy extractivism in the Global South offers cheap uprooting of natural resources and labour prices. She describes how in the Andes, capital accumulation meets with the local resistance of peasants and indigenous peoples.

It is readily apparent that the SCMOs considered across the chapters differ from each other. This raised for me the question of what are the essential features of SCMOs, whether they include the 'traditional' not for profits ranging over mutuals, co-operatives, community organisations, and charities, and whether the local farmers' markets differ from 'regular' markets. There appears to be no discussion of the modes of organisation, nor the motivations of those involved.

SCMOs are said to represent life-style alternatives and forms of resistance to the traditional marketplace and the 'bedrock' within Social Solidarity Economy. They include a "broad range of organizations that are distinguished from conventional for-profit enterprise, entrepreneurship, and informal economy as they have explicit economic, social and environmental objectives." ~~There is rather little mention of how the SCMOs are funded as they continue to operate in a market economy. There is, though, mention of "innovative micro credit/micro financing alternatives" (3), though it could be said that micro credit institutions have often evolved into capitalist banks.~~

There is also the more general issue of how SCMOs relate to capitalism and the market. "SCMOs are alternative organizations which, while contesting around capitalism and markets, experiment with alternative ways of organizing. Then is done in the attempt to revamp moral principles (such as equality, democracy, and sustainability) within society and to contrast growing extremism and populism sentiments." There is though little, if anything, in this collection on how SCMOs relate to capitalism or to markets. Hence, questions of the financing of SCMOs and their ownership are not addressed, nor the possibilities that profits are sought by the controllers of SCMOs which may be disguised as additional salary payments and benefits in kind; or the evolving of SCMOs into capitalist organisations (consider the fate of UK building societies). SCMOs are largely viewed in terms of their internal organisation but rather little is said of how they relate to other organisations and

people in general through what may be termed market type relationships. There is though mention of Alternative Exchange Networks (AENs) that are solidarity-based exchanges and cooperative structures founded on principles of social and ecological values, participation and cooperation.

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