



REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

Title of Session: Citizen Participation and the Local Employment Process: Mutuality and Community Resilience Issues

Name of Session Convener(s): *George O. Tsobanoglou*, University of the Aegean

Chair: *George O. Tsobanoglou*, University of the Aegean

Comments: This session is organized on behalf of ISA RC26, Sociotechnics - Sociological Practice

I) From Hierarchy to Participation: Citizens Empowerment and Decision Making at the Local Level
Flaminia Saccà, Tuscia University, Viterbo

II) Citizen Participation and Local Employment: Organizing Mutuality Management in Cooperative Communities

George Tsobanoglou, University of the Aegean

Irianna Vlahopoulou, University of the Aegean

III) Rebuilding Sri Lankan Peace by Encompassing Tamil Plantation Community

Andrew Jilani, Smith College, Northampton, MA and Lahore, Pakistan

IV) Withering Away of the Public in South Korea: Declining Significance of Civil Society and NGOs

Dong-No Kim, Yonsei University, Seoul

V) Citizen's Participation in South European Countries Health Systems: Italy, Portugal and Spain

Mauro Serapioni, University of Coimbra

Session description:

Public policies are nowadays facing issues of participation. During the past few decades the non-profit sector and local civil society organisations, as social economy organisations, have been involved directly into the politics of local and endogenous development. The crisis of representational democracy also gave an impetus to local innovations where combined and even development has become the new autarky issue expressing also the power of place and its people.

Participative democracy has become almost mainstream in public discourses and practices while issues of empowerment are also in place to couple those participative trends.

We are interested in relating participation to a socio-technical process whereby local community cohesion issues emerge as dominant forms impressed by globalisation forces on the one side but also by new knowledge forms, such as info-technology, which require symmetries in the manner of holistic approaches to be founded at local level.

Territoriality becomes important as local labour needs to organise new forms of organisation where info-technology becomes key for bio sciences, including services such as, labour mobility. Tourism, culinary culture and gaming are cases in point. However the key issue remains the social reproduction issues which are needed by the community. A “design for all” principle remains the key to communal sustainability.

We are seeking papers whereby different forms of participation, inclusion/exclusion issues, empowerment, cooperation define forms of social development at local level.

How do power relationships allow for inclusion and how such partnerships can become more effective tools for local governance.

We welcome papers focused on these kind of issues leading to the overall consideration of the role of social capital and its role on local public (general interest) policy formation.

Abstracts:

1) From Hierarchy to Participation: Citizens Empowerment and Decision Making at the Local Level
Flaminia Saccà, Tuscia University, Viterbo

Many Western Countries have started implementing citizens involvement practices in the decision making process both at a local and national level, more than a decade or two ago. Much literature has been produced on the governance concept and praxis. If we look at the *Reinventing Government* reforms launched by President Bill Clinton in the U.S., we will find a clear example of how “informing (and involving) the people” can be an economic necessity before being a democratic political one. Beside rhetoric, these reforms aimed at cutting the heavy costs of large, inefficient bureaucracies by setting new priorities in cooperation with the citizens, using their feedback in order to reduce “trial and error” procedures and the waste of funds connected to them.

In Italy the problem of ineffective and costly bureaucracies has been dealt with more recently and the process has encountered many difficulties. This work will concentrate on the practices experimented at the local level, their comparison with the *Reinventing Government* model and on the results in terms of real or may be it would be more appropriate to say “formal” participation of well organized and influential groups rather than the citizen itself.

II) Citizen Participation and Local Employment: Organizing Mutuality Management in Cooperative Communities

George Tsobanoglou, University of the Aegean

Irianna Vlahopoulou, University of the Aegean

Public policies are facing issues of participation. During the past few decades the non-profit sector and local civil society organizations, as social economy organizations, have been involved directly into the politics of local and endogenous development. Local innovations aiming at communal capacity building strengthened autarky expressing the power of place and its people. Social economy organizations applying cooperative participation and learning seem to show resilience as they empower the community while they bring together productive and consumption relations.

Participation, as impressed by globalization forces representing the knowledge economy, require symmetries of a holistic nature whereby local participation is strengthened by high skills at operational enterprise level as well as other mainstream business forms. However they maintain a cohesive communality engagement as they service the community, as well, in a comprehensive local division of labor.

Territoriality is a key issue here as local labor needs to organize new forms of organization where productive arrangements tie comprehensively with re-productive community supports for collective communal consumption. A “design for all” *value-chain* principle, if made possible under cooperative management, forms the organizational basis for communal sustainability. By organizing the skill basis for the management of cooperative community organizations capacity is developed in a market system. However this market also becomes transformed by becoming increasingly social. While the question on how do power relationships allow for modalities of participation/empowerment within cooperatives, the question of political and professional controls become issues for success during this crisis period in particular. Knowledge development for managers in cooperatives, under such stressed times, will be discussed focusing on a European Community project currently in process.

Key words : Communal sustainability and resilience, local employment development

III) Rebuilding Sri Lankan Peace by Encompassing Tamil Plantation Community

Andrew Jilani, Smith College, Northampton, MA and Lahore, Pakistan

Globally, plantation communities live in persistent poverty. The cessation of the civil war in 2009, present an opportunity to end long marginalization of Tamil tea plantation laborers in Sri Lanka. As the country explores ways to transform relations the plantation Tamils should be included to bring lasting reconciliation. This paper will expound on the qualitative research on Conflict Resolution among the Tamil tea plantation laborers.

The Tamil plantation laborers in Sri Lanka for long have lived under difficult conditions and yet have contributed to tea export economy. This research explored the structure of plantation economy under the British colonial period and its present day continuation by Sri Lanka government after the British left. The plantation structure provides few opportunities to youth, creates inhuman conditions for women laborers and limits integration with the larger society.

The civil society and the government can benefit from this research to strengthen larger reconciliation efforts, which can include greater economic opportunities for plantation youth and women. Education programs can be enhanced for greater understanding of all ethnic groups through national curricula. Sri Lanka has the opportunity to bring lasting reconciliation and Tamil plantation society cannot be ignored. This oral presentation will allude to possibilities.

Key Words: Tamil plantation laborers, reconciliation, integration

IV) Withering Away of the Public in South Korea: Declining Significance of Civil Society and NGOs

Dong-No Kim, Yonsei University, Seoul

Unlike in Western European countries, civil society (or *shimin sahoe*) in Korea emerged after (not before) political democratization in the late 1980s. Despite its short history, civil society developed very rapidly and provided social space for the fulfillment of the public interest, as is manifested by the prevalence of various types of NGOs in the 1990s and 2000s, especially those that fostered social justice. The Korean people responded very favorably to this new social trend by evincing a very high level of trust on them and picking up NGOs as the most reliable social organization in Korea. Its apex reached in the general election of 2000 when the Solidarity of Civil Society for General Election announced the list of 85 corrupt candidates, about 70 % of whom eventually failed to be elected.

The current situation of Korean civil society shows dramatic turnover. NGOs pay little attention to the change of political system without waging large-scale resistances against the state. The public withdraws the support for NGOs and shows a very low trust on them. Why did this dramatic change happen? This is the main question my paper is going to investigate. Of various reasons responsible for the declining significance of NGOs, I will investigate two critical ones: globalization of neoliberalism and over-politicization of civil society in Korea. Under the overwhelming influence

of globalization led by neoliberalism since the very late 1990s, the Korean people became to be isolated from the community they belonged and attentive only to their personal interest at the expense of the public one. At the same time, some leaders of NGOs transformed themselves to be politicians, especially the members of national assembly, thus blurring the boundary between the state and civil society. Political power they obtained by crossing this boundary cost the main NGOs loss of social trust they accumulated from the Korean public who regarded these organizations as the watchdog of corrupt political practices in Korea.

V) Citizen's Participation in South European Countries Health Systems: Italy, Portugal and Spain

Mauro Serapioni, University of Coimbra

The purpose of this study was to analyze the health systems in Spain, Italy and Portugal from the perspective of the Southern European countries Social Protection. Through a review of the sanitary regulations, health plans and literature on specific health experiences, published in recent years in Spain, Italy and Portugal, the practices of participation, in these three countries, were studied. The paper will briefly describe the context of Southern Europe welfare systems and the singularities of healthcare systems of Italy, Portugal and Spain. Subsequently, the preliminary results of the research on citizens' participation experiences, in the health systems of the three countries, will be presented. Some of the research results are noteworthy: a) citizens' participation in the decision making process on health has become the focus of attention of the public policies only after the 1990; b) there has been a significant progress in the regulatory framework and in the acknowledgement of users' rights; c) the development and implementation of participatory mechanisms were insufficient and limited to certain regions; d) the study emphasized the insufficient scientific production and theoretical contribution of the South European Countries on the subject of public participation in the health sector. To conclude, some reflections on the possible developments of citizen's participation within the health systems of the Southern European macro-region will be proposed.