

SOMBRERO

THE BIOGRAPHICAL CONSEQUENCES OF ACTIVISM. TRAJECTORIES, NETWORKS, ORGANIZATIONS

Short presentation

Personal and biographical consequences of social movements are effects on the life-course of individuals who have participated in movement activities, effects that are at least in part due to involvement in those activities. Literature in this domain remains quite scarce. On the part of social movement scholars, this is mainly due to a strong structuralist bias which is responsible for the imbalance between research on recruitment by movements and that studying the effect of the institution on activists. Generally speaking, political behavior or participation in political organizations is generally conceived of as a dependent rather than independent variable. Socialization research has in turn been aimed at understanding why individuals do or do not participate in politics not at revealing the effects of political activity. One has rarely studied the socialization effects of the participation to protest events (e.g. demonstrations) or explicitly political organizations as compared with others such as families or schools. Even if the so called *lifelong openness model* of socialization is now more and more in favor. As a consequence, not only participation into social movements depends on political socialization, but it also has to be considered as having potentially socializing effects.

SOMBRERO examines political involvements' socio-biographical effects, that is, ways in which political commitment generates or modifies dispositions to act, think, and perceive either consistent with or breaking with the results of previous socialization. It is from the angle of how trajectories are formed that we propose to broach this question and to determine *what involvement leads to* rather than, from a more conventional perspective, *what produces involvement*. Therefore, one of the concerns of SOMBRERO is to propose a fresh analysis of activist socialization, seeing it as a process of individual transformation, directly or indirectly stemming from involvement, and with immediate or deferred repercussions in all domains of social existence (subsequent commitment, of course, but also professional and affective life). Beyond the explicit learning dispensed by activist organizations, or the socializing effects of exposure to political events, it is a matter of studying the ways in which political commitment affects all individual behaviour and perceptions, in other words of considering that all participation, however sustained or intense, has secondary socializing effects.

This ambitious project aims at identifying individuals who were activists in the 1970s (from immediately after 1968 up to 1981) in three movement families (the feminist movement, workers' unions and extreme-leftist organizations) and in five urban locations (Marseille, Lyon, Lille, Rennes, Nantes). 500 life histories, associated to "sequence analysis" of life calendars (Fillieule, Blanchard 2013) will allow us to reconstruct these people's life course in order to determine the biographical consequences of their involvement. For this, we have recourse to a process and multi level approach of activist trajectories, based on an interactionist and configurational approach of life-course, what we call, drawing directly on the work of E. Hughes and H. Becker, but also on H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, or A. Strauss, a sociology of « Activist careers » (Fillieule 2001 ; 2010). Such an approach allows us to articulate micro (idiosyncrasies) meso (secondary socialization through commitment) and macro (local and national contexts) levels of analysis in order to make sense of individual trajectories.

Project management

SOMBRERO is supported and financed by the French National Agency for Research (ANR- Agence nationale de la recherche – projets blancs). The project was launched in Feb 2013 and will last three years.

The coordinating laboratory (CESSP-Sorbonne) brings together political scientists and sociologists. Sub partners are the CRAPE in Rennes, the CENS in Nantes, the CERAPS in Lille, the Max Weber center in Lyon.



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