



Review of the publication: Kerstin Jacobsson, , Steven Saxonberg, *Beyond NGO-ization. The development of social movements in Central and Eastern Europe*, Farnham: Ashgate 2013, ISBN 9781409442226

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The volume edited by Kerstin Jacobsson and Steven Saxonberg contains a collection of studies about the specifics of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and selected social movements in post-communist countries in Europe.

The main aim of the book is to re-examine the notion of NGO-ization, which describes non-profit organizations and civic charities as structured, professional, and dependent on grants. The NGO-ization theory reveals the mechanism of the negative influence of donors on the development of NGOs. After regular financial support the sponsored NGOs usually change their modus operandi, and eventually focus much more on the mining of funds than on social work. On the other hand, they work only when they have the financial resources. This means that NGOs actually become quite addicted to the system of grants, which changes their focus from helping people to fundraising. The idea of NGO-ization is commented on in almost every chapter of the book from various perspectives.

Many scholars from different East European countries (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Russia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Ukraine) analyze various civic organizations and movements and attempt to show the reasons they take action, the roots of their successes, and the best practices of cooperation. Conclusions and additional remarks are collected in the first and last chapters of the book, which are written by the editors. These comments by the editors make the research, and each individual study and chapter more interesting for the sociologist interested in the topic.

In the research the scholars use a variety of methods and approaches: content analysis, focus group studies, and interviews. The authors made every attempt to overcome the limits of one of the methodologies and other older quantitative approaches. This was well-founded as the qualitative approach is a better solution when researchers seek new explanations or when they explore new, unfamiliar phenomena in the field of social sciences.

This new and original approach to the concept of NGO-ization insists on analyzing the wider area of social action, such as in structured organizations with a long history, as well as social movements created for achieving short-term goals. For example, the book includes conclusions from analyses of, among others, animal rights activism, social mobilization for mothers' rights, the home-birth movement, conservative women's and family organizations, the gay rights movement, extra-parliamentary political activism, the movement against immigration, local urban activism, the environmental movement, and social movements against electoral autocrats.

It seems that almost every author in this volume is convinced about what the specific mission of NGOs in post-communist countries should be. In many cases, NGOs and activist movements would be allowed to remain not as dependent on grants as in Western countries.

One of the most important advantages of NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe is the diversity of available strategies. Some of these strategies are discussed as being the result of the specific East European history and experience, but in some cases they are described as resulting from a lack of other opportunities. For example, the Russian March, organized since 2005 by the Movement Against Illegal Immigration was arranged thanks to social media. It was impossible to cooperate with local authorities and the organizers had to find other ways to coordinate.

The activist movements presented in the volume were not interested in so-called 'funding games' because all were mission oriented. In *Conclusions*, the editors stressed the variety of strategies used by these movements and the variety of topics or achieved results. However, in my opinion, the real value of the studies is the range of possibilities for supporting these movements. The organizations and movements the authors analyze are very flexible and creative in finding ways to reach specific objectives. This book will be very interesting for the social leaders of NGO's, who would like to enrich their activities with new patterns, ideas, or methods.

The authors stressed the specific East European mentality as a kind of background for social movements and individual attitudes. Their analysis attempts to explain the lack of confidence and trust in the power, independence, and the selflessness of huge formal institutional structures. In my opinion, it is a very interesting argument, but needs to be tested in further research.

The collection of studies and reports is very useful and even crucial for understanding the specifics of social activism in Eastern Europe. The book is well structured and presents a diversity of approaches, which is a huge advantage of the NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe.

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