Sustainable Consumption in the Brazilian Case: civil society organizations and companies in the environmental mobilization

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The public repercussion of the environmental problems has been moving civil society organizations, companies and governments to discuss this problem, creating a new action field of regulation of conflicts in the contemporary societies. The environmental problems became central point in the speeches of different social actors and it composes the social imaginary. (SACHS, 2004)

Civil society organizations and companies due to the constant social pressure for the observance of the environmental norms and try to work with the challenges of the environmental risks, present in the daily dynamics. This concern denotes a consent about the risk notion originating from of the ecological crisis (BECK, 1997). Behind the consensual reasoning, however, there are interests, disputes of power, meanings and different projects of social organization to achieve the sustainable development (ZHOURI, LASCHEFSKI and PEREIRA, 2005).

The act of consuming can contribute to the satisfaction of population needs, improving the life quality and the local development, as for the exploration of the natural resources and the increase of the social inequality. In this context, the meaning of the consumption in the contemporary societies, the impacts of that action in the social life, which limits would permeate the act of consuming and which attitudes should have the citizens are some of the questions and meanings in dispute by civil society organizations and companies (LIPOVETSKY, 2007).

Changes are observed in direction to a larger understanding on consumption patterns. The purchase decisions have been clearly influenced by the improvement of the ecological conscience. It’s possible to observe the emergence of a new consumer type, that that would take in consideration the environmental subjects during your consumption (DRUMWRIGHT, 1994). In spite of that movement, there are many debates about the effective change of the individuals' posture, since the ecological conduct includes individual and collective needs in different moments of the life. (STRAUGHAN AND ROBERTS, 1999).

Those speeches are re-meant by the individuals in the society. More and more companies have a speech similar to the civil society organizations. Accused of motivating the consumption and of producing damages to the environment, the companies have been developing environmental projects, incorporating a responsible speech about the environment and looking for to build that image close to the society.

The civil society organizations, for your time, are considered an relevant actor to solve the environmental problems, but on the other hand, it’s possible to find several critics to its performance in the protection of the environment and its really democratic approach of the environmental problems in societies marked by the diversity and for the inequality access to the social, economic and political rights and power (LÊLÊ, 1991).
In Brazil, several studies discuss the impact of the consumption in the environment, sometimes analyzing the way that the companies act in relation to the nature, others discussing the consumers' sensibility on the subject. There are little specific reflections about the sustainable consumption and its implications in the public sphere — about the consumption as a social action with political and democratic implications. That effort suggests the construction of different political articulations between civil society organizations, market actors and government to assist the demands of the population and to adopt green production practices and sustainable consumption. (PORTILHO, 2005)

To understand what means to consume and the reason for your expansion and possible renewal, is discussed in this article themes as consumption, environmental citizenship and participatory democracy, in way to analyze the challenges that the social mobilization about the environmental problems acquires in Brazilian political reality. Starting from the relationship among consumption, communication strategies and social mobilization, it is studied the environmental posture as collective action in the public sphere, in the which are find the speeches of civil society organizations and companies about the environment.

Two important Brazilian experiences are analyzed in this paper: the IDEC (Institute of Defense of the Consumer), an civil society organization partner of the NGO Consumer International, and the Akatu Institut, a managerial initiative that diffuses the notion of green consumption in the country. The investigation is an exploratory comparative research based on case studies, documental analysis and depth interviews with members and representatives of those organizations.

References


