How can we measure success of new social economy movement in political process of institutionalization?

Hyungsik Eum

Centre d’Economie Sociale, Liège, Belgium

Beginning with the Italian law of social cooperative, a series of legislations concerning new types of organizations in civil society have been introduced in various countries since 1990s. To call various titles such as social enterprise, social cooperative, organization of solidarity based economy etc. with a more global expression, I would use the term of “new social economy” (Defourny & Develtere, 2000). To designate the political processes of these legislations, I will use the term of “political process of the institutionalization of new social economy”. Although these legislations are concerned with similar types of organizations and their activities, their contents and applications in practice vary in each country.

In the whole plan of research, main research question is to find which combinations of conditions would bring about the institutionalization of new social economy which more favors civil society actors. This question would be addressed with theories on outcomes of social movements. In trying to define “what is success of movement in the institutionalization of new social economy”, this paper would be a preparatory work for the whole research.

In the discussion on outcomes of social movements, outcomes might be distinguished into at least three categories: internal impact, impact on movement’s target and impact in a large sense such as on the public or structural change (Kriesi et al. 1995). Principally, many works on the outcomes of social movements for changing policies and legislations have been carried out from the point of view of the impact on movement’s target. In these works, researchers often consider introductions of specific legislations or policies themselves as the success of movement. However, we could find that many legislations and policies don’t work as movements had intended. Moreover, some of them confine social movements into institutionalized cages and distort their original values and identities. From this point, it seems to be reasonable to distinguish ‘outcome responsiveness’ which means targets’ effective implementation of their new policies and laws from ‘policy responsiveness’ which means targets’ simple adoption of new policies and laws (Burstein 1995). In this paper, I will try to define success of the institutionalization of new social economy by measuring to what extent the legislations reflect values and identities that new social economy movement ultimately pursues.

Although concrete realities of new social economy movement vary in each country, to compare outcomes with the common criteria, I would suppose an ideal and normative model of new social economy which pursues alternative ways of life based on civil society’s values and norms over market and bureaucracy. By analyzing the texts of legislations and the accompanied measures for their implication, I expect to be able to measure to what extent the values and identities of new social economy movement have been reflected in these legislations. In the next step of research, using the method of ‘qualitative comparative approach’ (Ragin 1987), I would try to find what interactions among movement, countermovement (or movement’s target) and their structural environment have taken place during the political process of institutionalization of new social economy.

To analyze the texts, I will use 16 cases of legislations in 12 member countries of OECD. In examining the texts of legislations, I would focus mainly on the following points: internal structural which define functions (such as governance structure and limit on distribution of profit), scope of social purpose, and protection from external control such as the role of public authority. Provisionally, I suppose that the more strict democratic and participatory
governance structure, the more limit on distribution of profit, the more broad scope of social purpose and the less influence of public authority particularly in the process of recognition, the more the legislations could reflect and keep movements' original values and identities.

Because this paper is a part of the whole research, it could not develop its own theoretical or empirical finding. However, the result of this paper would provide not only a preparatory work for the whole research, but also a trial of responding to one of important lacuna in social movement study, that is, defining and measuring success of social movement.

References


Kriesi, H., et al., 1995, New Social Movements in Western Europe, London: University College London