Shared Space: Sustainable Innovation Strategies in Urban Health and Environmental Policy

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Abstract: The article will examine grassroots and policy networks concerned with local food and traffic control and develop a typology of sustainable innovation strategies for change in health and environmental policy. The article is based on a review of the health and environmental policy literatures conducted for the EU funded Katarsis project, focusing on bottom-up innovation in oppositional or alternative networks, through which citizens take control of these aspects of their lives and/or challenge power and policy. Case studies of good practice in sustainable innovation are identified in two areas: (1) networks promoting the growing, trading and consumption of local food; and (2) networks protesting against transport policy and producing innovative design solutions to traffic problem. The sustainable innovation strategies in this field have immediate aims to improve social, mental and physical well-being and long term aims to promote global and local sustainability. This process attempts to increase citizens' level of physical exercise, improve diet and reduce road accidents locally, while encouraging lower carbon consumption and higher social well-being through increased social inter-action. The authors develop a typology of sustainable innovation strategies as networks arising from (a) social movements, (b) community based organizations, (c) socially creative individuals, or (d) local authorities and partnerships.

Keywords: Health, Environment, Networks, Local Food, Traffic and Transport, Social Innovation

Introduction

THIS ARTICLE WILL examine social innovation by grassroot and policy networks concerned with policy change in favour of social and environmental sustainability through the development of wellbeing and inclusive public space in cities and urban neighbourhoods. Social innovation refers to the use of imagination or creativity to produce social change rather than, or as well as, technological change. In a review of the literature, Moulaert et al, (2005) present five ways in which social innovation has been used in different literatures to refer to different aspects: dynamics of organizational learning; finding ways of squaring the circle of competing social, ecological and business interests in (mainstream) sustainable development; innovation by individuals in the creative arts; community led neighbourhood governance and policy networks; and creation of utopian alternatives through social movement mobilizations. It is the last three of these five types of social innovations that fit with the focus of the research in identifying bottom-up innovation. We have ignored the process oriented definitions of social innovation as relating to organizational learning and balancing ecological and business interests, in favour of a focus on the organizational types of social innovation in this article. Alongside the creative individuals and

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social movements, we have divided the neighbourhood level innovation into community based organization on the one hand and the more institutional local authorities and partnerhips on the other hand.

The broader political and policy context in which the concept of social innovation is used in this article can be described in two points. First, Jessop (1999) has described the influence of neo-liberal thinking on public policy (particularly in the UK) as a paradigm shift from the Keynesian national welfare state (KWS) to the Schumpeterian post-national workfare regime. This indicates shifts on three levels – (a) Keynes, the social scientist most associated with social democracy, is replaced by Schumpeter who advocated innovation in competitive markets, (b) the hollowing out of the national state as the focus of politics and policy making and (c) the shift from a centralised state to a regime of numerous organizations engaging in multi-level governance through more complex policy networks; leading to (d) greater dominance of economic policy over social policy, with more focus on maintaining a competitive place in the globalising economy than protecting national benefits. Thus innovation is agreed to be a crucial element in policy making. Second, social innovation is presented as a critical approach in relation to the growing literature and EU policy support for a post-industrial knowledge economy. Where the technological innovation associated with the post-industrial economy emphasizes market competition, and possible new forms of social exclusion, social innovation is aimed at promoting bottom-up socially creative strategies for social inclusion and the fostering of progressive and participatory forms of social organization and governance.

The article is based on a state-of-the-art review of the health and environmental policy literatures, conducted for the EU Katarsis project[1], using broadly a 'realist synthesis' methodological approach (Pawson, 2007), which emphasizes theory building in the review process. The literature reviewed included macro-, micro- amd meso-level theories. The macro-level theories of political economy were concerned with social, health and environmental injustice arising from the operation of global markets, global political structures and neo-liberalism. The micro-level theories of and claims for social and policy networks were concerned with oppositional or alternative networks through which citizens take control of these aspects of their lives and/or challenge power and policy. At the meso-level health and environmental policy agendas converge on climate change and obesity, which are key, contemporary, European wellbeing policy issues (WHO 2002; Sustainable Development Commission 2007). We identify a third policy issue of road accidents – a pandemic cause of death and serious injury across Europe particularly for young people (Vincenten 2006). The review identified case study examples of good practice of social innovation, and the presentation of the case studies form the basis of this article.

Thus the focus of this article is on the micro-level, where case studies of social innovation are identified in two areas: (a) networks protesting against urban transport policy and claiming new rights of access to public space; (b) networks promoting the growing, trading and consumption of local food in cities and urban neighbourhoods. Social innovation in these areas combines the immediate aim of improving social, mental and physical wellbeing with the long-term aim of promoting global and local sustainability.

Appropriating public space from car travel for community use is aimed at promoting social wellbeing by increasing social interaction, as well as promoting physical wellbeing by redu-

cing harm from accidental injury and directly or indirectly providing physical exercise. Mental wellbeing is addressed by attempting to reduce the trauma of accidents and the stress of traffic. Local food networks emphasize the benefits of healthy eating and physical exercise for physical wellbeing and local social interactions for social and mental wellbeing. Across both domains reducing the carbon footprint of daily life has an intended impact on the wellbeing of future generations in contributing to ideas for mitigating global environmental damage in terms of climate change and loss of biodiversity. The geographic scales of operation vary across the case studies from the local to the global. Generally, however, the aims to improve wellbeing are immediate and local in scope, whereas the environmental aims focus on long term, global sustainability.

The research questions addressed in this article are:

1. to develop and apply a typology of forms of social innovation in this field of sustainability;
2. to explore the implications for sustainable governance of urban public space.

Case Studies of Sustainable Innovation Strategies: A Typology

We take on board the insight from Actor Network Theory (Latour 1987; Callon 1986) that networks can contain dissimilar elements, and therefore sustainable innovation strategies can emerge through networks built around the actions of a range of people, organizations, institutions and non-human actors (including nature), and may consist of collaborations between and across scales. Nevertheless, in this section the case studies are presented according to their organizational form. The most obviously recognizable of these are protest oriented social movements, which use direct action methods to appropriate public space in order to try and change local, national and global policy. The second form is community based organizations which act as the hub of a network which includes local communities, but are often funded through the state. Third, we highlight the role of creative individuals in pioneering social innovation. Fourth are local authorities and partnerships which institute socially creative policies.

Social Movements

Social movements (SMs) have been conceptualised "as (1) informal networks, based on (2) shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest" (della Porta and Diani, 1999: 17). Two inter-connected global SMs, Reclaim the Streets (RTS) and Critical Mass (CM), organize protests across Europe with the aim of reducing the dominance of cars to increase access to public space for pedestrians and cyclists.

The RTS movement emerged from overlapping networks of radical activists with links to Earth First and other radical environmental 'disorganizations', who promote the interests of various excluded groups, including travellers and squatters (Goodchild and Dillon, 2001). The boundaries of RTS as a movement are fuzzy. For example, reclaiming of public space has been used as a tactic to support and promote dance music and to find spaces to party by youth oriented networks across Europe (e.g. Right to Rave). An RTS party held in September 2006 in Copenhagen led to violence with police as the movement fought to save the Ungdomshuset (The Folk House). RTS inspired 'happenings' frequently lead to police a clamp

down, as in Brighton in 2006. RTS have challenged the control of public space in a number of innovative ways, including DIY painted bicycle lanes to reclaim the roads for excluded cyclists and 'tree camps' in resistance to airport expansion or road developments. RTS were also strongly networked into international mobilizations and held a para-G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany in 2007 to raise the profile of the issue of environmental degradation and climate change.

RTS shares activists and networks with a global movement known as Critical Mass (CM). CM events are fostered by several networks who seek to address health and environmental issues. 'Massers', as they are colloquially self-defined, attend what they call 'unorganised coincidences' which are supported by a broad range of political, environmental and anarchist groups like RTS, Greens and Earth First. CM is 'badged' as an 'unorganised coincidence' because its participants stress that they have no leaders and what happens at a CM event is not predetermined by its participants and is purely coincidental. The first CM happening occurred in San Francisco in September 1992 and CM events have spread to cities across the world. Adopting CM techniques cyclists gather in city streets on the last Friday of every month to raise the profile of eco-friendly transport, pollution, safer routes and global environmental issues. CM events 'have different flavours city to city; have no leaders; no central organization and simply assert the right to ride' (Critical Mass, 2007). The biggest CM event in Europe saw 35,000 cyclists take to the streets in Budapest in 2005, while a CM event in Hamburg during the 2007 G8 summit led to mass arrests and police repression. Regular monthly CM events occur in 101 European cities, all with their own local websites.

Many CM events are encountering repressive police action and opposition from local authorities, who try to curtail CM activity to enable motorised traffic to retain total access to roads. In London CM participants have been issued with police letters threatening arrest and a recent court case has declared it an illegal protest, which, in the future, would need to notify police of planned routes. This is ironic because physical exercise is seen as important to addressing the European obesity epidemic and the promotion of cycling specifically has been seen as a key strategic area for local agencies to invest resources in order to facilitate the promotion of people's wellbeing (European Commission, 2007: 7). Cycling also enables greater understanding of the natural environment and reduces environmentally damaging transport (Sustainable Development Commission, 2007: 2). As a movement in the UK, CM opposed and successfully lobbied the government to halt their intended reform of the Highway Code, which sought to confine bikes to cycle lanes and lessen the burden on motorists in the event of accidents if such lanes were not used. Movements like CM help to mobilize people across the globe and raise public consciousness contributing to the creation of a global political culture of rights (McGrew, 2004).

Community Based Organizations

Local food networks, our second area of focus, tend to be structured around NGOs or community based organizations, who work in less contentious ways than the protest movements. Community organizations focus on the neighbourhood level or engage communities of interest, such as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. NGOs work more at regional, national and international levels.

In the UK there are several neighbourhood scale food projects that are working co-operatives addressing themes of sustainability, food quality and employment. One innovative

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example is the community based organization Hartcliffe Health and Environment Action Group (HHEAG) based on a deprived outer city housing estate in south Bristol is addressing its neighbourhood's 'food desert' status. HHEAG uses a holistic approach, linking together local residents to work on food issues from 'plot to plate' which enables them to target key groups like pregnant women and young mothers and those who have a diet-related illness or condition: e.g. diabetes, coronary heart disease and some cancers, as well as people who are obese with high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels. As well as the emphasis on physical wellbeing, HHEAG is also concerned with mental and social wellbeing, providing participants with extended social networks and leisure time out from the stress of living in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the region (Interview, 2001; HHEAG 2006).

A second community based organization is Sho Nirbhour (translating as 'self-reliance'), based on three allotments sites in Bradford, UK, bringing together Bangladeshi women, who as a social group, tend to have a high susceptibility to diabetes and heart disease, as well as lack of English language skills and consequential experience of social isolation. Like HHEAG, Sho Nirbhour focuses on growing food, healthy eating and physical activity, contributing to physical wellbeing. The produce grown is shared among participants. In addition there is a strong focus on mental and social wellbeing, by working together women are encouraged to come out of their immediate family circles and homes, share an enjoyable activity with their peers and challenge the isolation that Asian women sometimes endure. The organization also offers English classes and is linked to Walking for Health, which provides a programme of short local walks and an annual residential visit to a National Park. Through its parent organization, Bradford Community Environment Project, the women have links to a City Farm and the Women's Environmental Network (WEN), a national organisation that works on gender issues and the environment, and which promotes local food production as a sustainable alternative nourishing activity for neighbourhoods and families to enjoy. WEN emphasises the commensality of food, the diversity and vibrancy of food cultures, the value of food rituals and the connections these have with caring for the environment (BCEP 2006). Thus the highly localised experience that Sho Nirbhour appears to offer is linked to wider networks, offering broader opportunities to a marginalised group. There are similar food projects across Europe that seek to reinstate local food production and traditional cooking techniques; one of which is highlighted in the section after next.

Socially Creative Individuals

Actor Network Theory (ANT) emphasises the role of creative or innovative individuals in science (Latour, 1987). However, it is not enough to have an inspiration. It is also crucial to having these ideas accepted by enrolling other individuals, institutions (and, indeed non-human actors) into networks (Callon, 1986). Across Europe and in North America there are various sustainable innovation strategies that have been initiated by a variety of individual engineers and artists, but crucially these have then been implemented by NGOs, social movements or policy actors such as local government planning departments.

Bicycle designer George Bliss first used the phrase 'Critical Mass' to describe a new type of protest action for the bike-culture art documentary *Return to the Scorcher* (1992)[2]. Bliss

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[2] Pedicab designer George Bliss interviewed in the Ted White documentary *Return of the Scorcher,* http://www.ted-whitegreenlight.com/scorcher.htm .

argued that in China bikes flow with cars on roads until intersections (crossroads) are reached. When a critical mass of cyclists builds up at the intersection halting the flow of traffic, permitting them to undertake turns and manoeuvres from which they were previously excluded. Cyclists thereby gain the freedom to use the road while the traffic is forced to wait. From Bliss' creative innovation grew global bike-based demonstrations.

The Dutch engineer Hans Monderman believes engineers should address the health and environment issues posed by the separation of traffic and people through improved and more inclusive engineering design. Highlighting the contemporary dominance of road traffic in Europe's urban centres and neighbourhoods, Monderman has worked with local authorities to support communities who desire to reverse the trend of excluding pedestrians from free movement. Believing that it is vital to rebuild the social life of the street as an effective means of taming traffic, reducing injury and promoting quality environments, he reverses current hegemonic engineering philosophies that have traditionally separated neighbourhoods from traffic (e.g. in the UK since the Buchanan Report, 1963). The unintended consequence of this separation is that risk has shifted from drivers to pedestrians by enhancing motorists' movement at the expense of public space ownership (Adams, 2005). Monderman's groundbreaking designs have challenged traditional traffic calming measures that have dominated local authority planning and road safety departments across Europe for forty years (Glaskin, 2004).

Monderman's designs for shared space in local neighbourhoods and urban centres could only be judged successful when not only pedestrians but also car drivers were enrolled into his network; i.e. drivers changed their behaviour in response to the lack of road signs, making eye contact with pedestrians and taking greater responsibility for safety. The network built by Monderman was extended much further by local authorities in several European countries who have joined and now actively promote this network for fostering alternative traffic management designs. The development of shared space has happened in several neighbourhoods across Denmark, Sweden, UK and The Netherlands. It reflects the French programme Ville-plus and adopts many of its key principles. They are all aimed at bringing people from neighbourhoods back into public spaces. There is also a Shared Space European project in seven cities, which form part of the EU's *Interreg IIIB-North Sea* programme. Providing such opportunities for the actual engagement of citizens in decision making holds some potential for refashioning citizens from passive dependence on formal institutions to active citizenship in a vibrant civil society (Brown, *et al*., 2000: 55).

Local Authorities and Partnerships

Social innovation by local authorities, often inspired by Local Agenda 21, has included civic promotion of Car Free Days in several European cities. Many EU member states encourage local authorities to develop policies to address national targets to reduce the number of pedestrians Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI rates). In Sweden the *Vision Zero* policy has an objective of zero KSI. Speed limits of 30km/h have been introduced in several cities. Town and city centres are becoming increasingly pedestrianised, sometimes offering Park and Ride solutions (Hamilton-Baillie and Jones, 2005). Some local authorities have gone further, and have started to ban cars altogether from parts of their cities. For example, in Groningen, Netherlands' sixth largest city, ruinous traffic congestion led city planners to dig up city-centre motorways and in 2005 they set about creating a car-free city centre.

In the Vauban district of Freiburg in Germany, control of land use for a new self-build development of over 38 hectares was delegated to Forum Vauban, an NGO formed in 1993 to represent the community, which successfully convinced a sceptical city council to establish a car-free environment as part of their housing development project. Housing plots were sold to co-housing groups which has facilitated considerable architectural diversity while at the same time employing low energy technology as an integral condition of design. Regional planning legislation required applications for car free environments to provide evidence for the lack of parking need, and to reserve land in case of future need, where cars are excluded from the design. Car owners in Vauban purchase a parking place in an out of town multi-storey car park and cars only enter for delivery at walking pace. Of people living in Vauban without cars, 57% gave them up on moving to the neighbourhood, which is supported by a low cost tram system city-wide and the promotion of cycling, traffic restraint and parking space management (Melia, 2006).

Multi-agency partnerships have been shown to be a good source of local neighbourhood innovation in community health provision, while simultaneously engaging with multi-level governance. The Portuguese School Health Program and the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) project provides settings to include young people as part of an initiative launched by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the WHO (Europe) in 1991 (Henriques, 2006). The initiative now embraces a network of schools across 38 countries, including Portugal. Each locally owned initiative is an effective partnership between schools, families, health professionals and local authorities who define their goals and strategy according to local need.

The HPS activities address many issues including nutrition, which is important as the prevalence of obesity and pre-obesity in 7-9 year old Portuguese children is 32% (Henriques, 2006). Innovative examples include the São Brás de Alportel (Algarve, South Portugal) a setting with 10,000 inhabitants. In the last five years, the local education authority, Health Centre, schools and City Hall have collaborated to develop a health education project for the promotion of the traditional Mediterranean diet, now acknowledged as a healthy way to eat. Young people and families from local schools were invited to compile and cook traditional, local Mediterranean recipes. Caterers have been retrained and young people are encouraged to move away from excessive consumption of sweets, soft drinks and fried foods.

The four types of networks illustrated in the case studies play a variety of roles in sustaining social change. The social movements primarily mobilize action for change in policy and governance; the community organizations are more concerned with trying out new collective solutions to problems in a local neighbourhood context; innovative individuals can contribute to both finding new ways of raising awareness of issues and in proposing novel solutions; whereas local authorities and partnerships are able to use their institutional form both to promote awareness and to implement problem solving, as summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1: Network Roles in Sustaining Social Change

Roles in Sustaining Social Change	Social Movements	Community Organizations	Creative Individuals	Local Authorities and Partnerships
Awareness Raising and / or Mobilizing Action	Critical Mass and Reclaim the Streets		George Bliss	Health Promoting Schools
Collective Problem Solving and / or Representing Community Views		HHEAG and Sho Nirbhour	Hans Monderman	Shared Space and Vaughbann Car-free Neighbourhood

Sustainable Governance of Urban Public Space

In the preceding discussion we have examined the network forms of the case studies and the creative strategies that have been adopted. In this section, we analyse the contribution these forms of social innovation make to sustainable governance of urban public space. We argue that they contribute in three ways. First, the discursive frames they propose not only recognize the environmental and health risks posed by existing policy and consumption patterns, but also the extension of rights to put public space to diverse and innovative uses. Second is the innovative action repertoires they employ in order to implement their innovative ideas; and third their ability to engage policy networks at different levels of governance.

Discursive Frames: Risks and Rights

The motivation of social movements is provided by 'injustice frames' (Gamson 1995). Given the centrality of risk to contemporary society (Beck 1992), sustainability discourse is frequently organised through both a negative 'risk frame' and a positive 'rights frame' (Purdue 2000). The risks to both wellbeing and environmental sustainability are acknowledged in policy discourse:

> "Local action is more important than ever. Getting more communities involved in decision making will be the key to finding the solutions to some of the biggest challenges currently facing the country such as obesity and climate change." Hazel Blears, UK Minister for Communities and Local Government (CLG Press release 18/10/2007).

The case studies illustrate responses from a range of actors seeking to address not only urgent health risks of injury and obesity (including lack of access to physical activity and healthy food); but also long-term global environmental risks of climate change through CO_2 emissions. Risks are seen to be generated by the global market – including the dominance of industries such as the motor industry and commercial agriculture (e.g. powerful retailing su-

permarkets) which connect to and shape consumerist popular cultures – in diet and transport – which produce externality costs in daily life.

While the risks frame is important in bringing into focus the problems to be solved, a rights frame demands implementation of positive solutions. The key here is a claim to greater rights over public space (green spaces, streets and buildings) for citizens to use in more socially productive and sustainable ways. In part this is an issue of widening rights of effective and safe access to public space. Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass and Shared Space all claim rights of particular groups – pedestrians and cyclists, who are also disproportionately young people or children and / or people on lower incomes – to use space that has been increasingly taken over by motorists (and technology). These 'disorganizations' are also concerned with challenging the inequitable distribution of risks in access to public space and take an active part in moving towards more sustainable transport systems. Increasing rights to access also produces safer and more convivial spaces, leading to physical and mental wellbeing by reducing injuries, reducing the distinction between drivers and pedestrians/cyclists creating more inclusive community space and generating social wellbeing. This leads to a third, longer term aim to get people out of their cars and shift to more sustainable forms of transport thus addressing two major health epidemics facing Europe (injury and obesity) today.

The local food networks reject a passive role as consumers on the global market, become producers not only of food, but also extending their control over their lifestyle and wellbeing. Local food networks are socially creative in using local resources in new, and unexpectedly, sustainable ways. Land, which always faces a potential threat of development, and underemployment in the local population (often disguised by differential access to the labour market) are brought together in socially and environmentally productive use.

Action Repertoires for Bottom-up Policy Implementation

The action repertoires (Tarrow, 1994) utilized by the networks examined vary from direct action to active citizenship. CM and RTS use a contentious action repertoire, taking direct action to protest against current policy and power imbalances. Communicating and mobilising via the internet, the CM movement has inspired thousands of people across Europe to become involved in global protest activity in their local towns and cities to address climate change. Local CM events with global links mean that participants can learn creative protest tactics from other places. CM events are not ritualized and frequently take the form of amorphous *unorganised coincidence* happenings, evolving in unique ways. They also attract individuals wishing to express their resistance symbolically. 'Music on the move' is a feature of many CM events and participants often include younger skateboarders and roller-bladers, who relish the opportunity to reclaim the streets.

By contrast, other networks use a more conventional action repertoire and engage in partnership working with public agencies (HTP); and transforming practice by becoming embedded in local authorities and public agencies (Shared Space) or pursuing active citizenship and community building (HHEAG and Sho Nirbhour). Local food networks are innovative in their symbolic resistance to the global hegemony of the food system, inscribed in the practices of everyday life, pursuing what is both a healthy lifestyle and a low carbon lifestyle through a series of micro-sociological decisions. Like CM, the 'localistas' dramatise

their oppositional identity in a series of presentations of alternatives, from farmers' markets to collective dig-ins.

Mulit-Level Governance (Linking the Local and the Global)

These differing relationships to governance can operate at all scales from the neighbourhood to the global; and can involve combining different levels of governance.

Local food networks act on governance at all scales from the local neighbourhood, through regional and national to global governance. Local food networks in the UK have mobilized citizens to take responsibility for their own health and claim the right to grow their own food or access locally grown fresh food as well as to utilise green space and physical exercise. They also constitute community organizations developing relations of solidarity across neighbourhoods (HHEAG, Bristol) and communities of interest (Sho Nirbhour, Asian women in Bradford). Health Promoting Schools (HPS) links the European scale with local scale. They involve partnerships between European agencies: Council of Europe, the European Commission and the WHO (Europe) with local public and community partners.

CM takes the form of globally co-ordinated events (in time) and an evolving globally diffused action repertoire, focused on local authorities that control traffic policy. RTS and Shared Space both operate across a number of European countries, engaging with local governance of public space and traffic, but whereas RTS acts on local authorities from the outside in contentious encounters, seizing control of public space, Shared Space has become a socially innovative practice taken up by local authority planning departments. Thus interactions with multi-level governance vary according to three dimensions: scale of governance; internal or external relationship; and their focus on developing practice or changing policy.

Conclusions

The typology of networks engaged in social innovation examined in this article take a range of organizational forms. They range from the connections around creative individuals to flexible and constantly changing protest movements, through more stable community based organizations to policy networks embedded in area based initiatives and local authorities. Examination of these case studies re-problematizes settled definitions of the public sphere as an interaction of the global and the local and focuses on emerging forms of active citizenship involving previously excluded groups from influence in governance, including young people, cyclists / pedestrians / non-car users, and globally aware 'localistas'. For these groups re-drawing the physical and political contours of public space, and the diverse groups and types of access to it, is intimately linked to the transformation of the public sphere, and their representation in it.

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