Review of: "Ethical and political consumption: an integrated typology of practices"

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Recent research, on the social stratification and social embeddedness of political consumers, illustrates political consumerism as ‘a weapon for the ‘happy few’’ (Hooghe and Goubin, 2022) with more highly educated and progressive respondents being significantly more likely to engage in it. However, much of this body of literature focuses predominately in the developed capitalist North, with Sweden, Belgium, and Canada enjoying the lion’s share of the available scholarship. However, latest research in a comparative context between countries of the European north and the European south, including our recently published work (Kyroglou and Henn, 2022a), suggests that this line of research underestimates on the one hand the collective appeal of political consumerism, and the other, the use of the market as a way of countering the effects of the neoliberal governmentality (both on ideological and practical terms) that has arguably brought political consumerism into existence (Kyroglou and Henn, 2017).

In that respect, the present article makes a noteworthy contribution in the field of ethical and political consumerism by presenting a new analytical tool in the form of a (non-exhaustive) conceptual typology of consumer practices, based on two dimensions, namely **a)** legality, and **b)** monetary transaction. Both of these dimensions have received limited attention in the available literature to date. I particularly agree that focusing exclusively on shopping-related practices which require (or involve) ‘purchasing’, either in the form of positive political consumerism (buycotting) or in the form of negative political consumerism (boycotting), risks to underestimate both the **extent** (the different actions that political consumers may engage in) and the **intensity** (the engagement or responsibility) behind the action (Kyroglou and Henn, 2022a); in the words of the author “the agency and political involvement of certain (often disadvantaged) segments of the population” such as women (O'Neill and Gidengil, 2013) and young people (Kyroglou and Henn, 2022b). In particular, non-market and illegal market transactions indeed remain relatively underrepresented within the available literature that employs the ‘ethical consumption’ and ‘political consumption’ frames, whether in the fields of Marketing or in the fields of Political sociology. This limitation is further discussed in detail by Zorell (2018), whereas Kyroglou and Henn (2022b) mitigate its implications by assuming a subjectivist approach in survey research, by introducing their **Political Consumerism Index** (**PCI**) which takes into consideration both the frequency and the responsibility behind the respondents’ decision to purchase or abstain from buying a service or a product for ethical, political or environmental reasons.

The article then proceeds to define what the author means by ‘alterity’, building on the work of Gibson-Graham (2008) and Jonas (2013, 2016). This is a welcome addition, which helps clarify the authors’ conceptualization of ‘alterity’ and ‘alternative economic spaces’. Especially in political sciences, referring to political consumerism as ‘an alternative form of

political participation' neglects on the one hand its pervasive neoliberal underpinnings (Lekakis, 2013; Kyroglou and Henn, 2017), and on the other, the ability of market economy to co-opt not only **alternative-additional** consumer practices (such as buycotting and boycotting), but also inherently **oppositional** practices, such as occupying, re-appropriating, or reducing consumption and waste; in an instance of what Mark Fisher (2009) would refer to as **Capitalist Realism**. The author artfully navigates away from this conundrum by asserting on political consumers the agency to participate in both market and non-market activities, under Gibson-Graham's definition of a 'diverse economy'. Indeed, the author clarifies that "we conceptualise economy as diverse, in the manner Gibson-Graham perceived it, much (if not most) everyday consumer practices do not actually occur within the marketplace".

Measuring political consumption only through purchasing decisions (buycotting, boycotting or a combination of both) may indeed be responsible for the portrayal of the political consumer as typically upper-class, left-leaning females with postmaterialist sensitivities. But as we have recently argued (Kyroglou and Henn, 2022b) such a portrayal is reductive and highly contested, especially in **a)** comparative cross-country research, and **b)** when the **intensity** and **extent** behind the actions are also being considered. The article expands on this rationale by acknowledging that "failing to recognise and measure forms of political consumerism that do not involve monetary transaction and/or where consumer choice reflects economic motives, underestimates the political involvement (and agency) of certain segments of the population". This is an important contribution in the study of political consumerism, that has till recently been underemphasised. Importantly, the proposed typology provides the grounds to eventually expand the geographical focus of existing and future research beyond the developed capitalist North, to developing nations - where arguably large parts of economic transactions take place via informal economies.

Scholars of political consumerism as a form of political participation (less so in the fields of Business or Marketing), have repeatedly raised concerns about the existence of a '*regulatory vacuum in global governance'* (Micheletti, 2003, p. 9), in favour of private businesses intercepting through Corporate Social Responsibility schemes to fill this vacuum. This, in turn, is being perceived as a detrimental 'commodification' of political participation, which results to the '*un-doing of the Demos'* (Brown, 2015), stripping it from its legitimising power. However, what such accounts tend to oversee, are the elements of **resistance** and **opposition** in the practice of political consumption. Political consumerism may indeed provide consumers with the (economic) agency to appraise or penalise market forces through the use of the marketplace itself as a regulating mechanism. However, this reductive conceptualisation of political consumerism would position such practices almost exclusively in Q1 of the proposed typology (i.e. as both **legal** and practiced through **monetary transactions**). But such a limited interpretation of political consumerism would inevitably render such practices susceptible to neoliberal co-optation and would thus strip them of their oppositional and transformative potential. When practiced outside the strict boundaries of either legality (shop-lifting, '*robin-hooding'*, squats and occupations, refuse-to-pay) or market-transactions (DIY, gift economies, time-banks, recycling/reusing/upcycling, anti-consumption), political consumerism has indeed the potential not to genuflect to neoliberal governmentality (Kyroglou and Henn, 2017) by re-asserting consumers with the agency (either individually or collectively) (Kyroglou and Henn, 2022a) to operate in alternative economic spaces. It is in those latter instances that political consumerism may serve instead as propaganda-of-the-deed by proposing viable alternatives to the critical-realist impasse of neoliberalism and the cultural logic of late

modernity.

The article therefore, makes a significant contribution in the study of political consumerism, by proposing a long-overdue expanded typology beyond legality and market-transactions. I can see this being particularly useful in the study of political consumerism beyond the developed, capitalist North and I am looking forward to the ripples it will create in future academic research in the field.

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