Political Consumerism in Switzerland: Linking Food Consumption, Conceptions of Citizenship, and Political Engagements

1. Summary

This research aims at understanding the political underpinnings of individuals' food consumption choices. A growing number of citizens make ethical, social, or environmental choices when they buy fair trade, organic, or local products. Although political sociologists studied these consumption choices as political acts, they correspond to a much-debated form of political participation. Some contend that consumption cannot be a political act for it refers to individual practices, with no clear goals related to societal transformations, and with no specific understandings of political problems. Furthermore, some fear that political consumerism might crowd out other forms of participation. It might even foster individual responsibility at the expense of the state regulatory power. Yet, in times of growing political disenchantment, analyzing and understanding this alternative form of political engagement more thoroughly allows identifying and establishing potential means for reinforcing and expanding citizens' relation to politics. Political sociologists need to take these criticisms seriously and analyze how political consumerism relates to broader political understandings and engagements.

I argue that political consumerism is political when it is connected to specific understandings of citizenship and political engagements. I also suggest that these understandings are related to framing processes set in motion by civil society organizations active in the food sector such as food basket cooperatives or political organizations like Public Eye. If so, political consumerism might play an important role in connecting citizens to politics in times of political dissatisfaction. In order to address these questions, my project focuses on political consumerism in the food sector in Switzerland. The project builds on a two-level design and a multi-method approach. At the micro-level, I propose to study conceptions of citizenship and political engagements to explain why individuals engage in political consumerism. This requires distinguishing specific food consumption practices that carry a political stance. Then, it calls for an analysis of the socio-political profiles of those who engage in political consumerism. Lastly, it builds on the analysis of specific conceptions of citizenship and political engagements. I do so through the analysis of survey data (Swiss Environmental Survey) and in-depth qualitative analysis. At the meso-level, I aim to analyze how civil society organizations shape these consumption practices through framing processes – diffusion mechanisms of conceptions of food consumption and its political underpinnings. Here, I start with a mapping of organizations and then move to a frame analysis to draw a picture of the associational landscape in the food sector and to analyze their political communication strategies.

This project links political consumerism to other forms of political participation through an analysis of conceptions of citizenship and political engagements. Scholars have stressed the need for more research analyzing the links between political consumerism and other forms of participation. Furthermore, the study of the relationships between everyday politics and of citizenships is under-studied. The proposed study makes a theoretical contribution by analyzing conceptions of citizenship based on everyday practices and relating them to specific forms of political participation. The project also reinforces the study of food consumption in Switzerland by developing a political perspective most often overlooked by previous research. Swiss scholars have mostly focused on the environmental aspect of food consumption. A political sociology perspective complementing that of environmental scientists and food sociologists is key to a better understanding of the relationships between consumers' choices, politics, and citizenship.

2. Research plan

2.1. Current state of research in the field

Political sociologists who study democracies are confronted to a challenge, understanding the growing dissatisfaction of citizens with their political elites, political institutions, and even, in some cases, with the functioning of democracies. This alarming phenomena is visible when analyzing citizens withdrawal from political parties (van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke 2012), their abstention at the ballot box (Blais, Gidengil and Nevitte 2004), and their support for populist parties that build on anti-elite feelings (Mudde 2007). These are expressions of a feeling of not being represented by political parties in institutional politics (Mair 2013). Institutional politics and citizens' growing dissatisfaction with it have received much attention in the field of political behavior. In political sociology, some focus on citizens' engagement in non-institutional participation. Research shows that citizens seek alternative means to engage politically, they favor non-institutional forms of participation, and many do participate (Marien, Hooghe and Quintelier 2010; Stolle and Hooghe 2011; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). Studying these non-institutional forms of political engagement offers opportunities to understand how citizens relate to politics, seek ways to promote social and political changes, and contribute to democratic life through alternative means.

The study of alternative forms of engagement is related to an emerging field of research analyzing everyday politics – political engagements and processes of politicization rooted in everyday lives, routines, and practices (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Eliasoph and Lichterman 2010; Micheletti and McFarland 2012). Political consumerism is one such form of everyday political participation. It refers to a refusal to buy or a choice to buy specific products for reasons that go beyond the personal utility of the good and that encompass social values (Micheletti 2003; Stolle and Micheletti 2013; Willis and Schor 2012). It corresponds to the idea that some everyday actions can have a political meaning (van Deth 2012) or be part of social movement activities (Dubuisson-Quellier 2013; Starr 2010). As they shop, more and more citizens make ethical, social, or environmental choices. They buy products and services that correspond to specific values – fair trade, organic, local, or animal-cruelty free for instance. These choices are also based on individual interests – cheaper, healthier, tastier, or other considerations that have no moral value. Hence, the political dimension in these consumption choices is not straightforward. Do these practices carry a political meaning, do citizens seek social change through their consumption choices, do they promote alternative models of society? These are controversial questions in the field of political consumerism. The literature review establishes different positions on this question of consumption practices as political acts. In so doing, it highlights strengths and weaknesses of existing research and shows the relevance of the proposed study.

Consumption as a political act?

In the literature on political consumerism, boycotting and buying products for political reasons are the most studied forms of participation. Quantitative empirical research on individuals' participation in political consumerism focuses on these action forms because surveys seldom include more specific questions. Focusing on boycotting and buying for political reasons, the literature established the profiles of those who engage in political consumerism (Stolle and Micheletti 2013). Showing that women, young people, urban residents are more likely to engage in political consumerism. Yet, some also point at different motivations and profiles of those who engage in either boycotting or buycotting (Neilson 2010). The former refers to refusing to buy specific products or brands

for political reasons, while the latter relates to choosing to buy some goods instead of others for political motives. Boycotting is more closely related to the protest culture and associated with highly visible, militant activities than is buycotting (Fournier 1998; Neilson 2010). The two are often viewed as antithetic because the latter promotes consumption and is prone to recuperation by corporations, while the former fosters alternatives to mass consumptions (Sage 2014). These studies suggest that buying products for political reasons would be less of a political act than refusing to buy some products. However, the two form a continuum that ranges from supportive (buying) to denunciatory (boycotting) practices and they are often combined (Balsiger 2014). Among additional alternatives to mass consumption, research analyzed anti-consumption practices (Cherrier 2009) or the exchange of goods and services (Conill et al. 2012). These forms of political consumerism are more radical in their goals and require a stronger commitment. But they are limited to the most activist political consumers. When focusing on less radical forms of political consumerism, in Switzerland, a third of the population buys or refuses to buy products for political reasons (ESS data 2014).

Focusing on these more widespread consumption practices or habits, some qualitative research highlights the process of norm formation at play (Johnston and Cairns 2012; Johnston, Szabo and Rodney 2011). As more and more citizens buy products based on environmental, ethical, or political reasons a trend is established but also a standard of good practice. It is deemed better to buy organic, local, fair trade, etc. and this products are sold in up-scale stores (Johnston, Szabo and Rodney 2011). This line of research underlines that most works on political consumerism remain blind to the study of inequalities related to participation (Johnston, Szabo and Rodney 2011; Lewis and Potter 2011; Littler 2011). These critical studies highlight class biases and socio-economic inequalities embodied and reified through consumption choices (Busa and Garder 2015; Johnston, Szabo and Rodney 2011; Littler 2011). Research shows that economic inequalities and social class strongly shape participation in political consumerism (Huddart Kennedy, Parkins and Johnston 2016). However, these new forms of participation are not unilaterally deemed to be more unequal. Some found that groups who tend to be excluded from politics are more active in political consumerism, thus reducing specific inequalities such as those related to age and gender (Marien, Hooghe and Quintelier 2010; Stolle and Hooghe 2011). Johnston et al. (2011) also pay attention to non-mainstream alternative modes of sustainable consumption. This focus allows studying ways to engage in politically motivated consumption choices that are affordable to lower-income families or individuals belonging to ethnic minorities.

The above-mentioned studies focus mostly on who engages in political consumerism and what forms it takes. Yet, we have not considered the most important critique to political consumerism. Those who oppose the idea that political consumerism is a political act, a way for citizens to engage in politics (see Littler 2011 for a discussion). Firstly, they question the capacity of political consumerism to bring about social changes. In particular, the narrow focus on consumption is viewed critically, researchers emphasize that to be a political act aimed at social changes, political consumerism has to be embedded in broader considerations about modes of production (Humphery 2011). In this conception, political consumerism requires showing some deep understanding of political problems and identified goals in terms of social change. Yet, the same expectations are not made towards other forms of participation. Research on voting, the most common and unquestioned form of political participation, shows that citizens choose to vote based on a sense of duty (Blais and St-Vincent 2011) or based on habits (Aldrich, Montgomery and Wood 2011), not necessarily building on thorough understandings of politics.

Another line of critique fears that political consumerism comes at the expense of other forms of engagement (Simon 2011). They argue that citizens turn away from politics as they engage in political consumerism. Citizens would seek to find answers to their social and political demands only through consumption, private practices, and market behaviors without involving the state as a regulator. Ultimately, these debates question the links between political consumerism and the privatization of regulation (Guthman 2003; 2007). They argue that the neoliberal turn reduces the regulatory responsibility of the state and this process is reinforced when citizens individually act as regulator through their consumption choices on the market. It is deemed problematic for it calls only on individual responsibilities. In its most drastic critics, political consumerism is considered to support neoliberalism by promoting the commodification of everything and the retreat of the state from the regulation of economic and social life. Others contend that political consumerism – in its green, ethical, or local form – is constantly taken over by multinational corporations in a process of green washing (see the contributions in Mukherjee and Banet-Weiser 2012 for an overview). They argue that social activism is turning civic virtue or ethical behaviors in marketable commodities. These studies contradict the idea that political consumerism can be a promising alternative to institutional politics, that it may solve citizens disaffection with the state and politics.

However, recent works show that political consumerism does not crowd out other forms of participation (Willis and Schor 2012; Zhang 2015). Citizens who engage in political consumerism also engage in other forms of participation (Baumann, Engman and Johnston 2015; Gotlieb and Wells 2012; Willis and Schor 2012; Zhang 2015). Furthermore, citizens who buy products for political reasons are not following only self-interest but they also pursue collective goals. They do not withdraw from the public life to solve any problem they face via private means of consumption. Many scholars refute the opposition confronting citizens and consumers, to some extent, we are all both consumers and citizens (see Schudson 2007 for a critique of this dichotomy). Historically, the two concepts are bound together and the usage of economic power to advance political causes is not new (Cohen 2003; Dubuisson-Quellier 2013; Haydu and Kadanoff 2010). Provocatively, some argue that it is not difficult to distract citizens from an activity as time consuming, boring, and disempowering as political participation (Schudson 2007). Pointing at the flaws of institutional political participation instead of viewing negatively political consumerism. Studies report about political consumers' disenchantment with institutional politics, which is considered to slow and inefficient in tackling current problems associated with the economy, the distribution of wealth, the protection of the environment, or the safeguard of the community (Simon 2011). People seek alternative forms of engagement that empower them and allow them seeing concrete changes.

The literature shows that citizens who engage in political consumerism pursue political goals. Even if these goals are not deeply articulated and reveal a thin conception of democracy (Huddart Kennedy, Parkins and Johnston 2016). Citizens buy products for both individual and collective reasons (Busch 2016). In the case of green consumption practices, research shows that engaged individuals see their actions as part of a collective movement (Carfagna et al. 2014). Furthermore, citizens engaged in political consumerism also participate through other means such as voting or street demonstrations. Yet, when a third of the population or more buys products for political reasons, it is not surprising that some of them also vote, sign petitions, or demonstrate in the streets. Unfortunately, this line of research did not analyze more thoroughly the links between political consumerism as 'individual collective' action and other forms of participation (Sage 2014; Simon 2011; Zukin 2006). We do not know: Who are those who combine political consumerism with other forms of political engagement? Why they use multiple forms of action to advance their political goals? How do they understand their role as citizens when

they engage in the different means of participating politically? And what is the role of collective actors in shaping this multiple political engagements?

Contributions of the proposed project

The literature review shows that part of the existing research takes for granted the political dimension underlying some consumption choices. Building on this assumption, they establish the profiles of political consumers and explore the links to other forms of participation. Yet, they are confronted to critical research refuting the idea that consumption can be political. These studies highlight the limits of privatized political engagement and they view critically the links between consumption practices and political goals. The literature suffers from two blind spots. First, it does not distinguish clearly behaviors from values, be they political or not. Consumption choices may be based on multiple considerations. Hence, we need to refine our understanding of these considerations in order to study who makes specific consumption choices and why they do so. Second, it fails to link individual and collective action. Political consumerism is a form of political participation set at the individual level and rooted in everyday life; it is perhaps the most individualized form of political participation. This poses questions with regards to the individual vs. the collective nature of political participation. Is political participation a behavior that must be linked to collective purposes or can it be merely an individual act. This requires analyzing the processes that lead to political consumerism and uncovering the mechanisms that support specific understandings of citizens and consumers' role in society. I propose to analyze how specific consumption choices are related, at the individual level, to conceptions of citizenship and to other forms of political engagement and, at the collective level, to how civil society organizations (CSOs) frame consumption as a political act or not. The project makes theoretical contributions to the study of political consumerism, everyday political participation, and citizens' conceptions of citizenship.

I take up these questions by focusing on the study food consumption in Switzerland. Food is interesting for the study of political consumerism because it is a key sector of consumption. Food is also central in processes of globalization and it is commodifiable for political acts. Furthermore, socio-economic inequalities constrain the choices of food that citizens can afford to buy, since only few citizens decide to become self-sufficient. However, we have also seen that political consumerism may take various forms: buying or refusing to buy, but also sharing goods or exchanging services, which are less costly practices. Most citizens buy food and can use it as a means to convey political messages and to support political changes.

Switzerland is an interesting case because the production and consumption of organic food exploded in the last decades (Kilcher et al. 2011). Organic, local, and seasonal products are widely available in the supermarket and there is a growing demand for these consumption goods. Research finds that up to 68 percent buy local products, 63 percent buy seasonal ones, and 47 percent try to eat less meat (Siegrist, Visschers and Hartmann 2015; Tobler, Visschers and Siegrist 2011). We know that these practices are widespread in Switzerland, but we know less about the motives apart from economic and ecological factors predicting these food choices (Bruderer Enzler 2015; Tanner and Wölfing Kast 2003). Food is also interesting because it represents a large share of citizens individual environmental footprint, between ten and thirty percent depending on consumption choices (Stoessel et al. 2012). This is particularly important since environmental consciousness is prominent among Swiss citizens.

2.2. Current state of personal research

This project benefits from my expertise in the study of political participation, everyday lives, and inequalities. In my thesis, I established how the lived experience of unemployment in terms of personal well-being, social inclusion, and relation to the state shape unemployed youth's political participation (Lorenzini 2013). My work shows that, in spite of long-lasting unemployment and its detrimental consequences for social and personal life, unemployed and employed youth similarly engage in politics. My research is published, in some cases together with Marco Giugni, in journals (Giugni and Lorenzini 2012; Giugni and Lorenzini 2017; Lorenzini 2015; Lorenzini and Giugni 2012) and more recently in a book (Giugni and Lorenzini 2017). I compare political consumerism to other forms of participation and I show that, in Switzerland, young people favor non-institutional forms and political consumerism is the most common form of participation among unemployed and employed youth. I also focused specifically on women's engagement in political consumerism (Lorenzini and Bassoli 2015). Political consumerism is a form of participation where the gender gap closed. Yet, our study reveals intra-group differences, not all women are equally likely to engage in political consumerism. Matteo Bassoli and I show that gender beliefs contribute in shaping women's political participation. Lastly, together with Swen Hutter (forthcoming), we wrote a handbook entry on political participation. In this entry, we discuss various forms of political participation and the different theoretical perspectives that are used in its study.

In the framework of my post-doctoral research, I worked on the impact of the Great Recession on protest. In a paper forthcoming in Mobilization (forthcoming), Carol Galais and I consider how grievances affect political participation. We analyze how various types of economic grievances triggered by the Great Recession fuel protest participation. Citizens who lost consumption power and faced deteriorations in their social status and in terms of workers' rights are angry and take to the street to express their dissatisfaction. I also analyzed the links between institutional and protest politics. I collaborated with Argyrios Altiparmakis for the study of how protest events are linked to institutional politics (R&R). Furthermore, I collaborated with Hanspeter Kriesi and Swen Hutter (forthcoming) for a handbook entry on the links between party politics and protest in times of crisis. The contribution to this volume advances our theoretical understanding of the interplay between institutional and non-institutional politics. These studies show that citizens seek alternative ways of expressing their dissatisfaction with political institutions.

A last area of my research relates to the study of associational networks and membership. While working on unemployed youth political participation, I analyzed CSOs. On the one hand, I studied how they contribute to youth political participation (Giugni and Lorenzini 2017; Lorenzini and Giugni 2012). On the other, I worked on the structure of associations active in the field of unemployment and precariousness (Baglioni, Lorenzini and Mosca 2014). In the former, we show that young people who are civically engaged are more likely to participate politically than those who are not members of any CSO. The beneficial impact of associational membership also appears for disadvantaged groups such as unemployed youth. This research points at the importance of civil society involvement for participation but fails to unfold the mechanisms that support participation. In the study proposed here, I aim at clarifying these mechanisms. Furthermore, my research with Simone Baglioni and Lorenzo Mosca distinguishes two types of associations. Those active in politics – the more advocacy, lobbying type of organizations – and those focusing on the provision of services – helping young people finding a job and

dealing with economic hardship. This distinction is useful for the study of associations in the field of political consumerism.

In addition to my theoretical knowledge on political participation, I would like to emphasize my methodological skills that cover multiple forms of data collection and analysis. During my doctoral research, I contributed to the development and the analysis of two surveys – an individual survey based on telephone interviews with long-term unemployed and employed youth and an associational survey based on face-to-face interviews with organizations active in the field of youth unemployment. Furthermore, I have prepared and conducted in-depth interviews with young long-term unemployed. In the last years, I worked extensively on the development and the evaluation of tools for the semi-automated coding of protest events. I also contributed to the design and the coding of newspaper articles in the form of core sentence analysis – a quantitative approach to the study of textual news material – and to that of political events analysis. My academic experience so far attests of my skills with regards to the design and conduct of data collection.

So far I have been involved in three large-scale research projects –YOUNEX & LIVEWHAT at the University of Geneva and POLCON at the European University Institute. In these projects, I collaborated with both senior and junior researchers, as well as with scholars of different disciplines. I have established a broad network of researchers working on issues close to mine. I worked with Marco Giugni on the political participation of unemployed youth. We worked together on YOUNEX and we collaborated for the dissemination of the findings associated to this research project. Yet, it is important to emphasize that I also collaborated with other researchers and with young scholars for the study of youth political participation, as well as for my post-doctoral research. Over the years I have been involved in collaborations with many colleagues that I met on research projects and while working as visiting scholar in different universities. Matteo Bassoli, Carol Galais, Swen Hutter, and Lorenzo Mosca are post-doctoral fellows and Argyrios Altiparmakis is a PhD student. Furthermore, Simone Baglioni is a lecturer at the University of Glasgow and Hanspeter Kriesi is the principal investigator in the POLCON project. These multiple collaborations attest of a capacity to set up my own networks independently of my former supervisor Marco Giugni and a willingness to engage in research with fellow young scholars.

It is important to note my scientific and academic independence since I propose to return to the university of Geneva and to have my project hosted at the Institute of Citizenship Studies (InCite) directed by Marco Giugni. The choice of the host institutions relates to the expertise available there – the only center focusing on the study of citizenship in Switzerland – and the existing datasets that can be used to facilitate my analyses. I am confident that InCite will offer the possibility to engage in lively debates and fruitful collaborations as a host institution for my project. Since I cannot supervise a PhD thesis, I believe that Marco Giugni will be a great PhD supervisor for my collaborator offering complementary guidance to the one I will provide. Returning to the University of Geneva will not arm my academic independence. Over the years, I have worked with different colleagues and in different institutions. I have been visiting scholar in Montreal (one year) and in Berlin (six months). I currently work at the European University Institute (three years). During and after my PhD, I spent more years abroad than working at the University of Geneva.

Lastly, I would like to link this project to a broader research agenda that I aim at developing in the next ten years. As a specialist of everyday politics, I propose to focus first, in the Ambizione project, on individual involvement

in political consumerism linking it to the framing of political consumerism by CSOs. In the next step of my academic career, I would like to expand this research to the study of other actors who play a central role in shaping everyday politics and political consumerism – namely political parties. In future research, I propose to analyze how political parties contribute in shaping political consumerism. Political parties influence political consumerism through the policies they promote, their electoral pledges, and their ties to CSOs and businesses that defend different views and interests in the food sector. But they also exercise a push factor, as mentioned above, dissatisfied citizens seek alternative ways to express their political views. In the future, I intend to analyze how citizens define and relate to political parties in order to establish a fuller picture of citizens' understanding of politics – analyzing their evaluation of political parties and democracies.

2.3. Detailed research plan

In this project, I ask who are the political consumers and why they engage in this form of participation. I analyze how citizens' understanding of their citizenship, political engagements, and political consumerism shape their consumption choices. Additionally, I ask how CSOs frame political consumerism and how these frames travel in society and shape citizens' consumption behaviors. I propose to a) distinguish specific consumption choices and their political underpinnings to avoid conflating consumption choices and political choices; b) establish the socio-economic and political profiles of political consumers in Switzerland over time and space; c) uncover the meaning of political consumerism for citizens and how it relates to conceptions of citizenship and political engagement; d) link the study of individual political engagement to collective action by studying the role of CSOs in framing consumption choices; e) re-construct the processes that lead to political consumerism.

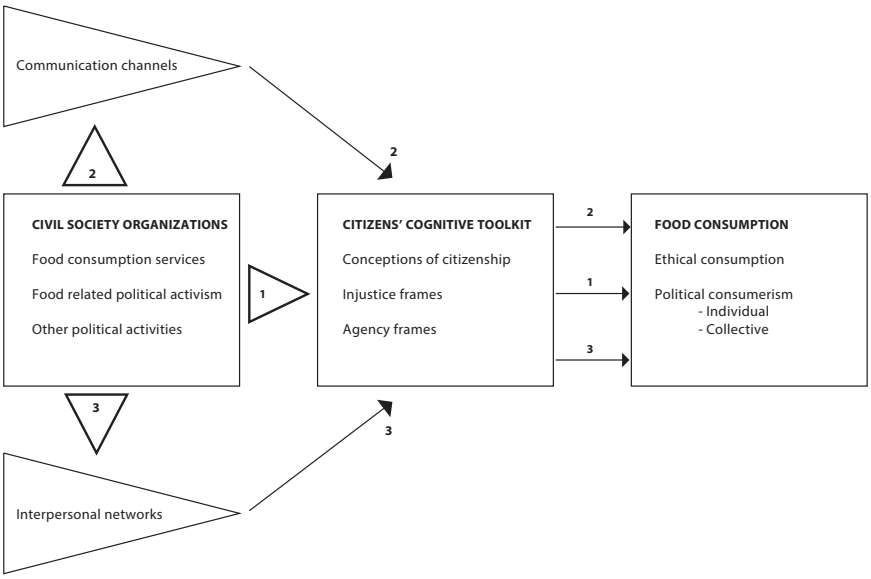
Theoretical framework

Figure 1 summarizes the different empirical components of the study. This scheme is divided in two types of elements. The squares correspond to the three main analytical parts of the project. In the first part of the research, I propose to analyze food consumption practices to distinguish ethical consumption from political consumerism, as well as individual and collective forms. This is done through conceptual work and empirical analysis of existing survey data. In the second part, I focus on citizens' cognitive toolkits – the meaning they attribute to political consumerism, political engagement, and citizenship. This analysis is done through in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis. The third part of the research deals with CSOs and how they shape food consumption choices through mechanisms related to framing processes – the production and diffusion of meaning. This allows studying the collective roots of consumption choices. I analyze the role of CSOs through a mapping of CSOs and framing analysis.

CSOs are connected to two triangles representing diffusion mechanisms, communication channels and interpersonal networks, which are studied indirectly – analyzed through the empirical material collected on citizens and CSOs. Three sets of arrows establish three mechanisms linking CSOs to citizens' consumption practices – be they political or not, individual or collective. A first direct path links CSOs to citizens' cognitive toolkits and consumption practices. This path points at the effects of associational membership and involvement. The other two show indirect influences of CSOs. The second one runs through communication channels including all the publications produced by the CSOs such as their website, leaflets, or journals presenting their activities.

The third one establishes a link running through interpersonal networks, citizens may be exposed to the views of CSOs through discussions with relatives, friends, and acquaintances engaged in CSOs.

Figure 1: Theoretical approach



Distinguishing ethical consumption and political consumerism

In order to face some of the critics addressed to political consumerism (see for instance: Lewis and Potter 2011; Mukherjee and Banet-Weiser 2012), I argue that we need to distinguish behaviors from their underpinning motivations to differentiate ethical consumption and political consumerism. The former refers to the consumption of specific food such as organic, fair trade, or local without a political meaning attached to these consumption behaviors. The choices of products are made based on other motives such as health, taste, or trendiness for instance. On the contrary, the latter points at practices that carry a political meaning. Political consumerism refers to all choices to buy or not to buy goods and services for political reasons. Hence, the same food consumption choices (organic, fair trade, etc.) rest primarily on political considerations when referring to political consumerism, while they build on other motives for ethical consumption.

Having distinguished political consumerism from ethical consumption, an important question remains. What makes any act a political one? van Deth (2012) argues that with the multiplication of creative political participation – acts of political participation that resemble art happening or common everyday practices – one must rely on the meaning that actors attribute to their acts in order to identify political behaviors. This acceptation of political participation falls far from the traditional definition proposed by Verba and Nie (1972: 2), "Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel or the actions they take". At the time, the definition proposed by Verba and Nie challenged the classical focus on electoral participation only. Yet, as time passes alternative forms of political participation gained prominence and raised debates about their political nature. Two decades later, Brady (1999: 737) proposed a broader understanding of political participation as "action by some ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes". Teorell et al. (2007) emphasize four critical elements of this definition: a) political participation entails action, it is a specific behavior; b) this action is performed by ordinary

citizens, that is by non-elite actors; c) it must aim at affecting decisions taken by someone else; d) lastly, the target of the action does not need to be the state or state-related actors, other citizens or businesses can be targeted as well. What is at stake is conflict over dominant values in society.

Another question relates to the individual vs. the collective underpinnings of political consumerism. Michelle Micheletti refers to this action as an "individualized collective action" (2003) taking place when people shop. Thus pointing at the Janus-face of political consumerism that can be both an individual and a collective mode of action. Citizens might base their consumption choices on boycotting campaigns (Balsiger 2010; Dubuisson-Quellier 2013). In this case, it is the individual enactment of a collective political action. But they can also choose individually to act politically through their consumption choices – buying regional products to support the local economy, organic to make a contribution to environment protection, fair trade to guarantee decent working conditions to the producers, etc. without relating these actions to those of others.

Citizens' cognitive toolkits: The roots of political consumerism

In this project, I argue that the choice to buy food for ethical or political reasons and the individual or collective nature of this action can be traced back to specific cognitive toolkits – the meaning that citizens' assign to citizenship and political engagement. Existing research on the political meaning of political consumerism point at thin conceptions of democracy held by political consumers (Huddart Kennedy, Parkins and Johnston 2016). They also reveal the narrow understanding of the political goals behind their actions (Simon 2011). My goal is to uncover meaning-making processes sustaining engagement in political consumerism. I propose to analyze how conceptions of citizenship, injustice frames, and agency frames are related to citizens' political consumerism. Furthermore, I argue that these specific understandings are shaped by involvement in or contacts with CSOs.

The literature on citizens' conceptions of citizenship serves as a foundation for my research. Cynthia Miller Idriss (2006), Ruth Lister (2003), and Sophie Duchesne (1997) have worked extensively on the meaning of citizenship for ordinary citizens. They point at specific conceptions of citizenship that cohabit in a given society. Some people understand citizenship as narrowly related to nationality, while others have a universal understanding of it (Duchesne 1997). It is also notable that some relate it to specific practices of everyday life – complying with the unwritten norms of a given society (Millet-Idriss 2006) or adopting specific behaviors such as working to earn one's living, paying taxes, or engaging in CSOs to contribute to the common good (Lister et al. 2003). These studies point at variations with regards to citizenship understandings. A next step in the analyses of everyday citizenship is to connect these different conceptions to specific political engagements and to understand how they are established. This is exactly what I propose to do here through the study of political consumerism.

Individuals constantly try to make sense of their life and of their social, economic, and political environment (Jasper 1997). Unfortunately, we know very little about processes of meaning-making (Jasper 2010). The construction of meaning is associated with citizens' social interactions, discussions, and readings in various settings of their lives – at work with their colleagues, at home with friends and families, or in CSOs. Individuals' cognitive toolkits are constantly enriched and shaped by personal experiences, conversations with others and with themselves, or major events in society (Passy and Monsch 2014). Networks, be they interpersonal or organizational, shape citizens' understandings of the world. Below I discuss how CSOs contribute to meaning making and present in more details three processes related to it.

Civil society organizations: Meaning-making at the meso-level

In the third part of the project I explore how individual cognitive toolkits are related to frames produced and promoted by CSOs. CSOs shape conceptions of citizenship, political engagement, and political consumerism through framing processes (Goffman 1974). Frames give meaning to events and organize experiences, in so doing they guide action. In this perspective collective action results from social interactions and the goal is to understand how people and groups make sense of their action. It is less a question of structural pre-conditions or the expression of specific values than a process of social interaction related to meaning making. It has a double task of determining the motives for actions and the goals they pursue together (Gamson 1992). Within organizations specific understandings of social problems are debated and constituted (Benford and Snow 2000). Passy and Monsch (2014) explain the importance of injustice and agency frames for political mobilization. They explain how CSOs elaborate and transmit specific understandings of socio-political problems (injustice frames), as well as meaning related to political action, in particular, the understanding that political action is effective to solve a political problem (agency frame). In so doing, they support engagement in contentious participation.

CSOs are multiple and they produce specific meaning related to citizenship, political problems, political engagement, and political consumerism depending on their objectives. I propose to distinguish CSOs active in the food sector according to their focus on offering services or on engaging in political actions (Baglioni et al. 2014). The former comprises organizations that are part of the social and solidary economy – organizations offering services such as selling organic, local, or fair trade products, promoting alternative networks of consumption be it in the form of food baskets, shops, restaurants, or cooperatives, etc. The latter promote alternative modes of consumption as a political ideology. They defend the rights of workers, those of animals, the environment, or the local economy through lobbying and by raising citizens' awareness. These are two ideal-types and some CSOs might fall in between these two cases. The first mapping allows assessing the organizational landscape and evaluating the types of CSOs active in the alternative food sector.

Depending on their focus on services or political action in their core activities, CSOs transmit different messages to their members and to broader audiences. In so doing, they contribute to politicizing citizens. Beckstein (2014) identifies four goals of political consumerism, they can be used to account for CSO's political engagement: 1) Motivate others to modify their own consumption; 2) Influence business actors in the ways they provide goods and services; 3) Address policy-makers and demand changes in regulation; 4) Impact other social life dimension that of ethical consumption (improving working conditions, protecting the environment, fostering community life, etc.). I expect that these four goals are less prominent or even absent in the service-oriented ideal-type of organizations. Hence, these CSOs would promote frames that are less conducive to political engagements. Whereas, in the politically active ones, I anticipate to find these goals and, therefore, they would establish stronger political roots in the practice of food consumption.

Processes behind political engagements – CSOs direct and indirect influence

The influence of CSOs on individuals' cognitive toolkits is analyzed through the study of three processes of politicization. The first and most obvious path refers to membership in CSOs. In different setting people learn how issues can be politicized or depoliticized (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2010) and, in a given group, participants learn the codes of what can be said or not (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Eliasoph and Lichterman 2010). Passy

and Monsch (2014) show that organizational networks influence citizens' cognitive toolkits. Firstly, they do so by sensitizing to specific issues – creating a specific understanding of social issues that include an indignation frame. Secondly, they develop an agency frame – an understanding of one's capacity to act and to effectively influence society and politics on a given issue. Yet, they explain that this is most effective when contentious politics calls for a high commitment. In the case of political consumerism, there is no high commitment required and participation can remain at an individual level. Hence, it is interesting to analyzing how these injustice/indignation and agency frame contribute in understanding political consumerism.

Drawing from the study of processes of collective identity construction will also be useful. Collective identity is a sense of connection to others associated with beliefs about the group, its place in society, and actions in daily life (Whittier 2016). Furthermore, lifestyles are based on shared meanings and they are part of identity project. They are associated with the construction of the self, with everyday routines, and with patterns of consumption (Melucci 2005). They can be defined as routines that include the presentation of the self and consumption patterns (Lorenzen 2012). Early research on consumption examined how lifestyles are shaped by consumption practices (Bauman 2007; Giddens 1991; Schor 1998). These studies help us understand how consumption, at the individual level, is related to processes of belonging and identity construction. Some studies build on Bourdieu (1979) approach in the study of social class and taste. Recent studies developed the concept of an eco-habitus, which is guiding practices in multiple life spheres (Carfagna et al. 2014; Lorenzen 2012). For our analysis, it means that consumption choices are based on processes of identity construction and belonging, but also that they result in specific behaviors that are adopted at some point and repeated over time through the establishment of habits. These can be connected to CSOs. Members of a groups might share collective identities and lifestyles, but more broadly individuals share them with significant others who might be engaged in CSOs.

The construction of lifestyles in particular when related to issues of social distinction and belonging are related to discussions within groups of significant others. In these discussions, some political arguments might appear. Therefore contributing in shaping political stances and being part of politicization processes. Along with discussions about actions and their meaning, conceptions of citizenship and political engagement are two crucial elements in the process of politicization (Simon 2011). In order to be fully political actions taken in the realm of political consumerism require a link to modes of production (Humphery 2011; Sassatelli 2015). This link might take the form of specific understanding of processes of production of goods – awareness of the labor involved in production and sales, the structural inequalities involved, and the threat on the environment. Furthermore, a move towards institutional politics is also important. This means going beyond the market place and engaging in a political conflict with the state in order to politicize an issue and call for regulation by the state.

Methodological approach

This research project builds on a micro- and a meso-level analysis at both levels different methods are combined to answer the research questions. At the micro-level I combine survey data and in-depth interviews, while at the meso-level I work on a detailed mapping of CSOs and an analysis of the frames they produce. In table 1, I present the different datasets used in the empirical part of the research. The research design exploits existing data when possible and complements it with newly collected data that will be made available to other researchers at the end

of the project. The research design requires the involvement of a main researcher (the project applicant) and a PhD candidate.

In order to analyze who engages in political consumerism in Switzerland, how this evolves over time, and what are the political underpinnings of it. I start with an analysis of the Swiss Environmental study (1994, 2007, 2011, and 2017). Andreas Diekmann and his team from the ETH conducted these repeated surveys to study the environmental consciousness and practices of Swiss citizens (N=3'000). Interestingly for my project, this survey asks how frequently respondents buy organic fruit and vegetables and how frequently they eat meet. These questions have not been analyzed yet, while they offer a possibility to analyze specific forms of political consumerism over time. The survey also includes questions about the most important political problems, as well as measures of political attitudes and behaviors. It allows quantifying specific forms of political consumerism in Switzerland and to establish patterns over time and across space. It permits to set the socioeconomic profiles of political consumers in Switzerland over the last twenty years. Additionally, it offers the possibilities to link political consumerism to conceptions of most important political problems and to other political engagements.

Table 1. Data types, availability, and sources

	Data type	Analytical focus	Sources
Micro-level	Survey	Longitudinal approach Links to political attitudes / behaviors	Swiss Environmental Survey (1994, 2007, 2011, 2017)
	Interviews	Study of cognitive toolkits Conceptions of citizenship, political engagement, and political consumerism	To be collected
Meso-level	Mapping	Mapping of CSOs Types of services / political stances	Livewhat & TransSol data
	Frames	Sample CSOs Political actions, aims, and frames	To be collected

I complement the survey with a study of the construction of meaning in citizens' everyday lives through in-depth interviews and grounded theory analyses. I propose to conduct interviews focusing on one urban canton with a rich CSOs scene, namely Geneva. I plan 15 interviews with members of a service-oriented organization, 15 members of a politically active one, and 30 non-members of organizations active in the sector of food consumption. This variation in the types of CSOs allows studying the impact of different framing processes within the associations and different motivations to join CSOs. Among the service-oriented ones, we find associations that promote urban gardening projects, food baskets, and food cooperatives. For the political ones, I include organizations such as Public Eye or Swiss Vegetarian Associations promoting alternative modes of consumption through political campaigns. Members of CSOs will be recruited for the interviews within specific organizations chosen from the mapping of CSOs, while non-members will be recruited in different shopping venues (ethical consumption places and mainstream shops). I rely on snowballing techniques to constitute the samples once established access to the targeted population. The in-depth interviews will be fully transcribed and analyzed using grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006) to uncover processes of meaning-making, how citizens make sense of their citizenship, their political engagement, and their consumption choices be they political or not. The

For the meso-level, the study benefits from its embeddedness in the Institute for Citizenship Studies which hosts a number of key research on the organizational landscape in Switzerland. Two of these datasets are of interest, the LIVEWHAT dataset maps organizations active in alternative forms of political engagement and the TransSol

dataset covers organizations active in the sector of transnational solidarity. These two datasets are a starting point for the mapping of existing CSOs active in the field of ethical food consumption. They will be complemented by on-line searches of additional CSOs active in this field. Once completed, the mapping will be used to sample organizations for the framing analysis. The websites of the CSOs will be coded to analyze the written material presenting their actions, their goals, and their understandings of social problems.

This project establishes a close collaboration with a Ph.D. candidate who will be hired to work on the meso-level part of the study and to write a thesis on this topic. S·he will benefit from my experience in research to learn about data collection and analysis. S·he will also be invited to collaborate on publications and to participate in my research networks. Formally, I cannot be the supervisor hence Marco Giugni will take this responsibility. As the project will benefit from existing data collected under the supervision of Marco Giugni, Livewhat and TransSol data, we will establish close collaboration with him and his collaborators. Furthermore, the project includes the use of the Swiss Environmental Survey conducted at the ETH in Zurich. Since I plan to use this data, I have been in touch with Heidi Brüderer Enzler who is conducting the last wave of the survey taking place in the spring of 2017. We plan to collaborate for this last wave of the survey, Prof. Brüderer Enzler offered to include a few questions in this last wave. Furthermore, I will collaborate with Dietlind Stolle for the quantitative analysis of political consumerism. This will be highly beneficial for my research since Dietlind Stolle is an expert on political consumerism. Lastly, as an external member of the CREEC group at the university of Lausanne, I often discuss ideas with Florence Passy and we will collaborate for the qualitative part of the study, in particular for the study of conceptions of citizenship. Florence Passy is a well-known scholar in the field of social movement, altruism, and cognitions. My research would greatly benefit from collaboration with her.

2.4. Schedule and milestones

The project includes ten milestones over the four years of the research. These correspond to the main outcomes of the project in terms of publications, datasets, and dissemination of the main findings. I plan to write three articles related to the project (Milestones 1, 2, and 7), as well as a book (M8). The PhD thesis also counts as one major outcome of the project and constitutes one of the milestones (M9). Furthermore, the research instruments (M3 & M5) and the datasets produced within the framework of the project will be made available to the scientific community at the end of the project (M4 and M6). Lastly, the research findings will be discussed in the scientific community through a conference organized at the university of Geneva (M10). They will also be presented to the CSOs which participated in the research at a workshop organized with them (M10).

Semesters	*Project part*	*Research phase & task*	*Milestones*
Fall 2017	Pre-project	Recruit PhD candidate	Team ready to start in Jan. 2018
Spring 2018	Theory	Consumption as political act	M1: Article 1 – Review article
Fall 2018	Micro: survey	Longitudinal analysis	M2: Article 2 – Longitudinal analysis
	Meso: mapping	Mapping of CSOs & coding scheme	M3: Frames codebook
Spring 2019	Meso: survey	Framing analysis	M4: Frames dataset
Fall 2019	Micro: interviews	Interview guide for interviews, sampling	M5: Interview guidelines
Spring 2020	Micro: interviews	Interviews & transcription	M6: In-depth interviews
Fall 2020	Micro: interviews		M7: Article 3 – Political conceptions
Spring 2021	Dissemination	Publication of main findings	M8: Book Manuscript M9: PhD Thesis
Fall 2021	Dissemination	CSOs workshop & scientific conference	M10: Project events

2.5. Relevance and impact

The proposed project makes three scientific contributions. Firstly, it develops a research agenda in a field that is under-studied in Switzerland and abroad. It analyses the politics of everyday life. In times of political turmoil, with the rise of populist parties and actors, with a mounting dissatisfaction with political institutions observed among citizens, it is very important to understand how citizens invest other life spheres in order to achieve political goals and to promote political ideals in their everyday life. This project focuses on one such form of everyday life political participation, political consumerism, and it proposes to uncover its roots in specific conceptions of citizenship, as well as in frames promoted by CSOs. Secondly, in so doing, the project makes a theoretical contribution. It underwrites understandings of citizenship, examining how processes of meaning making at the individual and the collective level shape them. In political sociology, we know very little about citizens' conceptions of politics. We build on research in political theory to analyze citizens' engagement, but we cannot establish what are the individuals' specific understandings of politics and how these relate to their political actions. Thirdly, the project makes a theoretical contribution to the study of social movements. In this field, we know little about processes of meaning-making that support individual action. I propose to understand how CSOs construct and disseminate ideas about political problems and social transformations. A direct influence is studied through associational membership and activism. However, indirect paths are less studied because they are more difficult to grasp. I propose to explain how CSOs shape citizens' cognitive toolkits directly and indirectly.

The project also contributes in establishing my career as a political sociologist specializing on everyday political engagements. It grants me the opportunity to run my own research project, to establish a small team working on the project, and to disseminate broadly the results of this project. In so doing, it reinforces my academic independence and gives visibility to my research. At the end of the project, I will be able to compete for professorship and to further develop my research agenda. Thus, contributing to the diversity, creativity, and richness of the Swiss academic scene.

The potential impact of the project goes beyond scientific achievements. This project may benefit civil society as well. In particular, it allows CSOs to better understand how they can influence individual behaviors when seeking support for political campaigns and promoting social change. Furthermore, for the state, it is important to understand the mechanisms behind political disaffiliation in order to fight against it. All political theorists agree that democracies require the tacit consent of citizens and some active involvement. They disagree about the involvement required, but blunt apathy is not advisable. Hence, it is crucial for the state to understand processes of disaffiliation but also potential path towards active participation. This project analyses citizenship conceptions, how they are established, and what is their impact on political engagement. In so doing, it allows promoting desired forms of citizenship and political engagement. For instance, it can help designing citizenship courses for children in school that help promoting a lively citizenry. Lastly, the study of political consumerism as part of everyday life politics allows understanding better how citizens – at different stages in their lives – adopt durable practices for political reasons or not. This is interesting when seeking to promote civic awareness and civic behaviors in relation not only to consumption, but also to the use of energy, recycling, green mobility, or any other practices supporting sustainability and based on everyday compliance of citizens with specific norms and values.

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