

Each of these four theoretical frameworks is presented in depth in a chapter by leading authors (respectively: Robert Boyer, François Eymard-Duvernay, Alain Caillé, Fabian Muniesa and Michel Callon), but three other theoretical contributions (by Lucien Karpik on the economics of singularities, André Orléan on the economic sociology of money, Emmanuel Lazega on the cooperation between competitors) display other and/or newer perspectives. All of them clearly identify the way each theory contributes to economic sociology, illustrates it and supports it through a comprehensive set of references.

Among the other chapters

- three are clearly devoted to a specific topic: Frederic Lebaron (on the training of economists and its symbolic implications), Philippe Steiner (on organ transplantation), and Patrice Flichy (on how Internet became a market) present well-documented empirical studies.

- eight are review articles on various objects of economic sociology (management tools, economic calculation in everyday life, services to individuals, entrepreneurship, financial markets, uses of money, performance measurement at work, consumption as social practice).

The categorization of chapters we have established is not the one that is used in the book, that is divided in five parts (the Introduction and Chapter 1 set aside, these are: The economic fact as social fact, Economic representations, The social construction of markets, Competition as a social relation, The economy as ordinary practice), but ours simply seemed more logical and practical. Even this one, though, is not really clear-cut. For example, you'll find deep theoretical insights in Steiner's chapter, Godechot's one on financial markets clearly contrasts with the usual focus of social studies of finance on performativity by displaying a much wider array of theoretical and empirical approaches, and 14 of the 35 pages of the Muniesa & Callon's contribution are devoted to empirical studies.

Generally speaking, this edited book, which was and still is the first French one specifically devoted to economic sociology, presents a strikingly diverse, rich and stimulating approach of the field. If we get back to the 2005 edition of the *Handbook* we talked about at the beginning, we can remark none of the 7 theoretical approaches presented in the *Traité* is distinctively exposed in it. A significant part of the research reviewed or exposed in the other chapters was not mentioned in the *Handbook*.

If you read French, you probably already know the work of some of the contributors, but this book will give you a mind-opening view of economic sociology and may urge you to contribute to its renewal by giving you a set of tools and ideas designed for it. If you don't, you may exert some pressure on editors to get it translated. Let's just hope it won't take 15 years to read it in English, as it was the case for Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot's masterpiece *On Justification*.

Book: Rainer Diaz-Bone, ed., 2011, *Soziologie der Konventionen: Grundlagen einer pragmatischen Anthropologie*. Campus: Frankfurt/Main.

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While economic sociologists have started to engage with conventions in recent years, the sociological enterprise at large still awaits their reception, at least outside of France. For the German-speaking audience this could change with a new book whose title translates into English as "Sociology of Conventions: Foundations of a Pragmatic Anthropology." Released in the prestigious Campus series "Theory and Society," the collection of essays by members and affiliates of the *Économie des Conventions* (EC) will surely catch attention.

Edited by Rainer Diaz-Bone, the volume consists of nine texts, originally published between 1993 and 2007 mainly in English but also adding a few which were previously available only in French. The book relies on a set of translations, which was first produced for an issue of the French-German online journal *Trivium*. These four essays can still be downloaded for free (<http://trivium.revues.org/3557>). But those who look for a more comprehensive overview of the development and some applications of EC's core ideas will appreciate the editor's decision to commission the translation of five additional essays into German for the book.

"Sociology of Conventions" comes with two claims: Not only has the EC achieved for a sociological analysis of the economy in France what the new economic sociology has done in the United States. It has also developed a distinct contribution to the theory of action and institutions. For both claims, the book offers extensive textual evidence. The second one is perhaps most unrecognized. It opens up

the reception of the work of and around Boltanski and Thévenot in Germany *beyond* the current interest in a sociology of everyday criticism, spearheaded by the heirs to the Frankfurt School. For economic sociology, the claim to a distinct social theory may mean a caveat not to assimilate too quickly conventions *merely* as another explanatory variable and simply squeeze them in somewhere between institutions, networks, and culture. The book does not advocate against such use. But the selection of texts demonstrates that exclusively taking such a route could miss the larger social theoretical offer of the EC.

Diaz-Bone's introduction rightfully cautions against the potential misunderstanding to equate conventions with customs or *ad hoc* agreements. The intellectual project of the EC aims at a quite different layer of collective existence. It is concerned with the exploration of variable forms of intersubjectivity and their link to action. This becomes most visible in the notion of "orders of worth," explored in the opening essay by Boltanski and Thévenot. Orders of worth link action with different forms of justice through the patterns of valuation they respectively imply. The authors start from the observation that social action can be criticized for the relative size it recognizes in persons and objects as well as their ways of relating to each other. Any such criticism, they argue, will necessarily be based on a different order of worth, which is thereby introduced into the situation as a competing principle of justice. Because the presence of multiple orders of worth undermines the shared qualifications of actors and objects, radical uncertainty ensues, which disrupts joint action. It can only be restituted by making the diverging definitions of the situation accord again. This is done by putting criticism and justifications to test.

The essay written by Nicolas Dodier goes beyond a discussion of this neo-pragmatist action model and makes clear why analysts should pay attention to conventions. The key challenge for actors in a situation, the argument goes, consists in the adjustment to each other. Dodier shows how giving accounts and ethnomethods can serve as coordination devices. But the coordination allowed by them is bound to the here and now and depends on the continuous and unending production of order each time anew. Conventions, by contrast, extend the scope of coordination in time and space because actions can rely on the legitimacy granted by conventions. Together with qualified objects present in a situation, conventions serve as anchors for action, which, in turn, allow the relaxation of assumptions regarding actors.

This point runs through almost all texts. Actors are boundedly rational, yet the usual sociological solution of socialization is rejected as being too inflexible. Hence, common knowledge among actors, simply presupposed by neoclassical economics, cannot be sufficiently explained by referring to the immersion into a social group. It is rather the very achievement that is brought about by conventions. For it to work, actors need to be endowed with interpretive skills. This is made most clear in a programmatic essay collectively authored by almost all the economists who launched the research program of the EC more than twenty years ago – the most lucid and comprehensive overview of the intellectual project of the EC in the book. According to the authors, conventions foreground what is pertinent and what is to be neglected. Thus, conventions can be seen as interpretive repertoires serving cognitive and evaluative functions *at the same time*.

At the latest here, sociologists will be reminded of institutions. But the early writings on conventions, Christian Bessy helpfully recounts in his essay, have shunned institutions because of a skepticism that they cannot, by themselves, secure coordination. Institutions, understood as rules, were seen as incomplete. To bridge the gap between a rule and its conditions of application, the interpretive effort by actors was emphasized. Conventions were suggested to come into play exactly at this point, either as backing up or weakening the validity of institutions. In examining current positions within the EC, Bessy notes divergent standpoints over the relation between rules and action and separates an explanatory pole from an interpretive one. He points out that they may not be fully incompatible but unfortunately does not describe in detail how this could exactly be conceived. In many ways, his contribution is the richest and most intricate text of the book. It pursues a much needed debate about the relation between conventions and institutions. However, it is symptomatic that even in Bessy's treatment new economic institutionalists and Durkheim still remain the only critical reference points before turning to philosophy for alternatives. As conventions are now debated much wider, it will be important that all existing institutionalist variants from the social sciences be included in the discussion.

Towards the end of the volume two additional chapters are included by Thévenot. They extend the horizontal plurality of orders of worth by a vertical plurality of regimes of engagement. The proposal can be seen as EC's latest contribution to action theory, intending to denaturalize action as a fixed form of human activity: Engagement results from

the way actors relate to their environment, particularly to objects. Regimes differ in generality regarding the information format they allow, the constitution of the actor, and the requirements to be fulfilled for coordinating with others. The research projects, which inspired the regimes of engagement and which are shortly described at the end of the chapters, sound highly interesting and should be given a closer look. They also testify to the thematic breath of empirical work that is undertaken within French sociology in the wake of the conventionalist movement. Here, more than a few gems may be found!

“Sociology of Conventions” is a timely book. Even if partially a challenging read, it will undoubtedly spur the reception of the EC in Germany. By assembling dispersed key statements of the EC movement between a book cover, it provides the chance for a deep and comparative reading. To what extent its claims should be adopted, can now stand to an informed, hopefully productive and empirically grounded debate.