

More generally, Swedberg explains very well why Tocqueville did not really develop a coherent system of political economy. Unlike Smith, Marx, or even his friend John Stuart Mill, Tocqueville had no interest in abstracting purely economic mechanisms. From this perspective, the book title *Tocqueville's Political Economy* may sound a little misleading. Tocqueville's thought profoundly differed from that of other political economists of his time. Swedberg characterizes Tocqueville's method as "synthetic" rather than "analytic". But, as Swedberg also recognizes, the accepted practice of modern social science – especially economics – is more often analytic than synthetic. In this sense, Tocqueville's reluctance to systematize his ideas can appear as a weakness for his posterity as a political economist. Today, we still find Tocqueville's ideas quite profound; but we often don't understand how they cohere, and we find it difficult to teach our students Tocqueville's method.

Despite this resilient mystery in Tocqueville's "way of thinking," he remains relevant to us because of his quite modern, empirically grounded view of social science. The advantage of Tocqueville's distaste for abstract systems of ideas is that he never tried to force reality into his intellectual categories. As a result, he developed remarkable insights on the interactions between economies, societies, and politics. Swedberg's argument is broadly convincing in this regard, and his book consequently provides an excellent introduction to Tocqueville's work. It is also a timely book for anyone who wants to understand the on-going vitality of scholarly fields such as economic sociology, or economic constructivism and historical institutionalism in political science. Tocqueville's work exemplifies some of the best scholarship that can be produced on political economy – yet his approach is quite different than the analytical framework of contemporary economics.

Book: Hann, Chris, and Keith Hart, eds, 2009: *The Great Transformation Today*. Cambridge University Press.

Reviewer: Kurtuluş Gemici, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, Germany, gemici@mpifg.de

Karl Polanyi's lifelong intellectual pursuit and passion was to expose the limits and disastrous outcomes of "the economic fallacy" and to contrast it with the "reality of society" – the "relationship of persons" that constitutes the fabric of social life (Polanyi 1936; Somers 1990). Po-

lanyi's warrant comes into sharper focus today, as the world economy experiences a massive crisis. This refocusing is what the edited volume by two prominent anthropologists, Chris Hann and Keith Hart, aims to achieve. In this timely volume, the editors and contributors do not probe Polanyi solely through *analyse de texte*, but strive to transpose a fine-grained reading of Polanyi's major work onto the theoretical and empirical analysis of markets and societies in today's world. In so doing, they enrich and expand Polanyi's enduring research agenda.

The volume includes broad theoretical essays as well as chapters combining empirical examination and theoretical reflection. In chapter 2 for instance, Gudeman, writing on markets, claims that "all economies are both embedded and disembedded", because all economies involve – simultaneously – mutuality and market, community and impersonal trade. Chapter 3, by Beckert, presents an authoritative look at the strange career of embeddedness, in particular at the twists and turns in economic sociology's appropriation of the concept. In chapter 4, Steiner investigates the affinities between Polanyi, Durkheim, and Durkheim-inspired sociology, drawing attention to the role of economic knowledge. In chapter 5, Servet offers an excursion into the question of economic value, specifically the moral boundaries and social relations that permeate the use of money and the functioning of market. Chapter 8 by Gregory is a first-rate analysis of Polanyi's "conceptual toolbox," and includes an extended discussion of householding, reciprocity, redistribution, and money-making. In chapter 9, Spittler critically examines the analytical categories and dichotomies of *The Great Transformation* through a comparative anthropology of work. The rest of the volume comprises diverse empirical chapters, including analyses of union politics in Central India and obstacles to a Polyanian counter-movement (chapter 10 by Parry), community recycling schemes and redistribution in London (chapter 12 by Alexander), the partial commodification of environmental conservation in Jamaica (chapter 13 by Carrier), and "non-market disembedding" under socialism (Hann's intriguing chapter 14). While the quality is at times a bit uneven, a remarkable feature of the empirical chapters is that all authors devote themselves to the interpretation of their accumulated work in the light of Polanyi. Given the recent economic crisis, three chapters are particularly relevant: Hart on money (chapter 6), Graeber on debt (chapter 7), and chapter 11 by Guyer on price, composites, and commodification of risk.

There is much to recommend in this collection. There is a consistent thematic focus, if not theoretical unity, connecting the chapters. The theoretical essays are insightful and concerned with some of the most important aspects of Polanyi's work. The empirical analyses construct a fascinating dialogue between Polanyian themes and market-society relations in an impressive reach across diverse parts of the world. But perhaps the biggest virtue of this collection is the critical and constructive approach it takes toward both Polanyi and *The Great Transformation*. This approach acknowledges that Polanyi asks the most pertinent and far-sighted questions on market and society, but that he does not necessarily give the most consistent and rigorous answers to those questions. This is one of the reasons why learning from Polanyi is rewarding and generative. Nevertheless, a Polanyi-inspired research program on market and society faces several hurdles. Both the editors, in their introduction, and Don Robotham, in a thoughtful afterword, outline some of these obstacles. Accordingly, the attempt to go beyond The Great Trans

formation and the larger corpus of Polanyi's work in analyzing market-society relations is a recurring theme in the book.

This edited volume is essential reading for anyone interested in Karl Polanyi and the continuing relevance of his work. Because it provides both an overview and examples of research in Polanyian economic anthropology, it has further appeal to sociologists who want to acquire familiarity with a discipline whose agenda offers fruitful overlap with research in economic sociology.

References

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- Somers, Margaret R.**, 1990: Karl Polanyi's Intellectual Legacy. In: K. Polanyi-Levitt, ed., *The Life and Work of Karl Polanyi*. New York, NY: Black Rose Books, 152-158.