

matter...and, second, that it needs to be criticized anyway' (ibid.). But equally, the capacity to defuse and deflect critique is fundamental to the maintenance of the kind of institutional power that makes (certain kinds of) economics matter (see Morgan, 2015). Perhaps, then, this collection should be judged in terms of its capacity to provoke change in the economics profession, and the 'acts of economizing' (Muniesa, 2014) that might be enabled in a world where neoclassical economists find themselves on the back foot.

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Book: Sparsam Jan, 2015: *Wirtschaft in der New Economic Sociology. Eine Systematisierung und Kritik*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS

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With the overall discipline of Sociology continuously debating its own crisis, it seems remarkable that this crisis has, at least according to most scholars from the field, never seri-

ously affected the subfield of New Economic Sociology (NES). In his dissertation on the academic practices within the subfield, Jan Sparsam strongly criticizes this self-perception by characterizing what he perceives as a number of fundamental deficits.

As the central objects of NES, the author identifies the conceptualization of economic matters, the principles of sociologically explaining economic phenomena, the economy as a dynamic order, as well as explanations and critiques of (socio-)economic specifics and their continuous transformation (25ff). Starting from the hypothesis that NES systematically fails to meet these aspirations, Sparsam aspires to offer a metatheoretical critique of New Economic Sociology. His empirical basis constitutes central concepts of central authors; namely Harrison White, Mark Granovetter, Neil Fligstein, and Jens Beckert. The selection of these four theoretical approaches follows a dual principle: firstly, these are only perspectives aspiring to propose a general sociology of the economy and which, secondly, do not derive their principles from the field of rational choice theories.

After introducing the topic and research question in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 formulates the analytical framework of the study (inspired by Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School and some of its successors). Chapter 3 then describes the development of NES as an independent discipline. As the emergence of the field of NES did not only derive from Parsionian sociology's increasing inability to explain economic developments from the 1970s onwards, but also from similar (though more genuine) limitations of neoclassical economics, Chapter 4 explains the latter's shortcomings as the object of NES's critique. By reconstructing a selection of the writings published by the above four authors, Sparsam then goes on to substantiate the main thesis of his work. He concludes his immanent critique of the four approaches by offering the suggestion that none of the authors manage to take into account the very preconditions of the objects they attempt to explain. From a Marxist perspective, these preconditions, Sparsam explicates, can be subsumed under the term of the capitalist mode of production, namely profit-making through capital accumulation and (re-)investment as a goal in itself (1), the particular price form of commodities and its effect on measurability (2), the systemic character and the internal logic of the economy (3) and the effect economization on other societal spheres (4).

As one central deficit of the approaches discussed, Sparsam names insufficient references to 'the classics' of sociological reflections on the economy. At least with regards to the mainly meso-level focused and largely case-study based research, a lot of which was published in the *American Journal of Sociology* starting from the 1970s, such a tendency can be observed (although, for example, quite a lot of Georg Simmel's work can be found cited in the writings on network-analysis). In my opinion, this argument works only as long as you do not include scholars whose work intersect with NES (such as Wolfgang Streeck or Fred Block). By looking closer at the more recent writings of Jens Beckert on fictional expectations, who basically deals with Weber's ideas on rationalization, or the field-theoretical approach of Fligstein and McAdam, Sparsam neglects their explicit and (in my opinion) relatively far-reaching implications and references to classical authors and texts. Interestingly, while recognizing Beckert's attempt to systematically introduce a concept of agency into NES's theorizing, similar proposals by the Fligstein and McAdam are more or less ignored. If, and here I agree with Sparsam, NES attempts to establish a narrative of being immediately connected to the classics, I would welcome his critique.

Formally, the book is well-written and neatly structured and it is remarkable how much literature Sparsam incorpo-

rates into the text. All in all, however, and to be plainly honest, I am not really sure what to make of this book. I am convinced that Sparsam has carefully read everything he quotes from the authors, and from what I understand, he perceives a lack of a macro-perspective on 'Capitalism' as a comprehensive system. By confronting NES with what he describes as his own goals (or better: what he defines to be the goals of NES), his arguments derive their contours from a discrepancy between nominal aim and academic practice. Although I strongly sympathize with the argument, I am, however, not sure in how far I share Sparsam's description of NES's goals.

Coming from a tradition of Parsonian sociology, young scholars from the 1970s turned to meso-sociological thinking not least for the reason that they perceived macro-theories such as Parsons' as too ample and complex to explain the rapidly changing economy. While Sparsam does account for the intraprofessional negotiations of the discipline's representatives during the 1970s and 1980s, a stronger empirical focus on the ongoing within this community (i.e. a perspective established from the angle of a sociology of professions) could reveal more specific insights on the emergence and development of NES as an epistemic community.