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Book Reviews

A Postcapitalist Politics. By J.K. Gibson-Graham. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press 2006. Pp. 276. US\$ 25.00 (paper). ISBN 0–8166–4804–2¹

J.K. Gibson-Graham's² *A Postcapitalist Politics* is relevant to sociologists, as well as other scholars and organizers, drawn to activist research. The authors construct a *politics of language*, dislodging the “macronarrative” of capitalism; a *politics of the subject*, welcoming subjects who desire non-capitalist ways of being; and, a strategy for *collective action* through poststructuralist action research.

Through deconstruction and a queering of the economy, Gibson-Graham create a vocabulary for the diverse economy, to broaden our imaginations about what work, exchange, and business are. The authors offer a pie chart showing that, at most, half of our daily work (in the U.S.) is capitalist. A good portion of our work is non-capitalist household, cooperative, or governmental work. And yet we see ourselves, without question in most cases, as participants in a capitalist economy.

Creating a language of the diverse economy goes hand in hand with developing non-capitalist subjectivities. Gibson-Graham look at the power of Economic (by which they mean capitalocentric) rhetoric in creating a “hegemonic system of subjects, relationships, institutions, and practices” (50). The authors also identify momentary cracks and openings that could, if cultivated, allow for the emergence of “different kinds of being,” borrowing William Connolly's phrase.

Aware of the challenges in creating such spaces of becoming, Gibson-Graham embrace Eve Sedgwick's proposal for “weak theory.” That is, they make room for hope and the not-yet-fully-realized in order to nurture non-capitalist

¹ A longer version of this review was published in “Social Problems Forum” (Summer 2006), the newsletter for the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

² J.K. Gibson-Graham is a pen name for Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson, both feminist economic geographers who have collaborated on a number of prior publications, including the recently re-issued, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Graham teaches at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Gibson teaches at Australian National University in Canberra.

subjectivities. (Though not explicitly described this way, the authors' collaborative pen name is an experiment in alternative authorial subjectivity.)

While immersed in postmodern ideas about language and subjectivity, Gibson-Graham do, refreshingly, recommend certain kinds of collective action, and they “tentatively” offer the community economy as an alternative “nodal point” (78).

Gibson-Graham use the phrase community economy carefully, avoiding “normative ideals of community as a fullness and a positivity” (86). They do not assume that a community economy is the same thing as a local, green, or socially responsible economy. They define community economy more openly as “an ethical space” where participants can decide how to generate and use surplus, how to create direct well-being, and how to develop and use the commons (86).

Gibson-Graham enact their politics of subjectivity, language, and collective action through their action research projects (and through their writings.) *A Postcapitalist Politics* details a number of exciting action research projects in the Latrobe Valley of Australia; in the Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts; and in the Jagna municipality of the Philippines.

A Postcapitalist Politics brings the economy down to size and shares inspiring examples of community enterprises. Gibson-Graham devote a chapter to Mondragón, an impressive production cooperative in the Basque region of Spain with over 30,000 worker-owners, and its own credit union, housing system, and university. They also mention Mararikulam in the Kerala province of India, which is helping to create women's savings groups, credit associations, and production cooperatives.

Gibson-Graham contribute to academic culture through their international and collaborative ways of working. They are models of public intellectuals, popularizing their work through a website (www.communityeconomies.org) and aligning themselves with “the movement of movements,” as articulated in the World Social Forums. They also invoke the ubiquity of feminism as their political inspiration and show that knowledge production is a valuable way of being political.

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