

Alter Political Economy

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Sociologists such as Simmel, Tönnies, Durkheim, or Weber defined various kinds of solidarity: national, religious, guild, and kinship. In the 19th and 20th century, their ideas and identifications competed in the political arenas across Europe and USA (Stjernø 2004). In their theories, the economy as *social process* was identified with the economics as (socially conditioned) *theory* (Hopkins 1957), and their habitus was nation-state (Graeber 2004; comp. Smith 2010 [1876]). Taking into account the diversity of human natural and cultural environments, and historical shifts in the political and economic conditions, we realize that the phenomenon of stress and group forming, belonging and sharing must be much older and more diverse than the idea of *solidarity*, the promise of the French Revolution.

The concept of solidarity is ambiguous: it includes mechanisms of taxes and redistribution, charity, altruistic contributions

and political support, social policy, concessions, grants, funds, food, clothes, social entrepreneurship, sponsorship, NGOs, etc. Communitarianism, equality and progress are their ideological pillars. Solidarity in mass culture is a form of ideational and tangible redistribution. Sociology based on the Marxist tradition has been rejecting perpetuation and masking of fundamental economic, social and political *inequalities*, but their classless society remained attached to nation-states. Following the game theory in the late 20th century, sociological and economic solidarity became a matter of rational choice among alternatives of group belonging (intentional communities) that could bring the greatest "profit" to an individual (Komter 2005).

Anthropology initially used the expertise of European sociology, political science, law and economics. Anthropologists have reported about internal balance, "social security" and cooperation in a number of non-European and preindustrial *communities*, which have been by default referred in the west as archaic. In the 20th century, anthropology and ethnology remained on the imperial and heritage margins of culture and science.

When Garrett Hardin declared the tragedy of commons (1968), the divide between mainstream sociology, economics and anthropology in the American west seemed to be sealed. His writing was an application of the game theory, with separated, misinformed and mistrusted members of society (methodological individualism). In his view, neither socialist state nor commons were suitable as property owners for environmental challenges of the global future. In time of cold war, such an announcement looked quite logical to western readers and became a common sense among many students and future scholars in ecology and economics.

Persistence of economic and environmental anthropologist at small-scale, face-to-face communities and ethnographic research has reversibly influenced political and economic thought. Elinor Ostrom (2003, 2009), accepted Robert Netting's stance from his book *Balancing on an Alp* (1981), that it is possible and sustainable to practice common (pool) management, especially in areas with small communities. In short, I see at least four aspects of Ostrom's communitarian intervention, important for our understanding of mainstream western political economy. First, Ostrom also used the game theory, but this time to prove quite the opposite as Hardin. Second, she explicitly used Netting's description of management in an (Alpine) community to reintroduce an *alternative* to mainstream economics, but she barely mentioned anthropology in her book (2003). Third, she became and remained the only woman to win the Nobel Prize in economics (2009).

Fourth, western economic theories (mercantilism, classical and political economy) have been standing on influx of various (“unlimited”) riches coming from the newly established colonies, emerging world trade system and church-like organisations. Alternative models (heresies) in economics gather momentum and recognition only in times of perceived environmental and social crises.

To overcome subsistential problems after the global financial crisis in 2008, many people recalled and established different communitarian models of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption. The mainstream theory and media called them “alternative economic practices”: cooperatives, agrarian commons, immediate supply networks, social enterprises, housing communities, etc. (Simonič 2014a). The recent reinvention and reinforcement of community and resilience in the USA and (southern) Europe pulled anthropological methodology close to this kind of public discussions (Graeber 2011).

Anthropology never definitively adopted the concept of solidarity, at least not in the same manner as sociology and economics. For Mauss (1966 [1925]), solidarity was an ideological side of established social order. Solidarity can arise from either contractual arrangements of individualised types of society and market exchange *or* through gift-giving of mainly non-European, primitive, stateless societies (Kula and Potlach as core examples). Economic anthropology proposed the concept of *reciprocity* – a continuum of moral obligations along the processes of *exchange* (Malinowski 2002 [1922]; Mauss 1966 [1925]; Lévi-Strauss 2015 [1955]; Polanyi 1957; Sahlin 1972). Certainly after Polanyi (1957), economic anthropology readily criticized catalactic fundamentalism in the study of (economic) life of humans. Society and economy are much more complex and cannot be reduced to market merits and objectives (Gudeman 2005; Hann and Hart 2009; Hart, Laville and Cattani 2010). Anthropology added many new examples of human organisations, economies and their indicators: *hunters and gatherers, herders, tribal communities, households, kinship, gender, age, bridewealth, inheritance, magic, all kinds of informal economies* etc. In terms of the history of sociological theory, reciprocity would originally fit within “organic community” (Tönnies, 2001 [1887]) or “mechanical solidarity” (Durkheim 1984 [1893]). The division of labour between anthropology and sociology also looks like the relation between micro level (family, small scale, face-to-face community, etc.) and macro level (nation, international community). A sharp division though is not possible, because of many initiatives from both scientific disciplines to overcome the boundaries: sociologists are concerned with the problems of the family, village communities, and diverse

interest groups, and anthropologists nowadays regularly evaluate nations, administrations, and global dynamics.

Reciprocity has ever since been loaded with meanings and usages. Reciprocity has become a general concept, specific moral obligations of primitive, preindustrial societies, which must be recognised and used in our time. For Mauss, reciprocity was a “third-way” political project as *alternative* to “two extremes”: individualist liberalism and collectivist communism (Mauss 1966: 63-69). In this sense, his theory of reciprocity was a successor of the nineteenth-century French *solidarisme* movement (Narotzky 2007). Further, history and epistemology of economic anthropology was explained in relation to *anarchism*, to self-organisation, voluntary associations, mutual aid, likewise rejection of the state and all kinds of structural violence (Graeber 2004: 3). A hundred years after Malinowski and Mauss, and after several decades of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005), the anthropological third-way appeared in the form of *human economy*, related to alter-globalisation movement from Puerto Alegre (Hart, Laville and Cattani 2010; Pleyers 2010; comp. Gregorčič, Babič and Kozinc 2018). In France, the *Mouvement anti-utilitariste dans les sciences sociales* (M.A.U.S.S.) promotes a similar approach. Prior to that *moral economy* dealt with questions of social scope and ethics (Thompson 1971; Scott 1976).

As with solidarity, meaning and experiences of reciprocity are cumulative and ambiguous. As we try to get inside of how reciprocity works, “we get sucked into concrete historical specificity and away from reciprocity as a category – a political category” (Narotzky 2007: 407). From a point of view of economic anthropology, it is worth studying reciprocity and solidarity as forces of integration and group building. They function in households, kinships, fraternities, lodges, guilds, agrarian communities, villages, municipalities, neighbourhoods, states, religious communities, family enterprises, cooperatives, unions, universities, factories, communes, in fair trade, clubs, squats, gardening communities, collaborative consumption, local money, universal basic income, etc. An important part of corporate business is of course based on specific internal solidarity and reciprocity. Some call it “corporate socialism”.

Reciprocity, redistribution and market (Polanyi 1957) were intended to describe various forms of exchange and (moral, juridical) obligations. They detected all kinds of circulations of things, concepts and people, and the motivations that drove them. Less attention in anthropology and consequently the anthropological study of reciprocity was devoted to production side and property (Meilassoux 1972; Neveling and Trapido 2015). Mauss was not interested in the production

of valuables, but exchange (sociability) of gifts and visits. Yet, modern farmers' or workers' cooperatives, which Mauss wished to promote, were meant to be self-managed *production*, "co-operation" units (Marshall 2010, comp. Kropotkin 1972 [1902]). Cooperatives spread in the nineteenth century and represented a communitarian response of farmers and workers to an industrialised and financialized states. Cooperatives nurtured solidarity and security for their members, and together they competed with other state and private agents – on the economic and political market. They represented the *intentional* solidarity and reciprocity of groups and networks, distinct to *kinship* based belonging. However, the implementation and the quality of the cooperation, reciprocity, solidarity and belonging vary from case to case.

Due to the ideology of economic growth and mercantilism, commons have been expropriated and adapted (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). Companies like AirBnB or Uber are good examples of modern enclosures. They have both benefited from the digital exchange of information, quite differently from i.e. Linux several decades ago (Bollier 2014). AirBnB stands on the original idea of Couchsurfing, and Uber on the original idea of car sharing. Instead of open-access and immediate sharing of available resources, a third party stepped in and has capitalised on communications and transactions. In capitalism, alternatives or third-way economic ideologies and practices are often transformed into business models, and integrated in state policies. Internet is certainly an important modern tool. Even though our volume misses a separate essay on the topic, modern communication and network technologies are inscribed in many: as a source of reference, as an integration mechanism or as a promotional extension of groups, communities and organisations.

Volume *Anthropological Perspective of Solidarity and Reciprocity* brings together articles on different kinds of group building and bonding. The authors use various concepts to describe specific scopes of (economic) activities: human economy, moral economy, solidarity economy, even leisure commodity, or higher cause.

The first two articles are historically comparative. Jadran Kale writes about the historical development of three types of *commons* in the Eastern Adriatic. Recently, they became a matter of local identity and political power in the fields of agriculture and tourism. Peter Simonić discusses historical shifts of communitarianism in the Trenta valley and explains them in relation to political economy and ethnoecology of the Alpine region. Family, village, commons, cooperatives and tourism societies are successive and interdependent *institutions* of reciprocity and solidarity.

The second group is the largest and brings together different responses to recent ecological, economic and political crises. The article by Silvia Contessi and Cristina Grasseni looks at the emergence of *re-localised food supply networks* in northern Italy. The authors problematize the often naïve trust and solidarity between farmers and consumers. They point out some inconsistencies in grassroots supply networks. Authors from the Spanish collective Hosaralmo are also interested in local food provisioning. The second example of their comparative discussion is a financial cooperative. They present *cooperative practices* as a place of struggle between life and forces of profit, but at the same time as an object of the capitalist project of integration and social reproduction. Food and community are central also to Valentina Gulin Zrnić and Tihana Rubić. Authors compare several examples of *urban community gardens* in Zagreb (Croatia) in relation to ecological, socio-cultural and economic sustainability. Irene Sabaté thinks about home repossessions in Spain as structural violence of the market against morality and justice. She is curious whether strategies implemented by *mortgage debtors* have a potential to secure domestic reproduction and transform financial capitalism.

Political scientist Cirila Toplak examines Yugoslavian workers' *self-management*; its ancestors, development paradigms and paradoxes. She calls for the scientific analysis of democratic autonomism instead of its ideological rejection or glorification. Nina Vodopivec offers an ethnographic account on the changing political and economic environment of the Slovenian *textile industry*. Abandonment of self-management, introduction of corporate law, deindustrialisation and precarisation have devaluated work, and diminished self-esteem and the collective efforts of workers. Sociologist Gorazd Kovačič evaluates the causes and practical lessons from *trade union's fragmentation* in Slovenia. He detects reasons in the diversification of working practices and sees only the possibility for contemporary unions to reflect and adapt to internal and external differentiation and competition.

The third part of the book presents two non-European examples. Tanja Ahlin explains the extensive emigration of nurses from the Indian state of Kerala to some western and Arabic countries. The most important driving force for migration is intergenerational reciprocity – *repayment for parents' suffering*. Daughters have become the most important investment and income providers to transnational families. Prof. Eugene Richard Sensenig's contribution presents one of the oldest intentional Christian urban communities. It is the Reba Place Fellowship from a suburb of Chicago. The author identifies the theoretical and social motives for its emergence, leadership modifications,

impacts in the neighbourhood, and finally offers some lessons for personal and societal development.

The last two articles address leisure, art and imagination. Boštjan Kravanja presents the swing dance scene in Ljubljana. In his opinion, aspects of scene solidarity are part of dance *communitas*, rooted in the USA in late 1920s. Internally, members are practicing competition and sub-grouping due to skills, style and achievements. Dan Podjed and Daša Ličen describe a mixture of volunteer and professional activities among bird watchers and ecologists in Slovenia. They propose a new applicable concept or *orgunity* – as the sum of community, network and organisation.

The first version of some articles was published in the Slovenian-Spanish edition of the journal *Ars & Humanitas* (Kravanja 2014, Hosaralmo Collective [Alquézar etc.] 2014, Sabaté 2014, Simonič 2014b, Vodopivec 2014). With the permission of the journal's chief editor, selected articles have been rewritten in English and re-edited. Updated version of one article already appeared in other scientific journal during prolonged arrangements for this book (Gulin Zrnić and Rubić 2018).

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