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Gieseeking, Jen, and Yvonne Hung. 2008. "Reviews: A Postcapitalist Politics by J.K. Gibson-Graham." *Environment & Planning A* 40 (2): 505–506.

*A Postcapitalist Politics*

J.K. Gibson-Graham

Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006

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Whereas Max Weber's landmark study of the Protestant Ethic could only depict capitalism as society's end point, J.K. Gibson-Graham's recent *A Postcapitalist Politics* imagines possibilities beyond this "iron cage." It pushes beyond the theoretical insights of their widely read *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*, which queered and deconstructed capitalism and demonstrated that "our economy is what we (discursively and practically) make it" (1996, page xxii). Gibson-Graham's latest book shows how reinterpreting one's relations to labor and the broader political economy not only places economic concepts (i.e., necessity, surplus, consumption and the commons) squarely in the realm of ethical decisions, but also forms the basis for counter-hegemonic practices.

The book begins with a brief interpretation of two British films, *The Full Monty* (1997) and *Brassed Off* (1996), in which the transformations of the protagonists suggests how a stance of openness and connectedness might support the formation of more conscious economic identities. The second chapter develops one of the book's key theoretical interventions, what Gibson-Graham term a "project of becoming." Based on the work of Judith Butler and William Connolly, Gibson-Graham argue that we are always being (re)produced and are (re)producing our selves, our spaces, and our economies. Through their participatory action research project in the Latrobe Valley (Australia), Gibson-Graham historically trace the anti/development of the region into the present through the practices of governmentality, technological developments, and overall strategic disinvestment that has depressed the region.

The next two chapters build original arguments, based on participatory action research, about how discourse affects social and spatial relations. The authors use Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of Being as "being-together" to introduce a new "language of economic diversity" that redefines notions of sociality and commerce. They extend existing meanings of four concepts:

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necessity, surplus, consumption, and the commons. Rather than set out claims for specific redistributions of power or resources, Gibson-Graham use these extended concepts to inform an ethic and politics of community economy that destabilizes "the economy as it is usually known and performed" (page 79). That notion is fleshed out in subsequent chapters focusing on the Mondragon cooperative in the Basque region of Spain, which illustrates how their redefined concepts are already existing in cooperative structures related to pay, profit, and ownership, and on participatory action research projects with residents in the Latrobe Valley (Australia), Pioneer Valley (western Massachusetts, U.S.), and the islands of Bohol and Mindanao (Philippines). Through these cases, Gibson-Graham enter dynamically into existing languages of economic subjectivity, drawing directly on quotations from interview subjects, as a way to hear, engage and co-create new understandings of and terms for participation in and transformation of the economy. Their final chapter challenges existing ideas about ironclad capitalist path dependencies by exhorting readers to "start where you are" (page 194) and not limit where your imagination can lead.

J.K. Gibson-Graham's most recent book trumpets the possibility of a new and better political economic tomorrow while remaining admirably realistic about the present. The book is therefore non-utopian in a double sense. The authors clearly situate their work in the larger field, particularly theories of action research, Marxist political economy, and mainstream economic development policies. They explicate their uses of concepts and interpretations in dialogue with the narratives of residents involved in their local action projects while remaining skillfully reflexive about their own roles and power over the research. For teaching, the book is most appropriate for graduate students, and it is likely to have broad appeal to geographers, feminists, sociologists, queer theorists, Marxists, activists, economists, and social justice scholars.

Like Gibson-Graham, we too are excited by their process-driven theory of change, which does not fix subjectivity or practices but offers room for multiple and even radical forms of thought and actions to emerge and so provide for the possibility for transformation at perhaps, larger scales than they address here. Our only difficulty with the book is how to link their insights to anti-globalization projects, transnational movements of oppressed people, and other efforts beyond the scale of everyday lived experience. To this end, *A Postcapitalist Politics* acts not as a manifesto rather, the theory, language, and ethics that J.K. Gibson-Graham offer begins to corrode the "iron cage" and imagine the contours of political economies to come.

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