

Hann, Chris, *Repatriating Polanyi: Market Society in the Visegrád States*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2019. Cloth, \$95.00.

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Months after Russia's full-on invasion of neighboring Ukraine and the election that handed Victor Orbán's Fidesz party a fourth consecutive two-thirds majority in Hungary's Parliament, there is much need for the kind of understanding of "postsocialist Europe" that anthropologists construct from the combination of long-term fieldwork and theory. Chris Hann's 2019 volume *Repatriating Polanyi* seeks to apply insights of Vienna born Hungarian socialist Karl Polanyi (1886-1964) to understand current conditions in the region. As Attila Meleg (2019) pointed out in an earlier review in *Intersections*, there is a long and active tradition of drawing on Polanyi in Hungary. Hann, however, seeks also to repatriate Polanyi, that is, to bring this thinker back home to the broader region as well as to anthropology itself. Polanyi never quite had a disciplinary home, and Hann argues that despite his rise in popularity since 2007, Polanyi remains "unfashionable" among anthropologists. He thus seeks to stress the relevance of Polanyi's thinking to anthropology and specifically the anthropology of the region.

Bemoaning what he sees as the continued lack of attention to Polanyi's work despite his "critique of market economy" and "razor-sharp tools for incisive critique into" the new order brought about by the collapse of socialism, rapid privatization and marketization implemented according to neoliberal orthodoxies (7), Hann writes that "the guiding thread of the book is a Polanyian interpretation of market society after socialism" (3).

The introductory chapter details the tools on offer, which go beyond the list of forms of market integration that Hann refers to as a "special toolbox" (10). He lays out Polanyi's substantivist position that understands the economy as integrated with other institutions, a position that asks us to investigate what forms of integration are present in any given society as well as those processes of disembedding that have led to the emergence of the "fictitious commodities" land, labor, and money. Drawing particularly on the analysis found in Polanyi's 1944 book *The Great Transformation*, Hann goes on to argue for the utility of Polanyi's concept of the "double movement"—the dialectical process of the disembedding of the market and attempts to re-embed it by countermovements, through which people defend themselves (or society) against the market's

effects—for understanding the region's “passage through socialism and postsocialism” (14). It should be noted that in the region, Polanyian references, most particularly the language of countermovement, are widespread in social scientific and activist analysis.

While the introduction offers a useful introduction of Polanyi and his work, including a critique, the connection to Polanyi is not equally apparent in each of the 11 chapters that follow, most of them previously published and which the author “resisted” rewriting (xvi). The reader must also constantly keep in mind that temporal references in each chapter are oriented to the moment of writing/original publication, not the volume's publication date in 2019. When reading the chapters on Poland, they may also benefit from looking at maps reflecting centuries of changing borders where Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania meet today.

Focusing on the economic transformations and privatization that characterized the region after the demise of state socialism, the first half of the volume draws largely on insights from 5 decades of fieldwork Hann has conducted in the Hungarian village of Tázlár in conversation with scholarship on the region. The last chapter in this section, updated in 2016 and tying this section together, he argues that the precarization of agrarian workers or peasants—whom Hann refers to as “the awkward class” (133)—has contributed to the “most malign aspects of the double movement” in the region, including “populist intolerance towards minorities and immigrants” (28). The second half of the book continues to explore the stuff of such countermovements in the postsocialist period. Hann organizes this section around questions of “civil society” (at this point a well-critiqued term that was once central to opposition movements in the 1980s as well as the Western organizations that landed in the region to “democratize” or “civilize”; see Gagyí and Ivancheva in *Funding, Power and Community Development*, 2019), “(un-)civil society,” and ethnicity. Beginning in Hungary, the bulk of this part of the volume draws on fieldwork conducted in southeastern Poland, in a border region that reflects the ethnic diversity that defies neatly drawn borders of nation states, showing in nuanced ways how the freedom associated with “civil society” after state socialism has often been used to pursue ethnonationalist politics.

Written for this book in 2017, chapter 11 deserves special attention, as it offers a synthesis of Hann’s thinking on how Polanyi's insights can be of use in analyzing the current conjuncture, characterized by questions of migration and mobility. The chapter focuses on the cluster of countries known as the V4: Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland (once the V3 before the split of Czechoslovakia) that entered into the Visegrad cooperation agreement in 1991 and subsequently

joined the European Union in 2004. The puzzle Hann seeks to answer is why these countries, once expected to continue on a path characterized by liberalism and prosperity, have become, instead, leaders of “illiberal” politics in both the region and in Europe. The infamous example of the V4's shared rejection of the “quota allocations” by the European Commission in the context and aftermath of the 2015 “migration crisis” (295) binds these countries as a region while illustrating their “renewing on principles of EU solidarity of which they are massive net beneficiaries” (295). Arguing that the “dislocation of the 1990s (the disintegration of central planning, the loss of COMECON, the introduction of ‘shock therapy’ and the subsequent mass unemployment and increased inequality) was an “irruption of Karl Polanyi’s ‘market society’ that made the ‘disembedding’ accomplished by 19th century liberalism seem mild and gradualist in comparison” (297). The triumphant growth in V4 countries—led by foreign direct investment—was accompanied by the growth of regional inequalities and new class structures (298). Returning to Tázlár, Hann points to the choice rural Hungarians face between labor migration to (richer) parts of the EU and workfare at home. He links the antimigrant and antiminority attitudes of Hungarians with those of precarious workers in England (many of whom may have voted for Brexit precisely to keep migrants like the former out) and to the slogan of the Hungary’s rightist Jobbik party that “everyone should be able to prosper in their native land,” illustrating how these and other forms of “populism” are, tragically, the dominant forms of countermovement to “neoliberal forms of Europeanization and globalization (316).”

The concluding chapter stresses the scale of Eurasia and the importance of a more expansive temporality when looking at the processes of embedding and re-embedding and forms of integration. The scale on which he presents the “short run: after Brexit” the “long run: after Speenhamland” (ie-the laws Polanyi wrote about in *The Great Transformation*) to illustrate the processes of market intensification and countermovement in England) allows us to see how events in Hungary and the G4 are far from isolated. Adding in “The very long run: after the Bronze Age” he argues that his temporal allows us to see “Marxist-Leninist-Maoist socialism” as a dramatic example of the dialectic of a double movement originating as far back as the emergence of markets and differentiation in societies in Prehistory (327).

In addition to applying Polanyi's important insights on the market's integration with other institutions and the double movement, and drawing on decades of the author’s own fieldwork, Hann’s book draws on the rich source of anthropological and social scientific

knowledge production in the region while engaging various social scientific thinkers in unique ways. While he mentions the interdisciplinary Karl Polanyi Center for Global Social Studies in Budapest and the fact that alterglobalization activists are drawn to Polanyi's ideas, the stark line he draws around the discipline and his dismissal of "token references" to Polanyi's "best known title" (7) might have led Hann to fail to capture the meaningful circulation of and engagement with Polanyian thought—especially in analyses about countermovement/double movement—among social movement thinkers on the left in the region to explain the current conjuncture in post-state socialist Europe.

Contributing to and taking part in a broader trend of using Karl Polanyi's ideas to shed light on the region in which he was born and raised, *Repatriating Polanyi* will be useful to anthropologists and sociologists of socialism and postsocialism, of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, those working in the realm of economic anthropology and studying capitalism. It will be interesting to those seeking to understand the rise of "populism" and "illiberalism" more generally in the neoliberal age, and to those trying to understand the possibilities of non-capitalist mixed economies, as well as to those wishing to know more about the region.