

pioneer in print in setting out such a radical approach across a range of ‘research interventions’. Critically it examines and demystifies ‘the relationships and intersections between research, knowledge construction and political power/legitimacy in society’. As researchers, particularly in higher education, begin to gear up for yet another round of research evaluation (variously known as the Research Excellence Framework or Research Assessment Exercise), a framework increasingly bound by the Holy Trinity of Significance, Rigour and Innovation, this book is a sharp reminder of the absence of political discourse and of the values of social justice – equality, dignity, respect, participation – in most research practice, despite the recent nod in the direction of impact. None of these indicators are fundamentally shaped by the alleged beneficiaries of research which all too often is constrained by the needs of government. As I have found to my cost, when research findings don’t chime with government’s messages, they tend to be suppressed, manipulated, distorted or simply ignored. There are far too few researchers prepared or able to stay true to the values and politics of social justice: hopefully this elaborate, committed and detailed account will inspire many more to move in that direction.

Note

¹ Most of the CDP local and national reports are can be accessed at <http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/>

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Lee Gregory (2015), *Trading Time: Can Exchange Lead to Social Change?* Bristol: Policy Press, £75.00, pp. 212, hbk.

doi:[10.1017/S0047279416000891](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279416000891)

Ongoing capitalist crises along with the current turbulence of economic markets and associated austerity politics have ignited interest in the possibility of breaking away from neoliberal capitalist discourses. Literature challenging the idea that there-is-no-alternative to the capitalist market has gone a long way in bursting the unquestioned myths of capitalism (e.g. Dodd, 2014; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham *et al.*, 2013). Yet while the mythology of money and the very nature of (neoliberal) capitalism have increasingly become an object of debate, we seldom challenge the capitalist nomos that time-is-money: nothing more than a measure of duration and productivity.

In his latest book, ‘*Trading Time: Can Exchange Lead to Social Change?*’, Lee Gregory tackles this issue. He eloquently deconstructs the universalising hegemony of the capitalist nomos of time, uncovering an alternative understanding of time that can provide a way forward. His book expands the discussions on social change, focusing on the role time-banking and a novel discourse of time might play in welfare reform. This way, Gregory broadens our understanding of time and by making a mark on non-capitalocentric literature manages to join the league of Dodd (e.g. 2014) and Gibson-Graham (e.g. 2006).

The argument, in brief, is that heterodox time discourses can promote social welfare against capitalist enclosures. First, drawing on social policies in the UK, Gregory argues that market practices have come to dominate welfare provision and public discourse around it, thus ‘subordinating the social democratic ideology to the requirements of neoliberal economics’ (p.18). This is exemplified by focusing on the socially and environmentally destructive

colonisation of clock time and the time-is-money discourse and its associated financial profit motive (ch.3). Second, drawing on the social theory of time, he breaks away from the discursive hegemony of the time-is-money calculation to resist these narratives and uncover how alternative time values can contribute to greater well-being and social advancement. Using time-banking as a case-study he highlights how feelings of pride and self-worth can become embedded in social valuations of time and, subsequently, argues that time-banking can constitute a form of resistance to neoliberal capitalism and austerity (ch.4-6).

Equally commendable is how Gregory maintains a vigilant eye by simultaneously considering how their emancipatory potential is challenged by the neoliberal mainstream. He focuses on the co-option of time-banking into neoliberal doings and the David vs Goliath relation between the mainstream economy and time-banking that undermine its potential to contribute towards greater social welfare (ch.5-6). He is, thus, pragmatic in concluding (see ch.7) that only through a bundle of broader social policy reforms drawing on such heterodox time discourses might we break away from the profit-first principle of neoliberalism.

In raising these arguments Gregory writes with great skill. The style is simple and compelling and the book is valuable to both academics and a lay audience interested in time-banking. On the one hand, the accessible summaries offered at the end of each chapter guarantee that the reader is not thrown into deep waters. On the other hand, most arguments are well grounded – both conceptually and empirically – and the book can also cater to the requirements of a more demanding audience.

At the same time however, the style of argumentation can also raise a few eyebrows. For instance, in attempting to present a simple and coherent narrative of time-banking, Gregory falls into the trap of presenting such schemes as monolithic constructs. By not providing background information on his specific case-studies of time-banking in the UK, he underplays the heterogeneity of the field – something widely contested by the whole body of research on community currencies.

Most importantly though, any academic interested in processes of social change will immediately recognise Gregory's failure to skilfully deal with the issue of social change. First, for a book posing through its title the question of whether exchange can lead to social change, it is a misfortune to ignore a broad and diverse literature on social change and take for granted a vision of social policy reform. Second, it is a travesty that Gregory does not adequately deal with how the transformative potential of this heterodox discourse around time might be unleashed. He largely restricts himself to concluding that the 'major challenge is to find the right language for promoting these alternatives' (p.164). For a book uncovering the manifold ways in which the capitalist mainstream co-opts alternatives, exercises a discursive hegemony across social fields and dictates certain ways of life, the very idea that discursive reframing is a possible and viable means of enabling social change is a paradox. Third, the very question of social change posed in the title is – in fact – misleading. The book outlines how time-banking is desirable *because* alternative conceptions of time are invested in it rather than exploring how exchange might nourish a potentially transformative discourse around time. Further, it is a surprise to pose this question when a response to it should, most definitely, include reflection on how big of an impact time banks can have.

These shortcomings are, of course, understandable. Gregory does not aim to offer a panacea to the co-option of time-banking into neoliberal thinking, nor to provide a definitive answer to the ongoing issue of social change. Some readers might definitely miss a more comprehensive synthesis. In its shortcomings, however, the book proves how intriguing it is to take different perspectives and stances on the polymorphic concept of time.

To repeat: yes, the book is not flawless. But it is far more rewarding. Some might not accept every argument Gregory develops. Yet for sure this book helps reconsider views and

claims on time taken for granted. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the topic as it helps to better understand the discursive nature of time. Further, my partial discontentment suggests how fruitful it might be to incorporate the insights provided into a broader debate around capitalocentrism and social change. Future attempts to challenge the unquestioned norms of neoliberal capitalism will surely gain from this work.

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Joe C. B. Leung and Yuebin Xu (2015), *China's Social Welfare: The Third Turning Point*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 224, £15.99, pbk.
 doi:[10.1017/S0047279416000908](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279416000908)

Since 1949 when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established, China's social welfare has been transforming in line with the changing social and economic environments. At the turn of the new century, as a response to the increasing number of critical social problems produced and accumulated in the market-oriented economic reform, such as rural and urban disparity, regional inequality, and unbalanced social and economic development, the Chinese government decided to prioritize social protection and strike a balance between economic growth and social development. Thus, an expansion of social policy came into practice since 2003. The social issues and government's policy responses to them in China have aroused more and more academic interests both domestically and overseas. The last decade has witnessed increasing publications on China's social policy and social welfare. *China's Social Welfare* is one of the most updated books.

Co-authored by Joe Leung and Yuebin Xu, *China's Social Welfare* aims to provide an objective and wide perspective on the social issues and policy responses in contemporary China. The book starts with a passionate preface by Professor Joe Leung, a Hong Kong-based pre-eminent scholar on social welfare in China, where he told his life-long story of doing social welfare research and engaging in social work education in China. By reading the preface, it is easy to feel Professor Leung's high commitment to the wellbeing of the Chinese people.

The main body of the book consists of eight chapters, addressing the key aspects of social welfare development in China, including China's welfare trajectory, the formidable social challenges faced, the emerging social protection system in both urban and rural areas, social care services, social work profession, and the ongoing social governance innovation.

Chapter 1 provides the background and objectives of this book project as well as the conceptual issues in analysing social welfare in China. Putting the critical social problems in the context of "the rise of China", Professor Leung argued that the determinants of Chinese social policy will need to shift focus, from a primary concern with facilitating economic growth towards a more balanced development that addresses the needs of vulnerable groups. He also asserted that China has to formulate an innovative model to guide future development in the face of profound and unprecedented challenges (p.3).