**Book review for Sidonie Naulin and Anne Jourdain, (Eds.)
The Social Meaning of Extra Money
by Elke Schuessler, Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria**

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I started working on this book review on the same day I showed my daughter how she can sell things she no longer needs on an online platform for second-hand goods. For her, clearly, this is pocket money which she intends to invest into purchases of her own on the same platform (or ice creams), and for me it is a way of showing her how to be mindful of resources – things as well as money. Activities like second-hand sales are the topic of the volume *“The Social Meaning of Extra Money: Capitalism and the Commodification of Domestic and Leisure Activities”* edited by the two French sociologists Sidonie Naulin and Anne Jourdain.

At its heart are eight empirical chapters providing case studies of different contexts in which what the editors call “extra money” is being earned. Many of these activities – like sharing and selling knitting patterns, selling handicraft goods, food blogging, setting up TV series fan sites or sexcamming – rely on digital platforms, but some – like Comorian women coming to Marseille regularly to engage in the suitcase trade or home farmers in Russia – are entirely analogue. These chapters are divided into three sections based upon the type of extra money concerned: *pin money*, largely but not exclusively for middle or upper class homebound women with care duties; money earned for *savings* to buffer uncertain economic situations or enable a career change; or *income* derived from entrepreneurial activity of people trying to turn their hobby into a profession. Except for the Russian case, all case studies are set in France, which has the advantage of providing a cross-class analysis of different life-worlds within the same national context. What these cases further have in common is that they all deal with “singularity goods” (Karpik 2010) and rely on specific amateur or professional skills, despite emerging largely from domestic or leisure time activities. The main argument pursued in this book is that an economic and market logic has spread into these domestic or leisure arenas, but that in none of the cases the activity is just about money but, as the title with reference to Zelizer’s (1997) “Social Meaning of Money” suggests, infused with social meaning and thus affecting gender, family, community and societal relations.

Yet, these social meanings differ from person to person, household to household, community to community. For some of the people studied, engaging in the respective activity was a way to escape traditional gender or family roles or an unsatisfactory job with the aim of building an alternative career; for others it was a way of gaining legitimacy within the family and society; yet for others it was a way of financing a wedding or a house, or actually a prime source of income. But regardless of the underlying motivation, the marketization of these invisible activities implied their economic as well as symbolic valuation – but also came with competition, e.g. between amateur and professional sellers, as well as conflicts and friction.

The volume frames the analysis of these different social realities around the question of “the economic and social effects of the marketization of everyday life” (p. 4), presenting two competing views on commodification: one, rooted in Marxist and

critical thinking, arguing that marketization “denatures” domestic and leisure activities and contributes to their degradation; and another, rooted in economic and feminist thinking, expecting empowering effects for both producers and consumers. The picture that emerges when reading through the various empirical examples is that the answer to this question is inherently gendered, and thus depends on a close examination of existing inequalities built into gender, family and societal relations. Examples of such patterns of inequality run through almost all of the chapters. Men, for instance, tend to earn more when they engage on Etsy or in foodblogging than women (chapter 3); male flight attendants successfully monetize their extra time and are able to build alternative careers, whereas female flight attendants tend to use this time to take up care duties (chapter 7); existing inequalities in the digital media industry are mirrored in that all the creators of TV series websites examined in chapter 9 were men; engagement in informal, home-based work such as sexcamming tends to prevent alternative careers for instance because of the reputational damage incurred and keeps camgirls bound to the informal, often sex work sector (chapter 8). For the Comorean women engaging in the suitcase trade in Marseille, the economic activity is partly a pretext for being able to organize themselves and break out of the context of a very patriarchal society. Thus, whether activities for earning “extra money” are devaluing the activities or empowering those that engage in them largely depends on the context in which they take place.

Here I would add that the main problem is maybe not the devaluation or “denaturing” of these activities, but rather the way engagement in these activities contributes to a reinforcement of existing inequalities – a topic that is at least briefly touched by the editors with reference to Matchar’s (2013) notion of a “new domesticity” created by the new valuation of traditional feminine roles and activities such as knitting or cooking. Here the final outlook chapter of the book written by Maud Simonet takes a much stronger stance than the introduction by clearly stating that “(...) the reality, for most of the workers depicted in the book, is meager economic gains and more invisible unpaid work, in the form of that extra emotional and relational work that is necessary to brand and market your product, and sometimes yourself. This specific romance, as well as the work conditions and remuneration created, reminds us, as N. Fraser has long claimed (...), that there is also a feminine face to neoliberal capitalism and that we should pay more attention to it” (p. 271). This, then, raises the additional questions of why people stay stuck in positions of doing even more poorly paid or unpaid work and who is benefitting from further a further expansion of “the frontier between paid professional and unpaid domestic and amateur work” (p. 272). Which parts of society are benefitting from women deriving their societal value – now further legitimized by the touch of marketization created by the “extra money” that can potentially be earned – from engagement in the domestic sphere? Which economic actors generate profits from the marketization of domestic and leisure activities and how? What is the role of digital platforms that today often mediate these activities? “That is for sure another story to be told ... one we can’t help hoping each contributor to this book will soon share with us, in their detailed and subtle ethnographic manner, in a further volume” (p. 272), is Simonet’s conclusion, which I fully agree with.

While the volume provides an extremely interesting and rich depiction of the different social realities in which very different parts of (French) society try to generate extra income, not all of the chapters fit equally well into the volume. For instance, while the case of the Russian household farmers is insightful to read, it is

hard to see how it fits into the definition of “extra” money being earned given the lack of alternative forms of work, and it also is the only case departing from the empirical focus on France, which in itself has advantages and disadvantages. As argued above, the main advantage is that the macro-societal context is “held constant”, helping us to capture the inequalities and different life worlds within this context. But it also comes at the expense of providing the perspective of people in less industrialized nations, particularly in the Global South, for whom the realities of work and family relations might be very different. Furthermore, while the cases provide a snapshot insight into different social realities, the question about empowerment versus a reinforcement of inequalities can only really be answered by taking a longer-term perspective, studying whether and for whom engagement in these extra work activities actually helps in establishing a career and exploring the context factors that enable it. Here I imagine that the conflicts unfolding not just in the economic sphere (such as between buyers and sellers touched upon in chapters 4 and 8 or between amateurs and professionals touched upon in chapter 3), but also those unfolding in the private sphere (as alluded to in chapter 5) where gender roles are negotiated deserve further exploration. Finally, the volume would have benefitted from both a deeper theoretical framework and broader links to other relevant literatures. In particular I am missing references to the current debate around the sharing economy where a similar question around the positive effects of “collaborative consumption” (Botsman and Roger, 2011) vs. “neoliberalism on steroids” (Murillio et al., 2017) is intensely debated. Furthermore, the empirical focus on the *work* that is being performed is not matched by the conceptual focus on *money* and marketization. So, in addition to exploring more deeply the links between commodification of leisure/domestic work and inequality I would have liked to see a discussion about the changing world of work and the legitimation, professionalization and valuation of new work practices as well as the related skills and career paths, not least with regard to the digital technologies in use (for a related endeavor see Barley and Orr 1997). Thus, the case studies of activities people engage in to earn extra money presented in this volume offer multiple new opportunities for “bringing work back in” (Barley and Kunda 2001) to organizational theorizing in times marked by increasing digitalization along with increasing informality, precarity and inequality of work relations.

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