

**KARL POLANYI INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY**

Call for papers

International Conference

The Enduring Legacy of Karl Polanyi

November 6-8, 2014, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

The year of 2014 marks the 70th anniversary of the publication of *The Great Transformation* and 50 years since the death of Karl Polanyi in 1964. It also marks the start of the First World War 100 years ago, and the 30 years which transformed the political, economic and social landscape of Europe and North America. On the occasion of these anniversaries, the Karl Polanyi Institute of Political Economy invites proposals for papers dealing with broad and overlapping themes central to Polanyi's work and vision. For this milestone international Karl Polanyi conference, panels will be organized as plenary sessions in order to encourage wide-ranging discussions of the relevance of Polanyi's world of thought to contemporary issues and struggles. Proposals for poster sessions on any aspect of Polanyi's work will also be considered.

Themes

The "disembedded economy"

What is the originality of Polanyi's historical approach to the place of the economy in the capitalist market society? His notion of the "disembedded economy" continues to generate debate among social scientists. Situating this debate in the analysis of contemporary society poses theoretical questions that return to Polanyi's analysis of the rise of liberalism in *The Great Transformation* and today's re-embedding of the economy in market society. Others suggest that this process of re-embedding challenges the dominant paradigm with numerous examples drawn from countries in the north and the south. How does "disembeddedness" explain the current tensions between market and society?

The "double movement" and agency in social transformation.

Polanyi's "double movement" referred to spontaneous protective reactions against disintegrating forces of markets by social forces within nation-states. Who and where are the agents of social change in contemporary globalized market capitalism? This theme invites papers on forms of resistance in the north and in the south. Recent *Occupy* and *indignados* movements, protests by indigenous peoples, resistance to global injustice and inequality are often perceived as autonomous and fragmented, reducing their transformative capacity. Other social movements are challenging the dominant paradigm by developing new institutions and processes of social and economic transformation. In many parts of the world, the social and solidarity economy is a transformative process of resistance engaging the

cooperative movement, labour unions, women's and environmental movements, youth, rural communities and organizations in a growing international movement to democratize the economy.

The social and solidarity economy challenges the principles underlying mainstream economics raising important theoretical questions. Does the diversity of the social and solidarity economy in different national and regional contexts reduce it to numerous discrete "double movements" or is it a global process of economic democratization? With the recognition of the role of the social and solidarity economy within numerous regions and countries in the north and the south, by the United Nations and the European Union, one asks if it exists on the margins of a global financialized economy or if its "lived realities" are contesting this model.

The double movement is also reflected in the rise of the new right in many parts of the world. As this call for papers is circulated, Europe prepares for spring elections. Rising nationalism and *Euroscpticism* are fuelling the threat of a right-dominated European parliament. Are Polanyi's writings on the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930's prescient? Do they still resonate today?

The "economistic fallacy"

Polanyi's anthropological research established that pre-capitalist civilizations did not permit individuals to fall into poverty unless the entire society suffered famine or other disasters. He contrasted the variety of economic institutions combining reciprocity, redistribution and exchange with the "economistic fallacy" of the self-regulating market. What lessons for our modern world can we draw from Jubilee cancellation of debt, precautionary food security, special purpose money or institutionalized respect for nature? Is basic income an effective means to address inequality? Are these measures challenging the dominant paradigm or do they accommodate market imperatives as demonstrated by the ongoing imposition of austerity measures on fragile economies?

Freedom in a complex society

"We cannot achieve the freedom we seek", wrote Polanyi, "unless we comprehend the true significance of freedom in a complex society". The last chapter of *The Great Transformation* resonates with the limitations on freedom imposed by market dominated priorities today. The commitment to "*bien vivir*" in regions of Latin America, for example, or the global movement to "restore habitat" ravaged by "blind improvement" with the collective management of resources, are expressions of freedom to set societal priorities. This theme can be addressed from several perspectives including the compatibility of freedom and regulation, the need for democratic institutions, raised by Polanyi in this last chapter of *The Great Transformation*.

Please send an abstract of no more than 250 words to Polanyi.institute@concordia.ca by March 30, 2014. Be sure to indicate clearly your name, institutional affiliation and whether you are proposing a paper or a poster.