

Reconciling 'Reformist' and 'Revolutionary' Elements in the Thought of Karl Polanyi.
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Recent efforts to develop archivally-based reconstructions of Karl Polanyi's social and political thought have yielded a wide variety of interpretations of Polanyi's political purposes and commitments (along with widely diverging readings of his theory of social transformation). Any such reconstruction will have to confront the existence of statements, often from the same period, which point in contradictory directions. Some appear to support a reformist reorganization of capitalism, while others suggest that Polanyi envisaged a more more radical socialist transformation. A number of suggestions as to how to reconcile these contrasting political programs have by now been made (most prominently by Fred Block & Margaret Somers, and by Gareth Dale). In this paper, I will argue that these approaches (though they arrive at somewhat differencing conclusions) have generally presumed that Polanyi held the same political vision (and framework of analysis) for different parts of the world. But I will show that most of Polanyi's apparently 'reformist' statements pertain to the United States, while he continued to argue for a radically-transformative socialist transformation in Britain and Europe. I will show that this programmatic divergence is, in turn, premised on very different analyses of the historical processes of capitalist development and crisis in the US and in Europe respectively. Finally, I will also take up the question of Polanyi's understanding of the developmental trajectories of Asian countries, and his vision of political transformation there.