

ideological delegitimation, and functional redundancy” (p. 109). The resurrection of the company-state in the nineteenth century as private enterprise without any further sovereign rights is described in the fourth chapter, followed up by the conclusion that these enterprises stand for the second type of company-states being only trading companies.

The authors depict the significance of trade companies in the formative stages of the modern international system by changing the perspective onto the companies following the approach and terminology of Philip J. Stern describing the hybridity of the company-state.<sup>1</sup> Sterns concept is transferred to the global scale by comparing companies acting in different world regions at different times overemphasising the sovereignty of the company-states and their pursuit of power. The profit of Sharman’s and Phillips’ contribution is the change of the perspective on trade companies as corporations. This perspective takes the variability of political entities as being important for the emergence and change of the modern international system and the state building process in the early modern times into account.

#### Note

- 1 Ph. J. Stern, *The Company-State. Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*, Oxford 2011.

**Kenneth Lipartito/Lisa Jacobson**  
(eds.): **Capitalism’s Hidden Worlds**  
(**Hagley Perspectives on Business and**  
**Culture**), Philadelphia: University of  
Pennsylvania Press, 2020, 320 pp.

Reviewed by  
Paul Franke, Berlin

This is an insightful, thought provoking ensemble of essays that explore the hidden economic forces, agents, and practices in the 19th and 20th century. As the product of a conference in 2017 (*Hidden Capitalism: Below, Beneath, and Beyond the Market*) with four additional papers, the volume spans Europe, as well as the Americas and Asia. What unites these diverse regional, and historical contexts are the questions laid out in the comprehensive introduction. Here, Kenneth Lipartito and Lisa Jacobson summarize the articles and argue that a new history of the economy and capitalism „requires us to conceptualize the relationship between the margins and the center – between the licit and the illicit, the waged and the unwaged, the public and the private – to better understand the mutual dependence of the visible and invisible markets“ (p. 3).

All contributions thus point a searchlight into these “Shadowlands of Capitalism” (p. 1), aiming at a particular set of practices, or processes. The research highlights how there are no natural or preset borders between visible market and hidden, or obscured economic systems. Connected to this perspective are questions on how „features of the licit economy transform into

exploitation“ (p. 3). The book is organized in four parts, with each focusing on a specific hidden aspect of the economy: Measuring and Unveiling Markets (I), Working on the Margins (II), The Licit and the Illicit (III), and Hidden Market Spaces in Planned Economies (IV).

The scope and the individual quality of the articles in the book are impressive, but its perspective is what makes „Capitalism’s Hidden World“ a much needed addition to the on-going debate. Research into the illicit economies has gained more attention in recent years.<sup>1</sup> Ongoing projects into the history of Globalization for example delve into the unmeasured, illegal and illicit dimensions as driving forces of entanglement in the modern world.<sup>2</sup> „Capitalism’s Hidden Worlds“ enriches these discussions with its collection of case studies, and its broad theoretical considerations.

The volume as a whole, grounds its claims in a number of empirical works. They range from the analysis of economic practices and unofficial markets, with Bruce E. Baker’s chapter on the loose cotton economy of late 19th-century New Orleans and Bryan W. Turo’s “In the Shadow of Incorporations”, to alternative histories of economic categories and thinking, as discussed in Eli Cook’s contribution on economic indicators (chapter 1) or Eileen Boris’ insights on feminist discussions on labour in the global south during the 1970s (chapter 2). Other papers discuss global illicit and unofficial economies (James Hollis and Christopher McKenna’s “The Emergence of the Offshore Economy, 1914–1939”), and communist societies (Philip Scranton’s “Comrades In Between: Transforming Commercial Practice in the People’s Republic of China, 1949–1962”,

or Anna Kushkova’s “Hidden Realms of Private Entrepreneurship: Soviet Jews and Post-World War II Artels in the USSR”).

While the approaches of the individual papers vary, they all try to show how clandestine or alternative economies shaped power relations as well as markets and economic practices. The articles of Hannah Frydman’s chapter on immoral advertising and invisible markets in Paris’s Mass Press between 1880–1940 and Kenneth Mouré’s article (“Capitalism’s Black Heart in Wartime France”) are good examples for this approach. In some cases, the papers directly refer to each other – e. g. Cook’s and Boris’ chapters – which strengthens the general argument of the volume.

Reading the well-argued contributions, one also begins to notice that the volume might be even stronger, were it not labeled as a history of capitalism. The introduction by Lipartito and Jacobson situates the book within debates of the “New Historians of Capitalism” (pp.5–6), and “Social History of Capitalism” (p. 8), presenting a new dynamic approach on how to capture it. The volume tries to circumvent the need for a clear characterization of capitalism by referring to it as a “hybrid system” (p. 9) or “ecosystem” (pp. 9–10) or by conceptualizing it as “economic hydrology” (p. 10) spilling over supposed boundaries. The authors suggest that capitalism is grounded in shifting markets (pp. 8–10), and constituted by practices (pp. 10–11,) rather than elementary characteristics. The issue remains however, how to distinguish between a capitalist and any other form of economy. If the illegal, the clandestine, the colonial, and the planned economy can all be capitalist, what use is the term for historical analysis? What makes a market,

or a practice capitalist? If capitalism itself is created by shifting and changing economic practices, how does the label help to explain historical change? The approach is interesting, yet seems much more suited to explain different economies. Indeed, many contributions in the volume make compelling arguments about the economy, rather than capitalism. Owen James Heyman's chapter "Jim Crow's Cut: White Supremacy and the Destruction of Black Capital in the Forests of the Deep South" tackles important issues of economic marginalization and alternative economic practices, but does not show how they relate to capitalism specifically. Turo, Scranton, and Kuhkova show persuasively how market logics penetrated spaces previously governed by different economic logics, but again the lack of a definition makes it hard to connect their interesting contributions to a history of capitalism in general.

Moreover, many authors implicitly seem to share the idea of capitalism just being the mainstream economy. While the introduction tries to present capitalism as a "field of analysis" (p. 12), in the individual contributions, it seems to be the center in opposition to the margins, or an encroaching new order (p. 102). Kenneth Mouré refers to "capitalist principles" (p. 140), Frydman to the influence of "industrial capitalism" (p. 125), and Hollis and McKenna write about "capitalist seeking out more favorable regulatory regimes" (p. 159). These references suggest that the authors believe capitalism to have principles, and characteristics, rather than being re-constituted in practices in- and outside of official markets. Most of the individual contributions do not consistently work with a detailed concept of capitalism, and

further not really need to in order to make their cases. The dynamic concept of capitalism suggested in the introduction gives a lot of food for thought, yet for the edited volume "economies" might have been the better term.

"Capitalist's Hidden World" is a stimulating, insightful collection of much needed empirical studies concerning the shadow economy of the modern world. It contains a number of contributions that offer new perspectives, especially in the fields of global history and discussions on marginalized groups. Despite its lack of a uniting definition of capitalism – or a convincing argument how one could do without one in the context of an edited volume – it is bound to make a big impact in the fields of social and economic history.

#### Notes

- 1 J. Beckert / M. Dewey (eds.), *The architecture of illegal markets. Towards an economic sociology of illegality in the economy*, Oxford 2017; H. Berghoff / U. Spiekermann, *Shady business. On the history of white-collar crime*, in: *Business History* 60 (2018), pp. 289–304.
- 2 J. Mathew, *Margins of the market. Trafficking and capitalism across the Arabian Sea, Oakland 2016; The Other Global Germany. Transnational Criminality and Deviant Globalization in Germany*: <https://www.uni-erfurt.de/philosophische-fakultaet/seminare-professuren/historisches-seminar/professuren/globalgeschichte/forschung/nachwuchsgruppe/the-other-global-germany-transnational-criminality-and-deviant-globalization-in-germany> (accessed 11.01.2022).