

Annual Report for the Section on Economic Sociology

For membership year 2012-13

Prepared by Vicki Smith, Past Chair of the Section.

October, 2013



Introduction

Dear Section Past Chair;

Section Annual Reports are an important tool for building your section's institutional memory and history. In addition, they are one of the most valuable tools that the Association has to assess the vitality of your section. These reports are read and discussed by the Committee on Sections at its Fall/Winter meeting. Afterwards they are retained in the ASA's Sections archive and will be available upon request for future section members and officers.

Annual Reports should cover your section's activities during your term as chair, or approximately from the end of the previous year's Annual Meeting to the end of this year's.

Please send your completed report to the Executive Office by October 15th of this year. We prefer your reports are sent in electronic format rather than in print. Any printed materials sent to us will be converted into an electronic format.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions, comments or concerns. I am here to assist you. Thank you for your hard work and creativity over these last several years, and congratulations for the successful completion of your term as Chair of your Section.

Sincerely,
Justin Lini, MA
Program Coordinator for Sections, American Sociological Association.
(202) 383-9005 x 330 - Lini@ASAnet.org

Section Governance

This first section of the report details your section's governance activity during the last year.

Business Meeting

This portion of the report should include an agenda, a count or list of members present and a copy of the meeting's minutes. If no minutes are available, please provide a summary of decisions made at this meeting.

*Business Meeting Agenda and Minutes
August 11, 2013
Submitted by Leslie McCall, Secretary-Treasurer*

The meeting was scheduled in the same room as the roundtables, which were still going strong at the start time of our business meeting. Chair Vicki Smith called the meeting to order.

Announcements from Section Business Meeting

Current status of membership: 824, 7th largest section in the ASA. This means that we will be able to maintain 6 sessions at the 2014 meetings. This year there were four sessions organized by members of the section, one was co-sponsored with OOW, one was an invited Authors Meet Critics session for the Zelizer awarded books; and one was for the roundtables, which were well-attended and lively. Regarding an issue of longstanding debate, the council decided against the idea of a new print journal dedicated to economic sociology but did endorse further discussion of an online publication or forum. Yuval Millo will be heading the committee to make a recommendation regarding a new electronic format that moves beyond a traditional peer-reviewed, journal article, format. Contact him if you have any suggestions. Vicki also announced the Council's decision to raise dues from \$10.00 to \$12.00. The membership will vote on it during the Spring, 2014, elections.

Committees and Council Membership Updates

Committees received many submissions for awards, and the awards committees were thanked:
Zelizer Best Book Award committee: Frank Dobbin, Chair; Fred Wherry, Stephanie Mudge
Granovetter Best Article Award committee: Sarah Quinn, Chair; Ofer Sharone, Ashley Mears
Burt Best Student Paper Award committee: Lyn Spillman, Chair; Harland Prechel, Adam Goldstein
Membership Committee: Emily Barnum, Chair; Brandy Aven, Alya Guseva
Nominations Committee: Alya Guseva, Chair; Tim Bartley, Monica Prasad
The newsletter committee: Jennifer Haylett
The outgoing Secretary-Treasurer: Leslie McCall
Outgoing Council Members: Alya Guseva, Adam Goldstein, Greta Krippner, Monica Prasad
The new officers and council members are: Chair-elect Greta Krippner; Secretary-Treasurer Delia Baldassari; Council members Fred Wherry and Jennifer Bair; and Graduate Student Representative Lindsey Ibanez.

Announcement and Presentation of Awards

Lyn Spillman presented a summary of the merits of the best student paper; Fred Wherry of the best books; and Ofer Sharone of the best article. The winners and honorable mentions are:

Vivianna Zelizer Award for Best Book:

Monica Prasad, *The Land of Too Much: American Abundance and the Paradox of Poverty*
Lyn Spillman, *Solidarity in Strategy: Making Business Meaningful in American Trade Associations*

Ronald Burt Outstanding Student Paper Award:

Todd Schifeling, "Defense Against Recession: U.S. Business Mobilization, 1950-1970"

Aruna Ranganathan, "Giving Your Baby Away: Identification with Work in the Sale of Handicraft Products" (honorable mention)

Edo Navot, "The Wage Share of GDP in the Long Run: Class Power and Economic Cycles in the U.S., 1870-2009"

Mark Granovetter Prize for Best Article:

Lauren Rivera, "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms" *American Sociological Review* December 2012 77: 999-1022

Comments – Open discussion

No response.

New Officers

Nina Bandelj was introduced as the incoming Chair.

Nina thanked Vicki Smith for her excellent service. She also solicited participation from other members of the section, whose service the section depends on, and also ideas for the newsletter. She circulated a sign up sheet for various committees. She announced that she already has five student volunteers committed to producing the newsletter (from UC Irvine), and they are an interdisciplinary team. She opened up the floor to discussion. One comment was raised by Nicole Biggart to move to electronic rather than paper dissemination and to publicize blogs on economic sociology, provide links on our web site, etc.

Attendees (44):

A. Kalev, D. Light, A. Guseva, J. McQuaid, F. Wherry, L. Ibanez, Y. Millo, N. Bandelj, L. McCall, F. Block, N. Biggart, L. Stearns, V. Smith, Y. Bian, C. Upright, M. Suchman, J. Beckert, T. Janoski, M. Latino, D. Baldassarri, J. Zavisca, L. King, Z. Kotelnikova, V. Raaev, O. Shaone, M. Prasad, A. Ranganathan, S. Quinn, M. Vidal, A. Pitluck, E. Larson, L. Rivera, G. Krippner, L. Spillman, R. Saeges, J. Gjata, V. Reyes, Marantz, B. Hannibal, R. Burt, S. Muetzel, V. Yalenskovich, H. Haveman, MN. Hsieh, and one person whose signature is unreadable.

Section Council Meeting

In this portion of the report, please discuss your section's deliberations at its Council Meeting. This portion of the report should include an agenda, a count or list of members present and a copy of the meeting's minutes. If no minutes are available, please provide a summary of decisions made by the Section Council. Please include information on all other Council Meetings conducted during the previous year.

Council Meeting Agenda and Minutes

August 11, 2013

Submitted by Leslie McCall, Secretary-Treasurer

ATTENDANCE (14)

Tim Bartley
Jens Beckert
Vicki Smith (chair)
Monica Prasad
Alya Guseva
Nina Bandelj (chair-elect)
Leslie McCall (secretary-treasurer)
Adam Goldstein (student rep)
Greta Krippner
Yuval Millo
Sarah Quinn
Frederick Wherry
Delia Baldassari (secretary-treasurer-elect)
Lindsey Ibanez (student rep)

MINUTES

Membership

Membership is now 824 as compared to 790 at this time last year. This is despite less of a membership drive this year than last, so perhaps the membership drives don't matter as much as we thought. The membership is also now comfortably over 800 but not close enough to 1000, which would give us another session slot, to motivate a major drive. We are the 7th largest section, and one of the largest among the older sections. Assuming our membership stays above 800, we will have 6 sessions at next year's meeting.

Membership Dues

Dues are currently \$10.00 even though we voted last year to raise them from \$8.00 to \$9.00! Obviously, we were somehow under the wrong impression about the current level of dues. Given the financial straits of the section (see budget section), a vote was taken to raise dues to \$12.00, which is standard for other sections. Graduate student fees would be raised from \$5.00 to \$6.00. The vote was unanimous in favor of raising dues. This vote will be put to the section membership in the 2014 election.

Budget

We began the year with a balance of \$4,387, with \$1,741 carried over from last year, and \$2,646 added from membership dues. The main expenses continue to be the reception (\$2,860), council breakfast (\$379), financial award for the graduate student paper (\$300), and award plaques (\$137). Thus our balance after these expenses incurred for the 2013 meetings will be \$711.

Based on our membership level, our expected increase in revenues will be comparable to previous years, at roughly \$2,650. Our next financial statement should thus reflect a balance of approximately \$3,361. This is about \$2000 less than the peak of revenues during my tenure as Secretary-Treasurer from 2010 to the present. Conference expenses in Las Vegas were particularly steep and cut into our savings.

We'll have an additional 20 percent of funds after the dues are increased, but this will not go into effect until the year after next, as the membership will have to vote on the increase in the Spring of 2014 elections.

Reception

A lot of work went into trying to find an off-site reception but the options were all more expensive than an on-site location, which itself was very expensive even with the limited food selection. The on-site location was a nice space, though, and convenient. Regarding co-sponsoring with the Culture Section, it was too complicated given that they have more money and are much bigger, thus perhaps more of an unfair constraint to co-sponsor for them than for us.

Award Nominations

The council can discuss this next year, but Vicki wrote up comments and questions to motivate future discussion. Some issues are whether a nomination letter ought to be required for the book award to prevent mass nominations by publishers, or refuse publisher submissions altogether; what constitutes an honorable mention versus a co-award; should the graduate student papers be published or unpublished, etc. Nina asked that members of prior awards committees send her comments on how they might like to modify the process and develop guidelines.

Roundtable Organizing

There was a problem last year with presenters that didn't show up to the meetings, which did not seem to be a problem again this year. Part of the problem could be that the management meetings coincide with ASA. Another issue was that the organizer of roundtables (Fred Block) started organizing the roundtables early but should have waited because a lot of submissions came later after they were rejected from other sessions. There were nine roundtables this year. There could have been more, given the number of submissions. Should we set a maximum number of roundtables? There could be up to 25 or so, but it would be difficult to find discussants for all of them.

Sessions

There were four open (unsolicited) sessions on particular topics. A lot of submissions were received (~50 first choice and more as second choice), and so the topics did not seem to deter submissions, as is often feared (some would like to have completely open submissions without topics that may inadvertently favor some subfields over others). There was also a regular session on economic sociology, which apparently was not very well attended (20-30). We need to perhaps coordinate more closely with the organizer of the regular session (organized every year by the ASA program

committee) to boost participation. For example, this year there were only two regular sessions whereas last year there were more (5?). Regular sessions this year were also not titled in an inviting way – they were Economic Sociology I and II. Also, regular session organizers may not know that they can request more sessions.

In addition to the four section sessions mentioned above, there was one invited session organized as an Author Meets Critic panel on the winners of the Zelizer Award (Monica Prasad and Lyn Spillman), and one session used for the Business meeting and Roundtables. Council meets at 7:00 am in order to maximize official conference time (6 sessions) devoted to presentations of research.

Economic Sociology Mini Conference (this year and next)

Yuval Millo and Daniel Beunza organized a very successful mini-conference on financial markets held at the New York Stock Exchange. The session included academic scholars as well as practitioners. NYSE finally agreed after much cajoling, and Yuval believes this was in part a result of having demonstrated their credibility by submitting comments on SEC regulations and meeting with the SEC in DC. There should be a summary of the conference in an upcoming newsletter.

For next year, Nina mentioned that it might be good to follow up on this model and invite a practitioner to appear on one of the section panels. ASA has funds to invite practitioners, and they are not required to pay registration fees.

Section journal

For the third year, the council debated the idea of sponsoring a new journal of economic sociology. A thorough report was submitted by a committee consisting of Adam Goldstein, Yuval Millo, and Monica Prasad (see report at end of this report, and minutes from previous two years). They decided against recommending a print journal because it would be expensive, increasing dues substantially to support it; will compete with *SER*; is not the best vehicle for quick dissemination of ideas/research; and seems to lack a critical mass of support, among other reasons. They did suggest three alternative models for an electronic “journal”: blog; curated e-papers; open-access e-journal. They came to no consensus on these options, however.

A new committee was formed, headed by Yuval Millo, to discuss and make recommendations for an electronic format “journal.”

There were many comments aired during a lengthy discussion of an electronic journal. The journal could foster more debate, dynamic feedback through commenting, rapid dissemination of ideas, quicker turn-around times, a variety of shorter and longer formats than is the norm in printed journals, and generally more flexibility in content, style, and length. We could hitch it to the economic sociology web site and begin modestly with a working paper series. Some worried about putting research out early and getting scooped. Norms about protecting authorship may not be well-developed in sociology.

Introduction of new officers

The new chair, Nina Bandelj, solicited participation on all fronts, from session topics to volunteers for various committees. She will continue to encourage discussion of a new publishing outlet and invited additional feedback and comments via email.

State of the Section Budget

Did your section operate within its budget for this year? Please include a copy of last year's projected budget and compare it with actual expenses.

The section operated within its budget. We began the year with a balance of \$4,387, with \$1,741 carried over from last year, and \$2,646 added from membership dues. The main expenses continue to be the reception (\$2,860), council breakfast (\$379), financial award for the graduate student paper (\$300), and award plaques (\$137). Thus our balance after these expenses incurred for the 2013 meetings will be \$711.

Based on our membership level, our expected increase in revenues will be comparable to previous years, at roughly \$2,650. Our next financial statement should thus reflect a balance of approximately \$3,361. This is about \$2000 less than the peak of revenues during my tenure as Secretary-Treasurer from 2010 to the present. Conference expenses in Las Vegas were particularly steep and cut into our savings.

We'll have an additional 20 percent of funds after the dues are increased, but this will not go into effect until the year after next, as the membership will have to vote on the increase in the Spring of 2014 elections. *Note from Vicki Smith: assuming the members vote to increase Section dues, we will earn an additional \$2 per regular member (for \$4 total for each regular member) and an additional dollar from graduate student members (for \$3 total for each graduate student member). This will help the budget considerably. Assuming that current numbers hold into the next few years, this would entail an additional \$1,592 in revenue: an additional \$1,022 from the 511 regular members and an additional \$570 from the 285 graduate student members.*

An operating budget for the coming year approved by the Section Council.

*A separate spreadsheet is provided to calculate the planning budget and track expenses. Please work with your Section's Secretary Treasurer on this point. The budget is of critical importance to the Committee on Sections and **must** be included with the section's annual report.*

2013-14:

Economic Sociology should receive a base allocation of \$1,000 (we have more than 300 members)

We should receive \$1,646 in membership dues (\$2 each for 823 members = \$1,646).

We will carry over \$711.

Our total balance should be \$3,357.

Our expenditures this coming year will include:

- Approximately \$300 for the graduate student paper award
- Approximately \$130 for award plaques
- Approximately \$350 for council breakfast
 - Subtotal = \$780

This will leave approximately \$2,500 for the section reception. With any luck it will be possible to spend less on the reception in San Francisco (New York City was hugely expensive). We should stay within our budget this coming year.

Statements, Notes, Observations

Please feel free to use this space for anything that does not fit above.

The Previous Year

This section discusses your section's activities during your term as Section Chair.

Overview

Please provide an overview of your section's programming for the last year. We also invite you to include information on the state of the section, sentiments of the members, important issues in the field.

There were four open (unsolicited) sessions on particular topics. They were:

- "Intimate Lives in Market Times" organized by Allison Pugh
- "Putting Economic Sociology Into Practice" organized by Donald Light
- "Work, Labor and Employment" organized by Gina Neff
- "Comparative/Global Economic Sociology" organized by Yanjie Bian

There was one session that was co-sponsored with Organizations, Occupations, and Work:

- "Economic Sociology, Organizations, and Social Inequality" organized by Alexandra Kalev

This year the co-sponsored session counted against OOW's allotment. Next year we'll co-sponsor another session with OOW; it will count against Economic Sociology's allotment. This exchange has been fully documented for the 2013-14 Section leadership.

Frank Dobbin organized a session—Authors Meet Critics—devoted to the two recipients of the Zelizer Book Award. Two critics spoke on each book, and the authors responded to their comments.

Fred Block, with the assistance of UCD sociology graduate students, organized the section roundtables (nine total). As discussant was appointed to each roundtable.

All sessions were well attended, with 20 or more attendees typically at each session. Each set of papers and presentations were followed by lively question and answer periods.

A lot of submissions were received (~50 first choice and more as second choice), and so the topics did not seem to deter submissions, as is often feared (some would like to have completely open submissions without topics that may inadvertently favor some subfields over others). There is also a regular session on economic sociology, which apparently was not very well attended (20-30). We need to perhaps coordinate more closely with the organizer of the regular session (organized every year by the ASA program committee) to boost participation. For example, this year there were only two regular sessions whereas last year there were more (5?). Regular sessions this year were also not titled in an inviting way – they were Economic Sociology I and II. Also, regular session organizers may not know that they can request more sessions.

My sense, shared by council members, is that our section is quite robust and lively. We are now the seventh largest ASA section, with 823 members, according to Justin Lini's most recent data. This is extremely large for a section that was formed relatively recently. Of the sections that have been formed since ours, we are far and away the largest. In most cases, we are the largest by a large increment, not a small one—we are twice and three times the size of some of the sections that formed after we did.

(With respect to newer sections, the second and third largest behind Economic Sociology are considerably behind us in membership size: Inequality, Poverty and Mobility has 671 members, and Global/Transnational Sociology has 627 members. If you go in the opposite direction and look at

sections that have been in formation for much longer than Economic Sociology: between us and the Sociology of Culture section [#26, with 1,191 members] there is only one section that's larger than Economic Sociology: Race, Gender and Class [#36], with 942 members.)

Between our excellent membership figures and the strong participation at the Annual meetings (solid turnouts for panels and sessions; reasonable attendance at the Section business meeting), I feel confident saying that Economic Sociology thrives, is the site of a great deal of cutting-edge research, attracts scholars who do a variety of types of research—and will continue on this trajectory for the foreseeable future.

Recruiting and Retention Efforts

What efforts did your section make to retain last year's members and reach out to new members? What were the results of the section's retention efforts?

The membership committee, the section chair, and some council members sent email messages to the membership and to relevant individuals, encouraging them to renew their memberships and to urge other individuals to join the section. The year before last, the membership committee did a major membership drive, offering copies of members' books to people who joined the section. They succeeded in expanding the section membership. This past year, it was felt that doing a less aggressive recruitment was acceptable and we have maintained our membership numbers over 800.

Communications Strategy

How does your section communicate with its members? Did it begin using any new technologies or techniques, if so were they effective? Please include links to your section's website, newsletter and other electronic media used.

I communicated with the section members in two major ways. First, I sent a set of announcements to the listserv on the first of every month. I regularly solicited materials for these monthly announcements by sending requests for information and updates to the membership. I received anywhere between 3 and 10 announcements each month.

Second, I produced three major newsletters during my term (Volume 12, numbers 1, 2, and 3 of *Accounts*, the newsletter that has existed since the formation of the section). Each newsletter was between 24 and 30 pages long and had columns written by myself; a series of articles I initiated called, "Why Economic Sociologists Should Care About..." (the first was on the 2012 elections, the second was on relational work, and the third was on education; each was written by a leading scholar in the respective field); book reviews, written by section members, of important books recently published by section members; updates about the planning, organizing, and scheduling of the annual conference; a major section of updates (news, awards, etc. for section members); and calls for papers for edited volumes and conferences. Each newsletter reflects the input and labor of many different section members. Each newsletter was sent electronically to the membership as pdfs. Our webpage editor, Craig Tutterow, also posted the newsletters in html on the ASA section website:

<http://www2.asanet.org/sectionecon>

Statements, Notes, Observations

Please feel free to use this space for anything that does not fit above.

Just a couple of comments. First, Justin Lini does a wonderful job as the ASA/Section liaison. He always responds in a timely way; his information is accurate and helpful; and he is cooperative and pleasant. He sent helpful updates (budget info, membership numbers, information about the listserv.) He made my job as chair so manageable. Thank you, Justin.

Second, the situation with respect to organizing receptions is a real source of anxiety and consumes a lot of work. As you well know, holding the reception on-site is shockingly expensive and we receive little for what we buy. I took a photo of the food served at our reception, simply to document how scandalously little we can buy for a huge amount of money (photo available upon request). The saving grace was that the room in which the reception was held, miraculously, was very pleasant. And of course, people bought their own drinks, which lubricated the event. I had friends search around in NYC for an alternate location but every place was too expensive. I know this problem holds for every location. But this was the least favorite part of my "job." I don't know what to suggest but it seemed out of hand, to me.

Aside from that issue, I felt like the job as chair was reasonable. I can see that much depends on the initiative of any individual chair. I was proactive about business, took responsibility for circulating information and updating the membership, and made sure that all our business across the year was conducted as expected. But it is a lot of work and woe be to the section that has a chair that doesn't take these extensive responsibilities seriously!

The Coming Year

This portion of the report discusses your section's plans for next year.

Elections and Nominations

This section details who is on the section's Nominations Committee and how they were appointed. If your section does not have a standing Nominations Committee, please discuss your process for nominating candidates for next year's elections.

Next year's Nominations Committee is:

Vicki Smith, Chair

Fred Wherry

Yuval Millo

2013-14 Section Chair Nina Bandelj invited these individuals to serve.

Plans for the coming year.

What sort of programming will your section conduct for next year's Annual Meeting. Will the section begin any new projects before then?

The activities planned for the coming year involve:

1. Organizing the section program for the ASA meeting in San Francisco.
2. Collecting institutional history of the section (activities, committees, prize nomination procedures, etc.) and gathering this information in one virtual place so that it can be easily available to future section officers.
3. Organizing mentoring activities, possibly a faculty mentoring lunch before the ASA meeting in San Francisco.
4. Updating the section website and using the online content format for the Newsletter, together with the PDF issues emailed to the members.

A group of individuals, including some council members, will continue to explore the possibility of an online journal reflecting the interests of section members.

Statements, Notes, Observations

Please feel free to use this space for anything that does not fit above.

The Association and the Executive Office

This is your opportunity to put items onto the agenda of the Committee on Sections and ASA Staff.

What issues would you like raised or recommendations would you like to make to the ASA Council and Committee on Sections?

This is your opportunity to make policy suggestions or discuss any difficulties that your section encountered during your tenure as Section Chair.

See earlier comments about the hassles of organizing the reception. Aside from that, I don't have any specific recommendations or criticisms.

What issues would you like raised or recommendations would you like to make to ASA Staff?

Please feel free to suggest improvements to sections procedures or services provided to sections.

None. As noted earlier, I was satisfied with the quality of the support provided to me by Justin Lini.

Statements, Notes, Observations

Please feel free to use this space for anything that doesn't fit above.

Goodby and good luck.

Vicki Smith

ATTACHMENT:

Exploring the Possibility of Forming an Economic Sociology Journal

Adam Goldstein

Yuval Hadas

Monica Prasad

In 2012 the Economic Sociology section was approached by several members interested in the possibility of starting an Economic Sociology journal supported by the section. The three of us were asked to think through whether this would be a good idea.

We concluded that the section should not start a conventional print journal, but should experiment with an online journal with the express goal of shortening the time that it takes to review manuscripts. Our orienting framework is that the decision about whether to form a section journal should be guided first by a vision of what such an undertaking would hope to achieve, and second by an analysis of whether forming a section journal is a viable means of achieving those goals. We conclude that there is no problem in the subfield that founding another print journal will solve, but there is a problem—excessive review times—that an online journal might be able to address.

Why a section journal?

The primary rationale for forming a new economic sociology journal is that it might create a more integrated forum for scholarly exchange about the field. Economic sociology's intellectual diversity is an asset, but it lacks a "communicative center" for debate and research. There is no dedicated home to engage in theoretical debates in particular. As economic sociology matures as a scholarly field, it faces some pressing questions about what it is, what concepts can anchor it, and how research agendas might proceed. Currently such discussions occur across a fragmented array of sites which members may not be aware of, including blogs and various journals at the margins of the field such as *Theory and Society*, *Politics and Society*, and various management and accounting journals such as *ASQ* and *AOS*. A dedicated econ-soc outlet could encourage the sorts of fruitful debates that fall within the realm of economic sociology, but at the moment are 'mixed' with issues from other areas. A section journal could thereby have a desired constitutive effect on the field. A dedicated journal might also serve as an instrument to heighten the legitimacy and impact of economic sociology in the public and policy spheres.

Another potential benefit of a journal is that it could provide a high-profile outlet for publishing the growing stock of high-quality empirical research in the field. Economic sociologists produce many excellent research papers that don't make it into *AJS* or *ASR*, and consequently end up making less impact than they might for lack of a natural "home." A recent ASA analysis showed that economic sociology has become one of the most popular specialties among graduate students. A section journal could be especially beneficial for younger scholars.

Why not a conventional print journal?

However, we were more convinced by the arguments against forming a section journal in the conventional mold:

First and most importantly, a conventional section journal would require raising section dues significantly. Currently there are only three ASA section journals, and there appears to be no set model for publishing one.¹ Sections with journals tend to have fees that are about \$20 more than other sections. We have recently had one dues increase. Raising section dues again would conflict with the section's goal of increasing membership and particularly of trying to attract graduate students and foreign scholars. There are also considerable time and labor costs of running such an operation.

Second, such a journal would compete with *Socio-Economic Review*, which has increasingly come to fill a role as a sub-specialty journal for economic sociologists. The *SER* editors, who include several section members and our section President-Elect, have worked hard to broaden its scope and range beyond comparative political economy. Though not dedicated specifically to economic sociology, *SER* has established itself as an excellent outlet for economic sociology research. There is a real concern that a section journal would compete with *SER*, potentially undermining both efforts.

Finally, it is not clear that a conventional journal format would be an effective way to spur lively debates and/or create a more vital communicative center. Despite honest efforts on the part of editors, print journals continue to be plagued by long review times and protracted revision sagas. The double-blind quarterly print journal serves an important role in the scientific community, but the genre is not well adapted to rapid dissemination of research findings and dynamic debate.

¹ It is important to bear in mind here that several well-known ASA sub-specialty journals are *not* section journals, e.g. *Sociology of Education*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *Sociological Methodology*. These journals are under ASA publication committee stewardship in the same way that *ASR* is.

Although the downsides of a print journal appear to outweigh the upsides, we do think that experimentation with online alternatives could, and should, address several of the problems mentioned above.

Why an online journal, and what are the alternatives?

One of the main complaints with the present journal publication process is its lengthiness. Even papers which do not undergo major revisions may spend years in the submission process before eventual publication. If the section were to form a journal, tackling this issue seems to us a primary goal. There are currently several attempts to reimagine online peer review communities to address this problem, and we feel that this is where the focus of a new journal should be.

An all-electronic journal format would involve lower costs and would afford the section greater flexibility. It could be self-published by the section (avoiding commercial publishers). This is probably the most viable way to form a journal without raising section membership costs significantly. It would also give the section complete control over the journal.

What sorts of alternative models might be promising? There is a spectrum from blog to website to edited working paper series to open-access journal that could fit what we are thinking about. We sketch out four possibilities below. All but the fourth aim to be synergistic with the existing peer-reviewed print journal system.

1) To the extent that a primary goal is to generate an outlet for more rapid dissemination of research, it could be worth considering alternative forms such as an edited working paper series. A highly successful model in economics is the NBER working paper series. NBER papers undergo a certain minimal degree of review before being posted. This allows economists who have produced relatively polished research to shortcut the lengthy journal publishing process. Yet these works have greater visibility and permanence than a working paper posted on personal websites or other repository like SSRN. Many become highly cited and influential. These sorts of alternatives need not be in competition with print journals: NBER and SSRN papers are usually published later in “traditional” format. Transposing such a model to economic sociology could be difficult. NBER has a dedicated staff to review papers for quality. But some variant on this approach could be worth exploring.

2) Another possibility is some sort of closed web community, accessible only to section members, where members can put up drafts of papers for early peer review. Such a forum would be oriented more towards feedback and discussion rather than dissemination. It could perhaps be anchored by a blog that focuses on what the emerging questions are in economic sociology and aims to provide a continuous online discussion of these issues, with reference to posted work. Such a model would seek to provide both an individual good (feedback, improving research) and a collective good for the subfield.

3) Getting ideas out faster and facilitating debate “in real time” might mean publishing shorter pieces, on the template of the European Economic Sociology Newsletter or ASA’s magazine *Contexts*. One model in this vein is what is called a “Letters Journal” in economics. Such a journal aims to publish shorter papers (maybe up to 3,000 words) that report on findings, theoretical developments and quality, sociologically-oriented opinion pieces. Such an outlet, to be successful, would need to promise short turnaround times, constructive reviewing attitude and, potentially, a web-based platform that would allow and encourage discussion (for example, comments, from registered members would be allowed). This will allow people to submit to the outlet “on the way” to submitting to a major journal, or on the rebound from a rejection

4) Finally, there is the possibility of an open-access, peer-reviewed e-journal. This is the most “journal-like” option, and would potentially compete with existing journals to a greater extent than the models discussed above. It would also differ from a conventional journal in important ways. Such journals promise fast turnarounds, with either minimal revisions or even a simple up/down decision. And the all-electronic format allows for immediate publication upon acceptance, without any queuing. A guiding principal of this format is that the significance and robustness of scientific findings should be assessed through open debate and replication by the community at large (rather than through a protracted and/or arbitrary review process).² As such, an economic sociology e-journal would presumably incorporate an infrastructure for commentary, reactions, and debate between authors and critics.

The most well-known of such journals is *PLOS One*, a general science journal which was profiled in the *Accounts* article last summer. Although articles are peer-reviewed, the standard is one of minimal competence rather than the exceeding standards of excellence that prevail in the top sociology journals and in highly selective natural science journals like *Nature*. *PLOS One* does publish plenty of high-quality articles, but it also becomes a sort of dumping ground for mediocre work and “leftovers.” A case could be made that an economic sociology section journal would only be successful to the extent it aims to be highly selective.

A group of sociologists are currently launching a general sociology journal in this vein called Sociological Science [<http://sociologicalscience.com/>], an experiment that bears watching.

If we pursue this path, a platform worth exploring is Scholastica, which was founded by a group of sociology graduate students at the University of Chicago. Scholastica is a combined journal review/publication management system and web-hosting infrastructure, which allows academic societies to bypass publishers. It is currently utilized mostly by Law Review journals. Rather than subscribing to a service, Scholastica charges the journal a flat fee of \$10 per submission. Presumably this would be passed on to authors in the form of a submission fee. Their website indicates that the system can be adapted to fit a variety of different journal setups. Using a service like Scholastica could facilitate the creation of an e-journal with little upfront cost.

Another innovation worth considering: some scholarly associations are experimenting with “portable reviews,” i.e. reviews that can be taken to other journals if the first journal rejects a paper. This seems a promising idea, especially for articles that are rejected after an R&R. At that time the article has received considerable effort from both author and reviewers, and there will be four to six reviews of versions of it available. A new electronic journal could invite submission of such articles, along with submission of all the prior reviews, with a guarantee of either an accept or reject decision based solely on those already existing reviews and the authors’ responses to them. Articles that have been narrowly rejected from AJS or ASR would make excellent candidates.

Conclusion

The task given to us was to consider the desirability of a conventional print section journal. We have concluded that the disadvantages of such a journal outweigh the advantages. We have not gone beyond that mandate to consider the pros and cons of the online possibilities suggested here. But we hope that the section will take this conversation forward, perhaps by appointing another committee convened to propose a specific online option for the section.

² As such, publication decisions at such journals tend to be based on a determination of basic competence rather than airtight robustness.

