
ACCOUNTS

- 1 Message from the Chair
 - 2 Section Office Holders
 - 3 On Digital Advertising: An Interview with Donald MacKenzie
 - 6 On Algorithmic Management: An Interview with Lindsey Cameron
 - 10 On Editing a Journal: An Interview with the New Chief Editors of *Socio-Economic Review*
 - 15 Spotlight: An Interview with Guillermina Altomonte
 - 19 Teaching Economic Sociology: An Interview with David Stark
 - 23 Bookshelf: *A Men Among Other Men, The Crisis of Black Masculinity and the Racial Capitalism*
 - 26 Award Nomination Calls
 - 27 Editorial Board
-

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear colleagues,

I'll use this occasion to announce our sessions for the section at ASA in Philadelphia, with thanks to all of you who volunteered your time and ideas for the program.

Last year under the leadership of Past Chair Emily Erickson, our sessions provided a roadmap of sorts to some of the key intellectual streams in the field. Those sessions were, 1) Discrimination, Race, and Bias in Economic Processes; 2) Problems in Economic Coordination, Organizations, and Networks; 3) Global Institutions and Development; 4) Social Processes and the Construction of Value; 5) A Future for Economic Sociology: Offering Solutions

This year, our program aims to signal those streams and spotlight the new directions into which they may branch. To those ends, in 2023 our five



sessions are outlined below each with a short summary:

1. Pasts and Futures of Economic Sociology

What are the future directions of economic sociology? How might the next generations of scholars build on and advance our conceptual frameworks? This open session invites papers that refine, reimagine, and/or radically go beyond the conceptual pillars of economic sociology, whose intellectual cannon is often summarized as the study of network embeddedness, organizations, performativity, and how culture shapes economic activity. What are the limitations and possibilities of economic sociology to push beyond these scopes, and what might it contribute to the discipline of sociology, and beyond? This session will be organized by Roi Livne, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan.

2. Centering Inequalities in Economic Sociology

What tools do economic sociologists have to identify and challenge pressing inequalities? This session centers race, gender, class, and other vectors of social and economic inequalities, and their underlying power dynamics, in economic sociology. Organized by Katherine Sobering, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of North Texas.

3. Digital Marketplaces

What happens to sociological theories of markets and exchange as they transition into digital space? What work and decisions are made to enable market dynamics on platforms? How do metrics transform other measures of value? This panel invites scholars to rethink core ideas of economic sociology for the digital age. This session will be organized by Georg Rilinger, Assistant Professor of Technological Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Strategic Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management.

4. Economic Sociology Open Session

Finally, we have a wide-open call for any and all submissions to spotlight new and emerging themes, questions, and topics in the field of economic sociology. Papers are welcome from across methodological and theoretical traditions, including syntheses, agenda-setters, and empirical studies. This session will be organized by Beth Redbird, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Northwestern University.

Finally, our referred roundtables will be organized by Roi Livne. Special thanks to all of our organizers, and we are looking forward to reading your submissions. Those of you who volunteered to be presiders and further involved in the program, we will be in touch. ■

SECTION OFFICE HOLDERS

Chair: Ashley Mears, Boston University
 Chair-Elect: Ken-Hou Lin, University of Texas at Austin
 Past Chair: Emily Anne Erikson, Yale University
 Section Secretary/Treasurer: Victoria Reyes, University of California, Riverside
 Barbara Kiviat, Stanford University
 Carly Knight, New York University
 Roi Livne, University of Michigan
 Gökhan Mülayim, Boston University (Student Representative)
 Beth Redbird, Northwestern University
 John Robinson, Princeton University
 Katherine Sobering, University of North Texas

ON DIGITAL ADVERTISING: AN INTERVIEW WITH DONALD MACKENZIE

Donald MacKenzie is a professor of sociology at the University of Edinburgh. He is a sociologist of science and technology who has studied a wide range of topics, such as the history of statistics, eugenics, nuclear weapons, computing, and social studies of finance. MacKenzie is a prolific writer who has published many articles, book chapters, and books, including *Inventing Accuracy: A Historical Sociology of Nuclear Missile Guidance* (1990); *Knowing Machines* (1996); *Mechanizing Proof* (2001); *An Engine, Not a Camera: How Financial Models Shape Markets* (2006); and *Trading at the Speed of Light: How Ultrafast Algorithms Are Transforming Financial Markets* (2021). He holds many awards, such as the Robert K. Merton Award from the American Sociological Association (1992); the John Desmond Bernal Prize of the Society for Social Studies of Science (2005); the Chancellor's Award from Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh (2006); the Viviana A. Zelizer Best Book Award (2005); and the Granovetter Award for Best Article in Economic Sociology (2012). Currently, he is working on a collaborative research project with Koray Caliskan and Charlotte Rommerskirchen on digital advertising.

Gökhan Mülayim, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Donald MacKenzie about his digital advertisement project, banal political economy, and material politics.



Gökhan Mülayim: *Thank you for joining us in this issue. Let's begin with the inception of your research project. How did you start studying digital advertising? What inspired you?*

Donald MacKenzie: The topics that I like to focus on are aspects of the technoscientific world that matter to people's lives but are often opaque to them. We all encounter digital ads every day, but few of us (and that included me before I started doing this research) have any real sense of the infrastructure that leads us to be shown the ads that we see. It's also important that digital ads are the primary revenue source for much of Big Tech, such as Google and Facebook.

Of course, fortuitous events played a part as well in making digital ads an attractive research topic. One of the most helpful informants for my previous research project (on automated, ultrafast "high-frequency trading" or HFT) in finance moved to a new post in digital advertising, and our conversations started to move beyond HFT to digital advertising. A further spur was a talk by Paul Edwards of Michigan and Stanford, one of the chief contributors to the literature on "in-

frastructure” in the sociology of science and technology, in which he sketched the infrastructure of online advertising.

I have been joined in this research by Koray Caliskan of the New School and my Edinburgh colleagues Charlotte Rommerskirchen and Addie McGowan. It’s a team I am very much enjoying working with.

G. M.: *Could you please tell us a bit about the process of digital advertising? What happens when one clicks on a link to an advertisement on a news website?*

D. M.: The mention of news websites highlights another reason I got interested in digital advertising: As print circulation and print advertising have declined as sources of revenue for news journalism, online advertising has become in many cases uncomfortably pivotal to journalism’s economic viability.

The ads that you see on a news website (or, indeed, in any online context) aren’t usually predetermined: A near-instantaneous auction of the right to show you an ad or ads takes place when, e.g., you click on a link. Typically, when your browser accesses a site that carries ads, a little software “tag” is triggered that alerts the site’s ad server, which is normally a separate computer system. By far the dominant such system is Google’s ad server. It’s not a standalone machine, but a cloud service running on thousands of servers in Google’s data-centres worldwide. The ad server then sends an electronic message to AdX, Google’s ad exchange, in which huge numbers of advertising opportunities are bought and sold. AdX calls for bids to show you an ad, and then returns the winning bid to an ad server which triggers the process of showing you the ad.

G. M.: *You use the concepts “mundane” and “banal” to describe the political economy of digital advertising. Could you please tell us what we can learn from the quotidian world of minuscule things and “uninteresting” processes?*

D. M.: All sociologists worth their salt are interested in the routine and the everyday: Goffman, perhaps above all, showed how rich a topic this is. There’s an additional angle to it in both financial trading and online advertising, which is that the profit on any one transaction is miniscule: In the case of HFT, typically no more than a twentieth of a cent per share traded, and much of the time the revenue from an ad to one user is no more than that either. But, of course, fractions of a cent add up if you can earn them millions or billions of times a day, and that’s the case for both HFT and digital advertising.

In either sphere, it’s instructive to “follow the money” (something which, to my mind, economic sociologists don’t do enough of). Auditors at PwC did a fascinating study for the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers a couple of years ago, in which they found that only just over half of advertisers’ spending reached publishers. Shockingly, PwC simply couldn’t trace where 15 percent of that spending had ended up (<https://www.isba.org.uk/system/files/media/documents/2020-12/executive-summary-programmatic-supply-chain-transparency-study.pdf>).

G. M.: *What is political about digital advertising? Could you tell us a bit about the material politics of advertisements and the struggles in the field, if there are any?*

D. M.: The most obvious thing that is “political” about digital advertising is data collection and the politics of privacy. That’s important, and we will be studying it, but we are also interested in what one might call “the material politics of market structure.” In other words material arrangements that either reinforce the dominance of digital advertising by big platforms or seek to undermine that dominance. Another political aspect is the environmental politics of advertising technology. Electricity consumption is involved throughout the chain from the design of an ad to that ad appearing on your screen, and by no means all that electricity is renewable. So each ad corresponds to a little puff of carbon dioxide, somewhere between a fifth of a cup and a couple of cups. It doesn’t sound much, but with

hundreds of billions of ads being shown daily it really adds up. (My estimate of the size of the puffs is based on the research of Mikko Kotila and colleagues: <https://medium.com/art-technology/how-much-does-an-ad-impression-emit-carbon-d31daea57184>.)

The presence of these three forms (and more) of material politics makes digital advertising fascinating, but also creates difficulties for political interventions and policy making, because the three forms are to a degree in tension with each other. For example, the most prominent material-politics challenge to Google's dominant role in the advertising market is a technique called header bidding," in which the user's own device gathers bids for the user's attention, partially circumventing Google's systems. From an environmental viewpoint, however, having multiple auctions (which header bidding tends to involve) consumes more electricity than Google's more centralized system.

G. M.: *Besides being radically ordinary, digital advertising also belongs to the esoteric world of the technical and technological. What fascinates me about your work is your in-depth engagement with the objects of your research, no matter how esoteric they are. Could you please tell us a bit about the methodological challenges you have faced in researching digital advertisements? And how have you dealt with these so far?*

D. M.: What's most difficult is securing interviews with current staff of the big platforms, which tend to have policies that constrain employees talking in depth about their work to an outsider such as me. So there's a danger of the research becoming lopsided, with much more input from smaller firms that often position themselves against the big platforms.

There's no simple way of getting around this: One has just got to be conscious of the possibility of bias. The pandemic was obviously also a challenge of a different kind. To my surprise, however, I have found Zoom interviews to be quite a good replacement for face-to-face. Rapport seems pretty similar. The main thing I miss is all the incidental stuff that you can pick up, by peripheral vision so

to speak, when you visit an interviewee in their place of work. I'm happy, therefore, that I've been able to restart face-to-face interviews in recent months.

G. M.: *Is the research still in progress? Can you tell us about the future goals of the project?*

D. M.: Yes, we are just nine months into a four-year project. We don't have rigidly fixed plans: I've always found it better to work iteratively, digesting the results of one phase before deciding definitively which direction to go in next. A definite plan is an article on header bidding and the "hack" of Google's ad server that it involves ("hack" is the term used, not by header bidding's opponents, but by interviewees who fashioned the technique). Beyond that, we're also planning a paper on how "rank-and-file" practitioners, for example in advertising agencies, negotiate (and sometimes resist and challenge) the opacities: both economic opacities of the kind revealed by the PwC research, and the technical opacities of the machine learning systems that play such a large role in the everyday practices of digital advertising. ■

CALL FOR PAPERS

7th Interdisciplinary Market Studies
Workshop #IMSW2023

The University of Edinburgh

31 May - 2 June 2023

Submission: 27 January 2023

FOR DETAILS

ON ALGORITHMIC MANAGEMENT: AN INTERVIEW WITH LINDSEY CAMERON

Lindsey D. Cameron is an assistant professor of management at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on how algorithmic management is changing the modern workplace, especially individuals' behaviors at work. She holds a Ph.D. in Management from the University of Michigan.

Elif Birced, Ph.D. candidate in sociology at Boston University, talked to Lindsey about her research on ride-hailing and food delivery platforms as well as her future research plans.

Elif Birced: *In your different projects, you have focused on the gig economy and different impacts of algorithmic management on the workplace. What sparked your interest in this topic? How did you get into this field?*

Lindsey Cameron: My mother lost her job during the Great Recession: She was a manager at a large financial services call center—so, a really a good middle-class job—that for that time was the entry ticket for the “good life.” Watching her experience, and the ensuing struggle, sparked my interest in how folks navigate situations like this. Katherine Newman is the only scholar I could really think of who looked at downward social mobility. And while her work is amazing, it’s from another generation of scholarship. So when I started my dissertation ideation process I looked at adjoining topics, such as how people tried to halt downward social mobility or how ex-offenders tried to enter the labor market after incarceration. As I was conducting explanatory interviews, I realized that a lot of these people were in the gig economy. This is where my dissertation advisor, Jerry Davis, jumped in with the very wise idea: “Why don't you bound the phenomena by an organization?” That's why I ended up bounding my study around the ride-hailing industry, because so many people were driving after they experienced layoffs and trying to pay their mortgages and car notes and whatnot. The story ends with a happy note: It took my mother about five to six years, but she ended up getting a job that was a W2 job with wages, benefits, and things like that.

E. B.: *You conducted a six-year long ethnography at the largest ride-hailing platform company. What were some methodological challenges that you encountered during the research process? What would suggest for junior scholars who would like to conduct an ethnographic study of platforms based on your experiences?*

L. C.: Studying such a topical context like ride-hailing is both a bit of a blessing and a curse. Everybody knows about Uber and Lyft, and have



their own pet theories about the platform after talking to about half a dozen drivers from the backseat. While these anecdotal stories are interesting, this is not science! I mean, if your department chair asked you if you liked your job, you would say yes—I certainly would!! In the early stages of my research, I wanted to block out all that noise. I tried, somewhat successfully, to not read newspaper or magazine articles about ride-hailing. And I especially tried not to listen to other people's pet theories, because I was concerned it would shape my thinking before I even knew what I thought. Today, I can tell a convincing narrative about why I am centering algorithmic management in my research, especially because of my prior career as a technical analyst and hacker for the government—but that's retroactive sensemaking. I could have just as easily taken an economic precarity lens or a value creation lens or a platform governance lens. Or I could have done a comparative analysis of platforms—which my qualitative advisors, Jane Dutton and Beth Bechky, wisely talked me out of doing in the dissertation. Remember, the best dissertation is a done dissertation! But... see my comparative ethnography with Hatim Rahman. I guess that means I was either hardheaded or wise because I worked with such a fabulous coauthor?!

Truly I didn't know which way I was going to go theory-wise until I got deep into the data, really lived in it. I explain that process, which involved a lot of index cards in a 500-square-foot apartment in West Philly, in my paper "*Making Out While Driving*." It was a very intense sixteen months to go from finishing data collection to a shareable first draft. If you want me to relive those days, you'll have to invite me out for a drink—I take rooibos tea!

Thinking about research from the "how to do it" side, it was very important to preserve the anonymity of my drivers. There have been instances in which ride-hailing companies have retaliated against drivers as well as other folks who have spoken out against the company. Google "Greyball." So I tried to do as much to preserve people's anonymity as I could so the

ride-hailing companies couldn't track participants from my ride log. I recruited drivers a lot of different ways. I would fly into a city, take a lot of rides, and then see who would agree to do a longer follow-up interview with me. I used my friends' phones and my family members' phones to get rides. I met some drivers in person at the gas station or the airport parking lot. I recruited online in forums. I recruited through friends and family, even in my temple. I had a wonderful research assistant, Sean Dew, who drove in a different city than me and also helped with recruitment. Another challenge I have is keeping track of the massive amount of data I've collected. I've been following people for six years now on five continents. That's a corpus of more than 200 interviews. I have field logs, both mine and my research assistants'. I have notes on basically every ride I've taken—that's in the high hundreds. I've scraped web forms and blogs. I've culled from official documents. I've done focus groups with customers. I fielded financial diaries and surveys. I visited drivers' guilds. I've watched video diaries on YouTube. And that's just ride-hailing—I study other companies in the gig economy too! So I have a very, very involved file management system. If I tried to explain, it would probably confuse you, so I won't go into it now, but it works for me. I can find everything I need in under a minute and I don't even need to use the search bar!

For future researchers, I'd suggest to think about what data sources excite you the most, because that will shape what kind of question you can ask the data. There are so many ways to look at the gig economy. Different data allow you to answer different questions. Some of the early work (not mine) on ride-hailing primarily focused on worker interactions in online forms and answered questions about how drivers combat information asymmetry and online activism. If I had focused on my participation observation data from guilds, I could have told a story about how individuals handle the deactivation process and what privacy looks like. I even fielded surveys. So your source of data matters quite a bit.

My advisor has a great analogy comparing a dissertation committee to a baseball team in which

everyone has a position. In addition to my chair and my two wonderful qualitative advisors I've already spoken a bit about, I had two other star players. Seth Carnahan was a great cheerleader. Every time I sent him a panicked "Another ride-hailing study came out and they are talking about the same thing I want to say!" he would cheerfully read the paper and point out how my research was different. I learned the value of creating simple, well-designed slide decks from Tawanna Dillahunt, the only non-business school person on my committee. I wasn't familiar with information schools and their mission before I started this research, and these folks know how to program for user design and experience. Presenting qualitative research is a skill, and, for better or worse, a lot of inferences are made about one's research and intellectual horsepower from talks. And, yes, a picture or diagram is still worth a thousand words! I will always remain indebted to my committee members and hope to continue to pay it forward.

E. B.: *In your recent coauthored paper with Hatim Rahman, you demonstrate some limitations of algorithmically mediated control over platform labor and argue for the significance of interactions between customers and platform workers. How can these interactions challenge organizational control over platform labor?*

L. C.: This idea was inspired by Mike Maffie's wonderful *ILR Review* piece on laundered control. Gig platforms say that customers actually have the control, because customers are evaluating workers. This, along with other things, helps gig companies get around costly employment regulations and have their workers classified as independent contractors. If you step back, as Hatim and I explain in the article, these gig companies strategically decide when and how much control they are giving customers. Ultimately, the platform still holds the power because they are capital. Steve Vallas and Juliet Schor use the wonderfully alliterative term "permissive potentate" to describe this in their *Annual Review of Sociology* piece.

One of my main ideas is that gig work extends the typical customer service encounter. In customer

service work, the emotional labor is the product, such as when you're "sold" smiles at Disneyland or on a Southwest flight. But here, because of the long reach of the algorithm and the rating system, the customer service interaction is extended and includes more than emotional labor. What requests should I make of the customers before I accept their work requests? Can I reject their requests in way that doesn't penalize me? How do I interact with the customers? How do I respond if the customer is misbehaving and may give me a bad rating, jeopardizing my position on the platform? All of this happens before ratings are actually exchanged, because once the rating is given, workers have much less power. So, the main idea is that workers have more or less ability to resist depending on what stage of work they're at.

E. B.: *In your research, you focus mostly on individual resistance tactics of platform workers. What are your thoughts on the possibility of collective organizing of ride-hail platform workers? To what extent, does platform-mediated work enable a collective resistance?*

L. C.: I didn't end up going on the collective resistance/organizing route in this paper, because there is so much good work done being done by Alex Wood, Mark Graham, Ya-Wen Lei, and other folks. But, in a paper with Hatim and Kalie Wertz, a researcher at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center, I am exploring organizing, using the empirical case of Doordash's DeclineNow movement. So I'll keep you posted on how that project evolves!

E. B.: *In another recent coauthored paper with Curtis Chan and Michel Anteby, you focus on how Instacart shoppers react differently upon the sudden public moralization of their work and show that not every Instacart shopper was considering herself/himself to be a "hero." Could you elaborate on the differences in reactions of Instacart shoppers?*

L. C.: Moralizing work has always been part of society, especially in the aftermath of national

crises. Think about Rosie the Riveter and the entering of women into the workforce en masse during World War II. Or after 9/11 or the landing of the flight on the Hudson, when pilots were called heroes. In that same vein, we looked at how individuals respond to the sudden moralization of their work in the context of lower-paid jobs during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Think grocery store workers, delivery drivers, hospital staff. We find there are people who accept the hero label, those who reject it, and those who are really wrestling with the label. We used Viviana Zelizer's idea of relational packages as being the mechanism to unpack this variation and understand how workers made sense of the work and their relationships to customers and Instacart as a company. Shoppers, for example, who saw themselves as heroes saw the work as easy and fun, customers as deserving, and believed that Instacart valued them. Whereas shoppers who didn't see themselves as heroes saw the work as trivial, the customers as underserving, and believed that Instacart didn't value them. To explain differences between individuals, we drew on Juliet Schor's research on gig work and economic dependence and Everett Hughes' work on career biography. Those who weren't economically dependent accepted the shopping work more easily accepted the hero label. Those who were economically dependent don't auto-

matically accept the label. The difference between whether workers rejected or wrestled with the hero label depended on their career biography. Those had a prior career path, especially in service-oriented work, saw working in the gig economy as a blip in their overall career trajectory and saw their customers, more often than not, deserving of help.

E. B.: *What is next for you research-wise? Could you tell us a little bit about your future research plans?*

L. C.: With Bobbi Thomason and Nick Occhiuto, I'm currently looking at the ride hailing industry in six different countries, examining how algorithmic management changes across national borders. I don't want to ruin the punch line for you, but the findings are counterintuitive! In another project with Bobbi, we are looking at reasons why drivers in the Global South report a greater sense of belonging to ride-hailing companies, especially compared with those in the Global North. There is also the paper on activism and Doordash that I mentioned before. I'm starting to get interested in the science of logistics and emerging technologies like blockchain and bots. Maybe I'll write a book, which is an unusual undertaking in the business school world. That's the fun thing about research—it's a true choose your own adventure! ■

CALL FOR PAPERS

118th ASA Annual Meeting

The Educative Power of Sociology

Philadelphia, PA

17-21 August 2023

Submission: 22 February 2023

[FOR DETAILS](#)

CALL FOR PAPERS

SASE 2023 Annual Conference

Socio-Economics in a Transitioning World: Breaking Lines and Alternative Paradigms for a New World Order

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

20-22 July 2023

Submission: 1 February 2023

[FOR DETAILS](#)

ON EDITING A JOURNAL: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW CHIEF EDITORS OF *SOCIO-ECONOMIC REVIEW*

Akos Rona-Tas is a professor of sociology at the University of California, San Diego, who specializes in economic sociology, risk and uncertainty, rational choice theory, and statistical and survey methodologies. Rona-Tas authored *Great Surprise of the Small Transformation: Demise of Communism and Rise of the Private Sector in Hungary*, and coauthored *Plastic Money: Constructing Markets for Credit Cards in Eight Postcommunist Countries* (with Alya Guseva). Currently, he is working on credit card markets and consumer credit in emerging economies and the role of algorithmic and expert predictions in society. Rona-Tas's research has appeared in several journals, including the *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Sociological Methods and Research*, *Theory and Society*, *Social Science Research*, *East European Politics and Societies*, *Socio-Economic Review*, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, *Historical Sociological Research*, and in various edited volumes. He was formerly President of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE), and he is currently serving as Chief Editor of *Socio-Economic Review*.

Alya Guseva is an associate professor of sociology at Boston University who specializes in economic and medical sociology. Guseva is an expert on the sociology of money, consumer finance, and biomedical markets. She authored *Into the Red: The Birth of the Credit Card Market in Postcommunist Russia*, and coauthored *Plastic Money: Constructing Markets for Credit Cards in Eight Postcommunist Countries* (with Akos Rona-Tas). She is currently working on a book tentatively entitled *Medicine, Markets, and Morality*, which focuses on moral, legal, and organizational aspects of markets for commercial surrogacy and draws on qualitative research conducted in Ukraine, Russia, and Kazakhstan. Guseva's work has appeared in *American Sociological Review*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *Socio-Economic Review*, *Social Science Research*, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, *East European Quarterly*, and *Journal of Family Issues*, and in various edited volumes. She is a cofounder and coorganizer of the Finance and Society research network at the Society for Advancement of Socio-Economics. She is currently serving as Chief Editor of *Socio-Economic Review*.

Gökhan Mülayim, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Akos Rona-Tas and Alya Guseva about becoming and being an editor, the field of scholarly journals, and *SER*.

Gökhan Mülayim: *Let me congratulate you on becoming the new Chief Editors of Socio-Economic Review. I would like to start with a question about the process of becoming an editor. What were your motivations and expectations for taking the reins of SER, and how has it gone so far?*

Alya Guseva: Thank you, and let me start. There was an open call for Chief Editor(s) of *SER* in the beginning of 2021, and at first, I did not really consider it. I think I actually just flagged it to Akos thinking he may be interested

instead. But he enthusiastically wrote back saying both of us should do it. It took a bit of convincing, but in the end what motivated me was that I saw it as a potentially exciting challenge to rescue me from COVID doldrums. It was also a time when I realized that both of my children have finally outgrown the time-consuming, hands-on stage, and I had more time to try something new. I had a limited experience as an Associate Editor in another journal, and plenty of experience of evaluating papers for panels, conferences, and the SASE's Finance and Society research network that Akos, Bruce Carruthers, and I founded several years ago.



So, the way I envisioned this job was being a shepherd of good quality research, which, of course, is a very exciting prospect for an economic sociologist: to be at the forefront of global scholarship on socioeconomics. It turned out this is a much more multifaceted job, in part as a result of our own doing, as we introduced several new initiatives that require regular attention besides evaluating submissions. But it has been an absolute blast.

Akos Rona-Tas: Apart from my own personal reasons, which were not that different from Alya's, as President of SASE I realized that SER was at an important juncture in three different ways. First, as an intellectual enterprise, SER has always been in the vanguard of rethinking how the economy works. With the enormous changes in the world economy in recent years, and the widely recognized imperative to reevaluate our most fundamental assumptions about the economic world, the importance and urgency of these new ideas are as great as ever. Second, journals as a form of academic knowledge production arrived at a point where we have to revisit fundamental questions, such as the role of peer review, the right balance between focus and diversity, or the role of the journal in the afterlife of the published paper. Third, with the gradual shift toward open access, we have to rethink the business model of *SER*, including the unintended

consequences of the author-pays system. These three challenges seemed to make the task of the Chief Editors more than just running the trains on time, which is why I thought this could be an exciting job.

G. M.: *SER has become an institution in less than two decades. While this may not be a short timeline for the institutionalization of a journal in a disciplinary jurisdiction, SER has achieved this in an interdisciplinary territory harboring several disciplines, including sociology, political science, management, and so on. I am curious about your thoughts on SER's success in such a diverse territory in such a short time.*

A. G. & A.R.-T.: SASE was created in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell, and communism started to crumble. This is also the year when the so-called Washington Consensus emerged, and we were told that we arrived at "the end of history." SASE took a stance against neoliberal triumphalism and its annual meetings served as an incubator for a different, more sociologically, politically, and historically informed way of thinking about the economy, bringing together ideas and scholars from different disciplines, methodologies, and national traditions. The driving force behind the creativity generated by SASE was the attempt to connect theoretical ideas from different fields through rigorous empiri-

cal research using the methodology most appropriate for the problem at hand. *SER* was built on this intellectual foundation of meticulous eclecticism. And while in the early 1990s this intellectual agenda swam against the tide, very soon a series of momentous events turned the tide in its favor. These included the failure of liberal reforms in Russia and in other parts of Eastern Europe, the economic ascendance of China, and the cardiac arrest of capitalism in September 2008. Since then, a series of unexpected crises, the latest being the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine, made it crystal clear that without interdisciplinary and empirically grounded thinking, we will never find solutions to these new problems.

G. M.: *The 20th anniversary of SER is approaching. Are there any special plans to commemorate?*

A. G. & A.R.-T.: We have many plans to celebrate. Some will happen on the now entirely virtual pages of *SER*, while others will be at SASE's 2023 summer conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. First, we are working on a commemorative 20th anniversary special issue of *SER*. It will include a number of commissioned review articles from leading scholars involved with *SER* and SASE reflecting on the past and present of the field of socio-economics. There is also going to be a curated list of about two dozen of the most notable articles published across the two decades.

Second, we have also recorded several interviews with past and current editors and members of *SER*'s Editorial board. Excerpts of these interviews will be projected during the Rio conference. The rest will be archived for posterity.

Finally, we are preparing a special panel to be held at the Rio conference reflecting on the past twenty years of the journal.

G. M.: *What are the challenges and rewards of leading an interdisciplinary journal?*

A. G.: If the stress is on interdisciplinary, the biggest challenge for me is that on any given day my editor's desk receives submissions outside of my immediate expertise. Fortunately, we've got an

amazing interdisciplinary team of Editors-in-Charge, including political scientists and economists. So I really appreciate the established collective practice of decision-making on submitted manuscripts.

Speaking more generally, one of the biggest logistical challenges of running an international journal is finding a suitable time for all members of our international teams, whether editors or student interns, who at the extreme may be 17 hours apart, to meet on Zoom.

The rewards? I am constantly learning, and it never gets dull. Recently we even got to play detectives trying to investigate a number of submissions that likely came from an academic paper mill (fake paper factory). What caught our attention were the partially overlapping lists of "proposed reviewers" in the cover letters accompanying several of these papers. A quick Google search confirmed that none of these people actually existed. We later realized that all of the proposed names were associated with noninstitutional Yahoo, Hotmail, and Gmail accounts. All of these papers were desk-rejected, and stern letters were written to their corresponding authors.

A.R.-T.: One of our big challenges is finding reviewers, as reviewing is a time-consuming service with few extrinsic rewards. We are lucky because most of our reviewers, once they commit, do an outstanding job, and we are very grateful for our colleagues who review for us, because the quality of the peer-review makes the quality of a journal. In an interdisciplinary journal, peer-review can be delicate because our reviewers often come from different disciplines and take different approaches to the paper. As peer-review is as much about improving papers as filtering them, reviews with different approaches can be both very stimulating and utterly confusing for authors who want to revise their paper. It is the editors' job to both find the best reviewers for the manuscript, and to help the authors make the most of constructive suggestions they receive.

G. M.: *The massive digitalization trend has drastically accelerated the production and*

consumption of knowledge. What are your thoughts on the state and the trajectory of journals as venues of scholarly communication and exchange in this context?

A. G. & A.R.-T.: You are raising a series of interesting questions. *SER* publishes four issues a year, and since last year it appears only online. As soon as the articles are finalized, they are put up on the *SER* site as Advance Articles, but it can take one or two years until the paper is published as part of an issue. By then, most people have already read the article. Just as today most music lovers don't buy LPs but download single songs, people typically don't read journal issues, they download single articles. So, do we need journal issues anymore? Do we still need to keep our strict page limits? Can we have longer and/or more articles now that we are not constrained by the cost of paper-based production? On a related note, should we be more demanding about documenting the empirical material and ask for the data used in the article we publish and make it available to others? Should we demand more detailed appendices about methodological details? Should we allow for new media to be part of an article such as video or audio files? Digitalization opens new opportunities, but we must consider carefully which one(s) of these multiple options we should pursue.

G. M.: *Digitalization has also revolutionized the relationship between a text and its audience by altering and multiplying feedback loops, and it seems academic social science journals have not been exempt from this transformation. From social media marketing to podcasting and even video abstracting, new tools and strategies are being adopted by academic journals. SER is now taking solid steps as well—such as SER Cafe, Authors in Class, and podcasts. Could you please tell us about these projects?*

A. G. & A.R.-T.: When we expressed our interest in becoming *SER*'s co-Chief Editors, we wrote a proposal in which we discussed some of these ideas for the post-publication promotion of articles because we believed that journals could do more to help disseminate ideas and facilitate conversations

between the authors and their audiences. To this end we created *SER Cafe* which features online moderated, real-time informal conversations between the authors of one or two recently published articles and an audience who have read the pieces. We hosted our first *SER Cafe* this summer, run by our inaugural cohort of student interns. It featured two authors from *SER*'s special issue on platform economies, and the conversation did not only focus on what's in the articles but went beyond to talk about the nuts and bolts of comparative coauthored research, publications, and career trajectories. We are currently working on putting on another one in January 2023 and two more in the Spring and Fall of 2023. We have also been working with SASE on *SER on Tap*—a podcast featuring prerecorded brief (about 10 minutes or less) conversations with authors of recent articles. Two issues of *SER on Tap* are already linked on *SER*'s website, with the third and fourth being produced right now. This is a great way to learn about recent *SER* publications in a digestible form and from the authors themselves. We are currently working on connecting *SER* authors with undergraduate and graduate classroom instructors who assign or would like to assign *SER* articles for their classes, so they can host the authors for brief Zoom appearances to participate in discussions or answer student questions. We ourselves successfully experimented with Zooming some of the assigned readings' authors into our classrooms during COVID and think there is a lot of demand for this.

G. M.: *Diversity, equity, and inclusion seem to be in journals' editorial policy statements, rather than put into practice. Recently, however, a few established journals have reiterated their commitments to these principles. I am curious about your thoughts on journals and DEI. Could you please tell us a bit about your plans to foster DEI in SER under your leadership?*

A. G. & A.R.-T.: As you rightly point out, there has recently been a renewed and sustained effort on the part of the academic community, including academic publishing, to implement diversity

and inclusion policies, and pursue DEI initiatives and practices. *SER* is no exception. In particular, to live up to *SER*'s international label we want to expand the global reach of *SER* by publishing research from a larger number of countries, and in particular from the Global South, and by authors located everywhere in the world, not only in European and North American institutions. While last year *SER* received submissions from more than fifty countries, with the exception of China, the vast majority of the submissions were from a handful of Global North countries. We have already appointed Sebastien Lechevalier, an economist from EHESS with a regional specialization in Asian economies, who is tasked with increasing submissions from Asian scholars. We are in the process of appointing an Editor with a regional specialization in Latin America. *SER* has not been tracking gender or race of authors of submitted or published articles (this may change in the near future). When we have these data, it would also allow us to critically examine these criteria when evaluating the diversity of *SER* authors.

We are equally concerned with increasing the diversity of the *SER* editorial team and its editorial board. No women have ever led the journal as Chief Editors before our team came on board, and there were only two editors-in-charge who were women in the history of the journal. Among the three recently appointed editors-in-charge, two are women, and women currently comprise two thirds among the thirty-two members of the Editorial Board (but only three members are people of color).

G. M.: *One of the changes that you have brought to SER is the editorial internship, which incorporates graduate students in the editorial process. It is quite rare to see internships in academic social science publishing; this project seems to fill a gap in this regard. How has it played out so far? Would you tell us about the current state and trajectory of this project?*

A. G. & A.R.-T.: We have been interested in bringing students on board from the very beginning. We believe that learning about academic

publishing is an invaluable professional development opportunity for Ph.D. students. In the long run, demystifying the publication process will also help us bring in better submissions from young scholars. Our inaugural cohort of *SER* student interns consisted of six Ph.D. students from our own institutions, Boston University and UC San Diego. This year we issued an open call and brought in six students, three women and three men, four from doctoral programs in the U.S. and two from Europe. The interns learn about how academic journals work and about writing, submitting, and reviewing manuscripts. They also help with tasks like *SER* Café, *SER*'s 20th anniversary, *SER* social media and other ad hoc needs. As you were a member of the inaugural cohort, could you perhaps tell the *Accounts* readers what it was like to be an *SER* intern?

G. M.: *The internship was truly instructive. I strongly recommend considering this opportunity to those who are interested in gaining a hands-on experience in academic publishing. I'm excited to see this project becoming institutionalized in the coming years. Speaking of demystifying the publication process, lastly, I would like to ask if you have any advice for students and young scholars interested in submitting to SER.*

A. G. & A.R.-T.: As co-Chief Editors we regularly run workshops explaining the submission and review process for prospective authors. About half of all new submissions to *SER* are desk-rejected, which means they are rejected without being sent to reviewers, usually within a week or two after submission. There are multiple reasons why papers are desk-rejected. Sometimes this has to do with the quality of the paper. It may have been submitted prematurely and is more of a thought piece than a well-developed and substantiated argument. But more often than not, the paper is desk-rejected because it is not a good fit for *SER*. Many desk-rejected papers are framed in a way that is too narrow for *SER* and does not speak to the journal's broad interdisciplinary audience. But they would likely fare well in a disciplinary or specialist journal. The key piece of advice on how to avoid getting

your submission desk rejected (at *SER* or elsewhere) is to read the journal and get a good sense of what sorts of articles it publishes, what kinds of issues and debates it focuses on, and to which kinds of audiences it speaks. One can then even model the structure of their papers-in-preparation after some

of the published articles, paying attention to how the different parts work together. We also appreciate papers that are well-written, which means that they were revised multiple times for clarity and precision, before they were submitted. ■

SPOTLIGHT: AN INTERVIEW WITH GUILLERMINA ALTAMONTE

Guillermina Altomonte received her Ph.D. in sociology at the New School for Social Research. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. Dr. Altomonte is interested in economic sociology, culture, medical sociology, organizations, aging, qualitative methods, gender, and work. Her research investigates how cultural meanings and economic logics structure elderly care in the U.S. and in the Global South. Her articles are published in *American Sociological Review*, *Theory and Society*, *Socio-Economic Review*, and *Social Science & Medicine*.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Dr. Guillermina Altomonte about her research and advice for doctoral students.

Ya-Ching Huang: How did you become a sociologist? What sparked your interest in studying the culture and market of elderly care?

Guillermina Altomonte: I became a sociologist by way of working as a journalist in Santiago de Chile, where I grew up. What drew me to journalism was similar to what compels me as a sociologist: the fascination with the social world around us and the desire to understand it and report on it. Over time, however, I grew frustrated with the ever-quickening pace of journalism and the fact that I was sometimes only able to scratch the surface of the topics I was writing about. I wanted to engage in more rigorous and systematic social analysis; I had also long been interested in sociological theory, which I had minored in as an undergrad. This led me to pursue first an M.A., then a Ph.D. in sociology at the New School for Social Research.

One of the last articles I wrote before coming to New York City for graduate school was titled, "Who Will Care for the Old Folks?" The issue of elder care in Chile had until very recently been

invisible. This was (and still is) a society in which caring for the old, the sick, and the young had been exclusively a private matter, a responsibility shouldered by women in the family. As has happened in many other countries, this private concern had begun to turn into a public problem due to the aging of the population, the entry of women into the paid workforce, and shrinking family networks, among other demographic and economic changes.

Having grown up in a place where women's unpaid work was taken for granted, seeing elder care (and other types of care) as *work* was a revelation. I returned to this topic again and again in my Ph.D. program using different angles, which led to some journal articles: the temporalities of caregiving; the relationship of care work to emotional and affective labor; and its location at the intersection of markets, institutions, and families. As I specialized in cultural economic sociology and became influenced by the work of Viviana Zelizer, Roi Livne, Kieran Healy, and others, I developed a dissertation that focused on the intersections of moral and economic logics as structuring forces of elder care organization and everyday interactions.



Y. H.: *Could you please give us a pitch for your book project: **On Your Own: How Independence Defines Aging in America (under contract with Princeton University Press)? What are the major insights and implications that your work can offer to economic sociologists?***

G. A.: My book examines independence as a strikingly undisputed goal for aging—the value that currently defines “good” old age in the United States. The idea for this project emerged as I conducted fieldwork for my dissertation at a post-acute care unit in New York City, where elderly people came for physical and occupational therapy after hospitalization. From the moment I started my observations I heard elderly patients and post-acute care staff constantly talking about the importance of independence in old age. At first this didn’t seem noteworthy, as we are surrounded by these kinds of messages in the media and advertising to the point that we have come to take them for granted. But progressively I began to see the idea of independent aging as a very strange thing. These people were visibly relying on technologies,

caregivers, financial assistance, and other forms of care. How do we make sense of a culture that glorifies independent aging in the face of the dependencies that come with old age? Where did this culture come from, and how does it structure choices and practices of aging and elder care? How is it defined and operationalized into something that can be used to assess “good old age”?

To answer these questions, I first trace the interlacing historical processes through which the concept of independence expanded to include the elderly as a new type of subject in the Twentieth Century. Independence became both a moral and economic imperative for old age but also an increasingly multivocal value, pulling together a shifting constellation of concepts and definitions. Drawing on ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews, I then turn to how these different meanings are put to use as people make decisions about aging and care (more on this below). Looking at the production of independence historically but also on the ground, the book challenges the idea that it is a “natural” thing. The elderly people I studied worked hard to inhabit their bodies and minds in ways that felt consistent with cultural norms of independence, and they were only able to come close to these aspirations by relying on multiple resources and infrastructures—which, unsurprisingly, are not equally available to different populations.

The insights I offer economic sociologists are related to the role that the multiplicity of meanings plays in orienting economic and organizational practices. My ethnographic observations in post-acute care revealed surprising variation in how staff used the concept of independence, switching between different meanings as they made decisions about patients. The polysemy of independence anchored the practices of workers in the face of significant economic pressures to discharge patients from their unit. But it did not *uniformly* moralize these financial pressures: Depending on which particular meaning of independence workers evoked in different situations,

they rationalized extending or reducing post-acute care services. I suggest conceptualizing this phenomenon as the “moral polysemy” of culture. This means that values can be considered indisputably worthy and act as a compass for action while retaining multiple meanings that become more or less relevant as they intersect with organizational pressures. I am hoping to contribute to emerging conversations in cultural and economic sociology, about the patterned ways in which cultural ambiguity and inconsistency shape valuation and practical action in specific contexts.

Y. H.: *In your article “Coordinating Illness and Insurance Trajectories: Evidence from a Post-Acute Care Unit,” you argue that economic considerations for Medicare reimbursement and coverage are factored into medical judgment and treatment plans. Could you tell us more about your this?*

G. A.: One of the things that shocked me as I was conducting observations in post-acute care was the extent to which decisions about patients were explicitly determined by insurance considerations. Post-acute care is largely financed by Medicare and because these reimbursements are substantial, Medicare patients are very attractive for skilled nursing facilities. But Medicare has also introduced a host of measures to contain spending, so skilled nursing facilities face increasing financial penalties for keeping post-acute patients for too long or without justifiable medical needs.

Besides creating the moral predicaments for workers that I analyze in my book, the incentives and constraints of Medicare created practical dilemmas that were largely about *time*. Basically, post-acute care workers were constantly trying to balance the timeline and conditions of patients’ insurance coverage with the projected timeline of their recovery.

To make sense of this balancing act I revisited an old concept in medical sociology: the “illness trajectory,” which includes all the work that is done to manage the course of an illness. I extend this concept to theorize the work of aligning treat-

ment with insurance temporalities, which I argue has three dimensions: creating roadmaps on which illness and insurance trajectories intersect in order to predict an ideal discharge date, synchronizing illness and insurance trajectories to maximize revenue for the organization and prevent denials of coverage before they happen, and projecting patients’ trajectories into the future to try to prevent them from decoupling once they are discharged. Taken together, I think these modalities of trajectory coordination shed new light on the effects of managed care for medical practice, because we see the extent to which principles of efficiency are embedded in healthcare workers’ modes of valuation and the temporalities of their work.

Y. H.: *Your other article on assisted living in Chile, which is associated with abandonment in local culture, presents a story of how class privilege is commodified and legitimated through high-end institutional care. Why is social class significant in understanding this moralized market?*

G. A.: That’s a great way to summarize this article! The emerging market of elite assisted living in Chile is an interesting puzzle because it represents a sharp break with a culture of care provided at home by family members and domestic workers, so I wanted to know how these organizations were becoming acceptable. What I found was that instead of, say, presenting their services as a superior and professional form of care, Chilean assisted living facilities were using legitimation strategies that aimed to establish continuities with the class privilege that residents were used to exercising in their own homes. For example, managers tried to make residents feel like “heads of household,” allowing—and even encouraging—they to exert authority over common spaces and over the labor of lower-level workers.

These findings challenge existing scholarship on the commodification of care in at least two ways. First, while scholars in the U.S. have noted that assisted living tries to recreate the affective and aesthetic dimensions of “home,” my study shows that social hierarchies and class dynamics rooted in the domestic sphere also play a role in moralizing

markets of care. Second, when we incorporate a class perspective to the analysis of a “taboo” market such as commodified care, we see that the source of taboo is not always the exchange of money for intimate labor. On the contrary, in the case I studied, paying for care was essential for clients’ sense of entitlement and thus helped legitimize assisted living organizations.

Y. H.: *What is next for you research-wise?*

G. A.: My new project examines what I am calling “healthcare sharing economies.” I’m focusing on medical cost-sharing and crowdfunding organizations that connect members to pool money in order to distribute it towards eligible medical expenses. Using interviews and digital ethnography, I want to understand the practices and discourses that circulate within these platforms and, ultimately, why people are drawn to them instead of “traditional” forms of insurance. I’m really interested in what these exchanges can tell us about the ways in which the logics and technologies of the sharing economy are affecting healthcare access and consumption, in a context of skyrocketing medical debt for American households.

Y. H.: *Looking back on your Ph.D. training, is there anything you wish you’d known earlier?*

What suggestions and tips would you give doctoral students?

G. A.: I wish I had understood earlier the importance of communicating my research on different levels of depth and across different audiences. It seems like a basic skill, but it took me years to come up with an elevator pitch that presents my work in a succinct and interesting way. (I’m not sure I have nailed it yet!). This is partly because my dissertation topic and the subfields in which it was situated kept evolving, so I was never sure how to talk about it without launching into a long explanation about the origins of the project. And of course, dissertations are complex and full of stuff we find interesting, so it’s a challenge to distill them into a short pitch. I would suggest to doctoral students to search for avenues for practicing these modes of communication within and outside their department. Many universities have some variation of the “three-minute thesis” exercise, which is one way to develop students’ capacities to explain their research effectively. But in general presenting work (even if it’s still in progress) to people who are *not* familiar with it, whether in brown bags, conferences, or professional associations, really helps. ■

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University of Cagliari, Italy

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TEACHING ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY: AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID STARK

David Stark is Arthur Lehman Professor of Sociology and the director of the Center on Organizational Innovation at Columbia University. By using ethnography, social network analysis, and experiments, he studies problems of valuation, innovation, and observation. He directed a research project on *Diversity and Performance: Networks of Cognition in Markets and Teams*, supported by a five-year Advanced Career Award from the European Research Council. As part of this project, he edited *The Performance Complex: Valuations and Competitions in Social Life* (2020). His research on historical and cultural network analysis has been published in the *American Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociological Review* with Balazs Vedres. He and his coauthor Daniel Beunza have published important work on finance and the trading room. He is also an experienced instructor and mentor for the graduate seminar *New Directions in Economic Sociology*.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to David Stark about his research trajectory and teaching philosophy.

Ya-Ching Huang: *Thank you so much for accepting this interview. Before we get into the topic—teaching economic sociology—I would like to ask what sparked your interest in specializing in economic sociology.*

David Stark: I was doing economic sociology before *economic sociology*, starting from the late 1970s while I was a Ph.D. student at Harvard. Back then, economic sociology didn't yet "exist" as a proper field. In fact, I remember, when it began—at least when it began to take official shape as a field. One could date it from the time when a group of us met at an ASA meeting, and we decided to start the process of establishing an economic sociology section of the ASA. It was sometime in the 1990s, and I recall Nicole Biggart, Woody Powell, Brian Uzzi, and Neil Fligstein in a meeting over dinner.¹ I guess, like those others, one could say that I was already doing economic sociology for at least a decade before it became a named field.

While I was a graduate student at Harvard, I decided to go to an advanced industrial society that was not capitalist. That was the idea, and there were only a few places that would fit that criterion where a sociologist could go and gain access to the

field. So, I went to Yugoslavia in 1977 for a short time and then for fieldwork for my thesis in 1978-79. That didn't work out. Josip Broz Tito, the dictator of Yugoslavia, was starting to die, and there was no way that the authorities would let me do my fieldwork. So, I went back to Harvard and then wrote a library dissertation comparing Taylorism and Leninism, which was eventually completed in 1982. So, I was studying problems in the organization of work, social class, value, and the relationship between different organizational forms in socialist societies—meaning in a society that was not capitalist. Those are my origins.

Y. H.: *Would you consider yourself to be postsocialist scholar, interested in “organizational transformation?” –I remember you used “transformation” instead of “transition” as a term to describe your research?*

D. S.: Well, I didn't start out as a “post socialist,” because during my first decade of work in Eastern Europe it was still socialist! With experiences in and with the socialist economy, I had a basis to think about comparative economics and comparative social forms. Also, very importantly,

¹ Brief history of ASA's economic sociology section: <https://www.asanet.org/communities-sections/sections/current-sections/economic-sociology/history>.

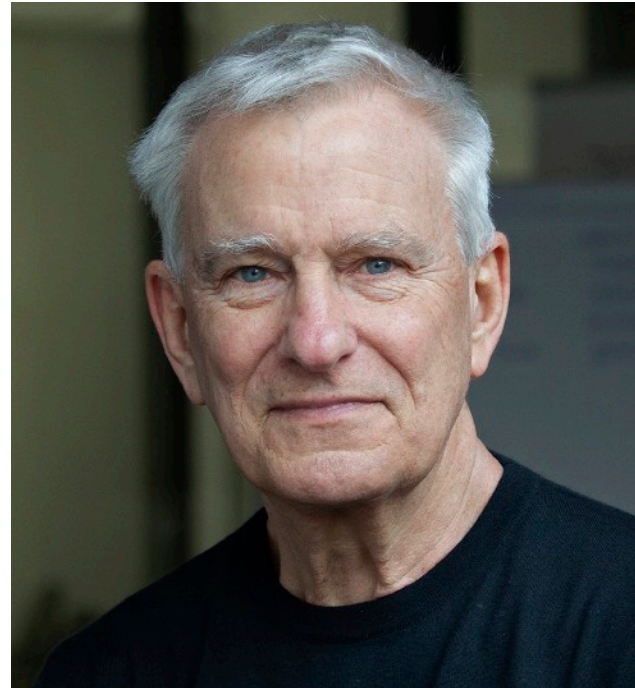
when the Berlin Wall went down in 1989 and these societies made that transformation (first in Eastern Europe and then elsewhere), I already had contacts and experience and knew something about those societies. I continue to be interested in what happens in Eastern Europe, Russia, and also now in China.

But starting around 1997, I shifted a lot of my focus to the United States and contemporary capitalist societies. I had been an ethnographer in Eastern Europe and then later a network analyst because we also collected network analytic data on ownership and directorships. My first fieldwork in the United States would have been in 1998 in Silicon Alley in New York City. So, I have now been working on contemporary capitalist societies for at least as long as I was working on Eastern Europe.

Y. H.: *That's fantastic. Could you share what you are currently working on?*

D. S.: Sure! Well, I have just finished up a set of pieces on diversity and performance. I had a five-year grant from the European Research Council, and with my coauthors, we have some network analytic papers,² an experimental paper on the racial attention deficit in *Science Advances*,³ other papers on testing⁴ and on algorithmic management,⁵ and a book on performance coming out of that project.⁶

Now I'm turning my attention to a new project. My research question is: To what extent and how is algorithmic management leading to new forms of class conflict? The focus of this project is not on how algorithms alter the relationship between capital and labor, but on how algorithmic man-



agement is leading to conflicts *within* the knowledge class.⁷

My focus is on the relationship between algorithmic management and professional expertise. I'll tell you a little bit more because there is important background information. The historical background, both in terms of the history of the United States and my own intellectual biography, is that some of these issues go back to the turn of the Twentieth Century. My first major publication was in *Theory & Society* in 1980.⁸ It was a paper that got considerable visibility at the time as a critique of Harry Braverman. Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974) was a very important book at the time. The aspect of that critique, which is relevant for the present, is that I argued that if we only look at scientific management from the lens of the rela-

² For example, Matteo Prato, and David Stark. 2022. "Observational Learning in Networks of Competition." *Organization Studies*. (Published online first.)

³ Sheen Levine, Charlotte Reypens, and David Stark. 2021. "Racial Attention Deficit." *Science Advances* 7(38).

⁴ Noortje Marres and David Stark. 2020. "Put to the Test: For a New Sociology of Testing." *British Journal of Sociology*, 71(3): 423-443; David Stark. 2020. "Testing and Being Tested in Pandemic Times." *Sociologica* 14(1):67-94.

⁵ David Stark and Ivana Pais. 2021. "Algorithmic Management in the Platform Economy." *Sociologica* 14 (3):47-72.

⁶ David Stark, ed. 2020. *The Performance Complex: Competition and Competitions in Social Life*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

⁷ See David Stark. 2022. "Questioning Humans versus Machines: Artificial Intelligence in Class Conflict." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 67(3):NP38-NP41.

⁸ David Stark 1980. "Class Struggle and the Transformation of the Labor Process: A Relational Approach." *Theory and Society* 9(1):89-130.

tionship between capital and labor, we will miss the ways in which scientific management was part of a new class project—of the new knowledge class, which in this case pointed to scientific management as its knowledge-based claim to legitimacy. It was about the insertion of a new class of professionals and managers, a professional managerial class, *in between* capital and labor.

Whereas at the turn of the Twentieth Century, we saw the emergence of a knowledge class organized around scientific management and spearheaded by mechanical engineers, today we have *algorithmic management* spearheaded by software engineers. Both these knowledge forms are a kind of specific knowledge, but the specific knowledge of a professional is bound to a field—for example, a doctor for medicine, an architect for architecture, a teacher for education, and so on. Software engineering is a specific set of skills, but these algorithmic managers do not necessarily see their knowledge as field specific. Therefore, my question is whether algorithmic management is challenging expertise. I'm looking at it in various fields. I would think about the problem certainly not only as a problem for workplace studies because conflict is partly in workplaces but it's also partly not. It's not even clear that the conflict will happen exactly in these places. For example, in education, one possibility is that conflict between "learning engineers" and professional teachers will happen in schools. But another possibility is that the conflict will happen in spaces outside the classroom. The same might be happening the field of health and wellness, and likely in other fields.

Y. H.: *That's interesting. I'm looking forward to seeing the new project develop. I know you have been teaching a graduate-level course called "New Directions in Economic Sociology." Could you please walk us through your syllabus? How do you design your course, structure-wise, for advanced graduate students?*

D. S.: I will not walk you through the syllabus because, in any given year, the syllabus is at least twenty-five percent different from the year before. It is always changing. In fact, I have been teaching

this course since I came to Columbia in 1997. That would be twenty-five years ago. It wasn't called "New Directions" then, but simply "Economic Sociology."

Y. H.: *I'm curious if there is a story behind the title of this course.*

D. S.: Why do I call it "New Directions in Economic Sociology"? The main reason is that by calling it "*New* Directions in Economic Sociology," I don't feel obligated to teach the canonical, classic pieces of economic sociology. For example, you will not find Mark Granovetter in this course. I can do that because there is already a PhD course in sociology at Columbia called "Economic Sociology." Students can take that course and then take my course. But taking that course is not a requirement to get into my seminar. That's very important. I don't require Ph.D. students to have any background in economic sociology or to even think that they will continue in economic sociology. Quite a few people will take the course just because it's interesting and relevant for them, regardless of the subject or the field they eventually go into.

As the title indicates, my course is about topics, problems, methods, orientations, and directions that are new and promising. I will always orient the students, for example, to the work of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, and to Bruno Latour, who I think are very important in this field because of the importance of the relationship between science and technology studies and economic sociology, which I've been pointing out for a long time. For the last seven years, there has been a subtitle for the course that indicates, what is not exclusive, but at least the main topic for a good portion of the course. For example, it was "Diversity and Performance" a year ago. This year it is "Algorithmic Management: Organizational and Societal Effects." The course is always somewhat changing.

I should also mention something about who takes the course. In any given year, with slight changes, the course has Ph.D. students from the Sociology department, one or two from the Columbia Business School, our School of Journalism, and

our sister schools like New York University, Rutgers, or the New School. It will typically have a postdoc who's working with me; and one or two visitors, often from Europe, for example, from the Max Planck Institute in Cologne, or colleagues from Paris or Italy. This year, the visiting colleagues are from Belgium and Poland. It's a very diverse group.

Y. H.: *I also noticed that for the final part of the course you give the class the chance to select the topics that will be addressed. Do you find students are more engaged in those weeks, and what are the pros and cons of this format?*

D. S.: I don't think they're any more or less motivated in those weeks. I would not want them to be. Every week is just as good as any other week, and the students are equally motivated. I do this because when I first taught the course, I had all twelve weeks worked out. But the more I taught this course, the more I learned that, as we went along, there were issues and topics that people wanted to go into in more depth. The particular combination of people in the course meant that there was something emerging in the course of the conversation to which we kept coming back. So, we said that the last third of the course is determined by the set of interests of the students in the course.

For that concluding part I would typically suggest topics that had been taught in some previous iteration of the course. As the years go by, some of those topics drop out completely, and a new set comes in, and every year at least two of those weeks are on topics and readings that I've never done before. It's not the ones that I already had planned. It's put together because we, as a group, realize that *this* is what we want to do, *this* is the problem that we've got to work on, and we'll put our attention to it. In any given one of those weeks, some students will be more invested in it than others because they feel it's *their* topic, but I don't sense that anybody is paying less attention, because if you've done the course to that point,

you want to get these things, if not resolved, at least worked out better. It's a very collaborative effort, deciding what we will talk about and what the work will be. Working it out with students is a lot of fun.

Y. H.: *Is there any specific pedagogy behind the course design?*

D. S.: You try to read the best work that's available in the field. You expose people to the best work that has been done. That's important. Let me tell you a story that gets at how I run a given seminar. The very first time I taught this course, back in 1997, I assigned AnnaLee Saxenian's book in the first week after the introductory session.⁹ I came in, and I said, "Okay, let's get started, what did you find interesting?" And the students—socialized at the time in Columbia sociology graduate student norms (which were probably very similar to any sociology department at the time)—started criticizing the book: "She didn't ask the right question," they said. Or "Maybe that was an interesting question, but the methodology was all messed up." Everybody was trashing the book and making criticisms. Everybody wanted to show right from the very beginning, from the first moment they opened their mouth in this course, that they knew how to be critical, and I just let them go. I was curious to see what was going to happen, and after the two hours were over, I said, "Okay, we will come back next week." My thinking at that point was "Let's see."

I came back next week, and they started doing the same thing. Then, I said, "Stop. This is not how I want to do things here. I think you are not using this opportunity the best you can. Imagine that you went to Paris and enrolled in the best Parisian culinary institute, and there was a master chef who taught you how to make a dish, and you all went off into the corners of the room to write restaurant reviews." I went on: "No, you need to pick up tools and make a dish." The whole point is that I am selecting great stuff. Of course, there are problems, but that's not what we start with. We want to say,

⁹ AnnaLee Saxenian. 1994. *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

“What does the author want to do? How are they trying to do it? And what can I learn from that? What can I use, whether it’s a methodology, a theory, a concept, a technique, or a way of defining a problem? That’s how we do the course.”

We eventually engage in criticism, but we should never start there. The students really got something from that. I now tell that story at the first introduction of every one of these seminars. ■

BOOKSHELF

A MAN AMONG OTHER MEN: THE CRISIS OF BLACK MASCULINITY IN RACIAL CAPITALISM

Jordanna Matlon is an urban ethnographer who studies racial capitalism and the articulation of Black masculinity in Africa and the African diaspora. Currently an assistant professor at American University’s School of International Service, Matlon received her Ph.D. in Sociology at U.C. Berkeley and was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse and a visiting scholar at the African Centre for Cities. She is generally interested in the ways “Blackness” operates as a signifier, intersects with gender norms, manifests in popular culture, and illuminates understandings of political economy. In addition to her book, *A Man among Other Men: The Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism*, Matlon’s work has appeared in *American Sociological Review*, *Antipode*, *Poetics*, *Ethnography*, *Contexts*, and *Boston Review*, among other places.

Meghann Lucy, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Dr. Jordanna Matlon about her recently published book, *A Man among Other Men: The Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism* (2022, Cornell University Press) and the ways in which gender and race inform contemporary capitalism.

Meghann Lucy: *One of the critiques of influential gender scholarship in your writing is that it doesn’t sufficiently consider the influence of the mode of production, here, capitalism and in particular racial capitalism. Can you tell us a bit about what gender scholars can learn from economic sociology and what economic sociologists could learn from studies of gender?*

Jordanna Matlon: Indeed, in my work I have emphasized how capitalism, or more specifically wage labor, plays a mediating role in social relations. Poised at the nexus of modern modes of work and the family, breadwinning was a product of the rise of industrial capitalism. The male breadwinner personified ideas about appropriate gender roles and was a means of securing patriarchy—even as racially marginalized men were

largely excluded from employment opportunities that would enable breadwinning. It is from this premise that I think through the relationship between Raewyn Connell’s concepts of hegemonic, complicit, and marginalized masculinities. Gramscian hegemony, I argue, should not be thought of as separate—or what Connell and James Messerschmidt have referred to in their 2005 *Gender and Society* article, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” as “parallel [to the] problem of gender relations”—but rather as constitutive. Complicit masculinity, I explain, describes an ideological orientation whereby even marginalized men embrace the hegemonic breadwinner ideal in anticipation of what Connell has classically called the “patriarchal dividend.” Recognizing that complicity refers to *ideology* whereas marginalization is a *structural location* changes Connell’s masculinities

framework because we see that marginal men can also be complicit.

With regards to what economic sociology could learn from gender studies, it is to take seriously the feminist call that the personal is political. What happens in the most intimate spaces shapes and is shaped by the greater political economy and its institutions and ideologies. And I will add that I could not do your question justice without also referring to Victoria Reyes' important intervention in her recent *Sociology Compass* article, "For a Du Boisian Economic Sociology," in which she calls out the politics and exclusions in the constitution of what is legibly understood to be "economic sociology."

M. L.: *The masculine ideal in Côte d'Ivoire is central to your work. Can you describe how it shifts overtime from pre- to post-colonialism?*

J. M.: Absolutely—the shift in the masculine ideal upon colonial contact is of fundamental importance to my argument. In what was the precolonial territory now known as Côte d'Ivoire, as with much of sub-Saharan Africa, there was no wage labor; this system was a colonial import. While sexual divisions of labor existed previously—for example, it was not uncommon for men to hunt and women to farm—both men and women contributed to the producer-provider role that breadwinning would supplant in the colonial and postcolonial economies and would be reserved for men according to imperial logics of appropriate gender roles. The colonial economy, in other words, the wage economy, could be juxtaposed to feminine labor, which were those activities not "captured" by the colonial state, such as food preparation and trade in markets. Upon independence the colonial economy became the formal economy, much of which was bound in the civil service since a robust private domestic sector never took off. The debt crisis and structural adjustment that devastated post-colonial African countries was then a crisis of formal, and men's, work. In my book I explain that the crisis of work was therefore a crisis of masculinity.



M. L.: *What does hegemony add to the story of racial capitalism in Côte d'Ivoire?*

J. M.: Much of the scholarship being produced within the revived theoretical framework of racial capitalism examines either its coercive apparatus, such as forms of labor exploitation, or resistance, in the tradition of Cedric Robinson's Black Radical Tradition. My examination of hegemony helps us understand how racial capitalism operates dually as ideology and materiality. The centrality of breadwinning helps us understand the long colonial history whereby normative ideas of masculinity were an integral part of capitalist expansion. The expectation of male dominance in the economy and thus as heads of household, what I call the political economy of patriarchy, secured consent, and complicity, for Ivoirian men even under structural conditions of racial subjugation. I will add that Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, known in the first decades of independence as the "Paris of West Africa," was exceptional for its adherence to French cultural and economic forms, and for that reason was an ideal type for understanding these dynamics.

M. L.: *Can you tell us a bit about the role of conspicuous consumption in demonstrating masculine value and deservingness? And*

what forms conspicuous consumption took in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire?

J. M.: The daunting financial struggles men in Abidjan's informal economy faced rendered them incapable of achieving breadwinning masculinities. The standard response I received from respondents when I asked them if they were married was, "*Je n'ai pas les moyens,*" which means, "I don't have the means." One group of men I conducted fieldwork with were mobile street vendors. These men were extremely marginalized and stigmatized and few of them were in heterosexual/romantic relationships. At the same time, many identified with global Black male media icons who shared similar stories of growing up in poverty before becoming immensely successful in the worlds of music and sport. This was not the colonial way of asserting masculine value—through the breadwinning ideal—but it is both significant and recognizable the world over, particularly among racially marginalized men. I

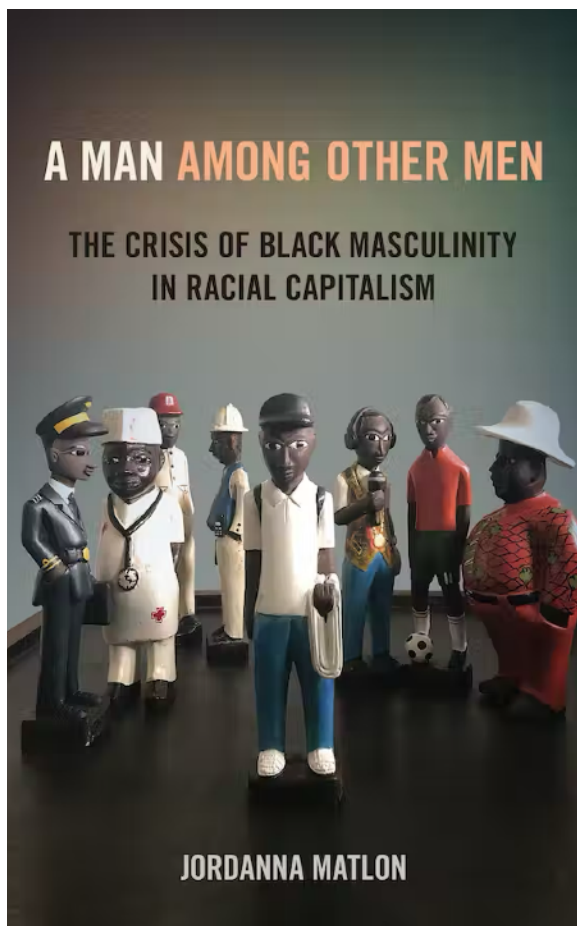
describe the way Abidjanais men embraced, represented, and emulated media icons, particularly through easily recognizable signifiers that could be embodied through sartorial expression or other performative acts. Conspicuous consumption was, in other words, shorthand to asserting these identities. Despite their poverty, it was also paradoxically attainable: Second-hand or imitation brand name clothing, even a big night out that might have cost a week's earnings or much of the month's rent, were in fact much easier to come by than a steady paycheck that might in turn support a wife or pay for a child's school fees.

M. L.: *What parallels can you draw between the consequences of racial capitalism in the U.S. and Côte d'Ivoire?*

J. M.: What I saw in the field made writing about a shared Black Atlantic (Paul Gilroy) experience obvious: Men in Abidjan embraced the representational repertoires and performative expressions of Black American icons and similarly signaled their worth via consumer and entrepreneurial identities. Moreover, as I expanded my historical scope, the transatlantic parallels became increasingly productive and essential. European empires enacted slavery and colonialism upon African and African-descended populations as a singular project of racial capitalism. These were contiguous projects, with the latter enabled by and emerging out of the former, and they produced familiar predicaments of economic marginalization that prevented the majority of Black men in both locations from asserting breadwinning identities. Whereas in the U.S. this leads to disproportionate rates of unemployment, in sub-Saharan Africa informal economies dominate, which, given the absence of safety nets, is the functional equivalent.

M. L.: *What are you working on now? What is next for you?*

J. M.: My book concludes by considering how the devaluation of Black humanity in racial capitalism generates a larger critique of processes of commodification and accumulation in ecologies of proliferating disposability for both humans and nature. This critique has become central in a burgeoning scholarship that analyzes the Anthropocene using



the lens of racial capitalism. For my next project, I am looking into these debates to think about the relationship between climate change and surplus populations in racial capitalism. Climate change is a peril both existential and epistemological: As it threatens our species' existence, it also upends foundational principles of global capitalism premised on resource extraction and commodification. While these threats have been and continue to be unevenly distributed along racial and colonial cleavages, the scientific fact of ecological devastation poses an unprecedented threat to the premise and promise of infinite growth in the world capitalist economy. Climate change thus initiates, within dominant paradigms, an urgent and compelling critique of capitalism as a systemic crisis heretofore unseen—

even in the most predatory and exploitative conditions of labor extraction. I find it significant, moreover, that the dispossessions and annihilations experienced on the lands and in the communities of racialized “others,” and the ways they have persisted despite, are preemptory of an era of resource constraints, the collapse of formal economies and social welfare systems, and forced economic and climate migrations. While hegemony and consent really led my analytic in my last project, in this project I aim to theorize human futures refracted through the lens of racial difference: how the possibilities and precariousness of species survival in the Anthropocene derive inspiration from histories and present-day realities of Black place-making and alternative livelihood ethics. ■

Zelizer Award for Best Book

The Economic Sociology Section invites nominations for the 2023 Zelizer Book Award for an outstanding book published in the field of economic sociology. Eligible books must have a 2021 or 2022 publication date. Authors are welcome to nominate their own work. Nominees must already be Section members or must join the Section. To nominate a book, please send a hard copy of the book to all five committee members listed below by March 17, 2023. Letters of nomination are not required from ASA members. Publishers who wish to submit a book for consideration must include a nomination letter that states how the book contributes to economic sociology. Please direct any inquiries, and nomination letters, to Josh Pacewicz, Chair pacewicz@brown.edu. Committee Members: Josh Pacewicz; Angèle Christin; Rebecca Elliot; Armando Lara-Millan.

Granovetter Award for Best Article

The Economic Sociology Section invites nominations for the 2023 Granovetter Prize for an outstanding article published in the field of economic sociology. Eligible publications must have a 2021 or 2022 publication date. Authors are encouraged to nominate their own work. Letters of nomination are not required. Stand-alone chapters from edited volumes are eligible for this award. Nominees must already be Section members or must join the Section. An electronic copy should be sent no later than March 17, 2023 to all members of the Granovetter Award Committee. Please direct any inquiries to Dan Hirschman, dan.hirschman@cornell.edu. Committee Members: Dan Hirschman (Cornell University); Robert Manduca; Minjae Kim; Barbara Kiviat.

Burt Best Student Paper Award

The Economic Sociology Section invites nominations for the 2023 Ronald Burt Outstanding Student Paper Award for a paper written by a graduate student in the field of economic sociology. Papers may be either published or unpublished, but must have been authored by students who have not received their Ph.D. by March 17, 2023. Students are encouraged to nominate their own work. Letters of nomination are not required. Nominees must already be Section members or must join the Section. Papers co-authored with faculty are not eligible for the Burt award. Electronic copies of the paper should be sent no later than March 17, 2023 to all members of the Burt Award Committee. Please direct any inquiries to Davon Norris, Chair, dnnorris@umich.edu. Committee Members: Davon Norris; Kathleen Griesbach; Guillermina Altomonte.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE



Gökhan Mülayim is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Boston University. Working at the intersection of economic and cultural sociology; organizations, occupations, and work; and urban studies, he studies how the so-called extra-economic is being translated into the economic. He looks specifically into how peculiar goods and services are being economized, and how the markets for those goods and services are being constructed. Using ethnographic research tools, his dissertation examines the economization of security as a political, social, and affective good and service in the market for private security in Istanbul. He received his B.A. with honors in political science and international relations, and his M.A. in sociology from Bogazici University in Istanbul, Turkey.



Dr. Ladin Bayurgil is a postdoctoral researcher at KU Leuven's Center for Sociological Research working on a European Research Council supported project that focuses on platform work across three sectors, gig, care, and creative, and across eight European countries, with a focus on precarity at the continuum between paid and unpaid work. Ladin's work spans urban and economic sociology, sociology of work and occupations, and particularly asks questions around urban precarious labor. Before her position at the KU Leuven, Ladin has received her PhD in Sociology from Boston University.



Meghann Lucy is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. Her interests are in inequality, consumption, economic sociology, cultural sociology, and medical sociology. A recent project examines the roles of overconsumption and divestment in discourses of the self, class, and gender through a case study of "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo." Other research investigates the medicalization of overconsumption or overaccumulation, that is, of hoarding disorder. In this work she evaluates the extent to which socioeconomic status of individuals and neighborhoods influences how cities define, detect, and either treat or punish hoarding behaviors amongst residents.



Ya-Ching Huang is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. Her research interests include economic sociology, cultural sociology, morality, and global health. She received her B.A. in the Interdisciplinary Program of Humanities and Social Sciences from National Tsing Hua University, and her M.A. in Sociology from National Taiwan University. Her previous research focused on Taiwanese pigeon racing, encompassing both the races and illegal gambling on them. She currently studies the production and distribution of cloth masks amid the coronavirus pandemic.



Elif Birced is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. Her research interests center on economic sociology, sociology of work and occupations, and cultural sociology. In her dissertation, she analyzes how expertise is constructed in platform economies with a particular focus on Youtubers. Using qualitative methods, she seeks to explore how jurisdictional boundaries are determined in the Youtube ecosystem in Turkey. In her previous work, she analyzed economic and political precariousness of academic labor with a particular focus on social scientists at foundation universities in Turkey.