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Meet the Editors

The SASE Newsletter is created by a dynamic group of graduate students and early career scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, aided and abetted by the SASE staff. We are pleased to introduce the Newsletter’s 2019 editors:

Agatha Anna Slupek is recently defended her dissertation in political theory and comparative politics at the University of Chicago. The dissertation, entitled "Feminism, Political Responsibility, and Democratic Justice," develops a theoretical account of how political actors confront changing institutional paradigms in light of historical and enduring injustices. Of particular interest to scholars of socioeconomics is Agatha’s work on the so-called ‘feminization of labor’ in advanced industrial societies. Surveying recent work in critical social theory, feminist theories of reproductive labor, and the historical entanglement of femininity with the ‘social’ rather than ‘political’ spheres, she interrogates the novelty of this phenomenon, which is often associated with the rise of women's formal entry into labor markets in the 1970s. Agatha’s Master’s Thesis, "Beyond the Fragments: Feminism, Work, and Freedom" was awarded the Joseph Cropsey Prize for Best Master’s thesis in Political Philosophy at the University of Chicago. In 2017-2018 she was a Sciences Po Doctoral Exchange Fellow and she hopes to continue her research in France. Her additional research interests lie in the fields of gender studies, political aesthetics, and the political thought of Louis Althusser and Cornelius Castoriadis.

Valerie Arnhold is a doctoral candidate at the Center for the Sociology of Organization in Sciences Po, France. Her research interests combine organizational, political and risk sociology in order to understand the changing role of nuclear accidents for the evolution of the nuclear industry and nuclear politics in France and, to a lesser extent, in Germany and the EU more broadly. Her dissertation is tentatively entitled "Beyond Apocalypse? Sociology of Nuclear Accidents and their Governance, 1986-2016". Based on a multi-site ethnography accompanying the work of experts and regulators on the accident of Fukushima Dai-ichi in 2011, her dissertation shows how these public actors worked with sector-specific procedures and rules to progressively challenge the apocalyptic images of nuclear hazards, showing that they could be rendered "manageable" through the tools of nuclear safety. Her research therefore helps scholars to understand the ways modern states manage major hazards and crises: by transforming them into ordinary events. In addition, it uncovers several mechanisms regarding the role of the industry and sector-specific agencies in strategically shaping policy areas such as nuclear energy. Valerie holds a MA in European Studies from the University of Bath, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, and Sciences Po as well as a BA in German-French studies.

Assaf S. Bondy is a sociologist studying the political economy of industrial relations systems in advanced economies, combining New Institutional and neo-corporatist theories with theories of intersectionality. Currently he is a Lady-Davis Postdoctoral Fellow at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel. His work so far has been dedicated to the study of changing conditions for collective action in labor markets, focusing on the context of the Israeli labor market. His latest publication, on the outsourcing and regulation of cleaning work in Israel, was published in 2018 in The Journal of Industrial Relations. His future project employs a sectoral perspective to the analysis of union revitalization strategies across different countries and sectors. He aims to develop research in the area of comparative industrial relations and union revitalization, emphasizing the intertwinement of sectoral socio-economic features and workers’ social position on developing trade-unions’ strategies and workers’ inclusion and agency. For the past ten years, Assaf has also worked with NGOs and trade unions in Israel, as a union organizer and the co-founder of "Power to the Workers – Democratic Trade-Union," later serving as the head of its transportation union.
Alaz Kilicaslan is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Global Health at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater since 2018. His research bridges medical sociology, economic sociology, and organizational studies to understand how healthcare is delivered, and who has access to it, in a global context. More specifically, he studies the moral economy of healthcare by examining how government agencies, medical professionals, and clients negotiate and ultimately shape the healthcare delivery through interactions in organizational settings. His dissertation, entitled “The New Economy of Doctoring: The Populist Restructuring of the Turkish Healthcare System and the Organizational Politics of the Reform”, is an ethnography of healthcare reform in Turkey. It explores the organizational dynamics of the reform by focusing on the shifting work patterns of medical professionals and doctor-patient relationships. It shows that the reform process, which combines neoliberal logics with an expansion of access to services culminated in a model involving a rapid expansion of outpatient care at the expense of inpatient care, an intensive and uncontrolled use of diagnostic technologies, a decline in the quality of healthcare encounters, overworked doctors, and a gradual marketization of services. Thus, it indicates a case whereby populist rhetoric and policies legitimate neoliberal reforms that hollow out the public system and introduce profit-oriented agents and mentality into hospitals.

Barbara Kiviat is an incoming Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Stanford University. She graduated from Harvard University with a Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Policy in May 2019. Barbara is an economic sociologist who studies how moral beliefs and other cultural understandings shape markets and justify the inequalities they produce. She is particularly interested in how normative ideas influence the pricing and allocation of socially important resources, such as insurance, credit, and jobs. Her current project considers how these dynamics play out when corporations use massive amounts of personal data to decide what to offer to individual consumers. Barbara's research has received awards or funding from the American Sociological Association, the National Science Foundation, the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, and the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics. In 2018, she participated in SASE's Early Career Workshop in Kyoto, Japan. Her work has been published in Socio-Economic Review, Socius, and Social Service Review. Barbara holds an M.P.A. from New York University, an M.A. in Journalism from Columbia University, and a B.A. in the Writing Seminars from Johns Hopkins University. Previously, she was a staff writer at Time magazine.

Kostiantyn Ovsiannikov is a postdoc at the University of Tsukuba, Japan. His research deals with corporate governance, labor economics, and determinants of innovation from the varieties of capitalism perspective. His dissertation explores how the pursuit of shareholder-value by management has affected labor policies at large Japanese enterprises listed in the Nikkei 400 index. He focuses on the issue of labor bifurcation, which refers to the division between standard and non-standard employees. Drawing on a political economy view of institutions, he argues that increased returns to stockholders during the last two decades can be explained with changes in the related domains of management and labor. In order to become 'eligible' for economic benefits, stakeholders of a firm must form a 'political bloc' that lobbies management to consider their interests. Differences in political power thus explain why increased returns have benefited shareholders but have been disadvantageous to non-standard employees. His findings suggest that companies with a higher degree of managerial entrenchment have more pronounced labor bifurcation. His paper entitled "Impact of shareholder-value pursuit on labor policies at Japanese joint-stock companies: Case of Nikkei Index 400" received the 2018 FFJ/SASE Best Paper Award.
Upcoming Events

Art Tour at The New School for Social Research
SASE is honored and delighted to have The New School offer art tours with Silvia Roccio, the University Art Collection Curator. She will give SASE conference attendees a 75-minute tour of the art collection at The New School. There will be 2 tours—one on Thursday, June 27 at 12 noon, and one on Friday, June 28 at 12 noon. There will be a maximum of 25 persons accepted in each group, which will be on a first come basis. If you would like to participate, come to the registration desk (in the cafeteria of the University Center at 63 Fifth Ave) to meet up with Silvia.
Further information regarding the art collection here: https://www.newschool.edu/university-art-collection/

NYC 2019 Annual Conference
Preparing for our meeting Fathomless Futures: Algorithmic and Imagined? Be sure to check out all the tabs on the SASE/NYC event page for information on everything from the online program to maps to WiFi information.

Costa Rica 2019 Regional Conference
SASE’s 4th RISE Regional Conference, Productive Transformation, Regional Asymmetries, and Social Exclusion in Ibero-America, will be hosted by the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica from 20-22 November 2019. Click here to find out more!
Amsterdam 2020 Annual Conference

For its 32nd annual conference, *Development Today: Accumulation, Surveillance, Redistribution*, SASE is heading to Amsterdam, Netherlands! More information on the Amsterdam meeting will be posted to sase.org shortly.

SASE News

Inaugural Alice Amsden Book Award of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics

We are delighted to announce that CK Lee has won the inaugural Alice Amsden Book Award of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics for her book, *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa*. To learn more about the prize committee’s decision, the winning book, and the award itself, visit https://sase.org/news/alice-amsden-book-award-winner/

SER Best Paper Prize

We are very pleased to announce that the Socio-Economic Review Best Article Prize will be given to Jacob Apkarian for his paper, entitled “Opposition to Shareholder Value: Bond Rating Agencies and Conflicting Logics in Corporate Finance” *Socioeconomic Review* 16(1):85–112. Click here to learn more about the prize and to read the paper.
**SASE Connected: The SuAVE Database**

SASE now has its very own exclusive and interactive database software, called SASE SuAVE. With the SASE SuAVE, you can explore distributions of SASE members by any characteristic available in the membership database. Our members can be filtered by country, city, gender, university, position, department, discipline of PhD, and research network interests. Within individual profiles you can see a user's photograph, biography, and contact details (if supplied). SuAVE has many practical applications including (but not limited to):

- Finding scholars with similar research interests for collaborations.
- Searching for academics based in a certain area or at a particular university ahead of a conference.
- Organizing regional meetings with local members.

The SASE SuAVE is currently open to all SASE visitors to use for a trial period, it will then only be accessible to our registered members. Check it out now!

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**Three Past Presidents on 30 Years of SASE**

SASE’s founder, Amitai Etzioni, as well as past presidents Nancy DiTomaso and Colin Crouch, share their thoughts on our organization and it’s transformations over the past thirty years. Visit [https://sase.org/news/sases-first-30-years-3-past-presidents-chime-in/](https://sase.org/news/sases-first-30-years-3-past-presidents-chime-in/) to read their contributions.

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**2019 Presidential and Executive Council Election Results**

SASE is delighted to announce that Nitsan Chorev will serve as President in 2019-2020. We would also like to congratulate Bruno Amable, Caroline Arnold, Chiara Benassi, Karin Knorr Cetina, Michelle Hsieh, Jeanne Lazarus, Virág Molnár, and Franklin Obeng-Odoom for their election to a three-year term (2019-2022) on the Executive Council. Warm thanks to Linsey McGoey, Emily Erikson, Sebastien Lechevalier, Jette Steen Knudsen, Ashley Mears,
and Bruno Palier, who will be leaving the Executive Council this year, and many thanks to all those who participated in the election as well as to the Elections Committee—Linsey McGoey (chair), Olivier Godechot, Alya Guseva, José Ossandón, and Dorottya Sallai—for their hard work.

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Teaching Socio-Economics: Challenges and Approaches

The socio-economic perspective is flourishing not only in academic journals and at research conferences, but in the classroom as well. Yet as the socio-economic canon grows ever larger, managing to fit its many insights into just one semester or quarter can be a tricky endeavor. This is especially the case when plenty of students arrive with little prior knowledge of the field. Newsletter editors Assaf and Barbara asked three scholars in the field of economic sociology how they’ve gone about crafting their courses given these challenges. Francesco Duina, Professor of Sociology at Bates College (USA), Rebecca Elliott, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics (UK), and Daniel Maman, Associate Professor of Sociology at Ben Gurion University (Israel), spoke to them about putting together syllabi, grappling with the mainstream approach to economics familiar to many students, teaching across national contexts, and much more.

The following interviews have been conducted by SASE Newsletter editors Assaf Bondy and Barbara Kiviat.

How do you think about constructing a course at a high level?

**Daniel Maman**: My undergraduate course “Introduction to Economic Sociology” is organized around two principles: explanatory approaches and empirical subjects. Specifically, it refers to three sociological approaches to the economy— institutions, culture, and social networks. In addition, I cover many core topics: markets; money and finance; networks and economic life; economic organizations; gender and the economy; culture and the economy; capitalism and varieties of capitalism; state in the economy; and globalization.

**Rebecca Elliott**: I teach a graduate (Masters-level) seminar in economic sociology, but even still, many of my students are completely new to the subfield. Many come to the course because they've had some background in economics and they're craving more diverse perspectives for explaining economic phenomena. In this context, I try to make it clear where economic sociology is in direct, critical conversation with mainstream economics, while also developing a picture of how and in what ways economic sociology provides distinct frameworks and concepts for revealing and explaining economic life—it's not all about
critiquing economists/economics! This means offering a course that takes a broad view of what constitutes "the economy" or "the economic," in addition to historicizing and deconstructing those categories.

**Francesco Duina:** My overall approach is to keep in mind that I inevitably have students in class that are majoring in various fields, including economics, political science, psychology, the hard sciences, and of course sociology. The course needs to reveal to all those students the basic sociological insights about the economy, and how it differs from (a) mainstream economic theories about atomized individuals seeking utility maximization, the availability of abundant information, etc., and (b) other disciplinary approaches to economic life (such as psychological ones).

**How do you go about deciding what to include on the syllabus?**

**Elliott:** Our terms are very compressed—just 10 weeks—so this is always a struggle. As for any instructor, my course design reflects my particular fascinations, which tend to pertain to the moral, cultural, and historical fundamentals and significance of economic life. Thus, key themes on my course include: moral economies; price, value, and worth; the politics and cultures of economic activity; and debt and credit. I also teach weeks on the sociology of economies/economists; embeddedness; consumption; and inequality.

It's also important to me that my students learn economic sociology by doing economic sociology. In the last week of the course, I have them do group presentations for a week I call "University, Inc." Here, each group provides an economic sociology of the contemporary university, with a particular thematic focus: accessing and paying for school; universities "on the market"; and universities and the broader labor market. This requires that they apply economic sociology tools related to quantification, ranking, inequality and social differentiation, student debt, job seeking, and consumption to an empirical case and lived experience that they know quite well.

**Duina:** I believe that research articles are valuable for students to read. They offer insights into our discipline: how we structure our work, the sort of data we use, etc. I think undergraduate students are capable of understanding that kind of material. At the same time, I rely on introductory texts, such as the “Economy and Society” series that Polity Press produced over the years specifically for economic sociology students. It includes an affordable series of books on topics like global capitalism, institutions and the economy, networks, the state and the economy, credit, etc. I’d also like to stress the merits of having students engage in exercises outside of the classroom. In my course, I ask students to spend time in shops and organizations to observe, firsthand, some of the dynamics and principles we discuss in class (for instance, how information is unevenly distributed and available; how colors, music, and other environmental factors shape a particular setting; how informal procedures and practices guide and limit exchanges). Students deliver presentations in class about their observations, and these sorts of exercises greatly contribute to the quality and impact of our discussions.

**Are there any scholars or readings you see as absolute must-haves on the syllabus?**

**Maman:** There are several scholars that I perceive as “must-haves” on the syllabus: Weber, Granovetter, Swedberg, Zelizer, Fligstein, Bourdieu, Carruthers, Dobbin, and Beckert. In addition, I have decided that most of the readings would be based on papers that were published in prestigious edited volumes, such as The Handbook of Economic Sociology (edited by Smelser and Swedberg, 2005), The Sociology of Economic Life (edited by Granovetter and Swedberg, 2001), and The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of

Elliott: Given my angle on the subfield, works by Viviana Zelizer, Marion Fourcade, Kieran Healy, Ashley Mears, Nina Bandelj, Akos Rona-Tas, Alya Guseva, Greta Krippner, and Fred Wherry appear across my syllabus. Students also love these readings and they are easy to teach because all of these scholars do such rigorous and beautifully rendered empirical work—there's real meat, based on fascinating topics, to dig into.

Karl Polanyi’s The Great Transformation is an important text to tackle early, given the legacy of the concept of ‘embeddedness’ in the subfield. Bourdieu's The Social Structures of the Economy is also an important text in my course. Many students are familiar with the Bourdieu of Distinction but haven't really thought of him as an economic sociologist until they see some of the implications of his sociology of consumption extended and elaborated in this former book.

Duina: I resist thinking that a canon in economic sociology exists and that some scholars must be included in any one syllabus. With that said, among many, I admire Viviana Zelizer’s work a great deal, and also John Campbell’s. I think John W. Meyer’s seminal work on organizations, even if not explicitly presented as economic sociology, is foundational. So, I make sure to refer to their work in my course. Over the years, I have also found Jeff Hass’ Economic Sociology: An Introduction (2007) to be especially clear, comprehensive, and useful.

How, if at all, do you include perspectives from other disciplines in your syllabus?

Duina: In my view, economic sociology was born in reaction to mainstream economics and its approach to economic activity in society. As a result, I always begin my course with the essential principles of standard microeconomics first: rational actors, abundant information, many choices, optimizing behavior, etc. This helps set the stage for our readings. Once we get going, I include material from world culture theory, historical and institutional sociology, and constructivist international political economy: they intersect nicely with economic sociology and allow students to see important points of connection to other theoretical perspectives.

Maman: In several subjects, I refer constantly to perspectives from economics. For example, I refer to classical and neoclassical economics when dealing with markets, and to organizational economics when dealing with firms and business groups.

Elliott: Like many economic sociologists, I have students read some Gary Becker early in the term—but I don't want them to think economic sociology takes an overly narrow view of its own intervention vis-à-vis economics, nor do I want to understate the diversity of thought within the discipline of economics. To address this, this year I brought in a representative from a UK organization called ECNMY, which seeks to diversify and democratize economics, who gave a fantastic lecture that historicized the concept of "the economy" and explained how economics has historically been and is currently taught in the UK (i.e., neoclassical and heavily mathematized). I'm also now including Foundational Economy (Manchester University Press), a book written by a collective of socio-economic researchers, on my syllabus, to illustrate the creative ways that heterodox economists redefine central concepts, offering really provocative policy implications as a result.

How do you think about the diversity of voices included on a syllabus?

Duina: This is a great question, in part because I think issues of gender, race,
sexual orientation, and—to some extent—class, have not been given enough attention by economic sociologists. Your latest newsletter was a good example of how gender, for instance, can and should be brought into the discussion far more than has been the case. So, in the course we talk about class a lot, especially as it relates to the formation of preferences, for instance, or the availability of information in poorer districts, etc. I also incorporate discussions of race (this does come up in the context of the existing literature on immigrants, say, but not enough so) and gender (for instance, how family finances are run in my students’ homes). These sorts of discussions really enliven our class meetings and discussions.

Elliot: When you look at my syllabus, it’s clear that much of my favorite material in economic sociology—and what I therefore assign—is by women scholars and scholars of color. So by this definition of diversity, I don’t have to do much deliberative reflection to produce a list that is not overwhelmingly white or male. The bigger challenge for me is to get beyond American economic sociology: this is something I’m still working on. I was trained in the U.S. and I am an American, so it’s the version of the subfield I know best and it is an empirical context that is intrinsically more interesting to me than it may be to my students at the LSE, who come from all over the world. I want students to see their own experiences and interests reflected in the course readings, so this means doing more to choose readings by scholars working on, or in, other national contexts. SASE has been really generative for this, given the international community it attracts.

Maman: The syllabus includes papers published by scholars from different generational groups and not exclusively from American universities. For example, when dealing with capitalism and varieties of capitalism, the syllabus includes papers by Randel Collins, “Weber’s last theory of capitalism” (1980), Jens Beckert, “Capitalism as a system of expectations” (2013), Yann Boutang, Cognitive Capitalism (2011), and Nina Bandelj, “On postsocialist capitalism” (2016).

How, if at all, does teaching in different national contexts change what you include on a syllabus and/or how your students react to the material? (If you have taught in more than one country)

Duina: I have taught mostly in the U.S. but also South Korea and Canada. In Canada, I was at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, British Columbia, for two years. Vancouver is a very global and diverse city, with close connections to Asia. Students in my courses came from many different countries. This naturally prompted me to adapt my syllabus so that we would cover the political economies of some Asian countries. Questions we asked included: How did Singapore and South Korea develop so quickly? What state policies favor the chaebol model of industrial organization in Korea? How has democracy both helped and slowed down India’s economic trajectory? The questions are endless, and being in a different setting has encouraged me to change my syllabi accordingly.

What do you hope that students who walk away from your course remember?

Elliot: Mostly, I hope that by the end of the course they feel empowered to offer their own sociological analyses of economic phenomena, rather than presuming they ought to defer to economists on these questions. If they can internalize that economic action is social action, then the tools they have developed not only on my course, but across their courses in the sociology department, prepare them to understand and explain various economic phenomena in terms of their social structuring, embeddedness, and significance.

Maman: I hope that students will learn that economic sociology provides concepts and ideas that enable them to understand economic phenomena. I also believe that after taking the class, students will be less...
intimidated by economic and financial issues insofar as they confront them be it as consumers, workers, scholars, or informed citizens.

**Duina:** Ultimately, I want students to take away the basic sociological insight that all

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**SASE Network Spotlight: Interview with Alya Guseva of Network N: Finance and Society**

*The editorial team is delighted to publish an interview with Alya Guseva, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Boston University (USA) and one of the Network N: Finance and Society organizers. She is famous for her original cutting-edge research in economic sociology. One of her main scholarly interests is the development of credit- and debit-card markets, as well as the nurturing of mass-consumer culture across different post-communist states. Her books *Into the Red* (2008) and *Plastic Money: Constructing Markets for Credit Cards in Eight Postcommunist Countries* (2014), co-authored with another Network N organizer (and current SASE President) Professor Akos Rona-Tas (University of California, San Diego, USA), have significantly enhanced our understanding of institutional change in transitional markets. In recent years, Guseva has been working with conceptual tools from the disciplines of sociology of medicine and health. More specifically, she has studied the emergence of commercial surrogacy as a practice in Eastern Europe. The study of this economic phenomenon includes the investigation of its accompanying institutional aspects such as its legitimization by state actors and the more general puzzle surrounding surrogacy’s commodification in the first instance. The issues that Guseva raises in her scholarship are centered around the mechanisms of socio-economic control and prediction. In other words, they strongly reverberate with the topic of this year’s SASE Annual Meeting, “Fathomless Futures: Algorithmic and Imagined.”

Interview conducted by SASE Newsletter Editor Kostiantyn Ovsiannikov.

**Why is it important to study the social embeddedness of finance? In a recent interview, you mentioned that “financial globalization has been fracturing along national lines.” Does one also observe a countermovement to this trend, for instance, towards a unification of financial practices?**

**Alya Guseva:** Akos Rona-Tas and I have addressed this question about globalization of financial markets in our book *Plastic Money*, and more recently, in the *Annual Review of Sociology* piece “Consumer Credit in Comparative Perspective”. The answer to the question of whether
financialization is fracturing along national lines (or instead, if there is a unification of financial practices) is that it depends on a few things, but mainly on the level of your analysis. For instance, from a bird’s-eye view, it looks like both credit cards and mortgages are now fairly common in Eastern and Central Europe, and at least some of the countries of the former Soviet Union. This is a big change from the early 1990s, and something that makes these countries similar to Western Europe, North America, and East Asia (Japan, South Korea). Moreover, household indebtedness is growing everywhere, too, suggesting a certain degree of convergence. And there are good reasons to expect this, given the spread of lending technologies and the global nature of the financial industry. But if you look closer, you actually see a lot of variation in household financial cultures, in the kinds of financial instruments offered to households, and in the way they are used. Consumer finance does not really work across national borders—at least not yet. It is still mostly impossible to get a mortgage or a credit card in a country where one does not reside, because credit histories are collected and stored on a national level, and financial services are regulated nationally, as well. In fact, many nation-states now want to take control over their payment and financial systems. This trend is not only limited to authoritarian regimes like China and Russia, but is a symptom of a more general political backlash against globalization.

In your 2014 book Plastic Money: Constructing Markets for Credit Cards in Eight Postcommunist Countries, co-authored with Akos Rona-Tas, you conclude that the mere spread of credit cards in the postcommunist states of Eastern Europe did not lead to a transition from a predominantly cash- and check-based payment system. Have the things changed since then?

Guseva: The transition is ongoing everywhere, not only in the former Soviet bloc. For instance, most Western countries are still far behind Sweden, which is trying to become the world’s first cashless society. And postcommunist countries introduced non-cash payments much later. According to the most recent World Payments Report, the fastest growth of non-cash transactions is in emerging markets, including Central and Eastern Europe. They are leapfrogging forward (mainly as a result of the push for more cards), while mature markets are slowing down. Russia is a champion of this trend with 36.5% growth in card transactions in 2016 compared to 2015. This is no doubt a direct consequence of the Russian state efforts to promote the new national card brand, Mir, underscoring the key role of states in building markets. According to the World Cash Report, Russia now has close to 2 cards per capita, while the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland are hovering right below or slightly above 1. China is in the lead in the group of countries we studied with 4.5 cards per capita, compared to about 4 in the US. (I do not have comparable data on Vietnam or Ukraine). The number of POS terminals per 100,000 residents in Russia reached 1,200 in 2016, about the same as in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, and behind China’s almost 1,800 per 100,000 residents (for a comparison, in the US this number is almost 4,500 per 100,000 residents). Cards are not alone in nudging cash aside: mobile payments—particularly useful for people with cell phones but no bank accounts—are growing, too (but I will leave it at that for the sake of space).
predictive algorithms related to personal credit history on the one hand, and on the management of reproductive mechanisms on the other, seems to highlight these aspects of governmentality. Do you yourself regard these two streams of your scholarship as interconnected?

Guseva: I think they are connected in several ways: both are about the construction of entirely new markets, and sometimes women become surrogate mothers to pay off or avoid taking on debt. You are pointing to another interesting connection between the two: surveillance and individuals’ control of their financial and reproductive selves. I have recently written about consumer credit surveillance using credit scores and electronic transaction information. Reproductive surveillance, too, has a rich and troubling history—from the more extreme cases, like the infamous control of clandestine abortions in Ceaușescu’s Romania, and China’s one-child policy, to the more mundane but still pervasive ones like the medical professional surveillance of pregnancy and childbirth (things like genetic tests, fetal monitoring, etc.) When it comes to assisted reproduction and surrogate pregnancies, surveillance gets particularly intensified, starting at the preconception stage—the “fourth trimester,” as it has been recently called—all the way to childbirth.

In relation to the previous question: one of your major academic interests is in the sociology of health and medicine. Why, in your view, is it important for socio-economics scholars to pay attention to this area of research? How does it correlate with the topics engaged in the “Finance and Society” Network?

Guseva: Healthcare is the largest single industry in the US (and in some other countries, as well): it is currently at 18% of the GDP, but is projected to grow to 32% by 2030. It is the biggest employer—it employs 16.2 million people—more than retail. It is also one of the fastest growing industries, projecting to add 18% more jobs by 2026. The pharmaceutical industry has been consistently more profitable than either oil or finance! The healthcare sector is recession-prone, because of both aging and medical innovation. Together, these ensure that demand is strong and that both employment and costs are growing. Moreover, at least in the U.S., with its complex public-private for-profit system, both medical education and health services are very expensive, and both medical students and patients frequently incur substantial amounts of debt. Recent research finds that more than half a million American families file for bankruptcy because of medical issues or bills. This accounts for nearly two-thirds of all bankruptcies. The last point is a particular American problem, as medical education and health services in other high-income countries are publicly funded (fully, or to a greater degree than in the U.S.). So, I hope it is clear why healthcare should be a topic of great interest to the study of socio-economics. SASE does not have a separate research network dedicated to the health industry, but healthcare-related research is dispersed across several networks, such as: “Professions and Professionals,” “Knowledge, Technology and Innovation and Markets,” and “Firms and Institutions.” The featured network of which I am a part, “Finance and Society,” too, receives an occasional health-industry-related paper.

How does your research resonate with this year’s SASE conference theme “Fathomless Futures: Algorithmic and Imagined?” Could you tell us more about ongoing research projects of yours?

Guseva: Markets for assisted reproduction sell hopes for the future, so yes, they are very much connected to the theme of this year’s SASE meeting: perhaps more so the imagined part, rather than the algorithmic. My current project examines commercial surrogacy—gestating babies for other people for compensation—in three post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan). These are legal and
flourishing markets serving the needs of both local and foreign prospective parents. Specifically, I ask (1) how surrogacy as a practice is morally framed by various actors—fertility clinics, surrogacy agencies, legal professionals, policymakers and the media, and (2) how these moral frames shape and structure the economic exchange of surrogacy services. I conducted dozens of interviews with surrogacy market actors in the three countries mentioned above and I attended several conferences for medical and legal professionals in the assisted reproduction field. My preliminary analysis underscores the key role played by fertility doctors in constructing the dominant frame of surrogacy. In all the three countries, surrogacy is legally available only to heterosexual married couples with a medically proven diagnosis of infertility. Framing surrogacy as a medically-necessary and doctor-prescribed treatment, as opposed to a market commodity, is a moral claim that separates deserving patients from market consumers and surrogate medicine from surrogate commerce. So, the argument is as much about the morality of surrogacy as it is, more generally, about the morality of market involvement in the provision of medical services.

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**Socio-Economics in the French Public Sphere: A Discussion with Professor Dominique Méda**

Dominique Méda is Professor of Sociology and the Director of the Social Science Research Institute (IRISSO) at Paris-Dauphine University (France). She is a graduate of both the École nationale d’administration (ENA) and the École nationale supérieure (ENS), the two institutions that traditionally train two distinct fractions of the French elite: political and administrative in the former case, and scientific in the latter.

Méda has authored numerous books on the changing role of labor and work in society, as well as on the role of the French welfare state model as it compares to other European welfare states. More recently, the role of climate change and the question of ecological transition have become more central in her scholarship, particularly as the effects of these phenomena ask us to re-think our understandings of growth, prosperity, and labor.

She is a politically-engaged intellectual, taking part in the recent presidential elections in France as a campaign advisor to Benoît Hamon (Parti socialiste) and formerly to Ségolène Royal of the same party. In a book published in 2018, Une autre voie est possible (in my translation, “Another Path is Possible”), co-authored with Eric Heyer and Pascal Lokiec, she argues that, contrary to what the current presidency and government pretends, the French
welfare state cannot be seen as the cause of the high levels of unemployment, slow growth, and high debt that France is facing. The reasons for this situation, they argue, have rather to be found in decades of liberalizing economic policies and more recent austerity measures, which in spite of their having proven incapable of adequately responding to the failures of financial capitalism, continue nevertheless to be relentlessly pursued by the current French government. In addition, her most recent book, co-edited with Florence Jany-Catrice and dedicated to the work of French economist Jean Gadrey, asks the question of how the economy (and economists) could better serve society today.

Méda participated in the recent “Grand débat” (Grand Debate) called for by French president Emmanuel Macron in response to the Gilets Jaune (Yellow Vests) movement that has been raging in cities around France since the fall of 2018. Macron invited a group of upwards of 40 academics, politicians, and policy experts to engage him in a televised conversation about pressing social and economic issues. Méda subsequently published an article in the left-leaning newspaper Libération, in which she strongly criticized the set-up and content of this so-called debate. For the SASE newsletter, she has accepted to answer our questions on her experience of the “Grand débat” and on the political relevance of socio-economic scholarship in France more broadly.

Interview conducted by SASE Newsletter Editor Valerie Arnhold.

In your recent newspaper article in response to the Grand débat, you insist on the severity of the social and ecological crisis that France is currently experiencing and which is partly reflected in the demands and grievances raised by participants in the “Yellow Vests” movement. Could you maybe summarize, for an international audience, what the key challenges of this current French crisis are from your point of view?

Dominique Méda: France faces the same ecological threats as other countries: they are global and absolute. Interestingly, this situation highlights that we find ourselves in a situation of total interdependence. The actions of any human being in the world have an influence on the common goods of the climate, biodiversity, and the habitable living conditions of our planet. As all other countries—even though our government likes to say that France is exemplary in terms of environmental protection (as we would produce low CO2 emissions thanks to nuclear power)—we have to take radical measures to completely rebuild our economy. However, if we are not cautious, ecological measures can prove to be anti-social. This situation explains the revolt of the Yellow Vests, which started because car-dependent populations were fed up with the increase of fuel taxes. Then, there was a revolt against fiscal and social injustice. This is a perfect illustration of the absolute need to address both the ecological and social issues at the same time: to make sure that solutions to one problem also work to address the other.

Your work on ecological concerns suggests that these may also be seen as an opportunity to rethink economic growth and labor, for example by inventing new economic indicators taking into account our “carbon footprint” or through a reduction and reorganization of working time. The Yellow Vest movement has raised a debate regarding the relationship between the “end of the month” and the “end of the world”. This may lead us to wonder what the conditions of enforcement of a new socio-economic model could be. For instance, in the short term, how could we change the rules governing production and consumption without harming the lower middle class?

Méda: This is the central question. In 2015 already, the International Trade Union Confederation proposed to address it through the notion of the “just transition.” The lowest income groups are the most affected by an ecological transition that is
oblivious to social inequalities. The risk is that we engage in an ecological reconversion that is blind to the fact that the lowest income groups are the most affected by carbon taxation. Public policy measures must therefore be able to reconcile both imperatives, ecological and social: they must be “tailor-made.” This is expressed in the message we convey regarding the GDP: it is a very poor indicator, in particular unable to speak to the evolution our most precious critical assets—our natural heritage and social cohesion. Therefore it should be, if not abandoned, at least framed by two other indicators—the carbon footprint and the index of social health—which would then act as ethical norms to reduce our carbon footprint in a just way.

You were invited to the “Grand débat” launched by President Macron and accepted the invitation. What were the prospects you saw for the outcome of this “debate”? What were your motivations to take part in it? What messages did you want to convey?

Méda: I strongly disagree with Emmanuel Macron's policies, but I had been assured that the pluralism of the invited guests would be respected and that we could establish a kind of dialogue. I found it interesting to be able to remind him of the ideas I had defended with my colleagues in Une autre voie est possible and in several newspaper articles. I was keen to see what arguments he would use. I did not expect a real debate (i.e., an organized exchange in the framework of a real ethics of discussion) because I had watched most of the “debates” between the President and mayors beforehand. But I was curious to see whether he would proceed the same way and how he would pretend to listen and to answer the questions once he had transformed the session into a promotion of his own politics. I was lucky to be the second speaker, right at the very beginning of the nine-hour(!) session. I had the opportunity to ask him, first, if he had not remained too attached to the whole set of dogmas, formulas, and beliefs that we had been taught as fellow graduates of ENA (especially in the economic policy field). Second, I asked if he was ready to change course and agree to a massive investment of 20 billion euros per year for at least ten years for the ecological and social transition, even if this implied increasing the deficit and raising taxes for the wealthiest.

We would be very interested in your “insider” impressions regarding the debate itself. How did you experience its “backstage” organization, choice of participants, or rules of interaction? How did these affect the content of exchanges and positions that could be expressed?

Méda: We didn't know until the last moment who had been invited and who would be present (personally, I discovered it when I arrived). I knew that Frédéric Lordon, a sociologist at EHESS and well-known social movement supporter, had refused, but I knew nothing else. I still don't know who was invited and who refused. It is obvious that academics close to Macron were over-represented, as were economists. There were few historians, lawyers, and sociologists, but many representatives from think tanks. Clearly, the people who were present had accepted the basic idea of an exchange with the President, which indeed limited the possibilities of critical exchange. I was very embarrassed by the lack of interaction, the lack of opportunity for participants to respond. The format, as we knew, was two minutes each. Most of the people present developed an idea and then asked a question. The President then gave his "answer" and that was it. For someone who is committed to dialogue, the development of ideas and rational discussion, this is excessively frustrating. For example, he answered to the second part of my question that this had already been tried out by former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, that it had been a failure, that France had not become happier, and that unemployment had not decreased. And
more importantly, he would in no way agree to increase the debt and taxes. And it was over. Of course, I was boiling inside. But it was over and so it was always he who had the last word, which for us was terribly embarrassing. Clearly, this was not a debate in any true sense of the term.

President Macron is sometimes presented as being representative of the return of a “strong” State or even an “authoritarian” style of government. Do you see any changes in the ways in which political debates take place in France under the current presidency compared to the former presidents?

Méda: This is a very complex issue. I would like to say that he probably unravels the power of the State in a very firm and authoritative way. Some examples: the labor law ordinances, at the beginning of his mandate, reversed parts of the Code du travail (French labor law) and deprived the State of powerful means of intervention. A law called the PACTE has just organized the privatization of the Aéroport de Paris group, which is a strategic sector. On the other hand, the State is recovering control over policies such as unemployment insurance, which may make it possible to reduce the resources devoted to compensating the unemployed, previously in the hands of the social partners. Yes, I think that the current President is organizing a form of dismantling of the instruments that were still in the hands of the State, but that he is doing so with an iron fist, even more so than all his predecessors. Ditto on the abolition of the ENA. There was no public debate, he made this decision alone. My fear is that this new school will leave the State without civil servants and that it will be entrepreneurs who take over the power, as the Minister of Economy suggested: "we are entering a new world: that of entrepreneurs, creativity, and innovation. Where the high administration has to take back its rightful place," he declared. The ENA is far from being the only institution of higher education where the children of high-income families are over-represented. The same applies to business schools, and in the end to most of the selective institutions. Therefore, the problem is much more general and I fear that this was only a pretext to attack the servants of the ENA.

How do you understand Macron’s attempt to get in touch with French “intellectuals”. If the “Grand débat” only very imperfectly enabled the organization of such exchanges, by which other means could such a discussion between politicians and intellectuals be created?

Méda: I find it very difficult today for academics to make their voices heard. Less so in regard to the general public, because many academics write books and newspaper articles, but especially in regard to politicians and administrations. They have their own specialists inside (in ministerial cabinets, central administration departments), who provide excellent figures and analyses and even have a kind of monopoly on the production of data and analyses. It is very difficult for a researcher to access all the necessary data in order to, for instance, fully evaluate a law or measure. This is true for the effects of the ISF (Impôt de solidarité sur la fortune, solidarity wealth tax) and for the tax system in general, but also for many other topics. Academics are deprived of access to a certain number of data sources and competing with structures such as the INSEE (French statistical institute), the Treasury, Bercy (Ministry of Economics and Finance), DREES (Research and statistics department of the Solidarity and Health Ministry), or DARES (Research and statistics department of the Ministry of Labor). Few academics have the means to compete. One way to structurally improve the dialogue would be to open up data much more widely to academics and to organize spaces for co-production and co-evaluation: for example, the National Assembly and the Senate should organize the evaluation, monitoring, and debate on
past and future laws with external, independent academics. I think that this would prevent a lot of problems. It also seems essential to me that the training of state executives become much more open to PhD holders and involves academics from all disciplines.

*As a graduate of both ENA and ENS, you have a rather atypical trajectory compared to other French scholars. How do you see your own position in the academic field? To what extent does it impact your willingness and ability to be part of the political debates regarding socio-economic policy in France?*

**Méda:** This is an extraordinary position for me. And very rare. In general, my colleagues who have completed the ENA and are employed in the administration have a duty of confidentiality that prevents them from expressing themselves. They are aware of all the limits and shortcomings of policies but cannot criticize them except, euphemistically, in reports, such as inspection or control reports, most of which are unfortunately commissioned by the government. Academics, as I said earlier, often do not have access to strategic information. They can express themselves, but too often lack crucial information.

I am extraordinarily fortunate to have been on the inside (I worked for four years in the inspection and control body of the social ministries, then for almost 15 years in the DARES, the Research and statistics department that the Socialist Minister of Labor, Martine Aubry, had created in 1993 to counterbalance the expertise of the Ministry of Economics and Finance. My job was precisely to build bridges between the world of research and the administration of the Ministry of Labor).

Academics should be much more involved in the debate, as I am trying to do or as someone like Thomas Piketty is trying to do. We must try to hold all positions at the same time: a hyper-rigorous scientific ethic, serving a vision of society to be defended. Unlike some, I think that engaging academics in public debate is essential and should go much further. I find that the establishment of common working spaces on issues, measures, laws, important themes—arenas where administrative executives, academics, and citizens can meet to discuss a subject, propose measures, exchange evaluations, and put them into discussion—could be very valuable.

*Finally, regarding your view on the political relevance and prospects of socio-economic scholarship in France more generally, what role can and should socio-economics scholars play? Are there any specific stakes for economic sociologists compared to economists for instance? In what ways can they make their voices heard? What do you see as the limits of such public and political engagement?*

**Méda:** I think there is a major problem with the economic discipline. Mainstream economists have come to occupy a prominent place, not only in the academy but also in public debate and among politicians. This is terribly dangerous because the discipline claims to be able to deal with all issues but never opens up its black boxes. We have seen how the so-called Nobel Prize awarded to Nordhaus was perfectly suited to the fact that his work led us to a warming of at least three degrees. Nordhaus is the one who ridiculed the authors of the Meadows report by saying that their model was worthless because they had forgotten the price. This is how we lost 50 years. Economists have gained too much importance in society. And the discipline is based on assumptions that are far too inappropriate. I am well aware that when you criticize the *homo economicus* you are told that behavioral economics has considerably refined its assumptions. But it is the whole set of assumptions on which Economics is based today that I believe must be challenged. Probably as much as those of philosophy.
and sociology by the way. Our disciplinary silos are outrageous at a time when we are wondering how to convince our governments and fellow citizens that a major change of course is urgent. I have the work of Tim Jackson in mind, who proposes in *Prosperity without Growth* to implement a materialistic macroeconomics, or of the Belgian philosopher Tom Dedeurwaerdere who shows how the different disciplines should be integrated—with renewed foundations—to work together. It is not only the founding hypotheses and methods of the disciplines that we must review, but all our categories, all our representations of the relationship between humans and nature, all our epistemes. This is a radical turn that we have to engage in.

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**Follow-Up on Kyoto: Sitting Down with Professor Hiroyasu Uemura**

*SASE is very pleased to feature an interview with Hiroyasu Uemura, Professor at the Graduate School of International Social Sciences, Yokohama National University, Japan. Professor Uemura has been one of the main contributors to the influential stream of scholarship that focuses on comparative dynamics of European and East Asian capitalisms. Together with a group of renowned Japanese and European political economists, Professor Uemura has integrated the tools of the French-originated Regulation Theory to analyze institutional developments within the East Asian socio-economic context. While operating within the institutional political economy tradition, the Japanese branch of the Regulation School has enriched it with valuable concepts that foster a better understanding of the peculiarities of East Asian growth regimes. The interview with Professor Uemura can be viewed as a follow-up to the last SASE Annual Meeting held in Kyoto. Among other successes from this last meeting, the event was a milestone for raising awareness about intellectual traditions that help us adequately comprehend and encapsulate regional socio-economic trends.*

*Interview conducted by SASE Newsletter Editor Kostiantyn Ovsiannikov.*

**Recent years have been marked by the appearance of some notable volumes that you co-edited, among which The Rejuvenation of Political Economy (2016) and Evolving Diversity and Interdependence of Capitalisms (2018). Is there a common idea uniting these books? What is the significance of the updated take on comparative capitalisms if we consider the Diversity and**
Transformations of Asian Capitalisms—a collection of works that you co-edited in 2013—as a benchmark?

Hiroyasu Uemura: The French-Japanese international collaboration has already produced several books. Especially, the following books are the main results of our collaborative research: Japanese Capitalism in Crisis: A Regulationist Interpretation, Boyer, R. and Yamada, T. (eds.), Routledge 2000; Diversity and Transformation of Asian Capitalisms, Boyer, R., Uemura, H., and Isogai, A. (eds.), Routledge 2012; Capitalismes asiatiques: Diversité et Transformations, Boyer, R., Uemura, H., and Isogai, A. (eds.), Presses Universitaires de Rennes 2015; Evolving Diversity and Interdependence of Capitalisms: Transformations of Regional Integration in Europe and Asia, Boyer, R., Uemura, H., Yamada, T., and Song, L. (eds.), Springer 2018. Our international collaborative networks started as a study on the Japanese economy in the 1990s, and have since developed extensively, including works on not only the Japanese economy but also the evolving diversity and interdependence of Asian and European capitalisms, which has made us understand more about the institutional characteristics of capitalisms more broadly.

The Rejuvenation of Political Economy, Yokokawa, N., Yagi, K., Uemura, H. and Westra, R. (eds.), Routledge 2016, is a more encompassing publication on political economy that was organized by the Japan Society of Political Economy.

While it certainly uses concepts that emerged within the Western context, its Japanese version is quite distinct. Still, there are generally applicable aspects of this theory, such as an evolution of the Fordist regime of accumulation. What are other examples of shared regulationist notions that can be useful to a comparative political economy analysis between Europe and Japan?

Since Toshio Yamada introduced regulation theory to Japan in the 1980s, the theoretical foundation of our international collaborative research has been regulation theory, but we have tried to integrate the fruitful results of various evolutionary and institutional economics. “The mode of regulation” and “growth regime” are the basic concepts for our research, and we also use some important concepts of institutional economics such as institutional complementarity, co-evolution, and endogenous preferences. The concept of “Fordism” is a little controversial. There have been diverse understandings among Japanese researchers about whether we can use the concept to characterize the Japanese growth regime in the 1960s in the first place, since it exhibited a different pattern of growth and distribution based on different institutional arrangements from the American one (as seen in Boyer and Yamada 2000).

Extending the previous question to an empirical dimension, in the book Evolving Diversity and Interdependence of Capitalisms (2018) you describe the interdependence patterns of growth regimes within Europe and Asia. Are there any noticeable patterns between these continents?

In our new book (Boyer, Uemura, Yamada, and Song 2018), we try to make a comparative analysis of transformations of regional integration in the EU and East Asia from the historical institutionalist perspective in regulation theory, especially focusing on interactions between polity and economy. We suggest that the European integration is a unique historical process that cannot be a benchmark for East Asian integration. In the European integration, polity and supranational institution-building have dominated over the economies, but the national economies with heterogeneous institutional structures cannot be effectively coordinated by common institutional rules and the Euro as
a single currency. In East Asian integration, multinationals’ business activities have dominated over political objectives, and the de facto economic integration has been developing in the diversity of Asian capitalisms (H. Tohyama and Y. Harada) without stable international political relations.

Against the recent revival of interest in growth models among post-Keynesian scholars, what are the main theoretical (and, maybe, empirical) contributions of regulation theory to this topic?

Regulation theory and post-Keynesian theories are complementary because the former makes institutional analysis at the macro level and the latter formalizes theories of growth, distribution, structural change, and financial instability. The pioneering research in this line was Boyer R. “Formalizing Growth Regimes,” in Technical Change and Economic Theory, G. Dosi et al. (eds.), Pinter Publisher 1988, which integrated Kalecki’s theory of growth and distribution and Kaldor’s theory of demand-led productivity growth to characterize different growth regimes. Based on this theoretical framework, Japanese researchers have developed multi-sectorial models with Pasinetti’s idea of industrial structural change and applied them to the analysis of productivity-differential inflation (or deflation) and de-industrialization (H. Uni; H. Uemura and S. Tahara). Furthermore, a shift in causality between variables in post-Keynesian macroeconomic models has been analyzed with the logic of a shift in “institutional hierarchy” in regulation theory (H. Nishi).

The two famous pillars of regulation theory applied towards Japanese political economy are “companyist regulation” and “hierarchical market-firm nexus”. As we know, after the “bubble burst” in the early 1990s, these features underwent substantial changes, leading to what Robert Boyer called a “dysfunction of regulation”. Regarding this, has regulation theory come up with any updated concepts reflecting the modern state of things in Japan?

In our international collaborative research, the mode of regulation in Japanese capitalism has been characterized by the concepts of “companyist regulation” and “hierarchical market-firm nexus” (consisting of large firm organization, hierarchical inter-firm relations, and the segmented labor market). Faced with domestic institutional changes leading to more heterogeneity (S. Lechevalier) and the multinationalization of Japanese firms to cope with economic globalization (Y. Hirano and T. Yamada), the Japanese mode of regulation has been eroded, and the dysfunction of regulation as coordination mechanisms has been exacerbated. In the 2000s, excess savings in large Japanese firms accompanied by stagnant wages and consumption are coordinated by expansionary monetary policy and public spending with increasing public debt, but this does not establish a stable growth regime. The dramatic transformation of Japanese capitalism is an important topic for our future research.
Interdisciplinarity, Law, and Global Capitalism at Northwestern University (USA)
A Q&A with the Global Capitalism and Law Research Group

SASE Newsletter Editor-in-Chief Agatha Slupek met with Professors Karen Alter and Cristina Lafont of Northwestern University when she attended the University of Chicago’s Workshop in International Politics for the first time. Alter is the author of, among several other books and articles, the award-winning The New Terrain of International Law: Courts, Politics, Rights (Princeton University Press, 2014), and her latest research focuses on the construction of global economic rules regulating trade and money, and on the determinants of politically sustainable capitalism. Lafont’s newest book, Democracy without Shortcuts is forthcoming from Oxford University Press, and her current research focuses on normative questions in political philosophy concerning democracy and citizen participation, global governance, human rights, religion and politics. Together, their research for the Workshop confronts pressing international issues in a novel and interdisciplinary way. The members of their team were gracious enough to answer some questions we thought would interest the SASE readership.

Interview conducted by SASE Newsletter Editor-in-Chief Agatha Slupek.

To begin with, could you tell our readers a bit about what led you to start this interdisciplinary group and about its composition?

We formed the Global Capitalism and Law Research Group in response to a “Big Ideas” call from the Buffett Institute on Global Affairs. The leaders of the Buffett Institute believed, as did we, that interdisciplinary research is the way to generate new and fresh ideas. In addition, we had all come to realize that the only way to grasp a system as complex as “global capitalism,” and to understand global capitalism’s enmeshment in and effects on law, was to bring specialists from different disciplines together.

We aimed to bring together scholars from a range of different disciplines, creating a big tent in which to discuss the relationship between global capitalism and law. The group included economic sociologists, legal scholars, philosophers, and political scientists. The members who joined brought different interests to the table: some were more interested in global economic systems and their interactions with domestic institutions; some focused on the rules and institutions of global economic governance; others honed in on the legal dimensions of regulating the global economy; and still others explored how global economic structures are adversely affecting the achievement of other goals (e.g., protecting human rights, democratic choice, or greater justice). What united us was a desire to better understand the relationship between...
capitalism, globalization, and law.

All of us wanted to better understand the historical origins of the system of global capitalism, the forces that challenge it, and the ideas and processes that sustain global capitalism. We invited every discipline to join in, but we had little luck encouraging economists to join our group. Anyone who has engaged in interdisciplinary work will be familiar with this challenge. A unifying theme among our core members is that there is no “one size fits all” solution that will work in different parts of the world. Thus our group includes scholars that expect and accept that people in different parts of the world will have a range of goals, and that there are many valid choices that populations can choose.

Since the financial crisis in 2008, one might say (using a somewhat cliché formulation) that capitalism has been “brought back in” to the center of analysis, at least in the field of political science. Would you agree? If so, how do you think it has been brought in—as a problem to address? An analytic framework? How do you see your Research Group either building on or departing from the approach to capitalism in the social sciences?

Every discipline will have its own story as to why global capitalism fell out as an object of focus. For political science, a somewhat general explanation is that the end of the Cold War meant the end of a socialist alternative. Those of us who were educated during the Cold War were taught Marxism alongside other theories of politics, the economy, and society. We were taught to think about class as an organizing principle, and about superstructures of ideas. But the end of the Cold War suggested that democracy and market economies were the best, and perhaps the only, viable governance models. We then entered an era in which many scholars came to presume that democracy and markets were background conditions or objectives. Social scientists Arrighi, Harvey, and Streeck continued to grapple with capitalism, but in mainstream political economy there was also a loss of interest in systemic theorizing of the kind that characterized much of the work on global capitalism. The seeming inability of dependency theorists, for example, to explain East Asian growth “miracles” like South Korea and, later, China motivated a shift to more middle-range theorizing, focused more on domestic-level institutions than the system of global capitalism.

The hubris of the post-Cold War period is that some economic, political, and academic leaders became drunk on the idea of markets as a solution to most problems. Yes, we needed to worry about market failures and negative externalities, but these were considered small problems that one tinkers to fix. This market ideology made it easy to discount what was happening to the middle class. Markets are disruptive by nature. For economists, the disruptive nature of markets is a good thing. Inefficient firms die; workers retool; new strategies emerge. So while it was clear that some individuals, communities, and industries were losing out to the forces of globalization, the presumption shared by many was that markets—or perhaps markets governed by a light-touch regulatory structure—would cure the problems they created. The alternative view was drowned out by an over-confidence in markets.

The point is certainly not that studying capitalism is about resurrecting Marxism. Genuine Marxists would never own what our group does. Indeed many scholars consider our group not nearly radical enough. Many of our group members remember too well the Cold War. We still presume that democracy and markets are background conditions. This is to say that fascism, nationalism, and Communism hold little appeal as an alternative to markets.

Our research vision is to study and envision what would make capitalism politically sustainable. We formed as a group before the 2016 presidential election.
Back then, few wanted to consider the idea that global capitalism might not be politically sustainable. This conversation is still not easy to have. Many business and political leaders do not want to suggest that capitalism might not work. On the one hand, it is obvious that the current system is not working for many people. It is equally obvious that the current system generates outcomes that are indefensible from the perspective of justice, however one might conceive the term. Yet ours is a conversation that accepts that the current capitalist system is going to continue. We are actually a rather middle of the road group, living in a world of political extremes. We are not extreme enough for Marxists, and are too radical for free-market loyalists.

The topic of this year’s SASE Conference is “Fathomless Futures: Algorithmic and Imagined.” Your group certainly takes inspiration from a set of problems adjacent to those animating the conference theme (uncertainty, lack of trust). How does your research help us to think about the “future,” broadly conceived?

There’s a difference between research that helps us think about the future and research that helps us think about how we think about the future. Most of the work by the group’s members falls in the latter category. For example, the perspective shared by some of our members sheds light on how law is not just an efficient response to coordination problems that market players face; law and legal “fictions” are also useful devices that help actors operating in an extraordinarily complex global economy cope with the radical uncertainty associated with an unwritten future.

Finance, an area of particular interest for some of the group members, is a domain that really forces you to think about how market players and regulators cope with the future. And law is enormously important for financial market innovation, as Katharina Pistor’s work shows. Debt contracts, for example, are simply the promise of the borrower to pay down the road. If we’ve learned anything from the past decade it’s that what lies down the road cannot be forecasted with much accuracy. Given uncertainty about the future, how do we get the “unbundling” of debt contracts so that different risks associated with the contract can be priced and traded? Lawyers, following Pistor, can creatively “re-code” existing contracts to make new financial assets that have the character of enforceability; thus these assets become legible and more valuable to market participants. Law doesn’t necessarily make the future in financial markets any less unknown—but it does outline the rights and obligations of parties to the contract and thus makes promises embodied in the contract appear more credible. Uncertainty about the future can be swept under the rug, to an extent, and you can then make the markets larger and more liquid.

An aspect of your Research Group that, in my view, makes it very unique is your incorporation of humanistic inquiry with social scientific analysis. Can you say a bit more about the philosophy behind your project? How does the conversation between your collaborators change or get refigured when disciplinary boundaries are pushed? Is this challenging?

We were looking for group leaders who would be real team players. Anyone who was willing to invest was welcome to join and lead. This is oblique way of saying that the answer to your question is: Cristina Lafont. Professor Lafont was willing to invest, and our social science members were open to learning.

All of us were committed to serious interdisciplinarity. Cristina wanted to engage with social scientists, and the social scientists therefore had to invest in philosophy. This is how collaboration works—you must find a way to meet in the middle.

Numerically speaking, most of the master
classes we have held come from the disciplines of social science. We have also invited lawyers, judges, and philosophers to teach our group members. The humanist and social science perspectives are always engaged elements of the conversation, and thus the social scientists have learned more about philosophy than many might have originally expected.

The investment in crossing the humanist-empirical divide is huge. Karen admits that she would never dare to enter the world of philosophy without a philosopher by her side. Cristina feels the same about law and empirics. She would hesitate to make claims about law or empirics on her own. This is why interdisciplinary collaboration is so essential. It is the best and maybe only way to seriously and simultaneously engage humanistic and empirical worlds. When Karen and Cristina present co-authored work together, Cristina can respond in ways that philosophers can accept. Karen can respond in ways that (most) lawyers and political scientists will accept.

We have found humanist and social science audiences extremely receptive to our collaboration. That said, it remains a challenge to speak to both worlds. Part of the challenge is that each discipline has its own language and jargon. If you say your message in ways that both can understand, then the collaborative work has twice the jargon. One must therefore speak to different audiences, one at a time, yet in ways that do not alienate the other discipline. It is a time-consuming yet also very rewarding challenge.

To give our readers an idea, what are the current projects your Group is working on? What are your hopes for the future of the Group?

We are in a year of rebuilding. Since we were founded, the vision of the Buffett Institute changed. Our plans to engage in a national global debate about the determinants of politically sustainable capitalism gave way to the need to recover our funds and find a new institutional home.

Current projects include a philosophical and empirical engagement with what we call “second best theorizing.” We develop in philosophical and normative terms the problem of the second best, and apply the framework empirically to suggest a strategy to reform the World Trade Organization. One way to explain this project is that we are rejecting realistic utopian thinking that adopts piecemeal reforms pushing towards a new ideal, in favor of defending elements of the current system—including democracy and human rights—as needing greater protection. We are therefore engaged in second-best theorizing, recognizing that this is not about identifying the highest ideals but about protecting important normative and political objectives that could be made worse by the search for ideals that cannot be realized under current conditions.

A second collaboration follows the trade and monetary politics that created the current system of global economic management. We focus on the divergent legalization trends in money and trade wherein global trade became increasingly legalized while global money became less legalized over time. The larger issue is that one cannot address the problems of trade and money separately. Yet we have institutional and ideational structures that imagine the two issues as distinct, one that is amenable to global legal solutions and another which is not. In fact, both issues are hard to regulate globally, yet there are real political and economic consequences associated with the failure to subordinate economic goals to political objectives and legal imperatives. The 2008 financial crisis is a case in point. Markets, left to their own devices and profit-seeking incentives, can implode with spectacular social and economic consequences. And elected officials can follow political logics in ways that harm the effective functioning of markets and political systems, which is why legal checks may be helpful.

A third collaborative project is a larger
national and global debate over the determinants of politically sustainable capitalism. We hope to discuss every element of this phrase. What makes something politically sustainable? How can capitalism, which is disruptive by design, be politically sustainable?

These three projects again highlight our middle-of-the-road approach. We want serious reform of the current system. We believe that uniting humanist and social science sensibilities and priorities will create new imaginaries of possible goals and practicable solutions. Our goal is not to construct a single one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, our goal is to generate new imaginaries—new benchmarks, new sets of normative and empirical criteria—so that we can have a robust political debate about real alternatives. The end, we hope, will be enhanced democratic choice of a market-based solution that works better for more people.

SASE Network Spotlight
Elizabeth Gorman and Leonard Seabrooke of Network D: Professions and Professionals in a Globalizing World

We recently had a chance to interview Elizabeth Gorman and Leonard Seabrooke, two of the organizers of SASE’s research Network D, “Professions and Professionals in a Globalizing World,” alongside James Faulconbridge and Sigrid Quack. Elizabeth Gorman is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia. Leonard Seabrooke is a Professor of International Political Economy and Economic Sociology at the Copenhagen Business School. Below, they discuss their current projects, the research field of professions and professionals, the importance of interdisciplinarity, the activities of the Network D, and this year’s upcoming SASE conference.

Interview conducted by SASE Newsletter Editor Alaz Kilicaslan.

*Can you briefly tell us about yourself and what you are working on right now?*

**Gorman:** I am an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, with interests in organizations, work, occupations, and economic processes more generally. I have a law degree and practiced law for a few years before returning to graduate school, and that experience has informed my interest in understanding professions and professional work. One stream of my research examines gender and racial inequality in the workplace, with an emphasis on professional contexts. In this vein, I am working on two projects with my collaborator Fiona Kay of Queen’s University in Canada. One of these examines the effects of professional firms’
developmental policies and practices on racial diversity among partners. The other investigates the impact of corporate clients on the representation of women in professional firms. The second, more recent stream of my research focuses on the regulation and self-regulation of the abuse of expert knowledge. Two projects in this vein focus on accountants and engineers.

**Seabrooke:** I’m a Professor in International Political Economy and Economic Sociology at the Copenhagen Business School, where I have been since 2005. I’m part of a political economy group that is the Department of Organization. My work is on topics like taxation, housing, finance, and international organizations, as well as on professional networks and expertise. At the moment I am working on a European Research Council project on expertise in corporate networks, as well as doing research on consultancy communities, tax activists, networks in the economics profession, and the careers of board members in international organizations. The persistent theme is micro-macro interactions—looking at how professionals operate within their networks, including their careers and skills, while also investigating the structures that affirm rationalizations of how knowledge and resources are mobilized.

**What are the most recent developments in the field of professions and professionals? Is there any recently published work that you find particularly exciting?**

**Gorman:** An exciting recent development is the thriving body of work on professional organizations, exemplified by the founding and growth of the *Journal of Professions and Organization.*

**Seabrooke:** There is still a very rich literature on national professions, especially in health, law, and economics, where there is a lot of excellent ongoing work. To my mind, the most recent developments have been investigations into the relationship between national professions and more transnational activity. This includes the de-linking of professional jurisdictions from national settings by professional networks and powerful corporate actors, like Global Professional Service Firms and consulting firms. That’s an exciting area of study, especially because it is reconfiguring how professionals treat health, law, and economics, including how they influence policy. On recently published work, I am a fan of research that looks into how professions and professionals are tied into perpetuating broader structural political and economic asymmetries. This includes work on the “transnational sociology” of professions (James Faulconbridge, Marion Fourcade, Daniel Muzio), their core-periphery dynamics (Mehdi Boussebaa), on how policy is created in international organizations and standard-setters (Susan Block-Lieb and Terry Halliday, Sigrid Quack), and the reconfiguration of global-local boundaries in professions (Anders Blok, Valérie Boussard, Sida Liu). My colleagues in the Department of Organization at CBS continue to develop excellent work on the link between professions and policy and business elites.

**SASE as an organization promotes interdisciplinary research on socio-economics. Can you tell us why interdisciplinarity is needed to analyze contemporary professions and professionals?**

**Gorman:** A number of disciplines have valuable ideas and knowledge to offer concerning professions and professionals. For one thing, academic professionals study their own professions: legal scholars study the legal profession, accounting scholars study the accounting profession, and so on. For another, all of the social sciences (including organizations and business scholars) have important perspectives on professionals as workers, professional organizations, and/or professions as collective entities and
institutions. All of us can benefit from this wealth of knowledge. Unfortunately, researchers in different disciplines (or subfields of disciplines) still largely engage with their own communities. Venues such as SASE are essential for promoting the interdisciplinary communication of ideas.

Seabrooke: Interdisciplinarity is important because we need to test strong assumptions within respective disciplines to find new information, which can help us produce better theoretical insights. In *Thinking through Theory*, Jacob Levi Martin refers to the need to draw on different disciplines to avoid finding obvious answers, encouraged by a singular discipline, and to engage in orthological “theory-work.” I agree with him.

Can you tell us about the history of the network and your involvement with it? What are the network’s activities at this year’s conference? How do you envision the way forward for the network?

Gorman: I became involved with the network in the 2015-2016 academic year, when James, Sigrid, and Len invited me to join as co-organizer. So far, we have been primarily focused on growing the network, stimulating interest in professions and professionals, and helping people to recognize that many topics studied under other labels actually involve professions and professional work. We have been excited to see the number of submissions to the network growing steadily year after year.

This year, I am especially enthusiastic about the session I organized on “Knowledge, Boundaries, and Legitimacy in Health Care Professions,” featuring four terrific papers by Daniel Menchik, Liz Chiarello, Kellie Owens, and Tania Jenkins. Another exciting session examines the impact of professionals on global economic development. But all of the network’s sessions look fantastic!

In the future, although we will continue our focus on growth, I think we will begin to think about ways to establish more channels of communication and interaction among members.

Seabrooke: The Network D organizers are James Faulconbridge, Liz Gorman, Sigrid Quack, and me. We got together in 2012, noting that Network D on “Professions and Occupations” could be productively updated. From 2013 we rebranded Network D “Professions and Professionals in a Globalizing World” and have run a series of excellent regular panels and mini-conferences since. This year we have ten excellent panels with 42 papers from junior and senior scholars. It’s exciting. As to the future, my sense is that we simply continue what we have been doing.

This year’s conference theme is “Fathomless Futures: Algorithmic and Imagined”. How do your network’s objectives and activities relate to this theme?

Gorman: Professional work involves the integration and application of expert knowledge. This kind of complex knowledge work is clearly one of the important directions that work will take in the future, as more and more manual and routine work is replaced by “smart” machines and systems. (Another future direction is “care work” of various kinds, and the health care professions stand at the intersection of these two trends.) Our network seeks to elucidate how professional work and its organizational and institutional forms are evolving to meet this future.

Seabrooke: The obvious connection is in how professions and expertise relate to technology. The interface between professional work and technology has been amplified, including more algorithm-based work in finance and other fields, as well as automation in some areas, like accountancy and law. These processes are all part of global changes in the world economy. We should expect to see
professions and professionals to respond by reconfiguring what they consider to be their jurisdiction, as well as organizing to ensure that they have their share of the spoils.

**SASE Network Spotlight – Network I: Alternatives to Capitalism**

*Interview with Network I organizers Katherine Chen, Torsten Geelan, Lara Monticelli, and Joyce Rothschild, conducted by SASE Newsletter Editor-in-Chief Agatha Slupek.*

When did Network I begin? What were the motivations for it and what does it focus on that is not captured by other SASE Networks?

Network I: This new network arose from the renewed debate about the future of capitalism and the urgent need to prefigure and enact alternatives that can help tackle the multiple intertwined crises that societies currently face—high and rising inequality of income and power, eroding democracy and citizens’ rights, climate change, and a shrinking welfare state. Worldwide, citizens, organizations, and social movements are increasingly engaging in collective action that challenges conventional modes of organization, production, and consumption, and seeks to complement or supplant conventional capitalistic and bureaucratic practices.

Our international and interdisciplinary forum supports disseminating research on emergent and long-standing groups, organizations, and communities that offer alternative ways of living, working, and associating in the Global North and the Global South. We are especially interested in theoretical and empirical work that helps us understand these alternatives and their potential, the future limits of possibility, and the complex ways in which the State and the market interact with alternatives through mechanisms of repression, co-optation, or facilitation.

The genesis of the network began in 2016, when two of the co-founders Lara Monticelli and Torsten Geelan, together with their colleagues Professors Paolo R. Graziano and Francesca Forno, organized their first SASE mini-conference at Berkeley titled “Re-Embedding the Social: Cooperatives, Political Consumerism and Alternative Ways of Living.”

Following this successful event, Lara and Torsten organized another mini-conference on the same theme at Lyon in 2017. At this same SASE conference, Professors Joyce Rothschild and Katherine K. Chen co-organized their first mini-conference with 8 sessions, titled “Seeking a More Just and Egalitarian Economy through Cooperatives, Communes and Other Collectives.” Given the overlap of the two mini-conference streams, we (the four organizers) decided to combine efforts and form a new
research network that reflects shared interests and expertise in organizational research, critical theory, social movement studies, industrial relations, and the sociology of work.

At the 2015 SASE annual meeting in London, interest in the future of capitalism was first raised during a roundtable discussion with Wolfgang Streeck, Craig Calhoun, Polly Toynbee, and Amitai Etzioni (cf. Socio-Economic Review). This year’s “Fathomless Futures: Algorithmic and Imagined” SASE conference theme similarly asks, among other questions, whether any utopian political or economic alternatives offer a desirable and sustainable future. While other SASE research networks partly address this question (e.g., Communitarian Ideals and Civil Society, Institutional Experimentation in the Regulation of Work and Employment), Network I is distinctive in its focus on empirically and theoretically pushing forward the debate on the future of capitalism and its alternatives.

How has the Network changed since its inception? What new projects or political-economic dilemmas have contributed to this change in direction?

Network I: Since its inaugural meeting in Kyoto, Japan (2018), Network I has expanded considerably to reflect the interests of its members. In this year’s conference at the New School in NYC (2019), presenters will discuss theoretical perspectives and cutting edge, empirical research in three concurrent tracks: “Capitalism and Its Alternatives: Contemporary Debates,” “Democratic Workplaces, Cooperatives, and the Commons,” and “Transformative Innovations and Social Movements.”

In addition, we have organized SASE’s first ever documentary screening on Thursday, June 27th, titled Occupy, Resist, Produce – Scop Ti (2018, 34 min) of a worker-recovered factory, which will be followed by a conversation with one of its producers Dario Azzelini.

We have also organized two Author-Meets-Critics sessions on Friday, June 28th. In one session, the founder and editor of Jacobin Magazine, Bhaskar Sunkara, discusses his new book The Socialist Manifesto: The Case for Radical Politics in an Era of Extreme Inequality (Basic Books 2019). In the other session, Professor Nancy Fraser presents her new book Capitalism. A Conversation in Critical Theory (Polity Press 2018).

Reflecting our network’s commitment to connecting with local organizations and activists, special activities encourage engagement with the local community. At a preconference event on Wednesday, June 26th, guests can tour Fountain House, observe a meeting, and explore how this communities’ mental health program uses decision-making by consensus with staff and members. Following this, at the “Innovating Community Connections via the Arts and Economic Exchanges: Perspectives from NYC Practitioners” round table on Thursday, June 27th, Fountain House staff and members explain how their social enterprise programs, art gallery, and other programs promote recovery from mental illness. In addition, the founder of FIGMENT delves into how a free, annual participatory arts festival started in NYC and spread across North American cities.

Finally, on Friday, June 28th the “Worker Cooperatives and the Labor Movement: A Co-op Development Initiative in the Nation’s Largest Union Local” roundtable features speakers from 1199SEIU, the Open Society Foundation, and the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations and Worker Institute at Cornell ILR. This session discusses an important alternative for organized labor, exploring why the largest union local in the US is considering worker cooperatives as a strategy.

During our Saturday, June 29th closing session, our network synthesizes emergent themes from our 2019 sessions and raises
publishing, funding, and professional development opportunities and plans for 2020.

How does Network I envision its next year or two?

Network I: We anticipate continued growth in our membership and deepening connections among members—which currently includes both disciplinary specialists who span anthropology, sociology, political science, and other social sciences, as well as interdisciplinary scholars in organizations research, consumption, public policy, and urban planning. We look forward to continued discussion of the complex challenges confronting alternatives to capitalism. Please join us at NYC this year, at Amsterdam in 2020, and beyond!

Futures at the End of Life?
Professor Roi Livne on the “Dying Economy”

We are thrilled to share the Q&A we conducted with Roi Livne, an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan. Livne’s first book, Values at the End of Life: The Logic of Palliative Care, just came out from Harvard University Press and examines the end-of-life care industry. Below he discusses his book and his broader research agenda, the intersections between economic and medical sociology, the experience and specific challenges of publishing one’s first academic book, and the role that SASE has played in his career.

Interview conducted by SASE Newsletter Editor Alaz Kilicaslan.

Your book, Values at the End of Life: The Logic of Palliative Care, has just been published. Could you briefly tell us about the book and the research behind it?

Roi Livne: It is a book that uses an economic sociology framework to analyze medical care at the end of life, specifically decisions on when to stop life-prolonging treatment and let people die. The argument is that in the United States today there is an economy that governs these decisions, which I call “the new economy of dying.”

What is this economy?

Livne: End-of-life care has become a major challenge for developed countries. They have unprecedentedly large elderly populations that often die of relatively slow-progressing chronic diseases, such as Alzheimer’s, heart disease, complications from strokes, and slow-moving cancers. Doctors can somewhat postpone the deaths of many of these people—dialyze those whose kidneys don’t function, implant pacemakers in those with heart failure,
connect those who stop breathing to respirators, provide artificial nutrition to those who can’t eat, and offer experimental treatments to those who tried everything and failed. Because medicine can replace the function of so many organ systems in the body (the brain is one notable exception), in order to die people often have to make active decisions to stop or not initiate medical interventions. They need to actively draw lines and limits on medicine.

Interestingly, the challenge here is not just emotional and ethical, but also financial. Life-prolonging and life-sustaining care is very expensive, and with ever-growing elderly populations and vast capacities to prolong their lives, developed countries are spending record-high budgets on healthcare. The U.S. is an extreme example—healthcare spending consumes about 18 percent of its GDP, and around a quarter of Medicare’s budget goes to treating people in the last year of their life. Since financial resources and human existence are both finite, the challenge of end-of-life care is a moral-financial hybrid: when is it right to stop pursuing and funding life-prolongation and allow death to happen?

The new economy of dying developed as an aggregation of numerous, different, and not always organized attempts to respond to this question. As economic sociologists, we know that economies are much more than a collection of monetary and self-interested business behaviors. Material and monetary relations are always enmeshed in moral views, cultural stances, and political and social structures. Inspired by the recently flourishing literature on valuation, I suggest that we study economies as regimes of valuation—sets of patterned judgments of worth and value, which may be monetary, moral, and social at the same time. The new economy of dying is one such regime of valuation; it ascribes financial, cultural, and moral value to human life and to the medical care used to prolong it.

Empirically, the book draws on both historical and ethnographic data. Its first chapters document historically how the new economy of dying came into being. I studied several areas from which this economy emerged: the medical profession, health economics, the corporate health industry, policymaking, and cultural trends in the U.S. society at large. In all of these areas we can find patterns of valuation that pushed to “economize”—restrain, curb, contain or otherwise limit—medical interventions at the end of life. Within the medical profession, we see the rise of hospice and palliative care—a professional movement that promoted the view that near the end of life, less treatment is oftentimes better (about 45 percent of the deaths in the U.S. take place under hospice care today.) Health economists produced and spread estimates of the cost of life-prolonging care and put forth financial evaluations that this spending is excessive and should be controlled. Hospital and insurance company executives, as well as politicians, have embraced these evaluations and sought ways to limit both private and public spending on life-prolongation in severe illness. And perhaps most intriguingly, a very lively public discourse on death developed—books, memoirs, documentaries, radio shows, art installations, and various other cultural products that invoked a particular vision of what would count as a “good death”: most commonly, death at home, surrounded by family, with minimal medical interventions.

These clinicians, economists, corporations, politicians, and patients had different perspectives on the topic, yet they converged around the notion that near the end of life, less is better. The outcome is quite stunning, in my opinion: the U.S. has a thriving corporate industry whose raison d’être is putting limits on life-prolongation. About two-thirds of the hospices in the country are for-profit, and they treat record numbers of patients. An ever-growing number of palliative care clinicians—professionals who specialize in facilitating conversations about end-of-life care—are working in hospitals, where they speak to patients and clinicians about scaling back life-prolonging care and educate the next
generation of clinicians in medical schools. There are billions of dollars from both public and private sources invested in putting limits on life-prolonging care, and they are buttressed by moral sentiments and cultural views on what counts as a “good death.”

The second part of the book draws on ethnographic work I did in three California hospitals, where I shadowed palliative care clinicians and documented how the new economy of dying impacts decisions at the bedside. Quite contrary to the impression that media reports often leave, I found much resistance from families and patients to the new economy of dying and the efforts to limit life-prolongation. Many people wanted to keep trying to prolong life, while their doctors (and the hospital behind them) pushed them to accept death. Resistance was more common among socially marginalized populations—ethnic and racial minorities, immigrants, and working-class people with lower levels of formal education. My ethnography follows how the palliative care clinicians I studied conducted end-of-life conversations and brought patients (and their families) in alignment with the new economy of dying. This micro-analysis of social interactions in hospitals complements the book’s more macro historical narrative about the effort to govern life-prolongation and spending.

**What are the book’s major contributions to economic sociology?**

Livne: As a book that examines how moral values interact with financial valuation in a very contested area of human life, its most obvious contribution is to scholarship on markets and morality. One thing this literature has not paid enough attention to is social hierarchies and inequalities. The book shows that the effort to limit life-prolonging interventions does not apply similarly to all people, partly because the hospice movement has been overwhelmingly white and middle class, partly because criticisms of excessive medicine speak more to the experiences of privileged populations that enjoy access to healthcare, and partly because of inequalities within U.S. hospitals that manifest in how clinicians and patients interact. In this sense, the book can be read as a morals and markets account that is sensitive to social hierarchies, inequalities, and differences.

A second contribution, which I discuss in the book’s conclusion, is outlining a framework for an economic sociology study of limits. The question of end-of-life care is illustrative of a cardinal challenge, which is particularly relevant in the current historical moment: how to govern excess and enact limits on economic and scientific progress. The modernist orientation is still dominant today—people want societies and economies to progress and grow. Yet questions of how to restrain and govern progress keep coming up and many of them are at the center of the most burning issues the world is confronting. We can think, for example, of the contribution of industrial growth to global warming as a challenge of this type. Similarly, in an era when the next generation may have less wealth than the previous one, how to restrain behavior in the face of socially defined limits is a critical question. The book’s framework can inform analysis in these areas.

You ground your research in medical and economic sociology. How can these two subfields of sociology inform each other? More specifically, how do the tools and concepts of economic sociology help you study medical practices and settings?

Livne: First and most simply, healthcare is a major economic sector in all developed countries. More than 1 out of 6 dollars spent in the U.S. are spent on healthcare, making it an enormous and very consequential area that economic sociologists should study. The opposite is true too. In 2017, $3.5 trillion were spent in the U.S. on healthcare—any scholarship on medicine can gain a great deal of insight from economic sociologists who study how this money is channeled into healthcare, the various actors involved in
channeling it, and the ways they impact medical practice and the healthcare system more generally.

I also think there’s a bigger theoretical payoff here for economic sociologists. Taking the idea of embeddedness seriously should mean more than just employing sociological concepts to the study of capitalist markets. We should, rather, stress that virtually every realm of human activity has (or is) an economy, which can and should be analyzed with the tools of economic sociology. Health and medicine are one among many areas that lend themselves to economic sociological analysis; sub-disciplinary jurisdictional boundaries are there to be challenged and should not limit us when we choose our empirical cases.

Values at the End of Life is your first published book. Could you tell us what it was like to publish your first book? Do you have any advice for early career academics in that regard?

Livne: Writing this book was the most rewarding scholarly experience I’ve ever had. It gave me the freedom to lay out a multidimensional argument with many moving parts, which is something that even the longest journal article would not have allowed. Still, writing a book should not be an end in and of itself. Some projects are book-appropriate, others would probably fare much better as a series of shorter and more concise articles. If I had to choose one piece of wisdom in hindsight (out of many I’ve collected in this process), it would be this: decide as early as possible whether you’re writing a book, and if you do, organize your data, analysis, and writing accordingly from a very early stage.

Looking over your CV, it is hard not to notice the role SASE has played in your academic career. You published in Socio-Economic Review, won SASE Student Paper Award twice, and presented a paper and organized a mini-conference at different SASE meetings. How would you describe what SASE means for you and your research?

Livne: SASE is a true asset for economic sociologists. As a person who got his PhD and works in the U.S., SASE conferences have always been excellent opportunities to engage internationally and be exposed to debates and issues that preoccupy sociologists in other parts of the world. The association’s other advantage is its intellectual diversity—not just in terms of interdisciplinarity, but also the diversity of definitions of what qualifies as “socio-economics.” You see this diversity at conferences and in Socio-Economic Review—which has an excellent track record of publishing foundational articles that other venues failed to recognize.

What are you working on right now? What is your next big project?

Livne: There are several things, so I’ll briefly mention two of them. I’m currently writing a paper about the question of limits, which redefines the term “economization” to tackle the question I mentioned above—in how societies govern and enact limits on growth and progress.

Meanwhile, I’m starting a long-term project on hospital pricing in the U.S. Many people talk about the “cost crisis” in U.S. healthcare, while somewhat ignoring the fact that at stake is not the “cost” of care (an abstract and difficult thing to evaluate) as much as the prices that health providers charge. As many media reports recently acknowledge, U.S. hospital pricing is like an exercise in smoke and mirrors—the prices hospitals charge to different patients and insurers can vary by thousands of percent. Similarly, the eventual amount that insurers (or patients) pay hospitals is often dramatically different from the amount charged. I am studying hospitals’ pricing techniques, the interactions around hospital prices, and the social inequalities structured into these interactions.