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Effective contributions to the review of social economy and social economics – editorial

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Articles published in the Review of Social Economy (RoSE) are of high academic quality: clearly written and argued. They make a significant contribution to the advancement of social economics, and therefore to the larger economics and social science literatures in general. Here we outline what we consider to be some of the factors that furnish a successful contribution to social economics' knowledge. Our list is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive, merely indicative. Moreover, the list should not be seen as some sort of tick-box exercise. Submissions do not have to embrace all of the foregoing, but they should most definitely make an obvious contribution to social economics.

1. A Focus on Social Economics

RoSE's Aims & Scope have progressively focused on the interface of the economy and ethical concerns. In short, the journal challenges the view that the normative is separate from the positive domain. Instead, the economy and economic activities are considered to be embedded within the social sphere (Dolfsma, et al 2012). Whatever the nature of the publication in RoSE, each contribution should engage with the lively and rich discussion in social economics, and advance the study of social economics, more generally. Engaging with ongoing social economics dialogue and analyses, most prominently featured in RoSE¹, means that key social economic concepts and interests feature prominently. Therefore, submissions must reference previous work in the area within the corpus of social economics, specifically work published in RoSE. A contribution is always *relative* to what is already known in a field.

Submissions to RoSE may address and engage with a variety of topics relating to social values, ethics, social policy and economic life. As discussed in Dolfsma *et al.* (2012), the scope of applicable research includes the examination of moral and ethical principles and their impact on economic and social life, identity, and behavior²; social philosophy, social theory, and religious dialogues on what constitutes a moral economic system³; the relationship between social values, the economy, and varied forms of inequality, poverty, social injustice, and uneven development⁴; and the ways social interactions and norms impact business, policymaking and policy outcomes in a variety of spheres (health, education, finance, trade, immigration, taxation, etc.)⁵.

¹ For overviews of social economics, see O'Boyle (2005), Davis & Dolfsma (2015), and Dolfsma, Figart, McMaster, Mutari & White (2016). The publishers Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan support book series on social economics. The journal "Forum for Social Economics" also provides a platform for scholarly work on social economics.

² Examples include Coşgel and Minkler (2004); Starr (2004); George (2006); Davis (2009); Owen et al. (2010); Duroy (2011); Chang (2011); Auterio (2015); and Boulu-Reshef (2015).

³ Examples include Beed and Beed (2002), Austen and Leonard (2008), White (2009), Daoud (2011), Wight (2014), and Andriani (2014).

⁴ Examples include Wagle (2009), Clement and Meunie (2010), Charles (2011), and Carr (2013).

⁵ Examples include Branston et al. (2006), Defina and Thanawala (2001), Mijid and Bernasek (2013), Warnecke (2013), and Bruni et al. (2014).

The journal operates a multi-tiered process of review. Initially the journal's editors consider submissions, partly on the basis of their potential to make a contribution that is relevant to a wider social economics audience.

Each article must explicitly make a significant contribution to the social economics literature. The typical successful paper is focused on a gap in the literature, or enhances the existing literature in some way, such as analyzing existing social economics analysis in a new context. Authors are encouraged to be explicit in their work advances social economics.

2. Timeliness

This factor is common to many academic journals, and RoSE is no different. We welcome papers that attempt to analyze contemporary socio-economic issues and problems through the lens of social economics. We recognize that problems evolve and hence change. Nonetheless, some problems, such as poverty, seem chronic to the human condition.

Each paper published is at the cutting edge of the discussion on a specific theme within the journal's Aims & Scope. Nonetheless, part of the process of review is to be mindful of an article's potential to provide a platform for future work in an area. At the same time, RoSE's editors appreciate, perhaps to a greater degree than some editors of other journals in economics that insights generated in their journal's pages will not be the ultimate truth about a topic. As editors we greatly encourage discussion in the journal, beyond the Speakers' Corner feature. The Speakers' Corner may include discussions on economics and the economy more broadly. Other comments may be published that feature a more focused discussion.

3. Appropriate Method and Analysis

RoSE publishes articles where appropriate data, methods and analyses are employed. As editors we do not eschew or privilege any type of data, method or analysis; nor do we engage in, or encourage fetishism with regard to any of these. Combinations of types of data, method and analyses may be used, as long as they are relevant and justified according to the theoretical framework used. Empirical contributions, in particular, should set out in sufficient detail why a particular method has been adopted, the nature of the data, and should ensure that the techniques are sufficiently clear to enable a fellow social economics researcher to further develop and progress the field, and for a reader to get a good sense of the empirical contribution. If necessary material that will enhance this process can be published on a separate website maintained by the publisher: in order to achieve a high and increasing contribution—to-length ratio, we enforce a maximum number of words (7,500) for each paper.

There must be an obvious relation between the nature of the discussion in a paper, and the methods adopted. This relation must be explained with reference to existing literature and with a view to the contribution to be made. A paper that, for instance, presents a simulation model without explanation of its underlying structure, and with no justification of the robustness of variables, is not acceptable for publication.

The journal also encourages theoretical contributions. Similar considerations apply to theoretical works: it must be clear why some insights and arguments are considered to be valid, rather than

others. Steps in the argument need to be clearly expressed in order for readers and future researchers to apprehend and appreciate the contribution to social economics.

4. Interdisciplinary Research

Given the journal's interface between ethics and economics, and its focus on real-world problems and issues, there is a willingness to draw from other subject areas and disciplines as a means of analyzing such issues. Moreover, given the complexities of real-world phenomena, and the inadequacy of any single technique in apprehending this complexity, the Review strongly encourages interdisciplinary contributions. Indeed, social economics, more generally, is open to interdisciplinary discourse (Dolfsma & Kesting 2013).

The process of review operated by the journal is designed to: progress social economics, and encourage authors to sufficiently focus their work on the journal's Aims & Scope. Accordingly, the initial process of review, conducted by the editors, establishes a paper's 'goodness-of-fit' with the Aims & Scope as well as its academic quality. If the editors judge that a submission is not yet appropriate for further processes of review, but offers potential as a contribution to the social economics literature, they will provide advice and guidance on how a paper may be developed appropriately. Some papers can go through several rounds of such 'coaching'.

While some authors might be unfamiliar with this procedure, RoSE editors believe that it offers significant advantages. At the very least, authors will receive quick feedback on their paper, rather than find out that their paper has wound up at the bottom of reviewers' 'to-do' piles. RoSE expert referees review submissions with particular expectations about the nature of the content, and its orientation to the aims and scope of the journal. If a paper does not seem to meet those expectations, the review process is likely to either result in a rejection or in a protracted period of revision and resubmission. Coaching authors of papers in their first round(s) of submission will thus lead to better review reports that are more relevant. Attention should be paid to address systematically each of the referees' comments. In effect, a significant proportion of papers rejected in the second round have not addressed the referees concerns adequately. Justifying the rejected and accepted changes in a cover letter is an example of good practice. Finally, despite some inevitable exceptions, RoSE has a review process that is enviably short.

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