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Editorial

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 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 a checklist that one must complete. Submissions do not have to embrace all of the foregoing, but they should most definitively seek to make a distinctive contribution to social economics.

1. A FOCUS ON SOCIAL ECONOMICS

RoSE’s Aims and Scope have progressively focused on the interface of the economy and ethical concerns. The journal challenges the view that the normative domain is distinct 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. Therefore, submissions must reference

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the previous work within the corpus of social economics, specifically the work published in RoSE. A contribution is always relative to what is already known in a field.\textsuperscript{1}

Submissions to RoSE may 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 behavior\textsuperscript{2}; social philosophy, social theory, and religious dialogues to what constitutes a moral economic system\textsuperscript{3}; the relationship among social values, the economy, and varied forms of inequality, poverty, social injustice, and uneven development\textsuperscript{4}; and the ways social interactions and norms affect business, policymaking, and policy outcomes in a variety of spheres (health, education, finance, trade, immigration, taxation, etc.).\textsuperscript{5}

2. TIMELINESS

This factor is common to many academic journals, and RoSE is no different. We encourage papers that analyze contemporary socio-economic issues and problems through the lens of social economics, or contemporary debates within the social economics literature. We recognize that problems evolve; nonetheless, some problems, such as poverty, seem chronic to the human condition. This is not to say that we do not value papers that focus on historical phenomena, but rather that historical issues should be viewed through their relevance to contemporary society.

Each paper published is at the cutting edge of the discussion on a specific theme within the journal’s Aims and 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’

\footnotesize{1 For overviews of social economics, see O’Boyle (2005), Davis and Dolfsma (2015), and Dolfsma et al. (2016). The publishers Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan support book series on social economics. Other possible journal outlets for scholarly work in social economics include The Forum for Social Economics and the International Journal for Social Economics.


5 Examples include Branston et al. (2006), Defina and Thanawala (2001), Mijid and Bernasek (2013), Warnecke (2013), and Bruni et al. (2014).}
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 both theoretical and empirical work. The expectations for what theoretical and/or empirical contributions must accomplish are similar: RoSE publishes articles where the analytical method is appropriate to the question asked in the paper. This includes, but is not limited to, a theoretical framework that is both relevant to the question and reflects the insights of social economics more broadly, utilizes relevant data if applicable, and employs analyses that are cognizant of both the advantages and disadvantages of the analytical approach adopted. As editors, we do not eschew or privilege any method of analysis nor type of data; nor do we engage in, or encourage, fetishism with regard to any of these. Combinations of types of data, methods, and analyses may be used in any article, as long as they are relevant and justified according to the research question(s) and the theoretical framework used, and are executed correctly. Similarly, researchers may draw upon theoretical frameworks from across the economics discipline, again, as long as they reflect or shed light on the basic insights of social economics. Both theoretical and empirical contributions, in particular, should set out in sufficient detail why a particular method has been adopted, 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 contribution. Empirical papers must, additionally, provide a clear description of the data used in the paper, and its applicability to the research question. 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 the 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 or results, is not acceptable for publication. This is equally true for purely theoretical and empirical contributions. All analyses have a set of assumptions that must hold in order for the analysis to be insightful; we encourage authors to be explicit about these assumptions and include a discussion about the robustness of their results to alternative assumptions.
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 for comprehending this complexity, the Review strongly encourages interdisciplinary contributions. Indeed, social economics, more generally, is open to interdisciplinary discourse (Dolfsma and Kesting 2013).

5. **RESEARCH ETHICS**

Submission of a manuscript to the journal implies that the author(s) has received the appropriate ethical approval from the requisite ethical committee in circumstances where primary data collection has occurred as part of the empirical research. For the purposes of the Review: Primary data collection includes the interviewing, or questioning, whether face-to-face or remotely across some other interface, such as a telephone or computer, of individual or group participants. Participation should have been on a voluntary basis and anonymity ensured, if relevant. Secondary data refer to already published data within the public realm.

Submission also infers that an article’s authors have no conflict of interests, either financial or otherwise.

6. **THE REVIEW PROCESS**

The process of review operated by the journal is designed to progress social economics and encourage authors to sufficiently focus their work on the Review’s Aims and Scope. The journal operates a multi-tiered review process. 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, and partly on an initial judgment about whether the submission achieves its stated goals. Accordingly, the initial process of review, conducted by the editors, establishes a paper’s “goodness-of-fit” with the Aims and 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 aspect of RoSE’s review process, editors believe that it offers significant advantages. RoSE’s 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 result either in a rejection or in a protracted period of revision and resubmission. 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 research practice.

As a result of the review process that we adopt, authors will at the very least receive quick feedback on their paper, rather than find out that their paper has wound up at the bottom of reviewers’ “to-do” piles. Coaching authors of papers in their first round(s) of submission will also lead to better review reports that are more relevant. Finally, despite some inevitable exceptions, RoSE thus has a review process that is enviably short.

7. CONCLUSION

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 should be explicit in exactly how their work advances social economics, rather than merely applying it in yet another context.

REFERENCES


