

Announcing a CALL FOR PAPERS for the WINIR-WSES Workshop on

The Future of Economic Sociology

University of Wisconsin-Madison (hybrid)

18-19 April 2025

Submissions should include a paper title and abstract, sent no later than January 15, 2025. If applicants would like to request a small amount of travel assistance, they can indicate this in their submission (allocation will be need-based, priority will be given to graduate students and junior faculty). Organizers plan to release a finalized program by late January 2025.

Submissions and any other questions can be sent to Gabriel Kahan (gkahan2@wisc.edu) and James Rosenberg (rosenberg24@wisc.edu).



For the last 40 years, politicians, academics, and pundits have championed the inevitability of liberal democracy. Unfettered markets, untrammled globalization, and *doux commerce*, it was said, would unleash collective prosperity and peace. During this time the New Economic Sociology blossomed.

At its best, this intellectual project was premised on the moral and communal contours of economic life, with research centered on questions of embeddedness, relational work, and performativity. But in recent years, the limits of these perspectives have become apparent. Many now rehearse the same tired stories of social capital or accumulate still more evidence of our “financialized” lives. An ungenerous critic might allege the field has functioned as the reluctant left wing of market fundamentalism or yet another cultural turn devoid of material politics.

As previous agendas grow stale, the field is increasingly rudderless. Economic sociology today lacks a well-defined object of study. There is no consensus as to what questions, if any, it seeks to answer. Worse yet, it is politically impotent — effectively divorced from policymaking and lacking any real capacity to transform the world. This does not bode well if the world in question happens to be on fire.

Yet there may be reason for cautious optimism. As global leaders sound the death knell of neoliberalism, so too have scholars begun re-engaging the macrosociological. In response to decades of tax evasion and capital flight, they are exploring central banking and democratic

finance.¹ In response to the climate crisis, they are grappling with questions of state power and green planning.² And in response to technological transformations, they are interrogating platform capitalism and digital currency.³

What is now urgently needed is an agenda capable of weaving together these threads. The WINIR-WSES Workshop on The Future of Economic Sociology seeks to contribute to this goal by drawing together a variety of presentations under a new theoretical framework. Our contention is that economic sociology's perennial topics — markets, money, law, firms, states, and the like — must be conceptualized not as sites of cultural exchange but as a matrix of institutions and protocols. Drawing on the best of economic sociology, political economy, and institutionalisms old and new, we are interested in mapping the “rules of the game.” Because it is only by attending closely to these rules that we might begin to ponder how to change them.

We are specifically seeking presentations on...

- Economic sociology as a tool for world-building, détournement, blueprints, real utopias; possible topics include:
 - Economic planning and development
 - Industrial policy and “post-neoliberalism”
 - Labor and democratic politics
 - Cultures of post-growth and post-work

- Economic sociology as a tool for power-mapping, class analysis, reconnaissance; possible topics include:
 - Fossil capital and the climate crisis
 - Platform governance and citizenship
 - Global finance and national sovereignty
 - Elite networks and regulatory capture

¹ Leon Wansleben, 2023, *The Rise of Central Banks: State Power in Financial Capitalism*, Harvard University Press; Ulrike Lepont & Matthias Thiemann, “The European Investor State: Its characteristics, genesis, and effects,” *Competition & Change* 28(3-4), 381-396; Fred Block & Robert Hockett (eds), 2022, *Democratizing Finance: Restructuring Credit to Transform Society*, Verso; Michael A. McCarthy, 2025, *The Master's Tools: How Finance Wrecked Democracy and How to Rebuild it*, Verso.

² Wolfgang Streeck, 2024, *Taking Back Control?: States and State Systems After Globalism*, Verso; Christopher M. Rea & Scott Frickel, 2023, “The Environmental State: Nature and the Politics of Environmental Protection,” *Sociological Theory*, 41(3): 255-281; Daniel Aldana Cohen, 2024, “The Case for Red-Sky Social Science: Or, Four Theses for Climate Sociology,” *Critical Sociology Mini-Conference*, Montréal, Quebec.

³ K. Sabeel Rahman & Kathleen Thelen, 2019, “The Rise of the Platform Business Model and the Transformation of Twenty-First-Century Capitalism,” *Politics & Society*, 47(2): 177-204; Ya-Wen Lei, 2021, “Delivering Solidarity: Platform Architecture and Collective Contention in China's Platform Economy,” *American Sociological Review* 86(2): 279-309; Koray Caliskan, 2023, *Data Money: Inside Cryptocurrencies, Their Communities, Markets, and Blockchains*, Columbia University Press.