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Note from the editor

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Note from the editor

Dear reader,

As the new editor it is a great pleasure to present you with this issue. I would like to thank my predecessor, Andrea Mennicken, for the magnificent job that she and her team have done, as well as for her very helpful advice and support during the editorial transition. I will try to follow her good example by directing the attention of economic sociologists to new fields of interest, and by providing a lively platform for debate. I would also like to thank the Editorial Board for their confidence in my appointment.

This issue of the *Newsletter* is mainly concerned with the commodification of the body. This is not an entirely new topic. Some years ago, Nancy Scheper Hugues and Loïc Wacquant edited a special issue of *Body and Society* (*Commodifying Bodies*, 2001, vol.7, nos. 2-3) dedicated to this topic. More recently, Kieran Healy (*Last Best Gift. Altruism and the Market for Human Blood and Organs*. Chicago University Press, 2006) has published a study of the situation in the US and in Europe, focusing on the tension between the rhetoric of gift-giving and the organizational settings in which human body parts move from one person to another.

Many aspects of the commodification of the body lie in the future. In this issue, the reader will find two papers endorsing completely different positions on the sensitive issue of the market for human body parts. Mark Cherry claims a moral imperative for the market, whereas Nancy Sheper Hugues presents evidence of morally outrageous forms of exchange from her international fieldwork. The reader should however bear in mind that this issue is no longer limited to the academic world, or at least the academic world of social scientists, since it is now the subject of discussion, pro and contra, among transplant surgeons who are directly involved with the issue. The commodifica-

tion of the body is also raised with respect to the difficult problem that organizations face where the production and the distribution of blood is involved. In some respects there is an important role here for the economic sociologist, as is demonstrated by Sophie Chauveau in a history of the French blood system. Here tariffs play a critical part within the rhetoric of gift giving when the management of a complex system of blood collection, production and distribution is at stake. Nevertheless, this issue does not capture the whole of the story. Lea Karpel explains how the gift-giving process functions in the case of infertile couples and how the gift of oocytes is organized in France, focusing on the social relations between donors, parents and child. Finally, Michel Anteby considers the case of a "market" for cadavers in the US. Here we are no longer in the domain of organ transplant or blood transfusion, but enter the domain of the professional training of surgeons, a process for which human remains are absolutely necessary and which entails forms of exchanges that repay study.

Further to the excellent issue on the financial crisis (March 2009), we seek to go deeper into this question with two new contributions. Horacio Ortiz investigates the imaginary figures of investment management, focusing on the practical role played by the figure of the "investor" routinely acting within "efficient markets" and following organizational rules. Secondly, there is an interview with Neil Fligstein, one of world's most prominent economic sociologists. He gives a critical view of sociologists' shortcomings in foreseeing the crisis, and scrutinizes the situation in the light of his model of market architecture, underlining the crucial role of the state.

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