

# Expressing thanks, taking stock, moving on

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## Expressing thanks

The December 2022 issue of *ELRR* will be the final published by SAGE, although SAGE will continue to publish Volumes 1–33. From 2023, the publisher will be Cambridge University Press, who will also publish the backfile. The journal's proprietor will continue to be the University of New South Wales. Financial and administrative support will be provided by the School of Business, UNSW Canberra and the journal office will remain in the UNSW Business School, Sydney. We are delighted to announce that Associate Professor Diana Kelly will be Editor in Chief from March 2023. Di has a distinguished record of research in the history of employment and industrial relations, particularly with reference to the steel industry. Her interest and expertise extend to the history of business and management thought, workplace health and safety, workplace bullying, higher education governance, women in history and aspects of early 20th century US history. Her service has been long recognised in her 1999 award of life membership by the Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand.

As Editor in Chief from 2007 to 2022, I begin by thanking the staff at SAGE Publishing, for their enthusiasm and generosity with time, as they supported our journey into the international publishing arena. In a motion carried unanimously on 14 July 2022, the *ELRR* Editorial Board expressed ‘. . . appreciation to the SAGE staff in London and New Delhi, for their unfailingly professional, warm and constructive support between 2013 and 2022. We note that we leave under radically different conditions as a journal from when we joined them’. This brief editorial outlines some of the changes to which the Board was referring.

*The Economic and Labour Relations Review* began life in 1990, as a niche Australian journal, self-published within UNSW Sydney by the then Centre for Applied Economic Research and the Industrial Relations Research Centre (the latter is now the Industrial Relations Research Group of the School of Business, UNSW Canberra).

The purpose of *ELRR*'s founders, John Nevile and David Plowman, was to provide a platform for informed debate on matters affecting the economic, social and industrial wellbeing of working people, paid and unpaid. Under the founders' guidance, during its first decade, *ELRR* encouraged articles based in theory but reaching out beyond the academy through plain-English writing. Although the journal's orientation from the outset has been towards heterodox macroeconomics and the pursuit of social justice, it has always accepted articles reflecting a wide range of perspectives. In the 1990s, the journal featured debates over wage policy, youth employment, taxation systems, privatisation, environmental issues and major labour relations conflicts such as the Australian

waterfront dispute. Increasingly, the journal explored issues of gender, disability, work and life, flexibility and precarity. It examined Nordic social models, Asian country industrial relations systems and manufacturing industry policy.

Between 2000 and 2012, with the late Joe Isaac as patron, and under the editorial stewardship of Peter Kriesler, Michael Quinlan, Phil Bohle and finally myself, *ELRR* carried responses to the key policy debates of the time. It published articles and collections on globalisation, international trade and monetary and fiscal policy, including austerity and taxation reform. Economist and renowned capital theorist the late GC Harcourt, and social policy scholars such as Michael Johnson and Peter Saunders, ensured that social exclusion was an ongoing theme, with studies of poverty and inequality. PN (Raja) Junankar other labour economists ensured a focus on Indigenous and youth labour market access, gendered time use and retirement incomes, housing policy and the economic, health and social costs of unemployment. Michael Quinlan oversaw articles on job quality, labour standards enforcement, workplace health and safety, union recognition and collective bargaining rights. Peter Sheldon in 2006 and Alison Barnes in 2009 organised debates over the labour rights impacts of changes to Australian industrial relations legislation; and Michael O'Donnell organised a symposium on new public management. As the journal internationalised, it increasingly included studies of Asian country unionism, informal labour markets, gender and migration. There were comprehensive debates over the causes and management of the 2008–09 global financial crisis and its aftermath, and over approaches to decarbonisation.

*ELRR*'s growth up to 2012 was managed in-house from a small office at UNSW Sydney, with Jason Antony undertaking copy-editing and layout and overseeing typesetting, hard copy publication and distribution. By 2012, with the help of Margaret Wallace, the journal had gained an on-line submission platform, and had applied for impact ranking.

Between 2013 and 2022, contracts between SAGE Publishing and the UNSW Sydney Business School, and generous funding support from the latter, have allowed *ELRR* to build a growing Australian and international profile. We recognise the unfailingly professional and cordial support of a succession of SAGE staff working on production, marketing and distribution over the past 10 years. Most recently, Sophie Donnelly, Senior Publishing Editor, has provided warm encouragement, good advice, and resourceful problem-solving. Brittney Stewart has offered patient support in improving the submission interface. Zahra Ahmed and Emma Yuan have supported the website and social media outreach. In the Delhi office, Ekta Aggarwal and Ahalya Karan, Production Editors, have been an infinitely patient and resourceful anchor for us during the past three difficult COVID-19 years.

Our Editorial and Advisory Boards have expanded since 2013. The wise heads and balanced judgement of our Board members have provided guidance on new research directions, coordinated reviews from around the world, and undertaken rigorous methodological screening. I owe much to co-Editors-in-Chief at various stages – Janis Wardrop, the late Anne Holmes and Al Rainnie. The journal has a creative and hard-working media and social media outreach team in Michael Lynch, Elizabeth Humphrys and Michael Johnson, and it is to Peter Sheldon and Diana Kelly that we owe the annual Nevile-Plowman best article award. Tanya Carney provides administrative/policy coordination and final quality oversight of textual content and social statistics of accepted

articles. Jason Antony continues to provide invaluable ongoing technical, stylistic, organisational and coordinating support.

## Taking stock

During our decade with SAGE, a growing inflow of manuscript submissions from around the globe has helped *ELRR* address pressing problems of our time. Articles and debates on aspects of the overarching climate crisis included studies in 2014 of green transition skills, a debate over the possibility of simultaneously pursuing the goals of development, globally equitable resource distribution and sustainability, and a September 2021 collection exploring various configurations of a Green New Deal. Financialisation was an ongoing theme. We took stock of the 10-year aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (December 2018 issue), the 30-year contours of Central and Eastern European post-communist capitalism (June 2020), and the adverse effects of fiscal consolidation, austerity and reduced public sector agency (see e.g. the March 2016 and March 2022 issues). In June 2020, we provided a blueprint for pandemic recovery and in September that year a wider perspective on five major types of catastrophic risk, going forward, that will require organised response on a social scale so far lacking.

Decent work has been a major *ELRR* theme since 2017. A September 2017 themed collection included a new typology for measuring the wellbeing impacts of precarity and analyses of approaches to regulating work in the gig economy. In 2019, *ELRR* provided studies of declining job security in India's already-small formal or regulated employment sector, and assessments from China and Singapore of prospects for regulatory improvements to low-paid work. Wage theft was examined in Australia (2020) and in the United States, the latter study winning the 2021 Nevile-Plowman best article award. During the pandemic, crowdsourced platform work was discussed in terms of inequality and justice expectations (2020), and location-based platform work was discussed in terms of the illusory freedom expectations delivery gig workers (2021).

Safety, the second main dimension of decent work, was a major thread, analysed from a range of economic and psychosocial perspectives, ranging from state interventions to regulate the hazard of workplace bullying (2019) to a discussion of economic impacts on families of workplace fatalities (2022), and a series of US studies in 2018 and 2019 providing evidence of the economic rationale for breaking the links between piece rate pay and road transport accidents. A series of articles in 2021 and 2022 analysed the hazards and poor protection regimes faced by seafarers, and ways of securing employer and shipping company compliance with labour and safety standards along value chains. In 2022, heat stress through climate change was identified as a growing work hazard.

Labour market fragmentation and polarisation of incomes and conditions were documented, for example in studies of the extensive use in Europe of 'envelope wages' (under-reported formal wages topped up by untaxed cash-in-hand payments) – a practice eroding both collective bargaining and the taxation basis of the welfare state. Labour standards were shown to be eroding through the spread of franchising and temporary agency work in Australia. A March 2021 article showed how in European car manufacture, segments of the labour supply chain, working under different conditions, may be located in the one plant. Growing regional disparities of income and job quality were linked to cycles of internal migration in India and to long commutes in China to zones

where workers lack residence-based health and social service rights. A 2020 study in Czechia analysed the export to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) of the Chinese FoxConn model, whereby temporary workers are brought in, housed in dormitories and subject to tight controls in work groups segmented by ethnicity. Westward patterns of CEE and Baltic labour migration in Europe, together with emerging forms of solidarity, were analysed in 2020. Studies in 2018 and 2020 demonstrated that Australia was displaying characteristics of a ‘guestworker state’ through increasing reliance on the employment of migrant workers on temporary visas, vulnerability to exploitation (the latter article won the 2020 Nevile-Plowman prize).

At the macroeconomic and social policy level, contributions to the journal addressed growing poverty, inequality and marginalisation, both within countries and on a global scale. Poverty and inequality measurement, both national and international, was discussed in a 2018 collection in honour of Tony Atkinson. Subsequent analyses included minimum healthy living standards (2022) and a carefully-modelled feasibility study of an affluence-tested Basic Income model (2020). Articles from 2014 to 2019 mapped age, gender, disability and racialised bases of poverty and inequality, including long-term scarring effects of insecure work on young people, including Indigenous young people in regional areas.

Gender-focused studies documented intra-household power imbalances resulting from gender wage inequality (2021), and role of variable rosters in generating household insecurity for women (2019). Australia’s slow progress towards paid domestic violence leave was discussed in 2021. In studies of academia, work standardisation, intensification and precaritisation were analysed, whilst ideal worker norms were shown to exclude disabled workers and older academics (2021, 2022). The capability potential of home-based work was both explored and questioned (2018, 2022). In 2021 and 2022, the pandemic raised questions of the lasting benefits and drawbacks of the working from home option as a source of flexibility as well as of gender inequality.

*ELRR* contributions explored macro-level approaches to reducing economic and social inequality, with a 2018 European study demonstrating that welfare state expansion may generate real national income increases and a 2019 South African study providing a historical and theoretical justification for the role of carefully coordinated ‘new deal’ style macroeconomic policy. Studies from China and Canada (2020), Europe and Australia (2021) indicated the compatibility of a strong minimum wage regime with stability or growth in employment and living standards. A 2019 study of New Zealand’s first Wellbeing budget identified areas for further development: family and intergenerational wellbeing, the role of cultural capital and Indigenous worldviews and the role of market enterprise in expanding capabilities. A 2019 study argued that the Australian neoliberal consensus was breaking down under a surge in public anger over inequality, declining job quality, wage stagnation and skill underutilisation.

The future of work, and the concept of a Fourth Industrial Revolution (i4.0) based on new digital, data management, biotechnical, engineering and communication technologies, were canvassed in a 2020 themed collection canvassing debates over the likely scale and socio-economic impacts of labour displacing automation, versus new skill demand generated by labour-augmenting technology. 2021 saw a comprehensive critique of quasi-determinist aspects of the i4.0 literature, particularly the view that technology such as 3D printing offers the prospect of significant ‘re-shoring’ or the creation of new regional

manufacturing clusters. 2021–2022 journal issues also saw studies asserting the importance for India and Australia of manufacturing as the most innovation-intensive sector, with the greatest spillover effects, and a counter-argument that the economic role of servicisation should not be overlooked.

## Moving forward

As well as critiques of current problems, *ELRR* has featured important articles pointing a way forward. For example, the 2021 Green New Deal collection featured a proposal for addressing air pollution in New Delhi, and a comprehensive approach to climate justice in Australia, based on a coordinated approach to fiscal stimulus, ‘just transition’, socio-economic equality and political empowerment. Early in the pandemic, *ELRR* published a multi-authored article calling for conversation over a new pathway out of crisis, with an overarching aim of ‘leaving no one behind’, as set out in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Hopefully, moving forward, *ELRR* will contribute to this conversation, by continuing to publish articles on the priorities identified in that article:

- Accelerated action for environment and habitat protection, sustainable and affordable clean energy and reversal of global heating
- National reconciliation: urgent implementation of a meaningful voice to Indigenous people
- More effective measures addressing global inequality
- The refashioning of global trade, the promotion of local manufacturing of essential goods, the effective regulation of supply chains and global corporations
- Promotion of community-voice
- Enhanced universal public healthcare and strong comprehensive primary health care
- Education infrastructure and skills formation as a public good and international obligation
- Finance, capital account management and corporate governance: prevention of stock market volatility unrelated to the real economy
- Taxation: stronger measures to stem base erosion and profit shifting by multinational corporations; increase progressivity to address rising inequality
- Promotion of public ownership of key instrumentalities; regulation of privatisation: stronger measures to prevent collusion and anti-competitive behaviour
- Social protection: universality for readiness in time of crisis and to reduce inequality; expansion of social housing
- Protection of workers’ welfare, through industrial relations and labour market reform: reduction of job insecurity, improvement of labour standards and creation of decent productive jobs that ensure the equitable inclusion of young people, women, migrant and First Nations people in meaningful and productive work.

This stocktake of recent contributions identifies certain gaps in coverage. In particular it will be timely to ensure a greater voice for First Nations scholars.

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