

Editorial introduction

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This issue of the journal not only marks the 24th year of publication but also the first issue to be published by SAGE. We are delighted by our association with SAGE and hope it will assist in bringing the journal to a wider audience.

This seems an appropriate point to say something about the journal's origins and ongoing objectives. When it was established in 1990, the aim of the journal was to bring economics and labour relations together in a single journal as part of an explicitly dual disciplinary approach to important social issues. While there is often overlap, articles published in the journal can be predominantly based in the field of economics and not make reference to labour relations, or alternatively, those based in labour relations do not need to incorporate an economics perspective. Contextual questions are deemed relevant, and recent special issues on environmental sustainability and sports have antecedents in the 1990s.

Under successive editorial teams (and here we acknowledge the pioneering contribution of John Nevile and David Plowman), our objective was and remains to publish theoretically informed empirical research that addressed important policy issues in the fields of economics and labour relations. In particular, the journal has been concerned to identify and critically assess the social impacts of particular economic and labour relations programmes and policies. The approach adopted has been broad, including not only income/wealth effects, wages and working conditions but also education/skills, pensions/superannuation and social security, poverty/deprivation, health, housing, migration and inequality/discrimination. The journal has published, and will continue to publish, research on the effects of changes to taxation, pension/superannuation and welfare regimes, significant changes to the labour market (such as the growth of precarious work and informal work arrangements) and institutions and laws (and their enforcement). *The Economic and Labour Relations Review (ELRR)* has a strong underlying theme of social justice, and we make no apologies for this.

One important change that has occurred with regard to the journal over the past decade is an increasingly global focus. While research is often country specific, it is difficult to confine critical economic and labour relations policy debates to a particular country or even region. Notwithstanding nuances specific to particular countries or even significant differences among particular groupings of countries (itself instructive when put into comparative perspective), there are striking parallels in policy debates across many countries, whether in collective industrial relations laws and minimum labour standards, pensions in the context of an ageing population, the shift to less progressive taxation regimes, work/life balance, training systems or a host of other issues. Explicit policy borrowing or the citing of research evidence from other countries is now more common in a

wide range of areas (from health and safety legislation through to privatisation to university funding models). Changes in business practices such as global supply chains also demonstrate the importance of encouraging research contributions from a wide array of countries. For all these reasons, the journal is committed to facilitating international research.

The world is currently experiencing its severest economic crisis since the Great Depression. As in the Great Depression, this crisis is leading to questioning of key policy settings as well as a polarisation of policy debate over their theoretical underpinnings. Disciplines themselves, like economics, are riven by debate as to the adequacy of particular frameworks. The competitive market underpinnings of neoliberalism that have largely dominated economic and social policy since the mid 1970s have been the subject of sustained critique within the field of economics itself and disciplines such as industrial relations, public health and public sector management. When the journal was established, the melding of economics and labour relations into a single journal was facilitated by a shared view among the editorial team. This view was bluntly sceptical of neoliberalism and drew its inspiration more from a view of a managed market economy consistent with neo-Keynesianism (or what is now labelled heterodox economics). The journal saw itself as a vehicle for critically assessing the implications of dominant policy orthodoxies as well as alternative models, thereby facilitating a more informed debate about social policy. We see no reason to change this focus. Indeed, in our view, such a focus is even more relevant in the current context.

We invite submissions providing a critical appraisal of a wide range of subjects that have a link to the economy, labour markets and society, as well as theoretical papers. Proposals for special issues will also be welcomed.

Executive Editors