

EDITORIAL

## On the shoulders of giants

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On the shoulders of giants – that’s how it feels to be the incoming Editor-in-Chief (EIC) of *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* (ELRR). My acquaintance with the journal goes back a long way, to the first issues in 1990. Even then, I marvelled at the courage of foundation editors, John Nevile (still patron of ELRR) and David Plowman (1941–2013), in considering a multidisciplinary journal. Both David and John were great scholars and effective organisers. They believed there was room for excellent research in heterodox economics and labour studies. But many others doubted the journal’s long-term capacity to survive in those early days. After all, everyone knew that multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity were ‘good things’, but surely things to be admired rather than practised. Most social scientists thought uni-disciplinarity was much safer. What is more, from the first the ELRR was a journal with a practical streak. Not only it was always going to be a journal where rigorous scholarship was an unquestioned given but also it was asserted, scholarship should inform policy, practice and imperatives, rather than develop the theory for theory’s sake. And there was a third important attribute of the ELRR. From the first, it dealt with research outside the mainstream priorities of the day. Fields of study such as heterodox economics and labour relations, scholars assuming ideals of human rights, equity, and social justice have been abiding foundations of ELRR, even from those early days when positivism was a virtue and neoliberal values were burgeoning.

Later, along with giants like Nevile and Plowman, the journal worked through an editorial collective for well over a decade. Researchers like Michael Quinlan, Raja Junankar, Peter Kriesler, and Peter Sheldon continued to insist on those core attributes of the journal – multidisciplinary, a policy, practical inclination, avoiding positivist assumptions, and an idealism founded in social justice and fairness. And the support for the journal continued to grow. As Anne Junor’s final editorial in November 2022 demonstrates, these wonderful longstanding colleagues were supported by many other academics as co-editors or deputy editors (Junor, 2022). So here we are in 2023, knocking on the door of Q1 status, with a fair chance of being invited into the top quartile of academic journals, despite (or perhaps because of) those same attributes developed by Nevile and Plowman thirty-three years ago.

In large part, the journal’s effectiveness in upholding its ideals in the ever-demanding 21st century has been due to three other important factors. These are collegial editorial and advisory boards, strong production teams on campus and with the publishers, and, especially, my immediate predecessor, Professor Anne Junor. Anne has insisted on scholarly rigour, idealism, and multidisciplinary. Her commitment to the journal has been

outstanding and unflinching, but always with kindness and respect. And all the while, Anne has also been modelling best practice scholarship herself, researching equity and low-wage industries for numerous government and community inquiries. Anne's selflessness and her commitment to research and fairness are without peer. We at the journal owe her an immense debt, because these continuing attributes of our increasingly prestigious journal are her legacy, a legacy I intend to nurture and nourish. In so doing I will, as Anne has done, continue to rely on our hardworking coordinators, Jason Antony and Tanya Carney, both of whom are essential in administering the journal, copy-editing, designing, clarifying, organising . . . . As I have already noted, the journal has a collegial and effective editorial board and a wonderful prestigious International Advisory Board – I will seek to work with all these scholars and indeed, make best use of them.

This is the first issue of *ELRR* to be published with Cambridge University Press (CUP). A large part of the issue is the Themed Collection of articles reflecting on the scholarship and contribution of economist, the late Geoff Harcourt who also served on the *ELRR* Editorial Board for many years and was unstinting in his support for the journal. The Harcourt Themed Collection in this issue of the journal has its own introduction by one of Harcourt's colleagues and co-authors, heterodox economist and foundation *ELRR* scholar, Peter Kriesler.

The other seven articles in this issue cover Vietnam, USA, South Africa, India, and Australia. These attest not only to the global reach of *ELRR* but also to the many ways in which good scholarship can provide insights for, and contributions to, improving policy and practice. For example, Belzer and Ryley draw on and analyse data from the National Survey of Driver Wages in USA to show how safety is severely compromised by pay structures in the highly dangerous long-distance trucking industry. They propose alternative pay structures and processes which would be safer for drivers and less costly for industry. Also based on USA data and also with a link to work safety, Khan and Mridha's paper offers insights into compensation and the value of injury differentials, revealing differences across race and gender. Sheldon and Kwon provide material for a fascinating analysis of the comprehensive role of Samsung in Vietnam, in which they evaluate how Samsung's multiplicity of supportive actions suggest that narrow definitions of FDI need rethinking. A current burning issue everywhere relates to serious gaps in housing. Morris explores fundamental issues which perpetuate and worsen housing inequality in Australia (and beyond). In so doing, Morris gives close attention to factors limiting access to fair housing, including the financialisation of housing on the one hand, and the contrasting neglect of social housing on the other. Oyenubi also evaluated a worsening of inequalities, focussing his investigation on the short-term effects of lockdowns on wages of already vulnerable groups in South Africa. Papadopoulos and O'Keeffe draw on Loic Wacquant's 'Centaur State' theory to examine the governmental discourse on work and welfare in Australia, especially in initiatives for economic recovery from the pandemic. They close their paper asking, 'The questions however remain, recovery of what and for whom?' The final paper in this issue comes under our **Contested Terrains** category, articles which investigate or analyse emerging, new, or highly contested ideas and interpretations. Taylor and Earl draw on the new concept of Common Good Human Resource Management (HRM) to find ways of achieving stronger and fairer approaches to the ageing workforce. The topical and geographical spread of these articles is evidently broad, and as readers will see, so are the research methods and methodologies, which range from econometrics to statistical analysis to critical analysis to scholarly speculation. The articles all draw on multiple theoretical perspectives, but all uphold the journal's foundation principles. The insightful and much appreciated book review, and notification of the Daryll Hull Memorial Award at the end of this issue, attest to the journal's commitment to the heterodox economic and labour relations communities.

So, as we start a new era with a new publisher, Cambridge University Press, and a new editor, we have much to aim for; we also have a wonderful foundation of giants on whose shoulders we can stand, collegial boards and administrative team from whose wisdom we can draw, and longstanding respected attributes and ideals that we can continue to uphold.

## Reference

Junor A (2022) Editorial. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 33(4): 1–5.