Editors' Note

A hallmark of sociolegal work has been assessing how actors anticipate what legal officials might do and how multiple officials work with law across settings. People strategize or change tactics where they can, find alternative venues for disputes, and draw upon cultural meanings when caught in legal tangles.

The articles in this issue take insights from sociolegal studies to interpret encounters with legal officials and to examine the framing of key problems as legal issues. The range of topics and methodologies is wide, but all of the authors engage with encounters between legal processes, administrative practices, and normative systems.

The article by Anette Bringedal Houge and Kjersti Lohne takes up the topic of conflict-related sexual violence and the criminal law fight against impunity. The authors examine central imageries of victims and perpetrators across interstate diplomacy and human rights advocacy to argue that such framing narrows and contains political maneuverability in the face of the harms of this sexual violence.

Florian Grisel's contribution proposes an alternative narrative of globalization in commercial arbitration. Grisel revisits the sociology of international commercial arbitration, arguing that a critical transformative period for international commercial arbitration took place between the 1950s and 1970s, when a group of individuals, "secant marginals," emerged as leading arbitrators at the International Chamber of Commerce. The cooperative (rather than competitive) interface that resulted created the conditions necessary for the emergence of a new transnational legal profession.

The study of legal pluralism has long raised questions about where and how different legal systems protect people: customary law can promise connection to community but that can obscure problems for individuals. Even different historical legacies can lead to similar issues, as Janine Ubink and Sindiso Mnisi Weeks demonstrate in their analysis of how traditional courts dispense justice in Malawi and South Africa.

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In Turkey, the turn to authoritarianism has brought increasing incarceration. Yet the carceral state also promises mercy and is discretionary, demonstrating the power of the state and outside legal processes. Drawing upon studies of mercy and incarceration, Irem Yuldrim and Tuna Kuyucu argue that the meaning of mercy has changed, from forgiving ordinary crimes to the promise of forgiving crimes against the state.

Administrative processes regularize applications for status in postindustrial states, but they enact procedural pains (see, for example, the article on gun licensing in Issue 51[2]), for both government officials and those subject to them. We learn from Arjen Leerkes and Mieke Kox that immigration officials avoid official processes by pressing people to leave without going through administrative processes. Administrative processes established to recognize tribes in the United States require documents and applications. As Kristin Matoy Carlson argues, some groups asking for tribal status have found using legislation faster and easier, despite the fact that administrative processes are usually set up to avoid legislative blockages.

Finally, in a vignette study based on a U.S. sample, Claire B. Wofford explores whether people report being less likely to sue if a wrong is committed by someone close to them. She draws from arguments that women are more risk averse and less confrontational than men to assess variation by gender. Her findings are mixed. Although the barriers to saying one will sue in a vignette study are lower than they are to actually taking a lawsuit, she too finds that people report a reluctance to sue that does not match with existing narratives about litigiousness.

Each of these articles challenges central well-circulated assumptions about the operation and import of law and of legal systems. They thus illustrate well the dynamism of sociolegal research and the active, evolving nature of scholarly conversation.

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