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EDITORIAL

From the editors

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It is with mixed emotions that we publish our final "From the Editors" note. As we write this note in December 2025, we are sad that our time as co-editors of *Law & Society Review* (*LSR*) is winding down. We enjoyed our opportunity to shepherd the journal and move the field of law and society forward. However, as the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer once wrote, "all good things must come to an end." After three years, we do think it is time to step aside and make room for a new editor team to take over and move the journal in a new direction.

We are forever appreciative for the support system we had as we edited *LSR*. We take a few moments to thank those who helped us along our journey as co-editors.

To begin with, we thank our Managing Editors, Danielle McClellan and Ryan Cadrette, for overseeing the daily operations of the journal, meeting production deadlines, and ensuring the content is of high quality and aligns with the journal's goals. First with Danielle and now with Ryan, we are confident that the journal's general management is in good hands.

We thank our Editorial Assistants, Isabel Patten and Jes Torres Baker, for invaluable assistance and support. Our ability to process manuscripts in an efficient and effective manner was largely due to their careful intake and assessment of articles. Our Editorial Assistants put us in a position to succeed as editors and we are incredibly appreciative of their commitment and dedication (especially since they did this work as graduate students).

We thank all reviewers for the journal. We recognize that their careful attention to manuscripts is hidden and anonymous. Reviewing articles is also considered underappreciated work in the larger scholarly community. We continuously leaned into their insights and feedback as we processed manuscripts. Simply stated, we are very grateful to all of you.

To that end, a special thank you to our Editorial Advisory Board, who often handled multiple reviews annually and offered feedback and support when called upon.

Our publisher support, first with Wiley, and currently with Cambridge, was outstanding. Our issues were routinely published on time and without a hitch. From

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Cambridge (who was our publisher for most of our time as co-editors), Rebecca O'Rourke, Angharad Thomas, and Jen Malat provided comprehensive support and engagement since taking over in 2023. We are confident the journal is in great hands with Cambridge as its publisher moving forward.

We thank Law & Society Association (LSA) Executive Officer, Steve Boutcher, for all his support. Steve was always willing to engage with us as we sought ways to creatively move the journal forward. Mediocrity was never an option with Steve – he always encouraged us to do the things we thought could make the journal as strong as possible. We also thank Melissa King for helping us arrange our publishing advice panels at the annual LSA meetings, Crissona Tennison for promoting the journal through the LSA's mailings and social media, and Kevin Rasmussen for his administrative support.

We thank the LSA for funding an Editorial Assistant. We also thank University of California, Irvine School of Law Dean Austen Parrish as well as Shauhin Talesh for providing funding for a second Editorial Assistant.

Finally, we thank LSA's Publications Committees serving in 2023 and 2025. After all, they (Chair Scott Barclay, Frank Munger, Anne Bloom, Jill Weinberg, Sheri-Lynn Kurisu, Hadar Aviram and Rebecca Sandefur) interviewed and recommended our appointment to the LSA Board of Trustees in 2023! They (Chair Karin Martin, Jothie Rajah, Frank Munger and Ashley Rubin) also worked hard in 2025 to find our replacement so that our three-year term ended on time at the start of 2026.

Aside from recognizing all those who have helped support us through our journey as co-editors of *LSR*, we want to take a few moments to highlight what we have done structurally and substantively to move the journal and the field of law and society research forward. We started our tenure with a defined vision and worked hard to execute it.

Our accomplishments

Transparency and access

A central goal of our editorship has been to openly communicate our approach to publishing and to help authors be successful in the publishing process. We published two extensive editors' notes outlining this approach, and we held regular online office hours (three per semester) to provide direct access to each editor. These office hours encouraged open conversations about individual projects and their fit for *LSR*, ways to frame a paper for a broad audience, and general questions about the submission and publishing processes. We held similar in-person office hours during the annual LSA meetings. In addition, we organized three Publishing Panels at LSA, inviting editors from other sociolegal journals – *Law & Social Inquiry, Law & Policy, PoLAR (Political and Legal Anthropology Review)* and the *Asian Law & Society Journal* – to join our collective efforts to "open the black box" of sociolegal publishing.

Besides these broad conversations about publishing in our discipline, we also looked for ways to streamline the journal's submission processes and give authors the best chance of having their article reviewed and published. Most notably, we added the "reject and resubmit" option as a first instance of editorial feedback for manuscripts that featured innovative questions and empirical studies, but that were not yet adequately framed in the law and society literature or had other limitations that would otherwise have resulted in a desk reject decision. We described this approach in detail

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in our first note from the editors (Heyer et al. 2023). We are confident that this opportunity for authors to receive editorial feedback and then submit a substantially revised manuscript has made a difference in the quality of the manuscripts sent out for review and provided authors with a better chance of having their work published in *LSR*.

To streamline the submission process, we conducted an audit of all internal operating processes and made several changes. First, we updated several Scholar One template letters to improve our communication with authors and reviewers. We also decided to no longer count references toward an article's word count, and then we reduced the maximum word count from 14,000 to 12,500 words. We made this change to encourage authors to broadly cite the relevant literature and not be penalized in their word count for doing so. In addition, tables and figures are now submitted in situ, rather than as attachments, allowing our reviewers a smoother read of the manuscripts. We also simplified the reviewer's menu of recommendations in Scholar One. It bears repeating here that we see our reviewers as central to the mission of this journal and that we are grateful for the constructive feedback and recommendations they provided to authors.

A more recent change has been to hide authors' names in Scholar One. As a team, we committed early on to a blind reading of all manuscripts and set up procedures accordingly so that we could check ourselves against unconscious bias. We have now institutionalized this approach and protected against accidental identification by automatically anonymizing all authors' identities and institutional affiliations in the online system until after a decision on a manuscript has been reached, when the editors communicate with the author directly.

Finally, we updated the journal's official description to adequately reflect the types of research we publish, including the journal's theoretical and topical content, empirical methods, and types of articles. For the first time, we included book reviews in the journal's description; book reviews had been historically omitted, but they are an equally important part of the journal. We believe the refreshed version offers a more accurate description of the journal.

Translations and international scholarship

Our updated journal description also makes explicit our commitment to international research, meaning articles that examine sociolegal phenomena in countries outside of the United States, particularly those from the Global South. We had flagged this commitment in our first editors' note, and we are pleased to report that we have published 18 articles (out of a total of 50 regular articles, excluding editors' notes, presidential addresses and commentaries, the Lauren Edelman memorial issue and special issue introductions) that cover the following countries: Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Taiwan and the Netherlands. The top two countries covered were mainland China (including Hong Kong) with a total of four articles and Chile with a total of three articles.[1] There are more countries in articles

[1]By issue, these articles include: 59-4: China, France (with US comparison), Germany; 59-3: China, Brazil, Taiwan, Cambodia; 59-1: Colombia, Chile; 58-4: Jordan, France; 58-3: Hong Kong; 58-2: Brazil, Chile; 58-1: Chile, (one global comparison); 57-3: Netherlands, France (with US comparison), Brazil; 57-2: Japan and Korea comparison, China, China.

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we have accepted but that will be published after our editorship ends, especially the special issue on the Right against Rights.

Furthering our commitment to recognizing law and society as an international field, we are also offering new language options for authors writing about countries or populations whose primary language is not English. First, authors may submit two abstracts, including one in the language relevant to the context of their study, alongside their English abstract. In addition, once an article is accepted for publication, authors may submit translated versions of their article, using the language that is relevant to the context of their study. We see this policy as a way to improve access to scholarship, in recognition of the increasingly international, if not global, LSA membership.

To date we have published three translated articles (in Spanish and Portuguese) in the journal's online edition, with a forthcoming article (in Dutch) and several more in preparation or production:

1. Fabio de Sa e Silva and Michael López Stewart. *Consciência jurídica relacional e anti-corrupção: Lava Jato, interações em redes sociais e a coprodução da detração do direito no Brasil* (2017–2019). (Vol. 59-1)
2. Javiera Araya-Moreno. *¿Cómo no tener que saber? Tecnicismos jurídicos y delitos flagrantes en Santiago, Chile*. (Vol. 59-2)
3. Mayra Feddresen et al. *"El estado es algo que decepciona": La conciencia jurídica en medio de la insatisfacción institucional*. (Vol. 59-1)
4. Lisa F.M. Ansems et al. *Over rechtvaardigheid gesproken: een kwalitatief interviewonderzoek naar ervaren procedurele rechtvaardigheid onder verdachten in Nederlandse strafzaken*. (forthcoming)

Theory articles

We introduced a major policy change in expanding the traditional types of articles published (theoretically motivated empirical articles) to now accept articles that make a strong theoretical intervention without an original empirical component. These "theory articles" draw on the secondary literature to contribute to central topics and debates in our field. We have accepted seven such theory articles during our editorship: "Surveillance deputies: When ordinary people surveil for the state" (Brayne, Lageson and Levy, Vol. 57-4), "Deconstructing racial code words" (Pfeiffer and Hu, Vol. 58-2), "Calabresi's invite: bridging Law & Society and Law & Economics through 'situated valuation'" (Tejani, Vol. 58-4), "Using court documents as data: opportunities and challenges for sociolegal scholarship" (Degenshein and Leslie, Vol. 59-3), "The Unintended Consequences of Increased Access to Justice" (Taylor, Vol. 59-4), "Backlash Against Rights: Conceptual Apparatus and Research Agenda" (Saffon, Vol. 60-2, forthcoming), and "Neoliberalism in Law and Society" (Sola, Vol. 60-3, forthcoming).

Special issues

We issued two calls for special issue proposals in the first year of our editorship. We saw these calls as opportunities to broaden the scope of articles submitted to *LSR* and to invite conversations around themes of current significance, such as (but certainly not limited to) indigenous peoples and colonialism, climate and the environment,

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disability and public health, racial justice, artificial intelligence and technology. Here, too, we were looking for special issues to build bridges between law and society scholarship and emerging topics and debates of general significance. We are pleased that two special issues emerged from these calls: first, an issue on "Law in a Changing Climate" (appearing in Vol. 59-1), and second, an issue on "The Legal Mobilization by the Right against Rights" (appearing in Vol. 60-2). We worked closely with special issue editors in issuing their call for papers, selecting reviewers, and, most importantly, in working with authors to frame their contributions for a broad sociolegal readership and in building bridges between their research and the field.

We also commissioned a special issue on empirical critical race theory, appearing as "New Perspectives on Empirical Methods and Critical Race Theory" (in Vol. 59-2). Finally, we are pleased to publish a symposium that emerged from a thematic panel from the 2025 LSA conference, entitled, "Building the Disciplines with Law and Society," that reviews the impact of law and society scholarship on the disciplines that first built our field: history, political science, sociology, anthropology and law (this issue).

Our approach and advice

We had set out our editorship with a vision of *LSR* as a general interest law and society journal, which meant that we were looking for articles that would articulate a theoretical contribution to the law and society literature rather than a single subfield. We worked closely with authors to frame their research for a broad audience, we solicited reviewers to lend their expertise to that project, and we supported authors in moving sociolegal theories in new directions. We generally wanted to ensure that authors had the best chance of having their articles selected for peer review and then successfully move through the review process, and we took real steps to accomplish these goals. These steps included the new reject and resubmit option, regular access to the editors through online office hours, LSA publishing panels, and two previous editors' notes that laid out our process and advice. We are proud of our commitment to this approach, and we believe that it is evident in the articles we have championed in the three volumes published under our editorship.

Critically reflecting on our vision of law and society and *LSR*

While we are proud of our original vision and what it has accomplished, our experience has also raised questions about whether it was the right move for the journal and the field. Indeed, the most challenging and controversial elements of our tenure related to questions about what exactly is law and society and what is the role of *LSR* as the field's flagship journal. In this section, we say a bit more about what motivated our vision and what limitations we see in it, following our three years as editors.

The limitations of viewing LSR *as a generalist law and society journal*

As noted above, we set out with a particular vision of law and society and for *LSR*, which we described in our application materials and our first editors' note. Our vision was shaped by our own training, our own experiences with *LSR* as authors and reviewers, and more than a decade of watching prior editors give advice and host field-level

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discussions about sociolegal publishing. We also workshopped our ideas with trusted colleagues in the field. Ultimately, we saw our vision as in line with the views of influential scholars in the field – and we have heard it echoed back to us by fellow editors of *Law & Social Inquiry* and *Law & Policy*, among other journals in the field.

As noted above, the central plank of our vision is that we view *LSR* as a generalist journal publishing law and society scholarship that makes theoretical contributions to the law and society field. We wanted to produce issues that law and society scholars could want to read cover to cover. As such, we have taken the strong stance that articles published in *LSR* should be plausibly interesting and relevant to a broad audience of law and society scholars. We have encouraged authors not to write as they would for a subfield journal. We have thus insisted, as many editors before us have, that articles make a strong contribution not just to one's subfield or topic area or discipline but to the general law and society literature.

When discussing fit, we typically begin by explaining that the topic alone is not enough to make work interesting and relevant to this broad audience – otherwise, everything in *Criminology* or the *American Political Science Review* could be submitted to *LSR* since they are technically related to the law in some way. So how does one make their work interesting and relevant to a broad audience of law and society scholars? Articles should be *framed* for *LSR*, using their opening and closing sections to speak to the field generally – not just a single discipline or subfield – to highlight what their article has in common with the core of law and society. This framing is a chance to signal to potential readers why they should read the article even if the topic is far afield from what the reader studies. It is also a way of thinking about one's larger theoretical contribution and how other scholars might use, engage, and cite an article that does not at first blush seem relevant to that scholar's work.

Figuring out what is "law and society" is thus central to determining a manuscript's fit in *LSR*. From the beginning, we have generally defined law and society somewhat flexibly but consistently. We have emphasized that research is properly considered "law and society," not because it has something to do with the law, but because of the conversations it engages. In our last editors' note, we ran through some common concerns traditional law and society conversations focus on:

> the gap between law on the books and law in action, the distributive effects of legal processes, law's capacity to produce social change, the role of frontline workers shaping the interpretation of the law in practice, the role of legal ambiguity making implementation difficult, the power of legal endogeneity, the role of legal consciousness and rights consciousness, the impact of autocratic legalism, how differences in the legal profession translate to different legal outcomes, variations in people's access to justice, the determinants of legal mobilization either at the micro-scale of disputing or at the macro-scale of social movements, etc. (Heyer et al. 2025, 8 n.2)

Scholars are not restricted to these topics, but they do need to show how their study builds on past law and society scholarship.

Indeed, if an author's project does not fit these traditional categories of focus for the field, they have an exciting opportunity to grow the field – but this opportunity also takes work. It is easy to frame a study of legal consciousness or legal mobilization

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(for example), but when there is not a preset frame, the author must construct one by reading the literature – by looking across subfields and finding shared examples, patterns, and processes that the author can bring into focus. What are other studies in the broad law and society literature that find something similar but different from what you are identifying in your particular context and topic? Answering this question effectively allows authors to identify a new subfield or a new framework that can be added to the pantheon of key law and society concerns. It elevates new work from a study on a particular niche empirical area to a field-defining study with a strong theoretical contribution. But this accomplishment can only be achieved by reading the broad law and society literature, beyond one's topic area, and building on what other scholars have already done.

In helping scholars identify what is law and society, we have also emphasized that at least some of the key conversations in a manuscript should engage some set of conversations that tend to be (but not exclusively) published in *LSR, Law & Social Inquiry; Law & Policy; Annual Review of Law and Social Science*; and *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society.* There are more disciplinary or topically specific law and society conversations in *Law and History Review; Political and Legal Anthropology Review; Law, Culture, and the Humanities*; and *Punishment and Society*. There are also other distinct versions of law and society conversations taking place in regional or country specific journals like the *Asian Journal of Law and Society, Canadian Journal of Law and Society, Journal of Law and Society, and Social & Legal Studies*. To the extent that conversations in disciplinary, topical, or national/regional journals do not overlap with ongoing conversations familiar to LSA members, we have asked scholars to broaden their framing in the front and backends of papers to engage with these more general conversations so that authors can bridge the gap between their own focus and a diverse array of scholars not focused on the same issues, discipline, or nations and regions.

We should also emphasize that this engagement is not simply a matter of framing but of ensuring the manuscript does not reinvent the wheel. Unfortunately, we have found that many scholars who do not engage earlier law and society scholarship often end up rediscovering a well-worn point; once this duplication is pointed out, their contribution to the literature falls apart.

The challenges of defining law and society in an evolving field

In these discussions, we have followed a somewhat flexible and broad conception of law and society, but we also recognize that what counts as law and society is controversial, particularly as the field expands generally as well as topically and internationally. From the beginning, we acknowledged that there is no singular consensus to answer this question of what counts – and we invited discussion on this point. Historically, perhaps the most common consensus point is that law and society does not include the doctrinal analysis of law. But once we move beyond that negative definition, we find disagreement. Indeed, we could see tensions over what was properly "law and society" in reviewer comments, where some reviewers would identify work as not law and society and others did not question a particular piece's relevance to the field. When strong disagreements exist in the field and among reviewers, what is the place of the field's flagship journal and what should its editors do? Our answer to this question was to ensure consistency across the review process so that the final decision was not

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contingent on the "luck of the draw" when it came to reviewers: it seems arbitrary for one group of reviewers to reject an article because of fit when a different group would recommend accepting the same article. Instead, we often refereed the reviews and sought consistent standards across manuscripts – standards that we tried to make public whenever possible through our editors' notes, publication panels, and office hours.[2]

Other questions about what counts as law and society emerge from LSA's explicit intention to be an international and even global professional organization. While we have successfully published scholars from around the world and initiated our translation policy noted above, there are still important questions about inclusivity when figuring out what it means to be an LSA-sponsored journal that publishes law and society scholarship. There is an ongoing debate about the extent to which there is an "American" version of law and society (despite the early contributions from scholars outside of the United States) or the point that one of our most influential legacies shaping LSA's founding – legal realism – can be found (earlier) in other countries (see Chua et al. 2023, 6–7). But there are also nationally distinct versions of "law and society" scholarship (e.g., Canadian law and society) that share the goal of understanding how the law works in practice, but use almost entirely different theoretical frameworks, embrace more pluralistic methodological standards, and follow different norms about writing and article organization. As a result, a manuscript from another tradition can seem unrecognizable as a law and society contribution for those trained in the American context. These differences raise important questions about the role of *LSR* in an international and even global organization, but an organization with longstanding norms, traditions, and theoretical frameworks. Indeed, something we have grappled with (and received understandable criticism on) is the extent to which our understanding of law and society is too narrow and excludes those traditions that emerged and are popular in other places around the globe.

Even within the United States, however, there are new fields that have developed alongside and often overlapping with law and society, including Empirical Legal Studies (ELS) and the New Legal Realism. The similarity in focus – frequently social science examinations of the law in action – has bred confusion over whether a piece of scholarship is law and society or not, a fit for *LSR* or not. Reflecting long-standing traditions in the journal, we have resolved many such questions with our insistence that whatever else an *LSR* article does, it must make a theoretical contribution to the law and society scholarship. Many ELS-style articles, for example, leverage excellent methods and clever research designs to answer an empirical research question (such as the quantified relationship between two variables) that is not clearly relevant to or in conversation with law and society scholarship. Moreover, these articles often lack a strong theoretical motivation or contribution. This ELS-style research need not remain separate from law and society scholarship, however: ELS scholars can look to the law and society literature to identify theoretical frameworks that would inform their research. Unfortunately, we have had limited uptake of this advice, including with our special issues.

[2]Thus, we leaned heavily on reviewers for substantive expertise – particularly methods, theoretical frameworks, the empirical context (particularly local knowledge of countries beyond the US), and the kind of expertise needed to evaluate findings. But we ultimately determined questions of fit, framing, and theoretical contribution, on which reviewers tended to be more inconsistent.

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Finally, in recent years, LSA itself has arguably drifted away from law and society, with the growing dominance in the organization of scholars who explore doctrinal questions and/or empirical work on the law in practice without engaging the insights of the law and society literature. These changes raise an important question: who is a law and society scholar? Is it simply one who studies the law from any tradition or perspective, one who studies the law from multiple disciplinary perspectives, one who studies the law as a social phenomenon, one who eschews doctrinal analysis, one who studies the law in action, one who attends LSA annually? This may be an uncomfortable question to ask, but it is an essential question.

Consequences for the field and for LSR

LSA prides itself on being a "big tent," but as we have noted in our last editors' note, if LSA is to support the field of law and society, we need to see field-level conversations and debates about what law and society is and what it means to be a law and society scholar. Our answers will (and should) change over time as the field evolves, but the discussions are crucial for onboarding new members or else LSA will simply devolve into a series of specialties that have little in common and do not communicate with one another. Indeed, we cannot emphasize this enough: it is not inclusive to simply admit scholars to the field and call them law and society scholars; doing so sets them up to fail. It is only inclusive when we do the hard work of bringing people along with us, sharing the hidden curriculum of the field, explaining the traditions and conversations. The field is currently too big and too sparse for new recruits to pick up law and society via osmosis. Scholars can annually attend LSA for a decade without learning what law and society is. This approach does not sustain a field.

Indeed, one consequence of LSA's seemingly inclusive expansion has been a persistent sense of insiders and outsiders in the field of law and society. That is, there are scholars who are recognizable law and society scholars, but others who do not feel they have met that mark, who feel like they are permanently on the margins. Unfortunately, there are limited pathways for outsiders to become insiders because their central hurdle is familiarity with law and society scholarship and there is very little training available to gain that familiarity. Again, while being a big tent organization feels inclusive, as editors, we have seen that being a big tent (but without offering training or other ways of becoming a law and society scholar) has only expanded the number of people on the margins and who feel like outsiders. Again, it bears emphasis: Regularly attending LSA does not help: there are so many panels on specialized niches now that one can make it through a whole conference without seeing a panel that explicitly showcases law and society research. Moreover, because of LSA's almost automatic inclusion of all paper submissions at the conference, some subfields regularly hold "shadow conferences" at LSA on topics and approaches that have little if anything to do with law and society scholarship. Meanwhile, formal law and society education and training is failing to keep pace, particularly as law and society programs have closed or have become interdisciplinary centers for the study of law rather than law and society centers. From conversations with many scholars of our approximate vintage, there is a sense that we are the last generation of law and society scholars. From conversations with newer scholars (graduate students and early career faculty) who identify as law and society scholars, they too recognize that they have become sub-area specialists who do not read, use, or contribute to the broader field. For all

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of these varied reasons, the number of people who feel like insiders has declined and there are fewer in the new generation to take the place of the retiring earlier generations. Ultimately, what we are seeing as editors is the field is simply not sustaining law and society scholarship: what we recognize as law and society will no longer be produced as there will be too few scholars trained in the field, despite its enormous membership growth.

We recognize that this message is both disheartening and at odds with a seemingly flourishing field. Law and society is currently experiencing a paradox. LSA is growing: conferences are flush with panels; international meetings are particularly successful and drawing scholars from all over the world. But while the association and membership are expanding, the field of those actually engaging in law and society scholarship is contracting. As editors, we do not see the field expanding into new areas; instead, we see many submissions focused on narrow slices of legal consciousness and legal mobilization (often engaging only the most recent or more well-known classics in these fields and thus reinventing the wheel or making only marginal empirical contributions). We have started referring to this trend as the "hollow core" problem: the field is vast and growing, but we are not seeing much core research or recognizable, central, let alone field-defining work to keep the field going. Indeed, we have seen very few articles making "big swings" – articles making great strides in theory development. There are many reasons for this decline (Rubin and Shalaby 2025). But as editors, we are realizing that as the field of law and society expands, it is actually shrinking because hardly anyone takes up the question of what law and society truly "is" anymore.

Looking forward, facing our limitations

As editors, receiving more than three hundred submissions each year for three years, we have been in a unique position to observe the health of the field as measured by submissions to its flagship journal. We began our tenure humbled and excited, but we end it ambivalent about the future of the field.

Put simply, we found our vision of *LSR* difficult to implement. Too many scholars who submit to *LSR* are not familiar with the general law and society literature. Too many scholars have not read beyond their subfield or topical focus. We understand, of course, that scholars are subjected to higher publishing expectations at the same time that there is more to read. But the field is also not producing enough scholars with general backgrounds in law and society – the kind of background one would glean from a graduate seminar in law and society or from routinely reading journals like *LSR* and *LSI*. We have always insisted on engaging prior law and society scholarship so that there is a chain of knowledge going back to the field's founders and carried forward in each article, but at the field level, that chain is breaking. During our editorship, many scholars struggled to make connections between their work and core conversations or theoretical frameworks, or to identify out-of-sample examples of the processes or concepts they sought to highlight in their work. Our vision – a vision we saw as consistent with long-standing *LSR* traditions – was ultimately unsustainable in this context. Unless the field changes substantially and structurally, future editors will need to follow a different vision.

Our vision also included goals to expand the field. Internally, we called it "core, but edgy," meaning we wanted scholars to maintain some connection to the law and

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society core but push it into new, mostly untouched areas where the field has tremendous growth potential. We wrote about this goal in both our previous editors' notes.[3] Instead, we have been disappointed not to see more scholars take up the call to push core law and society ideas into new areas. We continue to have very limited discussions on areas like technology, business (outside of employment law), health and disability, indigeneity and colonialism, or environment and climate. As a field, this should cause reflection. We inherited robust frameworks that could be unleashed on other areas of social life, which itself keeps evolving, but as a field we have not risen to these new challenges, to show how law and society can help make sense of the world around us. Is this a failure of our frameworks or of our failure to try to apply them to new areas? We encourage future editors to support expansions into new areas instead of reproducing existing hierarchies that repeatedly tread the same ground without learning new insights.

As editors, we have tried to claim or reclaim a vision of law and society research as a discernible field, one that is broad but that does have boundaries.[4] For us, a law and society study means more than simply a study about law in society. An empirical study of law involving some aspect of society may be interesting, but if it is not engaging those literatures in law and society, then it is not part of the field. We recognize this effort has been unsatisfying to some and limiting to others (e.g., Barnes and Obasogie 2025), but we encourage those who are dissatisfied not to complain or criticize, but to stake out a claim and do the hard work of setting out a vision for what law and society means to them.

While we see a general absence of the kinds of crucial discussions we hoped to facilitate, there are some signs of hope. We were very pleased when Mark Massoud independently organized a panel at LSA 2025, inviting an interdisciplinary group of scholars to engage the central question of what is law and society. Given the absence of other discussions at the field level and the high quality of the panel, we invited

[3]In our first editors' note, we encouraged authors to topically expand the field:

> We are especially interested in including scholars who study disability; public health; the environment and sustainability; Indigenous peoples and colonialism; business areas like finance, consumer law and insurance law; physical senses; emotions; place; and social media and other technologies (Heyer et al. 2023, 134).

In our last editors' note, we implored authors to do so:

> [W]e continue to receive very few manuscripts on other important issues of health and disability, the environment, colonization and Indigeneity, technology, business-related topics, or industries not commonly studied by law and society scholars. We strongly encourage prospective authors to look to topics that are not typically published in LSR and connect them to established questions, debates, and theories in the field and thereby think about what law and society has to offer for understanding these essential areas. This is a useful way to grow the field, connect it to other fields, and generally to keep the field fresh, relevant, and lively. Ultimately, we want (and need) authors to push the bounds of what is covered in LSR and introduce new topics to the field (Heyer et al. 2025, 4).

[4]In our first From the Editors note, we wrote, "we see our role as facilitators or shepherds. We are interested in facilitating conversations about where the field is going and what considerations we all should keep in mind as the field grows and expands" (Heyer et al. 2023, 134).

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Mark and his panelists to submit written versions of their talks for a mini special issue. The resulting essays reflect some rich interdisciplinary discussions that we think law and society as a field should continue to promote and discuss. Indeed, their interdisciplinarity and rich discussions relevant to the field at large offer a useful counterpoint to some other recent efforts to engage the field. We are pleased to include this collection in the final issue of our editorship.

We offer these final reflections not to critique the law and society field but to suggest that a call to action is in order. We believe our efforts have moved the journal forward in a positive direction, but more work remains to be done at the field level that will determine its future. At a minimum, we desperately need to have some difficult discussions and serious reflections about the state of the field that everyone – from LSA member to leader – can contribute to and help shape the future of this field we love so dearly.

Now, we pass the baton to the new editors and wish them nothing but success!

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