
EDITORIAL

Quantifying Quality: A Case of Chasing the Dragon?

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“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent effort”
–John Ruskin

New beginnings bring new challenges and opportunities. Such has been the case for Tilburg Law Review on many fronts: a new board, a new publisher, and of course a new issue. I am certain that Tilburg Law Review will seize the opportunities this new path creates. One of these is going open access. The aim is to put Tilburg Law Review *out there*, provide quality material that is easily accessible for all our readers, for all to see, and to continue to grow; for we believe providing quality remains the key for growth.

This raises a more fundamental question however: what is quality in research? How do we discern good research from bad? How are emerging empirical or socio-legal methods to be placed, valued and judged within legal research?

These various topics call for an immediate discussion within legal scholarship. It is of utmost importance that such queries are answered or at least debated. The quality of research forms the foundation of legal scholarship, of law as a science. It is a value we must all seek to attain as legal scholars. The metric as of now seems to follow Ruskin's mantra, meaning that much like former US Supreme Court Justice Stewart, we will “know it when we see it”. Is this eyeballing method sufficient, or must we seek to develop an all-encompassing framework to discern quality? The first article empirically supports a case for the latter, comparing survey results from jurists in the Netherlands and Switzerland on the perception of quality indicators in legal scholarship.

It would of course be a herculean feat to set up such a universal metric, especially in an ever-changing field given that legal research seems an oasis of opportunity at this juncture. Methods in the social sciences have emerged and continue to establish themselves as important parts of legal research, for example. Various articles deal with these new methods, in particular the analysis of the empirical method in general, the importance of content analysis and a case study for land tenure systems in Colombia. These shifts naturally impact what is to be perceived as quality research and how such methods should be conducted.

It is on the other hand of equal if not graver importance to find answers for us as Law Reviews. Having to sit on *the judge's chair* puts us in the interesting position of considering contributions without universal clear-cut standards based on a system that itself raises questions. Tilburg Law Review is a blind peer-reviewed journal, for example, yet there are still many questions circling around this approach. In the article that follows, the pros and cons of this review method are analyzed, preceding a plea for transparency in review processes.

At the same time, the urge of wanting to grow and achieve newer and better things is as natural a goal as can be. It remains uncertain however, at least within Europe, how law reviews rank exactly, which is an interesting contrast with other parts of the world as depicted in an article that compares the journal ranking systems in Europe and the US and their relation to Chinese legal scholarship.

Another development – similar to the one this journal is going through – is taking place for (legal) scholars. Scholars are not only dealing with varying degrees of *publish or perish* but are also urged – or perhaps feel inclined – to put themselves (and their research) out there through open access publishing, open platforms and through promotion via social media. The last article delves into this phenomenon.

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It is for these reasons that with this new beginning I am happy to present this broad and pivotal issue on 'The Quality of Research' in its brand-new coat!

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On behalf of the Editorial Board,
Oguz Kirman
Editor-in-Chief

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