



LAW & SOCIAL CHANGE

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FOREWORD

Law and Social Change: Bridging Law, Society and Emerging Challenges

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In the age of societal transformation, the law is both a mirror and a mechanism of change. It reflects the values, tensions, and inequalities of the societies it governs, while offering tools to challenge and reshape those very structures. This special issue of the *Kent Law Review* explores the dynamic relationship between law and social change and highlights the deployment and re-imagination of legal norms, institutions, and practices in response to pressing contemporary challenges. Moving beyond the formal letter of the law, these papers examine law demonstrates its power to effect meaningful social, environmental, and political transformation.

The issue opens with *Climate Change, Statelessness, and Digital Sovereignty: Safeguarding Island Nationhood* by E Prema and Ragul OV, which examines the threat posed to Small Island Developing States by climate change. Using Tuvalu as a case study, the authors explore how traditional notions of sovereignty and statehood are being redefined in the face of territorial loss. Through the lens of Tuvalu's "Future Now Project," a pioneering initiative to preserve national identity digitally, the paper introduces the concept of digital sovereignty, challenging conventional international legal frameworks and emphasising the decolonial dimensions of climate justice.

Nathalia Contreras Ceccarelli's *The Role of Judicial Literacy in Climate Change* builds on this exploration of systemic adaptation. It examines the critical role of courts in interpreting complex scientific evidence in climate litigation. Through landmark cases such as *Milieudefensie v. Shell* and *Urgenda v Netherlands*, she underscores how judicial competence and independence are vital to effective environmental governance and underpins the necessity of climate-literate judiciaries capable of responding to global ecological crises while holding powerful actors accountable.

Shifting the focus to human rights and political inclusion, Tamara Hanna's *The Right to Belong: Citizenship and the Crisis of Internal Displacement among Iraq's Assyrians & Chaldeans* examines the gap between formal legal recognition and substantive rights. By analysing the experiences of displaced Assyrians in Iraq, she demonstrates how citizenship alone is insufficient to guarantee protection, security, or meaningful participation. Drawing on Arendt's concept of "the right to have rights" and Habermas' theory of juridification, she argues for the inclusion of minority voices in legal frameworks to address structural barriers to reintegration and belonging.

Together, these contributions illuminate the avenues where law invites social change: from environmental and technological innovation to institutional reform and human rights protection. This issue challenges readers to recognise law's capability to respond to crises and promoting justice in various contexts, and hopes to inspire critical reflection, debate, and action to shape a more equitable and resilient world.

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