

ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE HELSINKI LAW REVIEW

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In the beginning there was a society, an idea, and a handful of law students groping about in the dark. It all sounds very *Slush* now, and it would be tempting to tell a story about how *Helsinki Law Review* simply came and disrupted the field of Finnish legal scholarship overnight. But to honestly characterize the way the Review emerged in its early days, a somewhat different word comes into mind: 'cultivation'.

Helsinki Law Review was founded on a gloomy Monday night in January 2007. I had spent the previous academic year in Dublin where the *Trinity College Law Review* was seen by the students as just about the coolest thing on campus. Since coming home I'd had some preliminary talks here and there about founding a student-edited law review in Helsinki, and now I was invited to the board meeting of Pykälä ry to pitch the plan. After a lively discussion, *Helsinki Law Review* was founded there. One could well say that the *Review* came to being from Risto Sandvik's pen, since that's what he used as chairman instead of a mallet.

Tap, said the pen. And there we were, a couple of students sitting in the lounge with plenty of things to do and little certainty about how it would all get done, but with a cautiously excited feeling about the project. The following day, we circulated an e-mail inviting all students interested in the project to meet in ten days' time at the premises. The meeting was a success, and the first board of editors consisted of Veera Kojo as secretary and Jenny Fredrikson, Sanna Mustasaari, Mikael Nuotto, Sanna Pekkarinen, Kari Peltola, Aino Pennanen, and Karri Wirén as editors.

New projects are made of a million little things. Things that are often invisible or seem self-evident on the outside. We had the good fortune of being all right with the technical side; we had enough experience with layout and printing from *Inter Vivos* and elsewhere so that we could build up the tangible template of the *Review* alongside as we went about working on the substance together. We were also fortunate with funding: we approached Dittmar & Indrenius because of their long-term interest in supporting the more 'serious' and substance-oriented student activities, and to our delight they proposed exclusive sponsorship right away. This basically meant that the board of editors was free to focus on the review as it wished, confident that it would be printed when ready. Jukka Lång even persuaded D&I to let us print their logo exceptionally in the shade of burgundy we used in the cover.

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But apart from such tangible issues, we still had to figure out what exactly the Helsinki Law Review would be about. What exactly should we publish, for whom, and by whom? How many issues a year should we aim to publish? What would the editing workflow be like? What languages would we publish in? How should the peer review mechanism work? Should we cooperate with the faculty, and if so, how? How should we distribute the *Review*?

New journals are often launched with manifestoes and ambitious programmes. What we wished to create was an open journal that would genuinely reflect the work and interests of the students and young researchers in Helsinki and beyond. We meant to provide an arena for a culture of writing to grow in, not a one-off impact on a particular issue or field. The special source of material which we wanted to tap were the seminar and conference writings produced at the faculty. The law schools in Finland have a relatively rigorous emphasis on written research papers, and it was our wish to offer the most successful of these a channel to be further developed and published. We could offer the authors a point of merit, and together they could contribute to a culture of high writing standards among law students. This also meant that we tried to focus on presenting the community of law students with an inclusive image of itself: although I don't think this was ever voiced out aloud, we instinctively sought to begin the journal with a relatively balanced set of accessible and not-too-theoretical writings across various fields from criminal law to private law to public law.

One invisible tightrope we knew we'd have to tread concerned the question about how 'serious' the *Review* wanted to be as a 'scientific journal'. When we as undergraduate students proposed to become editors for a new journal, the scholarly community responded with encouragement. Professors Pia Letto-Vanamo and Heikki Pihlajamäki even tutored us on the fine points of editing and publishing. But the academic community also expressed a degree of reservation. It's not that they wouldn't have liked our journal, but it seemed to be a whole another question whether our articles ought to be considered 'real' scientific scholarship. Somewhere there was an inner circle of 'real legal science' which we would not be able to access right away. After some deliberation among the board of editors, we chose to respect this sentiment. Maybe it was simply a humble submission of students in front of their teachers. But at the same time, we figured that asking the *Review* to first prove itself was, all things considered, a fairly reasonable request.

Which brings us back to the notion of 'cultivation'. The most basic need of the new journal was continuity. Not just to show our stability to potential authors and readers, but more importantly, to establish *Helsinki Law Review* as an integral part of student life. To make sure students cared about journal and wanted to get to contribute to it. From the beginning, therefore, we marked the path of the fledgling *Review* with small imaginary milestones which we hoped to see it pass. The publication of the first issue, of course. The year we'd publish two issues. The first change of editor-in-chief. The year the Board of Editors no longer had any founding members onboard. The year the *Review* would have existed before anyone in the Board had entered the law school. The publication of the first postgraduate article.

The publication of the first post-doctoral article. The publication of the first non-Helsinki article. The magical five years. The mythical ten years.

I still remember the slightly nervous anticipation in the weeks before the first submissions deadline. Would people submit? How would the *Review* look like? Would people read it? The deadline came and went, and yes indeed, the submissions we got were numerous, diverse and of delightfully high quality. Making up for our lack of experience with eagerness and honest determination, the board of editors picked and polished the first issues with a sense of dedication that I look back to with warmth. The truth is that *Helsinki Law Review* was a welcomed idea at a good time, and its audience adopted it with open arms. And once I passed on the seat of editor-in-chief to Antti Salonen, the *Review* really took off as the new board went on to establish and develop the journal's practices even further with their accumulated experience and professionalism.

Ever since, I've had no doubts about the capacity of the *Helsinki Law Review* to attract valuable scholarship and to serve its audience. In fact, I found proof of this rather anecdotally. In 2010, a colleague at a nearby office in the European Parliament was preparing a dossier for her boss on the energy markets and regulations in Finland. Knowing of my Finnish legal education, she called me up and asked me if a research paper she'd found was valid. And sure enough, on her screen was the article on co-operative Mankala-companies by Ilkka Puikkonen, published in the *Helsinki Law Review* that very spring. Needless to say, it was a privilege to confirm that the source was solid and came from a journal with very high standards.

Now, ten years after the founding of the *Helsinki Law Review*, I look back with pride and gratitude. The *Review* has become an established part of the academic life in Helsinki. Its association with the lively student corps gives it a pulse that makes it stand out, and by now we have in its back issues a relatively long record of the impressive variety of research papers produced here and elsewhere. The *Review* is available in Edilex alongside all the other law journals in the country, and anyone browsing the database is welcome to take note of the solid, good quality of our contributions. On the behalf of the founders, I want to join the present-day editors to thank everyone involved in *Helsinki Law Review* throughout these years as authors, editors, readers, and otherwise – not to forget Pykälä ry and Dittmar & Indrenius who made it all possible in the first place.

I also look forward to the next ten years of the *Helsinki Law Review*. It shall be my privilege to sit back and trust the dedication and instinct of the present and future editors. I have understood that the board is in constant communication with the Finnish scientific societies about the formal recognition of *Review*'s academic contributions. Perhaps now, after the ten-year milestone, there will be even more of a case for the *Review* should it wish to proceed on that path. Otherwise, looking back at the names in the old issues, it is evident that the veterans of the *Review* have gotten well established both in the academia as well as in the profession.

Being in the middle of such a network of people is without a doubt an asset for both the journal and its contributions. As the landscape of scholarly publishing and the relationship of the academia to the wider society are constantly shifting, the *Helsinki Law Review* is well poised to proceed on the basis of its own strengths.

Whatever the plan is, please keep up the good work, and take good care of the new generations of authors, editors and articles. Not all those who wander are lost, and deep roots are not reached by the frost.