

## EDITORIAL

# Introduction to the Journal

The publication of this first volume of the *International Journal of Online Dispute Resolution* ('IJODR') marks a critical milestone in the evolution of ODR. ODR, as a parallel universe blending information technology and dispute resolution schemes and applications, has grown exponentially since the late 1990s and the advent of the 'fourth party'.

Whilst acknowledging that ODR is a dispute resolution, and possibly dispute prevention, field, it seems manifest that the term 'ODR' is not subject to universal consensus over its scope. However, it is abundantly clear that ODR is a branch of dispute resolution that utilizes technology and artificial intelligence to settle disputes. Traditionally, ODR targeted online disputes of diverse forms and origin. Nevertheless, ODR seems to have outgrown its initially predestined online milieu and is now capable of fulfilling its potential by targeting offline disputes.

In light of the proliferation of technological applications and advent of fully fledged ODR schemes and providers, the *IJODR* signals the creation of the first dedicated global forum for discussion, disputation, and theory-building in the increasingly complex border between 'traditional' dispute/conflict engagement and technology. The *IJODR* offers a truly global and inclusive voice for the ODR universe with a diverse Board of Editors and, we hope, a diverse group of authors.

The content of this inaugural volume demonstrates the breadth of the impact of ODR, and the myriad directions from which one may approach the interaction of ADR and ODR. This volume contains four scholarly contributions covering a myriad of illuminating issues as well as a book review and an indispensable news section.

Rabinovich-Einy and Katsh discuss in their authoritative article entitled 'Digital Justice: Reshaping Boundaries in an Online Dispute Resolution Environment' the disruptive nature of technology, particularly as it applies to the concept of justice and justice systems. In particular and notwithstanding the benefits technology provides, Rabinovich-Einy and Katsh assess why ODR is deemed, by some people, as a threat to the principles and values of ordinary dispute resolution and address the qualities of technology that can enhance dispute resolution processes.

Rainey, in his seminal article entitled 'Third Party Ethics in the Age of the Fourth Party,' outlines the profound nature of the impact of technology on the ethics of third party work. Such impact is one that is not revolutionary but rather evolutionary, and brought about by the new technology introduced and induced demands, restrictions and freedoms. Rainey scrutinizes instances where technology affects ethical considerations, such as questions of confidentiality and self-determination and its evolutionary impact.

Philippe in her inspiring article entitled 'ODR Redress System for Consumer Disputes: Clarifications, UNCITRAL Works & EU Regulation on ODR' highlights the complexity involved in developing online arbitration for commercial disputes. Philippe argues that notwithstanding the evolution of ODR, some aspects thereof need be examined in order to determine the procedure best adapted to consumer disputes. Philippe focuses on the discussions of the UNCITRAL Working Group III on ODR as related to consumer redress and sheds light on the EU Regulation on ODR published in 2013 and aiming at providing consumers and traders with alternative, out-of-court, fast, simple, cost-effective and efficient fora to resolve their disputes.

Lauritsen in his innovative article entitled 'Boxing Choices for Better Dispute Resolution' explores the nature of decision-making and how technology can assist in dispute resolution environments. Lauritsen tackles technological tools people may rely on when making choices, as well as the principles that should govern designing tools for making correct and efficient choices. Lauritsen created a formula that underlies the process of making choices, and is based on a three-dimensional box metaphor, where one axis represents the options, the second signifies the factors distinguishing such options and the third is that of the perspectives which represent the different evaluative takes.

Zelevnikow makes the first *IJODR* book review by reviewing a recent publication dedicated to a 'Eurocentric' discussion of 'agreement technologies'. He invites readers to hold a liberal view about the definition of ODR, when deciding whether the new monumental book on 'agreement technologies', is an ODR book that addresses the semantic web, norms, argumentation and trust.

Finally, Rule provides a highly insightful tour into the most recent developments in ODR under the 'ODR News' section. Notable news include: the formation of a new UK ODR Advisory Group, the AAA's selection of ODR for its largest volume caseload, a new European online mediation resource, information on new ODR providers, and a succinct update on the recent work undertaken by the UNCITRAL ODR Working Group.

On behalf of the co-Editors-in-Chief for the *IJODR*, we are committed and dedicated to bringing into print and digital media the latest, most critical thinking about ODR, drawn from every corner of the globe – a globe that has, as the cliché goes, been made much smaller by the technology we use to create and resolve disputes.

We do hope that the *IJODR* and this first volume thereof will be of interest to our readership and will mark the glistening path of ODR for years to come.

Dr. Mohamed S. Abdel Wahab

For and on behalf of the co-Editors-in-Chief