

From the Founding Editors: Transformative Society, and the Work of Explanation in an Era of Accelerating Change

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We launch Transformative Society at a moment when the word “transformation” is no longer metaphorical. It is empirical. It is measurable in how people work, learn, organize, protest, migrate, parent, vote, trust, consume information, and imagine their futures. In 2025, that measurability became difficult to ignore. Nationally representative survey evidence suggests that by August 2025, 54.6% of working-age adults (18–64) in the United States had adopted generative AI in some form—an adoption rate that already exceeded estimates of household PC adoption three years after the IBM PC and internet adoption three years after the internet opened to commercial traffic. Work use rose over the same period (from 33.3% to 37.4%), and intensity of use increased: the share of work hours spent using generative AI rose from 4.1% in November 2024 to 5.7% in August 2025, with reported aggregate time savings equivalent to roughly 1.6% of all work hours when users and nonusers are pooled (Bick et al., 2025). Gallup’s workplace tracking adds a complementary signal: the share of U.S. employees who said they had used AI at work a few times per year or more nearly doubled from 21% to 40%, with daily use doubling over a single year. The implications are no longer confined to screens. In late 2025, Georgia regulators approved a \$16.3 billion plan to increase electricity generation capacity by 50%, framed explicitly as necessary to meet projected data-center demand associated with AI. The public debate turned on questions sociologists will recognize immediately: who pays for infrastructure, who captures the gains, how risks are distributed, and what becomes politically legitimate when “the future” is invoked as justification. And across capital markets, global data-center dealmaking surged to a record level through November 2025—just under \$61 billion in reported transactions—one more visible signature of the infrastructural reorganization underway (Simon et al., 2025). These statistics mark an inflection in the coordination problems, meaning-making struggles, and power contests that constitute collective life. In this environment, the social sciences are not simply observers; they are among the most consequential forms of public knowledge we possess, because the hardest problems we face are, at their core, problems of human coordination, meaning, power, and collective life.

In 2026, Transformative Society invites submissions that advance frontier research across the social sciences and their interdisciplinary intersections, with a clear center of gravity in sociological inquiry. We publish work that treats contemporary transformation—especially transformation catalyzed by AI, platforms, and digital infrastructures—as a socio-technical process shaped by institutions, markets, cultural meanings, and political conflict, rather than as an exogenous shock or a neutral tool (Castells, 2011; Latour, 2005; Winner, 2017). We welcome theory-building and conceptual innovation; rigorous empirical research; replications and enhanced

replications that strengthen cumulative evidence; systematic reviews and meta-analyses that consolidate what we know and expose what we do not; and case-based studies that reveal mechanisms, institutional logics, and lived realities that large-N designs can miss. We evaluate manuscripts primarily on rigor, transparency, and credibility. We also take research equity as part of scholarly seriousness: the global distribution of knowledge production is itself a core sociological fact, and the journal's aims include widening whose questions can become central, and whose contexts can be treated as theoretically generative.

Transformative Society is founded as a global, peer-reviewed platform dedicated to publishing frontier work across the social sciences and their interdisciplinary horizons. We are committed to intellectual ambition without parochial boundaries, methodological rigor without methodological dogma, and humanistic care without sacrificing analytical precision. Our journal will be authoritative not because of gatekeeping for its own sake, but because we hold ourselves to the highest standards of excellence, integrity, and scholarly rigor, and because we believe that social science becomes most valuable when it is both conceptually courageous and empirically credible. We invite scholars and practitioners worldwide to build with us a journal that treats knowledge as cumulative, evidence as a public trust, and debate as a disciplined form of respect.

The social world is changing faster than many of our publication systems can accommodate, and the costs of slow, fragmented, or non-reproducible knowledge are rising. Yet speed alone is not the goal. What we need is a publishing home that can welcome early discoveries, develop emerging ideas, and evaluate claims on the basis of rigor and credibility rather than fashion and novelty. Too often, the contemporary landscape rewards results that appear surprising over results that are solid; it prizes rhetorical novelty over methodological transparency; it treats replication as secondary work rather than the foundation of cumulative science; and it can marginalize voices from regions, institutions, and communities that do not conform to dominant networks of prestige.

Here sociology offers not only a diagnosis of society but also a reflexive lens on academia itself. In Bourdieu's terms, the field of scholarly production is structured by unequal distributions of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital; judgments of "importance" can be entangled with consecration, visibility, and network advantage, even when those judgments present themselves as neutral ([Bourdieu, 1990, 2018](#)). Transformative Society takes this insight seriously as an institutional design problem. We exist to counter these tendencies with a clear editorial ethic: every insight deserves fair consideration, and the primary obligation of editors and reviewers is to evaluate whether the work is careful, transparent, and capable of supporting credible conclusions. Theoretical and practical value ultimately belong to the broader readership and to the long arc of scholarly accumulation, not to the preferences of a small set of gatekeepers.

Our scope is intentionally expansive, because the problems that define contemporary societies are not organized by departmental boundaries. Transformative Society welcomes frontier scholarship from sociology and sociological theory; social psychology and psychology; anthropology; political science and international relations; history; economics and economic sociology; human geography and demography; public policy and public administration; public health and the social determinants of health; education; communication and media studies; law and society; criminology and social control; organizational studies; management and labor studies; development and inequality studies; migration and diaspora research; gender and sexuality studies; race and ethnicity scholarship; environmental social science and climate governance; science and technology

studies; digital society research; network science; computational social science; and the rapidly evolving domains at the intersection of society and technology, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, algorithmic governance, human-computer interaction, digital platforms, information ecosystems, and the ethics and politics of data.

We are equally open to work that bridges these areas in new ways: research that connects historical institutionalism with contemporary algorithmic infrastructures, ethnography with computational measurement, social theory with causal inference, or public health with social network dynamics ([Ao et al., 2023](#)). Interdisciplinary work, at its best, is not additive; it is synthetic. It clarifies which assumptions travel across fields, which must be rebuilt, and what new explanatory leverage emerges from the encounter ([Abbott, 2010](#)). If a manuscript advances understanding of social life and does so with intellectual seriousness and methodological discipline, it belongs in our conversation.

While our scope is broad, our center of gravity is clear. We emphasize frontier sociological research and the dynamic intersections of sociology with psychology, anthropology, political science, history, economics, and the transformative forces of artificial intelligence and technological change. We are especially interested in scholarship that treats technology neither as an external shock nor as a neutral tool, but as a socio-technical field shaped by institutions, markets, cultural meanings, and political conflict, and that in turn reshapes those same structures. This includes, but is not limited to, the social organization of innovation, the stratifying consequences of automation, the governance of digital infrastructures, the evolution of identities and communities online and offline, the transformation of work and organizations, the reconfiguration of interaction orders and self-presentation, and the rewiring of weak-tie networks through which information and opportunity travel ([Goffman, 2023](#); [Granovetter, 1973](#)), as well as the emerging moral economies that arise around data, privacy, surveillance, and algorithmic decision-making ([Foucault, 2008](#); [Fourcade & Healy, 2017](#)). We also welcome research that examines how technological change interacts with classic social processes: inequality, mobility, family formation, education, religion, migration, collective action, state capacity, and the production of legitimacy ([Skocpol, 1979](#); [Tilly, 2017](#)).

Transformative Society is committed to methodological pluralism grounded in shared standards of scientific seriousness. We welcome theoretical contributions that sharpen concepts, propose new frameworks, or revisit foundational debates with fresh analytical leverage. We welcome empirical research that is rigorous, transparent, and appropriately designed for the claims it makes. We welcome quantitative, qualitative, computational, experimental, quasi-experimental, historical, ethnographic, and mixed-methods work, and we encourage authors to choose methods that genuinely fit the question rather than conforming to disciplinary fashion. Our aim is not to enforce uniformity, but to cultivate a culture where claims are disciplined by evidence, arguments are strengthened by clarity, and uncertainty is handled with honesty.

We strongly endorse the aspiration toward a scientific social science: a social science that takes measurement seriously, treats inference as a craft, invites critique as a feature rather than a threat, and builds knowledge that can be tested, revisited, and refined ([King et al., 2021](#); [Merton, 1973](#)). This aspiration is compatible with interpretive depth and historical sensitivity. Thick description is not the enemy of rigor; it is one way of being rigorous about meaning([Geertz, 2017](#)). Likewise, the best quantitative work is not merely statistical; it is

conceptual, because measurement is itself a theory-laden practice. Transformative Society welcomes scholarship that treats methods as tools for disciplined inference rather than as identity badges.

To that end, reproducibility is part of our definition of scholarly responsibility. We encourage authors to share data, code, materials, and documentation whenever ethically and legally possible, and to describe their procedures in ways that allow others to understand, evaluate, and re-run analyses. We recognize that not all data can be shared and not all settings allow full transparency; sensitive populations, protected records, and fieldwork contexts can demand confidentiality and care. Our commitment to reproducibility therefore includes both technical and ethical maturity: transparency where feasible, principled protection where necessary, and clear communication about what is and is not possible.

We also explicitly welcome technical replications and enhanced replications of existing studies. Replication is not a lesser genre. It is a public good that strengthens evidence, increases credibility, and improves the cumulative quality of our shared knowledge. Enhanced replications, in particular, can bring real value by extending analyses to new settings, updating measurements, adding robustness checks, testing boundary conditions, integrating new data sources, or applying improved causal inference techniques to revisit influential claims. In a field where public trust and policy relevance depend on reliability, replication is a form of intellectual stewardship.

We also prioritize early discovery and fair evaluation of emerging insights. Transformative Society will not, as a principle, reject manuscripts because they are “not novel enough.” Novelty is a moving target, often confounded with visibility, and sometimes at odds with cumulative science. Our editorial evaluation is anchored in a simpler and more demanding question: is the work methodologically rigorous, intellectually coherent, and capable of supporting credible conclusions? If the answer is yes, the work deserves serious consideration, regardless of whether it confirms a classic theory, reports a null result, refines an existing model, or offers a careful descriptive mapping of a new phenomenon.

We want a journal culture where multiple insights can coexist, where disagreements are handled with evidence rather than prestige, and where scholars are encouraged to contribute to a shared empirical record rather than to a winner-take-all competition for rhetorical surprise. In this spirit, we invite research that presents different interpretations, alternative mechanisms, and competing theoretical expectations, provided the argumentation is disciplined and the evidence is treated with care. We believe each insight can carry unique value, and we see the editor’s role as evaluating rigor, not adjudicating ultimate importance. Importance is often revealed over time, through reuse, critique, replication, and application in new contexts by a broad community of readers.

Transformative Society welcomes case studies, and we do so unapologetically. In many corners of contemporary scholarship, case-based work is mistakenly treated as anecdotal, when in fact it can be among the most generative forms of discovery. A well-executed case study can reveal mechanisms that large-N designs miss, expose institutional logics that are not easily quantified, surface lived experiences that reshape theoretical categories, and identify the contextual conditions under which general claims hold or fail. We welcome ethnographic case studies, historical cases, comparative case analysis, process tracing, organizational cases, community case studies, and policy implementation cases, especially when they are theoretically informed and methodologically transparent.

We also welcome case studies that engage directly with technological transformation, such as how a particular city governs predictive policing, how a workplace reorganizes under algorithmic management, how a community navigates misinformation during an election, or how a health system integrates AI triage tools ([Zhang et al., 2024](#); [Zhang et al., 2025](#)). Even a single case can change how we see a broader landscape, and we want a journal where such insights are not merely tolerated but valued. Case studies can also serve as disciplined occasions for theory refinement: specifying scope conditions, identifying boundary cases, and clarifying how mechanisms operate under concrete institutional constraints.

Interdisciplinary integration is the condition of relevance for many of the most pressing research questions. The boundaries between sociology, psychology, political science, economics, anthropology, history, public policy, public health, education, data science, and computational social science are increasingly porous—not because disciplines have become irrelevant, but because the phenomena we study are multi-layered. A single research question about online radicalization, for example, can require sociological theories of networks and identity, psychological accounts of cognition and emotion, political science perspectives on polarization and institutions, computational methods for measuring exposure and diffusion, and ethical analysis of governance and rights.

Similarly, research on inequality in the era of AI touches labor markets, organizational practices, educational pathways, political regulation, cultural narratives of merit, and the global distribution of technological power. Our journal aims to be a home for research that is fluent across these languages and willing to do the difficult work of integration rather than superficial borrowing. We encourage collaborations that bring together diverse expertise, and we value manuscripts that take interdisciplinarity seriously by clarifying how concepts, methods, and assumptions travel across fields.

Because technological change is central to contemporary transformation, we actively encourage the responsible use of advanced artificial intelligence methods and modern causal inference approaches. We welcome data-driven research that uses machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, network modeling, agent-based modeling, and other computational techniques to detect new patterns, map complex social processes, and generate testable hypotheses. We also welcome work that uses causal inference methods, including experiments, natural experiments, instrumental variables, regression discontinuity designs, difference-in-differences, synthetic controls, causal mediation analysis, and modern sensitivity analysis, to evaluate claims about mechanisms and effects ([Liu & Li, 2024](#)).

We see these approaches as complementary tools. Data-driven discovery can reveal patterns that theory has not anticipated; causal inference can clarify whether patterns reflect mechanisms or artifacts; qualitative and historical methods can ground interpretation and identify meaning; and theory can guide which patterns matter and why. Transformative Society supports scholarship that combines these strengths with methodological humility, especially in settings where algorithmic models can amplify bias or obscure uncertainty. We welcome work that interrogates the social consequences of AI systems themselves, including fairness, accountability, transparency, labor displacement, surveillance, governance, and the geopolitics of technological power.

We also welcome systematic reviews and meta-analyses that take stock of what we know, what we think we know, and what we have not yet learned. The social sciences generate vast literatures, but without careful synthesis we risk reinventing debates, misreading cumulative evidence, or allowing selective citation to substitute for systematic assessment. A high-quality systematic review can clarify conceptual fragmentation, map methodological variation, identify gaps and blind spots, and propose agendas for future research. Meta-analysis can quantify heterogeneity, test moderators, and evaluate the robustness of evidence across contexts and designs. In an era of rapid publication and information overload, synthesis is an essential form of intellectual infrastructure.

Transformative Society is also founded on a commitment to research equity. We want to broaden whose questions are asked, whose data are taken seriously, whose contexts are treated as theoretically generative, and whose voices are welcomed into central scholarly debates. We actively support contributions from diverse countries and regions, including those that are economically poor or institutionally under-resourced, and we recognize that these contexts often produce some of the most urgent and illuminating social science. We also support voices from minority and disadvantaged groups, not as an act of symbolic inclusion, but because these perspectives can carry distinctive analytical power. They can reveal how systems operate at their margins, how policies are lived rather than merely implemented, and how social categories are experienced rather than merely measured.

We aim to build editorial and review practices that treat authors with dignity, evaluate work fairly, and recognize excellence across multiple scholarly traditions. That includes taking seriously the intellectual work produced in the Global South and resisting the reflex by which some contexts are treated as “cases” while others are treated as “theory” ([Connell, 2007](#)). Global scholarship is not a decorative map of “international submissions.” It is a pluralistic intellectual project, and we want Transformative Society to be a place where different epistemic traditions can meet in rigorous, respectful conversation.

Our commitment to impact is equally serious, but we define impact carefully. We seek research that contributes to academic debates while also offering insight that can inform policy and practice in an era of rapid technological change. This includes research that speaks to governance and regulation, education and workforce development, public health and risk communication, urban and regional planning, institutional design, social protection and welfare, digital rights and privacy, and the ethical deployment of emerging technologies. We are especially interested in work that treats digital infrastructures as collective resources whose governance shapes inequality, accountability, and resilience ([Ostrom, 1990](#)). We invite submissions that engage practitioners and policymakers without sacrificing analytical nuance. We also welcome research that challenges policy orthodoxies, exposes unintended consequences, or clarifies trade-offs. The purpose of social science is not to decorate decision-making with citations; it is to help societies see themselves more clearly, including the parts they might prefer not to see.

The editorial vision of Transformative Society is grounded in an ethic of constructive rigor. Peer review should be demanding, but it should also be generative. We will work to cultivate reviews that improve manuscripts rather than perform status competitions, and we will value reviewer feedback that is specific, evidence-based, and oriented toward strengthening claims and clarifying contributions. We encourage authors to write with transparency about limitations, alternative explanations, and uncertainty. We encourage

reviewers to distinguish between essential methodological concerns and matters of taste. We encourage debates that are sharp but respectful, and we are open to publishing work that challenges prevailing paradigms when it does so with careful evidence and disciplined reasoning. We believe a top-tier journal is not defined by uniformity of viewpoint, but by the consistency of its standards.

Transformative Society is therefore both a scholarly platform and a moral commitment. It is a platform for the best work across social science and its interdisciplinary horizons, and it is a commitment to treat knowledge as a collective enterprise that must remain credible to deserve influence. We refuse the false choice between scientific rigor and humanistic concern. The most rigorous work often becomes more humane, not less, because it clarifies what is happening to people and why. Likewise, the most humane commitments become stronger, not weaker, when they are paired with careful measurement, transparent inference, and the courage to revise beliefs when evidence demands it. Our journal stands for excellence and integrity, but also for intellectual generosity: the willingness to take another scholar's question seriously, to evaluate their evidence fairly, and to recognize that insight can emerge from many places and many methods.

We invite theoretical manuscripts that reimagine the categories by which we understand transformation, institutions, identity, power, and social order. We invite empirical manuscripts that test mechanisms, measure change, and map emergent patterns in the social world with care and transparency. We invite replication manuscripts that strengthen the foundations of our evidence and help the field learn what is robust and what is contingent. We invite enhanced replications that modernize analyses, expand contexts, and improve inference. We invite case studies that open new windows into complex realities. We invite computational work that uses AI and data science to illuminate social processes while remaining attentive to bias, ethics, and interpretability. We invite causal inference work that treats identification as a craft and communicates assumptions with honesty. We invite systematic reviews and meta-analyses that synthesize, clarify, and refine collective understanding. And we invite scholarship from every region of the world, including places too often treated as peripheral, because there is no peripheral place in a world where transformations are globally entangled.

The name Transformative Society is intentionally double-edged. It points to societies in transformation, and it points to social science as a transformative force when practiced with integrity. It reminds us that transformation is not only technological. It is also institutional, cultural, political, economic, demographic, ecological, and psychological. It is experienced unevenly, distributed unequally, and narrated differently by different communities. It generates new solidarities and new forms of exclusion, new opportunities and new vulnerabilities. Our journal is committed to publishing work that does not reduce this complexity to fashionable simplifications, but also does not hide behind complexity as an excuse for vagueness. We want clarity without arrogance, ambition without overclaiming, and rigor without cruelty.

If you are developing an idea that crosses boundaries, we want to read it. If you have careful empirical results that strengthen evidence, even if they are not "surprising," we want to consider them. If you have a replication that improves transparency and credibility, we want to publish it. If you have a case that reveals a mechanism or a lived reality that theory has neglected, we want to learn from it. If you are working from an under-resourced setting, from a marginalized standpoint, or from a context too rarely centered in mainstream debates, we want your scholarship to be met with the seriousness it deserves. If you are committed to a social

science that is both scientifically disciplined and morally awake, we want Transformative Society to be your home.

A journal is ultimately not a brand. It is a community of authors, reviewers, editors, and readers who agree, implicitly or explicitly, on what kind of intellectual world they want to build. We are building a world in which social science is cumulative, transparent, and fair; in which interdisciplinary work is evaluated with competence rather than suspicion; in which early discoveries can be shared without being punished for lacking rhetorical novelty; in which replication and synthesis are honored as core scientific labor; in which advanced methods, including AI and causal inference, are embraced responsibly (Qiu et al., 2025); and in which the global diversity of social experience is treated not as an afterthought, but as a source of theoretical and empirical power. We are building a journal that aims to be top-tier not by narrowing its imagination, but by raising its standards and widening its welcome.

With this inaugural statement, we extend a direct invitation for 2026. Submit your best work, whether theoretical or empirical, whether confirmatory or exploratory, whether large-scale or case-based, whether rooted in classic traditions or emerging paradigms. Bring us questions that matter, designs that are careful, analyses that are transparent, and arguments that are disciplined. Bring us your disagreements, your replications, your syntheses, and your cross-disciplinary collaborations. Bring us your attention to human lives and your commitment to scientific seriousness. Transformative Society is here to serve the field, to challenge it, and to strengthen it. We look forward to the scholarship that will define our pages, and to the collective work of building a more credible, inclusive, and transformative social science for a world that cannot afford anything less.

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