Highlights 2015

A Wave of New Publications

In 2015 iCourts published a very significant number of theoretically and methodologically innovative studies of international courts (ICs). Our 2015 publications include a set of key subjects related to the understanding of ICs and range from empirical analysis using both qualitative and big data approaches to epistemological inquiries into the use of empirical data in legal analysis and interpretation. This is now starting to make a real impact on our area of study. Postdoc Mikkel Jarle Christensen has successfully explained the transformation of international criminal law using novel agent-centred socio-legal methods (publications list no. 4 and 5; see also no. 22 and 63). Postdoc Urska Sadl has made major breakthroughs in the use of big data in the understanding of the evolution of law (no. 25, 26 and 30; see also 21 and 35). Associate Professor Shai Dothan has demonstrated how ICs increase their power by using judicial tactics to increase reputation (no. 37). Similarly, Professor Henrik Palmer has demonstrated the ways in which ICs use legal doctrine as means of "legal diplomacy" (no. 24). This notion was coined by Professor Mikael Rask Madsen who applies it to challenge dominant normative legitimacy theory and instead shows how ICs legitimize their existence and impact political processes with legal means (no. 62). This links to questions of the place of ICs in global governance, which particularly Associate Professor Federico Fabbrini has explored in the European context (no. 8, 12, 13, 38 and 50). Finally, Associate Professor Jakob Holtermann and Professor Madsen have made major contributions at the theoretical and epistemological level, by engaging head-on in the debate on New Legal Realism and empirical studies in legal scholarship (no. 16, 17 and 18).

Towards More Collective Research Processes

Since the creation of iCourts we have initiated processes towards breaking with the dominance of sole-authored research in our field. Examples of this are our promotion of collective reflection processes in the making of a special issue of *Law and Contemporary Problems* (vol. 1, 2016) (for details see Annual Report 2014). Similarly, in another special issue project currently under review, we deliberately matched a whole set of different regional experts to co-author a first comprehensive analysis of regional human rights law and courts. Among staff iCourts we have equally promoted a culture of co-authorship and co-creation since day one. The launch in 2015 of a series of one-day seminars where individual and collective ideas were discussed before all staff seems to have taken this further. This can be observed in an even greater clustering of papers coming out of the centre and a growing number of co-authored projects by centre staff.

Making the iCourts Database an Open Access Research Resource

iCourts has assembled the largest database of decisions by ICs in the world (for details see iCourts Annual Report 2013). The yields of this database are increasingly reflected in the publication output of the centre, beginning in 2015 and with much more to come in 2016 and beyond. Our next step is to gradually make it an open access resource for researchers at the website icourts.dk, starting with our collaborators and then expanding to the research community as a whole. Initially we will make datasets available that have been used in our publications, but towards 2017 we will start releasing more comprehensive datasets and expand the search functions. Our long-term goal is to ensure that iCourts is the central hub for research on ICs, both intellectually and in terms of data resources.