

CRIMVOL: The International Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Research Network

Third CRIMVOL virtual working
paper session: *3rd September 2020*



CRIMVOL
CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH

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About CRIMVOL: The International Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Research Network

[CRIMVOL](#) is an international, multidisciplinary criminal justice voluntary sector research network for academics, practitioners, and policymakers. The network fills an important gap in scholarship and infrastructure: the criminal justice voluntary sector is more topical than ever before, but has not received academic attention commensurate with its importance anywhere in the world. The network is chaired by [Dr Philippa Tomczak](#) (Senior Research Fellow, University of Nottingham, Author of *The Penal Voluntary Sector*). CRIMVOL was established with the generous support of the British Academy (Rising Star Engagement Award) and the Socio-Legal Studies Association (Seminar Competition). A core focus is the development of [specialist early career researchers](#) and scholar-activist work.

Third 'virtual' working paper session

The International Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Research Network (CRIMVOL) hosted their third virtual event on Thursday 3rd September 2020, with a presentation from [Dr Kjersti Lohne](#) (University of Oslo). After the presentation and discussion, we discussed some issues around (re)submitting journal articles and choosing journals.

PART ONE: Presentation on NGOs in International Criminal Justice

Kjersti presented a fascinating summary of her work on NGOs in international criminal justice, particularly in relation to the ICC (International Criminal Court) in The Hague and Uganda. The talk resonated with the work of all the members of CRIMVOL present. The discussion afterwards involved diverse research interests such as police volunteering, peer mentoring and youth justice in national and international contexts. In a friendly and relaxed way, we chatted class, race, age, temporality, spatiality and scale as our screens blended our distinctive workplaces from different parts of Canada, the UK and Norway.



(Kjersti – bottom left)

The paper drew on Kjersti's ethnographic work in The Hague and Uganda where she examined the role of non-state actors in the everyday life of international criminal justice. International criminal justice involves individual accountability for 'universal' crimes such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, yet Kjersti found multiple and conflicting conceptualisations of justice. The contrast between NGOs and their stark support for prosecutorial justice, and the North Ugandans' overarching desire for peace in a country ravaged by two decades of war, led her to question the role of NGOs in international criminal justice further.

Kjersti explained how NGOs e.g. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty and women's movements viewed international criminal justice as a way to enforce a human rights normative framework that had 'lots of rules but no teeth.' Their campaigning and lobbying was deemed so successful that the treaty that led to the ICC nearly twenty years ago was signaled as a significant civil society achievement – "a rule of law by the people and for the people". Prior to that they were also instrumental in establishing rape as a war crime.

Their role today is key to the operations of the ICC. Most importantly, they lobby states for political and financial support, and they lend the ICC moral authority and legitimacy. They also co-operate with states to enforce arrest warrants, provide access to local communities and organise publicity, legal aid, representation to victims and outreach. Yet Kjersti gently questions this moral authority and so-called distance from the ICC, especially when people in Uganda couldn't differentiate NGO from court representatives. She asks

- 1) Are they part of the power structures? Their whiteness reflects the whiteness of the ICC.
- 2) While they claim to speak to victims and survivors of conflict, who do they actually represent?
- 3) Do NGOs justify punishment through humanitarianism? How?
- 4) Is this purely victims' justice? Who speaks for defendants? There are no specific NGOs on their behalf.
- 5) Who is there to restrain the ICC? When NGOs are not there to speak truth to power, who is?

PART TWO: Notes on Discussion

Race/Class

- Charities in the UK/Canada are also often regarded as too white and middle class. They can reflect the ideals of their Victorian roots and philanthropists.
- Africa is a key focus of the ICC. African nations have campaigned for a regional court.
- The white/middle class bias at the ICC and Coalition of NGOs can be perpetuated by wealthy interns, who can afford to spend a year working for free in The Hague. Bias is bait for war criminals.
- The NGOs exploit similarities to forge networks and get work. They are 'chummy' with the ICC. Not seen as protesters.

Other forms of justice?

- User-led services in the UK also question whether procedural justice is useful for them.
- Other forms of justice that existed before the mid 90s e.g. restorative justice in Latin/South America and 'truth and reconciliation' in South Africa have taken a back stage.

Different scales/times, different themes & their interconnections

- What can we learn from the national/international interface in international criminal justice? How does this compare with Victim Support Europe who produced a European charter but originated as grassroots in Bristol?

- What is the relationship between peace and/versus justice NGOs? Peace/Humanitarian NGOs in the region may not support providing evidence to ICC. How is this reconciled through transitional justice?
- What is the role of emotion? Do people naturally coalesce more around blame/accountability/impunity and less around regional peace? Do we return to Durkheim on morality?
- What is the role of temporality? How do NGOs splinter spatially and thematically over time?
- Do international networks/coalitions dilute the message and lose their radical ideas?

Who is deserving of justice? Complex questions...

- Who deserves sympathy? How much agency does someone have in the context of war, especially child soldiers? A child rapist? Is a male rape victim as important as a female? How do we feel about Dominic Anguin, a kidnapped child survivor now being prosecuted as an adult for the same crime?
- What if someone is acquitted? If it is unsafe for them to return home, which country will accommodate a defendant acquitted of a war crime in The Hague?
- What is the role of testimony? How is it selected and commodified? Is it ok anyway to highlight specific cases? At least some stories get told. And if the disparity provokes anger, perhaps it is a good sign of a push for progress.
- There is a lot of sensitivity around giving testimony. To what extent does the ICC/NGOs acknowledge the pain of reliving events in the witness box?

PART THREE: Discussion Panel: Submitting articles

Following the presentation, panellists Dr. Philippa Tomczak (University of Nottingham), Dr. Gill Buck (University of Chester) and Kaitlyn Quinn (PhD Candidate, University of Toronto) gave helpful advice around choosing and targeting journals, and dealing with reviewer feedback. Participants also chipped in with their views.

Does impact factor or being a 'good' journal matter? Yes, but according to our panellists, this is becoming less indicative of quality and importance. Perhaps for example, if you do more participative research, your focus is more on your article's accessibility anyway? Journals vary in the rigour of their review processes. This could be an advantage and disadvantage. Perhaps it comes down to personal preference and what you like to read. Perhaps it is more important that your writing speaks to the style, themes and some specific articles in the journal. It takes time to learn and be intuitive about what fits where.

Dealing with rejection. Getting your article accepted first time without corrections is incredibly rare. Rejections and tough feedback are common and this needs to be normalized

and accepted. There is no denying it can be a painful process but there are ways to reduce the likelihood of and/or persevere with difficult comments e.g.

-Have a plan b. Compile a list of journals and send your article to number 2 on the list straight away.

-Choose a more 'friendly' journal or one where reviewers aren't anonymous. Qualitative Criminology is recommended.

-Acknowledge that if you are being super innovative, reviewers might not be able to dedicate the time and energy to grasp what's going on.

-Don't run before you can walk. A monograph before some clear and concise journal articles is ambitious.

-Be selective in asking mentors and colleagues to read your articles. Why rewrite it on the basis of their comments however useful, if they are not the journal reviewers? You will have to change it again probably.

-Trust yourself. Calmly print out your article and highlight the most important elements. Refine it, give it your best shot and just press send. "Perfect is the enemy of finished".

The third virtual CRIMVOL working paper session will take place on Thursday 5th November, with a presentation from [Abigail Salole](#) (Sheridan College, Ontario, Canada & University of Griffith University, Australia) entitled "**A look their mother wouldn't give them": Special tasks and positionality of the youth penal voluntary sector**". This will be followed by a members' choice of ECR career development discussion topic.