



JAR-Association Inaugural Conference

EDITORIAL

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The Justice Administration Research Association¹ (JAR-Association) was established at the end of 2019 to promote multidisciplinary research and exchanges of experience in the field of justice administration from a variety of perspectives (institutional, legal, political science, economics, organizational, managerial, etc.). COVID-19 restrictions meant that much of its activity over the first few years of its operation took place online.

However, in this special edition we are pleased to present selected papers from the Association's inaugural 'in person' conference which took place on 25–26 May 2023 at Rome Tre University in Rome, Italy. Under the theme 'Innovations in Judicial Systems: Human, Cyber and Beyond', the conference sought to bring together scholars and practitioners interested in innovation in the judicial system and to encourage discussion and create a space for reflection on the fundamental changes and challenges social, organizational, and technological innovations pose to law, judicial organization, justice services, governance, and stakeholders.

Societal changes in the last couple of decades have brought with them new societal, organizational, and economic perspectives that courts and prosecutors' offices are required to address and provide answers to, as well as become ready to work with in the years to come. In order for justice professionals to be able to properly address these changes and challenges reforms have been initiated in several countries.

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Codifying new developments and perspectives is challenging for the judiciary, which in its own turn has to reform and adapt to these new dynamics.

Technology is also becoming increasingly pervasive in society and, by extension, in different areas of justice. In particular, it has played an important role in court management and automation of certain administrative processes. New developments around emerging technology applications (e.g., automatic data collection, AI, algorithms, etc.) give rise to new challenges to traditional justice values and principles.

The papers presented at the conference examined a diverse range of topics related to justice changes and challenges, judicial organization, justice services, governance, and justice stakeholders. They examined these through the lens of social, organizational, and technological innovations.

This special issue brings together five contributions that focus principally on two aspects that are both topical and of vital ongoing importance to courts: the effective management of judicial resources and the effective implementation and use of technology. They are drawn from a range of jurisdictions across three continents (Europe, Africa, and Asia), reflecting the increasingly broad reach of judicial administration studies.

The first aspect to be explored concerns the effective management of judicial resources. The paper by Roberto Vinceti explores the important aspect of the evaluation of judicial performance as an element of judicial governance that can incentivize judges' productivity and secure their meritocratic career advancements. This matter is particularly challenging as developing methods of evaluation confronts technological limitations (e.g. data intelligibility, cognitive biases) and the difficulty of measuring objectively certain activities (e.g. qualitative limitations). In his paper, Jesper Wittrup addresses the matter of assessing the number of judges needed in individual countries. Rather than relying on comparative (between countries) calculations of the number of judges per capita, the author argues that absolute numbers are not accurate indicators of the actual needs and that socio-economic factors (e.g. demographic, social, political, economic variables) need to be taken into account in order to come up with a more accurate indicator of judicial needs. This can also lead to an "improved" comparability of judicial needs between European countries, given the differences between justice systems of EU Member States. The paper by Marco Fabri and Shanee Benkin adds another perspective to this topic of management of judicial resources. Courts are tasked with handling large numbers of legal proceedings which differ in type and complexity. Describing, researching and quantifying the complexity level of different case types is therefore important to ensure that the number of judges in each court, and the time resources available to them will allow cases to be completed in a just and fair manner within a reasonable time frame. Their analyses of "case-weighting" methods aims to assist readers to reflect on the possible solution or combinations of solutions that can be selected by national justice systems in this area in order to tailor to the unique characteristics and specific needs of their courts.

The other aspect addressed by this special issue concerns technology development for court activities. Edgar Kuhimbisa's contribution, from a professional perspective, explores the experience and digital transformation introduced by technology in the administration of justice in Uganda. The country has experienced wide-ranging justice reforms in the last twenty years driven by innovation and integration of digital technology. Through people-centred justice programming, Uganda's justice

institutions, led by its judiciary, are adopting innovative practices that aim to empower stakeholders with information and provision of digital platforms to facilitate access to justice for all. The paper details Uganda's experiences, the potential these transformations offer, and the challenges that are experienced in the process of implementing e-justice platforms. Aliia Marlbaeva's contribution to the digital transformation of justice focuses on Kyrgyzstan, which is currently developing its e-justice system. It presents the experience of that country's development of existing e-justice systems (e.g. e-case management and electronic workflow system, videoconferencing, audio-video recording of hearings, AIS "Enforcement Proceedings", a publicly available website for publishing court decisions and other judicial acts, the digital platform for education of judges "Higher School of Justice", and "Digital Justice" portal) using a mixed-methods research approach. These findings are then used to reflect on possible ways to further improve the Kyrgyz e-justice system.

These papers, of course, reflect only some aspects of the Conference discussions and debates. There was much 'work in progress', and also valuable contributions that took place in less formal contexts, as delegates asked and responded to questions, met and talked in and out of sessions. A collection of papers cannot capture these valuable interactions; nor the learning that goes on more interactive sessions, such as the innovative workshop on research methodology that was also part of this conference.

Nevertheless, we hope that this special edition will provide a useful flavour of the types of contributions and discussions that we intend to continue at the next JAR-Association in 2025, and we commend the contributions of these authors to you.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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