

RCSL WG - Judicialization of Social Problems: Report (Dec 2021 to Mar 2024)

Chair: Joao Velloso (University of Ottawa, Canada), joao.velloso@uottawa.ca

The Working Group on Judicialization of Social Problems was created in December 2021, and since then it has been active with local events and participating in RCSL during ISA conferences and sister Law & Society meetings.

We had 22 founding members from 5 different countries (Canada, Brazil, Spain, France, Portugal).

Other members (~10) joined after (in 2022 and 2023), notably in the context of conferences (from USA, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, Spain, Australia), but I am not sure who is still an active member of the RC12 and the WG.

On past activities during my short first mandate (2022-2023):

In 2022, our main activity was around the *Global Meeting on Law and Society* (Lisbon), where we organized three sessions on “Judicialization of Social Problems and Governance of Security in Comparative Perspectives”, and we had members participating in the L&S Global Cafe to foster connections with other L&S sister associations, notably the ANZLSA and ALSA, as the 2023 ISA World Congress would be in Melbourne – but also others we had connections (LSA, CLSA, REED, etc.).

Also, early 2022 we organized hybrid events on “judicialization and penal policies” in Canada and Latin America (three panels in Portuguese and English, and a roundtable in Spanish and French) at the University of Ottawa and Université du Québec à Montréal with live streaming via YouTube.

In 2023, we organized the following activities in main national and international conferences:

“Four Variations of Punishment and Social Control”, an open session (plenary) at the *Canadian Law & Society Association Annual Meeting* and offered to all academic associations participating in the *Congress of the Canadian Federation Humanities and Social Sciences* (Toronto, May 2023).

Followed by three sessions at the *XX ISA World Congress of Sociology* in Melbourne, Australia:

- Our regular session on “Judicialization of Social Problems and Governance of Security in Comparative Perspectives” within the RC12 (RCSL);
- A joint session on “The Criminalization of Struggles for Rights, Democratic Regression, and Legal Mobilisation”, within the RC12 and RC47 (Social Classes and Social Movements);
- An integrative session (plenary) on “Understanding the Criminalization of Struggles for Rights: Resurgent Authoritarianism or Deliberalization of Democracies?”, co-sponsored by the RC12, RC29 (Deviance and social control) and RC47.

In addition to these sessions, our members participated individually in other sessions of both events, and in sessions at the Annual Meeting of the Law & Society Association (Puerto Rico, June 2023) [org. sessions and ind. papers], and at the RCSL Meeting at Lund (September 2023) [ind. papers].

Also, we organized a hybrid event on judicialization, drug policies, illegal markets and governance of violence at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University with live streaming on YouTube (English and Portuguese).

And finally, we co-organized the afternoon workshop “Another North, Another South: Proposing a new dialogue on Justice in the Americas” a closed event with foreign affairs officials from Canada (Global Affairs and International Development) and Latin America (ambassadors or attachés on law, policy or academic affairs) on Global South-North /North-South collaborations on justice matters and exchanges based on empirical experiences of access to justice, law reform, and judicialization of social problems.

On ongoing and future activities:

We are organizing sessions at the 2024 Meeting of the *Canadian Law and Society Association* (CLSA) in Montréal (June 15-17), as the chair of the working group is the lead conference organizer and the venue is an accessible hub for participants coming from Europe, the Americas and Africa.

Some members are going to participate on the Congress 2024 of the AISLF (Sociologues de langue française) at the University of Ottawa (July 8-12). A few members mention that they are going to LSA in their way to CLSA, and members are not planning to attend the RCSL Conference in Bangor.

We recently submitted an Oñati workshop application expanding on the integrative session we organized at ISA Melbourne and previous ISA conferences. If everything goes as planned, we will be in Oñati in May 2025 and the workshop content will become a book.

The WG still do not have a position on participating or not at the 2025 ISA Forum of Sociology Rabat (Morocco). There was a buzz in Melbourne Congress about the Forum being in Rabat, and some scholars attending our sessions and joint sessions raised some concerns on academic freedom in Morocco and ISA assurances on how critical scholars covering sensible topics (e.g. gender, human rights, immigration control). It was odd that there was no official announcement about the 2025 Forum last July in Melbourne, just the 2027 World Congress in Gwangju (Korea) – which is after! The WG will wait for the call for papers before taking a position, and we really hope ISA will address the concerns on academic freedom (and safety of its members).

I was re-elected by acclamation at ISA Melbourne.