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Building a World Forum for Socio-Legal Studies
Reflections on the Berlin 2007 Meeting

Submitted to the Law and Society Association and the Research Committee on the Sociology of
Law

by

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This report contains our reflections on the Berlin meeting, observations on its significance for social-legal studies in general, and suggestions for future LSA-RCSL collaboration of this type. We list the features we think were important for the meeting's success. These features should be taken into account in planning the next meeting of this type. We recommend that LSA and RCSL continue to take the lead in such meetings and that consideration be given to putting these "world fora" on a four year cycle to begin in 2011.

Our report is based both on our experience as Program Co-chairs as reflected in the final Report of the Program Committee and on post-Berlin reports by those responsible for other aspects of the event including the co-sponsoring organizations, the Local Organizing Committee, the

Program on International Research Collaboration (PIRC), and the LSA Executive Office. All of these reports are attached to this document.¹

1) A Successful Meeting

The Berlin 2007 meeting was sponsored by six associations: the Law and Society Association, the ISA Research Committee on the Sociology of Law, the Japanese Association of Sociology of Law, the *Vereinigung für Rechtssoziologie*, and the Sociology of Law Section of the German Sociological Association.

By all available measures, the meeting was an overwhelming success. The quality of panels and other events was high. Although no formal evaluations were conducted, comments we received about the meeting were unanimously positive. Many labeled Berlin 2007 the best such meeting ever.

The numbers for registration and attendance far exceeded prior records for joint LSA-RCSL meetings. Over 2800 papers were submitted. 2475 people from 72 countries registered for the meeting. Of these, approximately 2376 from 71 countries were in attendance, including 478 students. Members of all six sponsoring associations attended in goodly numbers. But 1610 attendees, or 2/3^{ths} of all participants, did not indicate affiliation with any of the sponsoring associations

Final attendance figures demonstrate the scale and diversity of the event. Table 1 which is attached shows final attendance by country. The final figures by region were **982** from the US and Canada; **933** from the EU; **23** from non-EU Europe; **15** from non-EU Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; **134** from the Indian subcontinent, SE Asia & Asia; **77** from Australia and New Zealand; **97** from Central & Latin America and the Caribbean; **85** from the Middle East including Turkey; and **30** from Africa.

¹ We received assistance in the preparation of this report from Sally Merry, Masayuki Muryama, Bronwen Morgan, Stefan Machura, Lissa Ganter, Judy Rose, Ron Pipkin, Christian Boulanger and Liz Holzer. Their help is gratefully acknowledged.

The diversity of the participants, in age, nationality, and discipline helped give the event its special quality. People had a chance to meet and listen to scholars from many different academic fields and traditions, meet people with very different backgrounds, and learn about new issues and arenas.

The event was also a financial success. Almost \$160,000 was raised for use in supporting participation by scholars from low income (“B&C”) countries. Additional funds were raised to support attendance by graduate students: all the sponsoring associations and the Onati Institute provided support for graduate student participation.

Conference fees covered all expenses and provided a modest surplus which was allocated to the sponsoring associations on a pro-rata basis. Income totaled \$488,174 and expenses came to \$427,156 leaving \$61,017 to be divided among the sponsors on the basis of the number of members of each association that attended. LSA received \$38,994 or 63.9% of the surplus, RCSL received \$7,643 or 12.5%, and the rest was divided among the four national associations. For full details, see the Financial Appendix.

2) Lessons from the Berlin Experience

In reflecting on our experience, we have identified a number of factors that we believe contributed to the success of the event. These include:

a) Broad sponsorship

Berlin 2007 was sponsored by six socio-legal associations. This broad sponsorship helped ensure that the event reached people in many parts of the world and was seen as a truly international gathering. The lead sponsoring associations, LSA and RCSL, both have an international membership. They recruited four national associations as co-sponsors. The Japanese Association for the Sociology of Law and the UK Socio-Legal Studies Association are two of the largest

national associations in the world. Finally, the two German socio-legal associations represented the host country. All six participated in planning from the very beginning.

In addition to the academic associations, the event received full support from Humboldt University. Humboldt raised funds to help with organization, created an efficient local organizing staff (see below) and helped get support from German officials.

The co-sponsors all reported that the event had a significant impact on their associations. Thus, JASL reports that Berlin attracted the “largest number of JASL paper presenters at a meeting abroad in our history.” The UK Association representative noted that 264 scholars from the UK registered: she saw this as evidence of the importance of transnational and comparative research for the vitality of socio-legal studies.² The representative of the Sociology of Law Section of the German Sociological Association reported that the “...the event was an unexpectedly great success for us.” In addition, officials from Humboldt reported that the event would help stimulate social-legal studies at their university.

b) Advanced and detailed planning by an international, multi-disciplinary program committee

Planning for Berlin started almost three years before the event. In the 2004-5 academic year, LSA and RCSL explored co-sponsorship and organized the International Planning Committee (IPC) which included representatives of all six sponsors. The IPC developed the basic parameters for the conference and served as the core of the Berlin Program Committee. Members of the IPC met in Las Vegas at the 2005 annual meeting of LSA and then again in Paris at the 2005 annual meeting of RCSL to agree on general guidelines for the event. During 2005-6 an internationally diverse planning committee (PC2007) was appointed. PC2007 included representatives of each sponsor plus others nominated by the Presidents of RCSL and LSA. Members came from 11 nations and represented numerous disciplines. Co-chairs were appointed in 2005 and met twice during 2005-6 to begin detailed planning. The full committee met at the LSA annual meeting in

² Actual attendance from the UK was significantly higher than initial registration—see Table 1.

July 2006 and agreed on the theme, featured sessions, and other important aspects of the meeting. At almost all these meetings, representatives of the LSA Executive Office (LSA XO) were present to assist with logistical and financial matters.

c) Commissioned and funded projects--The Program on International Research Collaboration

One of the most important features of the conference was the Program on International Research Collaboration (PIRC). PIRC ensured participation from poorer (B&C) countries, facilitated close international cooperation on emerging topics, materially enriched the Berlin program, and generated a number of important publications.

Early on, the International Planning Committee recognized the value of commissioning special research projects whose work would be highlighted at the Berlin event. This effort was designed to enhance international collaboration on emerging issues in the field and facilitate participation by participants from B&C countries. Start-up funds of \$25,000 for this purpose were allocated by the LSA Trustees. And, thanks to the efforts of a committee led by Sally Merry and including David Engel and Terry Halliday, the PIRC was able to secure a grant of \$123,600 from the US National Science Foundation, bringing the total available to \$148,600.

With these funds, PIRC held an open competition and commissioned 20 International Research Collaboratives (IRCs) to deal with important topics. All IRCs included scholars from several countries and most included one or more scholars from B&C countries. PIRC supported travel for 56 B&C scholars: six came from Africa, seven from Asia, nine from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, thirty from Latin America and four from the Middle East.

The results of the initiative were impressive. Some of the IRCs raised additional

funds and held several meetings prior to Berlin. For Berlin, each of the 20 IRCs organized panels and roundtables which were given special designation in the program. In some cases IRCs organized as many as eight regular sessions. Six of the IRCs also organized Featured Sessions. We estimate that IRCs were responsible for close to 15% of all sessions at Berlin.

Many of the IRCs plan to publish the papers presented at Berlin and some have already done so. The Cornell International Law Journal will publish papers from the Lay Participation in Law IRC and the UCLA International Law Journal will publish papers from the After Public Interest Law IRC. Most of the other IRCs are preparing materials for publication and negotiating with journals or book publishers.

Many of the IRCs plan to continue meeting. Some will meet again at the LSA-CLSA meeting in Montreal. Several have formed LSA CRNs, others are planning to do so. Some plan to join existing CRNs whose topics include the issues pursued in the more focused IRCs, and one group has also created a RCSL WG.

PIRC was a very important element in the success of the Berlin conference. It made it possible to bring many scholars who could not have otherwise attended. It helped increase participation of US scholars in international networks: US scholars participated in 17 of the 20 IRCs. It formed research networks that have already produced important scholarship and will continue to do so in the future. It organized many sessions whose high quality and international participation enriched the program.

d) A broad theme and a distinct comparative and transnational emphasis

The theme selected was “Law and Society in the 21st Century: Transformations, Resistances, Futures.” This very broad theme was fleshed out through numerous special theme events commissioned by PC2007. Emphasis was placed on international, transnational, and comparative

topics. This emphasis meant that the Berlin event had a quality and tone distinct from the regular annual meetings of the sponsoring associations. This helped establish it as a special event with its own “brand.”

e) Extensive publicity

PC2007 embarked on a major publicity campaign. Dubbed the “must attend” campaign, and managed by PC2007 Associate Chair Mona Lynch, this campaign was designed to convince people that Berlin would be a major milestone in the field and that attendance would be important for socio-legal scholars everywhere. Standardized publicity materials were created and made available to sponsoring associations and other groups including the Onati Institute and socio-legal studies centers in many countries. This effort was materially aided by the work of the Local Coordinating Office (LCO). The LCO mounted a major campaign of its own. They created a logo, flyer, poster and multi-lingual website thus enhancing the corporate identity of the event and greatly facilitating dissemination of information. The LCO also secured substantial press coverage for the event. The turnout at Berlin, including the attendance of 1610 people not affiliated with any sponsor, is testimony to the success of these campaigns.

f) Experienced and efficient staff support

The success of Berlin 2007 is in no small part due to the excellent staff support provided by the LSA XO as well as by the Local Coordination Office at Humboldt University.

i) LSA XO support

The LSA XO staff provided support over a three year period. This included everything from site selection to after-conference financial and attendance reporting. They managed all financial affairs, worked out arrangements with the Local Coordination Office, and staffed meetings of PC 2007. The XO established the conference software and helped PC2007 and participants navigate through the rather complicated program assembly process. Because the XO staff had substantial

experience with events of this nature, and familiarity with the program software, they were able to anticipate and avoid many potential problems, train newcomers to use the system, and problem-solve when new issues arose. The XO reviewed the preliminary program to be sure all events were filled properly and they specified gaps for PC2007 to fill. They produced the final program, managed registration, and handled finances. Without support from such an experienced and professional staff, an event of this nature and scope would literally be inconceivable.

ii) **The Local Coordination Committee and Office**

Thanks to the support of Thomas Raiser and Suzanne Baer from Humboldt University, we were able to appoint an excellent Local Organizing Committee representing many institutions in Germany. Humboldt and the LOC created a functioning Local Coordinating Office (LCO) which worked for a year on all aspects of local organizing. The LCO was staffed by Christian Boulanger, a young socio-legal scholar from Humboldt. He was aided by an excellent group of assistants. Their work is summarized in the attached report. It describes all the measures taken and contains useful suggestions for future meetings. Reading it, one can see why the LCO was one of the major pillars on which the success of Berlin 2007 rested. Among items worth of special note was the excellent publicity campaign, the creation of a website where conference papers could be posted, and on-site monitoring of events to ensure that rooms and related facilities were adequate. The provision for posting papers – done at the initiative of the LCO-- was a first for LSA and LSA/RCSL meetings and made papers much more accessible.

In addition, the PC itself was directly supported by Elizabeth Holzer, a PhD candidate from the University of Wisconsin. Liz provided staff support for the co-chairs and helped all PC2007 members in their various tasks.

g) Diversified portfolio of featured events

We held 19 special events on topics related to the broad theme of “Law and Society in the 21st Century” and attracted a strong and diverse group of speakers. Judge Brun Otto Bryde of the

German Constitutional Court organized a special plenary on the *Globalization of Constitutionalism*. PC2007 itself commissioned 18 Featured Events held in two special time slots and publicized widely. These included six Featured Sessions organized by IRCs, ten organized by the PC itself, and two Presidential Panels commissioned by the Presidents of LSA and RCSL. The LSA International Travel Fund and PIRC supported the participation of speakers from B&C countries at these events.

h) Mobilization of standing bodies

PC2007 worked closely with LSA's Collaborative Research Networks (CRNs) and RCSL's Working Groups (WGs). We drew everyone's attention to these standing bodies and encouraged the chairs of the CRNs and WGs to incorporate new participants so that new people coming to Berlin could more easily locate others with common interests. We encouraged the standing bodies to organize panels and other sessions and we worked with them to help find appropriate places for people who submitted individual papers. . In one particularly effective strategy, we invited CRN and WG organizers to request that the Program Committee channel relevant early submissions to the standing bodies, to give their session organizers the chance to include new researchers in their well-organized panels. The result was a large number of carefully prepared events in key topical areas.

i) Special attention to students and funding for graduate students

The sponsoring associations decided that special attention should be paid to attracting graduate students. For all these students, attendance at Berlin 2007 was an opportunity to learn about the full range of socio-legal studies-world wide. For many, it was also a chance to present their work to a global audience. All six sponsors plus the Onati Institute provided funding to support graduate student attendance and an international committee was created to organize a series of special events for students. The "must attend" publicity campaign included efforts to encourage graduate student attendance. These efforts paid off – 478 students attended the conference.

Indeed, the number of students was much greater than anticipated and some graduate student programs were oversubscribed.

3) Conclusion: Towards enhanced international cooperation

Berlin 2007 should be remembered as a milestone in the history of socio-legal studies. But the full importance of the meeting will only be realized if this event becomes a platform on which to build stronger international cooperation in our field.

a) An unmet need

One of the most significant things we learned from the Berlin Meeting was that there is a large constituency for socio-legal studies that is not being fully served by any of the existing organizations in the field. The fact that 1610 people, or 2/3rd of all attendees, did not indicate any affiliation with any of the sponsors, is a sign that there is a major unmet need for programming in the field. Of course, some of the 1610 may have simply failed to indicate an existing affiliation, and some were drop-ins who have no long-term ties to the field. But most of these people were serious socio-legal scholars who are unaffiliated with any organized group and many came from countries far from Germany, so these figures clearly show the extent of demand for more international collaboration and programming.

b) International collaboration is everyone's responsibility

Such enhanced cooperation needs to be an ongoing process and should not just be left to major events held every 4-5 years. Such cooperation could take many forms and should be the responsibility of many associations, institutes and research centers. Smaller regional meetings, special workshops, increased opportunities for faculty exchange and fellowships for graduate student study in other countries all should be included. The Onati Institute has launched a new

initiative designed to create a consortium of socio-legal studies associations. This consortium could play an important role in future efforts to create enhanced international cooperation.

c) A continued need for periodic “world fora”

While the process of enhanced cooperation is the responsibility of many associations, institutes, and centers, major and periodic “world fora” of the Berlin type still have an important role to play. They signal the global nature of the field, serve as occasions around which special initiatives like the PIRC can be organized, and provide the kind of face-to-face contact still essential for intellectual life in the internet age.

We think that the Berlin event has shown both that such events are crucial for the future of the field, and that LSA and RCSL, working together with other associations, have the capacity to put on events that are truly international. We recommend the continuation of these periodic meetings and suggest that serious thought be given to holding them every four years with the next event scheduled to be held in 2011. Finally, we suggest that the pattern followed for Berlin, with LSA and RCSL taking the lead and other associations invited to join in, should be continued. We note that for future meetings it may be possible to add the Onati-Consortium as a partner.