

**Book of Abstracts (in order of title):**

**Law's Many Users: Legal Interpretation Within and Beyond Legal  
Institutions**

**November 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>, Jakobi 2, University of Tartu (Rooms 336 and 114)**

**CONTENTS**

<b>COORDINATION BY PRECEDENT IN JUDICIAL DECISION-MAKING [Salima Issina-Shorman (Department of Cognitive Science, Central European University), Ivar Rodríguez Hannikainen (Department of Philosophy I, University of Granada), and Christophe Heintz (Department of Cognitive Science, Central European University)] .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF PRECEDENTS [Mario Armando Sandoval Islas (Department of Law University of Genoa)].....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EVALUATIONS OF LEGISLATIVE REFORMS AIMING AT PROCEDURAL CHANGE [Kati Rantala (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki)].....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>EXCULPATORY EFFECTS OF THE IGNORANCE OF LAW: LAYPEOPLE'S AND EXPERTS' JUDGMENTS [Katarina Kovacevic (Department of Cognitive Science, Central European University) and Bystranowski Piotr (Interdisciplinary Centre for Ethics, Jagiellonian University)] .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>HOW TO IMPROVE CONSUMERS' UNDERSTANDING OF ONLINE LEGAL INFORMATION. INSIGHTS FROM A BEHAVIORAL EXPERIMENT [Alexander Wulf (Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford and SRH University of Applied Sciences Heidelberg, Campus Berlin)] .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LAW AS A DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE: PRACTICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE GDPR IN AI-BASED BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS [Krete Paal (CEO of <i>GDPR Register</i>)] .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LAW'S LITTLE USERS: HOW CHILDREN UNDERSTAND EVERYDAY RULES [Ivar Rodríguez Hannikainen (Department of Philosophy I, University of Granada)] .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>LEGAL INTERPRETATION AND ITS EVOLUTIONS: A CASE FOR MINIMAL SEMANTIC REALISM [Elena Pedroni (Faculty of Philosophy, Sorbonne Université)] .....</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>LEGAL INTERPRETATION AS SOCIAL LEARNING: STABILITY AND DIVERGENCE ACROSS CONTEXTS</b> [Karolina Prochownik (Faculty of Law and Administration, Jagiellonian University)] .....	9
<b>LEGAL MEANING AND ORDINARY MEANING WITHIN MINIMAL SEMANTICS</b> [Michał Wieczorkowski (Faculty of Law and Administration, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)] .....	10
<b>MEANING UNDER PRESSURE: ROLE-BASED INCENTIVES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW</b> [Alex Davies (Department of Philosophy, University of Tartu), Martin Aher ( <i>Mind the Meaning</i> ), Kurmet Kivipõld (School of Economics and Business Administration, University of Tartu), Maria Reile (Department of General Linguistics, University of Tartu), Nikolai Shurakov (Department of Philosophy, University of Zurich), Liis Soon (Department of Philosophy, University of Tartu)].....	11
<b>(META)CONTEXT IN SUPRANATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE: A LEGAL LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE</b> [Jekaterina Nikitina (Department of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Mediations, University of Milan)] .....	12
<b>READING BETWEEN THE LINES: A GRICEAN METHOD FOR ANALYSING CONSENT DOCUMENTS</b> [Emmi Kaaya (Department of Philosophy, University of Tartu)] .....	14
<b>STRANGE LAND: DISCRETIONARY POWER OF LABOUR INSPECTORS INSPECTING FOREIGN NON- WORKERS</b> [Johanna Vanto, Lauri Salonen, Anne Alvesalo-Kuusi (Faculty of Law, University of Turku)] ..	15
<b>The Scope of Legal Interpretation</b> [Nicholas Allott (Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, University of Oslo) and Kevin Toh (Faculty of Laws, UCL and the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies)] .....	16

**COORDINATION BY PRECEDENT IN JUDICIAL DECISION-MAKING [Salima Issina-Shorman (Department of Cognitive Science, Central European University), Ivar Rodríguez Hannikainen (Department of Philosophy I, University of Granada), and Christophe Heintz (Department of Cognitive Science, Central European University)]**

A recent study has revealed that being incentivized to coordinate with another person enhances people's tendency to interpret a rule based on its literal meaning (textualism) rather than its spirit (purposivism) (Hannikainen et al., 2022). This effect has been attributed to the rule's text serving as a focal point facilitating coordination (Schelling, 1960). Results of the current study show that a focal point can be derived from an alternative source: precedent established with a given partner (Lewis, 1969). In Experiment 1 (n = 176), when coordinating with the same partner again, participants who previously successfully coordinated with a textualist partner were more likely to judge an overinclusion case as a violation (e.g., driving after using alcohol-based mouthwash violating the zero-tolerance alcohol policy) and an underinclusion case as a non-violation (e.g., driving after using ecstasy not violating the policy) than those who coordinated with a purposivist partner. Additionally, participants varied in their interpretation of established precedent. For instance, some interpreted a violation verdict given to an overinclusion case as stringency rather than textualism (or a nonviolation verdict as leniency rather than purposivism). Experiment 2 (n = 175) investigated whether a precedent created within one rule affects people's responses to a case with a novel rule. The results revealed a similar pattern to Experiment 1 for participants with a textualist partner. However, the effect of precedent disappeared for participants with a purposivist partner. Together the results of the two experiments provide further evidence that people are opportunistic in that they leverage abstract concepts such as textualist vs. purposivist mode of rule interpretation for coordination. Rather than relying solely on the rule's text as a focal point, they flexibly adapt their strategy in view of precedent established with their coordination partner.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF PRECEDENTS [Mario Armando Sandoval Islas (Department of Law University of Genoa)]**

Interpretive theories tend to describe what judges do when they interpret legislation. However, the interpretation of precedents has not received the same degree of scholarly attention. In the presentation, I will compare the judicial interpretation of legislative provisions with the judicial interpretation of precedents, advancing the hypothesis that they are distinct activities. I will develop five distinctions that point to differences in how each type of document is interpreted. The aim is to demonstrate that judges engage in different interpretive activities depending on whether they are dealing with legislation or precedent. Consequently, interpretive theories should explicitly account for and distinguish between these two domains. The first factor concerns the origin of each document. Precedents are the product of interpretation, while legislative provisions are not. When judges interpret legislation, they do not seek something akin to "the

interpretation the legislator made of other documents.” Instead, they focus on the various methods of statutory interpretation recognized in the legal system. Some methods adopt a literal approach, others emphasize legislative purposes, and still others examine the contexts in which certain words or paragraphs appeared. By contrast, precedents originate from an interpretive act. Therefore, when interpreting a precedent, judges often look not only at the precedent itself but also at the interpretive materials that gave rise to it. More importantly, viewing a precedent as the product of interpretation allows for the possibility that the underlying interpretation was incorrect, and even for the proposal of a new, legally sound meaning of the provisions initially interpreted. The second factor is the authority behind each type of document. It would be unusual for a judge to treat legislative or constitutional provisions as merely persuasive, yet this does occur in the interpretation of precedents. This difference stems, among other reasons, from the nature of the authority that produces precedents. The third factor is the reiteration of precedents, which has no equivalent in the legislative context. Legislative provisions do not need to be repeated in order to acquire greater force. In many legal systems, however, certain precedents must be reiterated to gain binding authority. This requirement may depend partly on the type of issuing body, but it is primarily rooted in the procedural rules for their creation. The fourth factor relates to the intentions of the document’s creators. There is a substantial body of literature on legislative intent—what it is and how it can be determined—but far less scholarship addresses the intentions of judges when formulating precedents. In the presentation, I will examine how these differing intentions influence both statutory and precedent interpretation. The fifth factor concerns structure. Legislative interpretation generally begins with the statutory text and applies recognized interpretive methods such as literal, teleological, or intentional interpretation. In the case of precedents, the process does not begin with a fixed text. Instead, the first step is to reconstruct it, particularly in order to identify the *ratio decidendi*. Here, the issue is not strictly a matter of textual interpretation but rather the determination or reconstruction of the legal reasoning that constitutes the binding element of the precedent. Legal scholarship has thus focused on proposing rules for identifying or reconstructing the *ratio decidendi*. These five factors show that interpreting legislation and interpreting precedents are qualitatively different judicial activities. Therefore, interpretive theory must address the distinctive features of each and avoid treating them as interchangeable processes.

### **EVALUATIONS OF LEGISLATIVE REFORMS AIMING AT PROCEDURAL CHANGE [Kati Rantala (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki)]**

This paper examines ex post evaluations of legislative reforms: how the results of evaluations are related to the types of legislative reforms in question, those affected, and evaluation methods. The data consists of 45 evaluations of legislative reforms conducted by an independent agency and published from 2011 to 2020 in Finland (the dataset will possibly be updated to include evaluations of recent years). Based on the nature of the expected change and the actors involved, the main types of reforms evaluated are those

aimed at procedural change at a systemic level and those aimed at direct behavioral change of people or companies (or a hybrid of these two types). The type of reform largely determines the nature of the evaluation, and together they determine what can be said about the functionality of the reform. Procedural change is evaluated with process evaluations, and behavioral change with quasi-experimental methodology. Neither type of reform seems to work well. The logic of the problems seems very different at the outset, but they share a detachment from the realities of those affected. After introducing the research design and the results broadly, the presentation focuses on the evaluations of procedural change. These reforms concern social ordering in different policy areas, aiming to clarify legislation or update a practice or procedure to make it more efficient, functional, fluent, fair, or simply updated in relation to the changing world. The implementers are professionals in various occupational fields, such as teachers, social workers, or prison officials. The evaluations typically include both quantitative and qualitative data, including interviews and questionnaires with the implementers. The procedural changes seem to have their own intrinsic value; although the procedures are connected to the well-being or circumstances of citizens, the impacts on them are very indirect and dependent on many other factors as well. Problems of the reforms relate to unclear legal formulations difficult to interpret and apply, practical problems in implementation, and being distant from the everyday realities of those affected. The evaluations contain numerous recommendations on how to clarify the law or improve its implementation, yet it is not always clear when problems are expected to be solved through improved implementation, such as guidelines, and when better legal formulations are needed, or how to draw the line between these alternatives. In contrast to the numerous recommendations, the evaluations of behavioral change include no recommendations at all because the evaluation methodology mainly answers the question of whether it works, not why. The results will be discussed in relation to intervention theory and realistic evaluation (of evaluations) with a focus on the mechanisms of interventions in relation to the context of their implementation. To conclude, the paper proposes that rather than conducting numerous individual ex post evaluations that repeat similar challenges across policy areas, it could be beneficial to grasp ‘families of mechanisms’ of similar types of reforms to improve future legislation.

**EXCULPATORY EFFECTS OF THE IGNORANCE OF LAW: LAYPEOPLE’S AND EXPERTS’ JUDGMENTS [Katarina Kovacevic (Department of Cognitive Science, Central European University) and Piotr Bystranowski (Interdisciplinary Centre for Ethics, Jagiellonian University)]**

Exculpatory effects of the ignorance of law: Laypeople’s and experts’ Judgments

This work explores laypeople's intuitions on ignorance of law. An ancient legal maxim says that ignorance of the law is no excuse ("ignorantia iuris non excusat"). Legal philosophers question the moral acceptability of this maxim and criticize its inconsistency with the principles of imposing legal responsibility. However, less is known about how laypeople judge transgressors who are ignorant of the law. One of the rare studies shows that laypeople hold others responsible for not knowing the law (Bystranowski, 2024). On the other hand, many studies show that people are judged less harshly when they did not know the relevant facts (e.g. Kirfel & Hannikainen, 2023). What is it about ignorance of law that people find it non excusable? Bystranowski suggest that what drives the lack of exculpation for ignorance of law is the perception of rule's publicity, since legal rules are seen as broadly known. We can ask, however, whether people expect others to know the exact law, or just to act in a morally right way. People indeed often mistake the law expecting that the law prescribes what they personally think is right (Darley, Robinson, & Carlsmith, 2001), and some studies imply that they disapprove implementation of immoral laws (Engelman et al., 2024). In the current study, we plan to investigate the moderating effect of the legal violation's perceived moral wrongness on the exculpating effect of ignorance. We expect that the less morally wrong the violation is, the more exculpating it is to be ignorant. To investigate this, we employ a vignette study approach. Online recruited UK based Prolific participants first read a set of items in which agent's violated the law, and their task is to assess to what extent they think other people know about this law and whether it is morally wrong to do that action. Then, they read stories about actors who either knowingly or unknowingly violated some of the previously assessed laws. Different scenarios contain violation of laws that are as similar as possible in terms of publicity and severity of punishment, and different in moral wrongness. Participants are asked "To what extent do you agree with the following statements: a) The agent deserves blame for what they did; b) The agent deserves punishment for what he did." Answers are given on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 is "Completely disagree" and 7 is "Completely agree". We conducted a pilot study with three sets of 30 different behaviours that 60 UK based participants in total assessed regarding how morally wrong they are and whether they are legal in their country. The results have shown that there is a correlation of  $r = 0.4$  between the two measures. Cases that lower the correlation are items that are legal but immoral, such as cheating in a relationship. Interestingly, falsely believing that a certain behaviour is legal is more common in items that were rated lower in moral wrongness. These results give us an insight to what items we can select and use in the main study. This work will shed a light on the discrepancy between laypeople's intuitions and legal theory and practice. It will answer some, and open new questions. If ignorant violation of laws that are not perceived morally wrong are excused, should legal practitioners do anything to make the laws more aligned with people's moral intuitions? Moreover, if publicity remains the key to the non-

exculpatory effect, how can we remedy the widespread ignorance of law and deal with epistemic injustice?

**HOW TO IMPROVE CONSUMERS' UNDERSTANDING OF ONLINE LEGAL INFORMATION. INSIGHTS FROM A BEHAVIORAL EXPERIMENT [Alexander Wulf (Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford and SRH University of Applied Sciences Heidelberg, Campus Berlin)]**

Past research has shown that online information notices often fail to inform consumers well, even if transparency enhancing measures are implemented. However, the studies in question have employed research designs that were restricted to pre-contract conclusion scenarios and ad hoc, text-only attempts to optimize disclosures. While these results point to the general limitations of disclosures, they leave open whether optimizing information notices can be of substantial value to consumers in other settings. Our study tests the effectiveness of multimodal disclosure optimization techniques in both the pre- and post-contract conclusion scenarios. The post-contract conclusion scenario is the situation where a consumer has a dispute with a business. While this setting is not the primary target of disclosure legislation, it is a more realistic instance of the actual use of legal information online. Here the consumer has a real incentive to obtain information about his or her rights and obligations. We show that under these conditions, consumers do in fact read, retain and understand more when the attempt has been made to optimize disclosures.

**LAW AS A DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE: PRACTICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE GDPR IN AI-BASED BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS [Krete Paal (CEO of GDPR Register)]**

The meaning of the GDPR and other data protection norms is forged less in courtrooms than in product design meetings, business strategies, and daily operational choices. My talk will argue that in the context of artificial intelligence development, legal norms are actively re-interpreted and re-purposed by those who are not legal professionals- product managers, engineers, designers, and data protection officers. These actors transform the GDPR from a set of abstract rules into a development resource, one that constrains but also guides innovation. Drawing on my experience as CEO of GDPR Register, offering compliance software for clients in over 30 different countries, I will show how the practical meaning of “compliance” is co-produced through organizational priorities, technical possibilities, and role-specific understandings. In this process, the law is not merely followed; it is reshaped in order to fit development timelines, business models, and team

structures. The conclusion defended is that legal meaning emerges relationally within organizations- produced as much by engineers' and managers' pragmatic judgments as by formal legal texts or external enforcement.

**LAW'S LITTLE USERS: HOW CHILDREN UNDERSTAND EVERYDAY RULES [Ivar Rodríguez Hannikainen (Department of Philosophy I, University of Granada)]**

When adults interpret rules, they often balance the letter of the law against its broader spirit. Sometimes moral considerations guide adults to prioritize the rule's underlying purpose, and other times they enforce the rule's literal meaning in pursuit of group coordination. How does the capacity for discretion develop throughout childhood? In this talk, I will present new research on children's interpretation of codified rules, and explore what the findings reveal about the development of adult-like legal reasoning.

**LEGAL INTERPRETATION AND ITS EVOLUTIONS: A CASE FOR MINIMAL SEMANTIC REALISM [Elena Pedroni (Faculty of Philosophy, Sorbonne Université)]**

This paper addresses the issue of the *evolution* of legal interpretations. I advance the thesis that a *minimal* form of *semantic realism* (MSR)—understood in a specific sense to be clarified—is the only viable theoretical framework for explaining semantic changes within interpretive paradigms in a given legal system. The argument unfolds in three stages. In the first stage, I set out a fundamental opposition between two theoretical positions regarding legal interpretation. On one side stands a strict semantic formalism or *textualism*; on the other, a decisionism that presents itself as a form of *strong realism*. To this direct opposition, I add a third contender: a form of *pragmatism* that claims to resolve the problem of determining legal meaning by appealing to the *extra*-legal pragmatic context. The second stage demonstrates the *de facto* limitations of all three approaches through a close examination of two paradigmatic cases of jurisprudential reversal in French law which illustrate how interpretive shifts occur despite formal constraints. The point, then, is to test the various theoretical models of how meaning is fixed or altered over time within legal institutions against real-world interpretive practices. The core relevance of this inquiry to the conference theme lies in what this analysis reveals: namely, the problem of identifying the *source* of the new meaning attributed to a statutory provision in the context

of an interpretive reversal, which cannot be exhausted in the purely legal domain. This allows one to address the question of the structural and linguistically constrained mechanisms through which implicit *extra*-legal norms and beliefs—whether political, moral, or even aesthetic—become integrated *into* a legal system through interpretation. By examining a legal system that is neither rooted in common law nor grants judges broad freedom of interpretation, this analysis precisely pinpoints the boundary between pre-legal norms that guide—or even determine—interpretive acts, thereby shedding light on the dynamics of legal policy (*sensu* Kelsen). By exposing the insufficiency of the main competing theoretical frameworks in addressing this issue, I pave the way for demonstrating the necessity of the alternative framework I defend, i.e. MSR, which is presented and substantiated in the third stage. I begin by drawing an analogy with the structure of scientific revolutions, which, I argue, captures the common form of diachronic changes in legal interpretation. This helps to articulate the precise conceptual architecture of the framework, which requires, as a first step, adopting a theory of meaning and concepts inspired by the work of P. Gärdenfors. The resulting MSR perspective affords several advantages. First, it allows for a resolution—different from that offered by pragmatism—of the conflict between, on the one hand, an overly radical form of realism which becomes unrealistic (reducing interpretation to the judge’s arbitrary preferences, as if determined by “what they had for breakfast”), and, on the other hand, a rigid formalist literalism that proves inadequate for explaining hard cases. Second, it provides the conceptual tools to account for the precise structure of the process of normativization, thereby clarifying the evolution of its trajectories over time. Third, this conceptual framework can also be extended beyond judicial contexts, in other institutional environments—administrative bodies, regulatory agencies, and professional organisations—where legal meaning is in turn applied and transformed in accordance with the semantic structure highlighted by the MSR. By combining a rigorous structural analysis with a philosophically grounded account of meaning, the framework I propose aims to move beyond the limitations of existing interpretive theories and to offer a coherent, systematic account of how extra-legal norms are transformed into binding legal meaning through the practice of interpretation.

**LEGAL INTERPRETATION AS SOCIAL LEARNING: STABILITY AND DIVERGENCE ACROSS CONTEXTS [Karolina Prochownik (Faculty of Law and Administration, Jagiellonian University)]**

Laws are designed to communicate stable content across diverse users and settings. Yet their interpretation often diverges, raising disputes about meaning. This talk integrates recent research in experimental jurisprudence, cognitive science, and cultural evolutionary

theory to argue that our understanding of legal interpretation can be enriched by viewing it as a form of social and cultural learning. Interpretive practices are shaped by the interaction of social learning mechanisms—such as content, conformity, success, and prestige biases—and cultural attraction mechanisms involving psychological dispositions and environmental, institutional constraints. Together, these forces explain both the stability of legal interpretations within particular institutional populations and their divergence across contexts and over time. Viewing legal interpretation as a socially learned and culturally transmitted practice offers new tools for explaining, and potentially reducing, interpretive disagreements across contexts.

**LEGAL MEANING AND ORDINARY MEANING WITHIN MINIMAL SEMANTICS [Michał Wieczorkowski (Faculty of Law and Administration, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)]**

My presentation aims to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between legal meaning and ordinary meaning within the framework of Minimal Semantics. It begins with the observation that literal meaning alone does not determine legally correct outcomes. To explore this issue, the presentation examines two competing models that address how legal and ordinary meanings of an expression interact. The first model, which I term the disambiguation model, posits that legal meanings are conventionalized senses that contribute directly to the truth conditions of an utterance, co-existing on equal footing with their ordinary counterparts. On this view, an interpreter's task in a legal context is to select the relevant sense through a process of disambiguation. The second model, the implicaturist model, contends that ordinary meaning is primary. It holds that upon decoding the ordinary meaning of an utterance, pragmatic processes generate additional, legally relevant information in the form of implicature that is not relevant to the semantic interpretation of the uttered sentence. I will argue in favor of the disambiguation model, asserting that it offers more intuitive predictions regarding the use of disagreement markers and retraction requests. Although the linguistic evidence is subtle, I believe it nonetheless provides some support for this model. A standard method for distinguishing truth-conditional content from implicatures (at least conversational ones) is the cancellability test – assertoric content cannot be felicitously cancelled, while conversational implicatures can be. Thus, if legal information is conveyed via implicature, it should be cancellable. However, the felicity of cancelling legal information may be contentious, which motivates the use of an alternative test. In this regard, one may consider the following scenario: a court grants Sarah temporary guardianship of her 10-year-old niece, Lily. When Sarah arrives to collect the child, Lily's mother confronts her, claiming: "You have no right to take my child!" Subsequently, we can analyze the felicity of Sarah's potential non-exclusive responses:

1. What you said is false – here is a court's decision that grants me guardianship of Lily.
2. What you said is true, but here is a court's decision that gives me a right to take her.
3. You are required to take back what you said about me having no right to take Lily away from you.

The disambiguation model and the implicaturist model offer contrasting predictions. According to the disambiguation model, the word “right” has two distinct senses: an ordinary (e.g., moral) sense and a legal sense. Assuming that the context is sufficient to trigger the legal interpretation, this model predicts that the mother’s use of “right” would be understood legally, making her statement false and licensing Sarah’s request for retraction. Consequently, it predicts that linguistic agents would agree with Sarah’s responses in (1) and (3) and disagree with (2). In contrast, the implicaturist model assumes that “right” has a single ordinary (e.g., moral) meaning, making the mother's statement literally true. The legal interpretation is treated as a cancellable implicature. This model predicts that linguistic agents would agree with Sarah’s response in (2), where she concedes the literal truth while supplying the additional legal information, and disagree with (1) and (3). Intuitively, the direct disagreement and retraction responses (1 and 3) seem most natural and effective in this scenario. This intuition subtly supports the disambiguation model. The analysis thus indicates that legal meanings are best understood not as outcomes of secondary pragmatic processes, but as distinct, conventional senses that are contributing to truth conditions of uttered sentences. While this linguistic evidence is not conclusive, it may still provide a valuable contribution to the debate.

**MEANING UNDER PRESSURE: ROLE-BASED INCENTIVES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW [Alex Davies (Department of Philosophy, University of Tartu), Martin Aher (*Mind the Meaning*), Kurmet Kivipõld (School of Economics and Business Administration, University of Tartu), Maria Reile (Department of General Linguistics, University of Tartu), Nikolai Shurakov (Department of Philosophy, University of Zurich), Liis Soon (Department of Philosophy, University of Tartu)]**

The language of regulations appears in contracts between state actors (clients) and organizations to whom the state’s work has been subcontracted (service providers). The particular individuals responsible for interpreting and applying the laws as they appear in these contracts are subject systematically to different sets of incentives on their interpretation of said laws. An incentive inherent to such a contractual relationship is financial. The client pays the service provider to do work which results in compliance with the regulations. Let’s suppose this is a fixed payment relation: the client pays a fixed sum to

the service provider in return for service, and the service provider makes a profit insofar as their operational costs are lower than the fixed sum. In that case, hypothetically, we have a pair of opposing financial incentives operating on interpretation of the regulations by the client and the service provider. The stricter the interpretation of the regulations, the more service the client can demand for its fixed sum payment. But the stricter the interpretation of the regulations, the less profit the service provider makes out of the fixed sum payment it receives. Hypothetically, such a payment relationship thus incentivizes semantic disagreement between client and service provider.

This presentation explores the incentives on interpretation that can arise in such a contractual relationship. We focus on a case study: chapter 4 of the Estonian Road Condition Requirements Ordinance—which describes the requirements the roads should meet in the winter. Road owners (clients) outsource winter maintenance to maintenance firms (service providers). We identify two clauses of interest (the critical thickness clause and the countdown-start-time clause). If we assume a lump-sum payment mechanism, then we have underlying financial incentives which push clients towards strict interpretations and service providers towards lenient interpretations. We establish through experiment that these financial incentives can bend interpretations of the two clauses and then go on to investigate 3 further questions.

1. Can these underlying financial incentives to semantic disagreement be offset by manipulation of (a) the perceived purpose of the regulations and (b) enhanced oversight?
2. Can the service provider's incentive to favour a lenient interpretation be manipulated by changing whether the service provider has already violated the regulation on its stricter interpretation?
3. What happens to client and service provider interpretation when the payment mechanism switches from lump-sum to per-hour?

We will describe the results of our experiments and how they bear upon these questions.

**(META)CONTEXT IN SUPRANATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE: A LEGAL LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE [Jekaterina Nikitina (Department of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Mediations, University of Milan)]**

This study explores how context and metacontext shape the production and understanding of meaning in supranational human rights discourse as represented by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR), and the

African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACtHPR). The research frames each court as both a discourse community (Swales 1990) and a community of practice (Wenger 1998; Bhatia 2004), where shared communicative norms, interpretive routines, and translational practices collectively construct the "voice" of human rights case-law. In addition to different sociopolitical realia, these courts operate under distinct multilingual regimes, ranging from two official languages at the ECtHR, four at the IACtHR, and six at the ACtHPR, with the latter extending it to "any other African language" (Art. 27, Rules of Court). These linguistic frameworks are not neutral: they constitute part of the epistemic architecture within which legal interpretation operates. The study examines the use of specialized legal terms and phraseological patterns across the three courts, problematizing both convergent and divergent trends in the communication of legal knowledge. The interplay between terminology/phraseology and cognitive processes indicates that understanding terminology is crucial for knowledge acquisition and application in various disciplines (Kerremans et al. 2021). This supports Sager's (1990) perspective that terminology functions as a vital knowledge repository, essential for specialists who must navigate complex concepts and interrelations within their fields. Methodologically, the study builds on Prieto Ramos's (2014) taxonomy of legal terminology in international organizations and on works focusing on the ECtHR (Brannan 2013, 2018, 2023; Peruzzo 2019; Nikitina 2025), enriched by phraseological perspectives (Pontrandolfo 2023). It proposes a taxonomy of human rights terms and recurrent phraseological units, revealing a terminological–phraseological continuum across the three courts. English functions as a metacontextual lingua franca (Flikschuh 2011) that mediates between legal cultures, while translation and interpreting act as key sites of contextual negotiation and meaning transfer. Findings show that the discourse of these courts is shaped by (1) supranational terms from treaties and "jurisprudential creations" forged by judicial communities; (2) legal transplants reinterpreted through contextual adaptation, often yielding divergent understandings across courts; and (3) system-bound elements that migrate from national legal orders, sometimes preserved through bilingual or hybrid formulations. The study argues that these dynamics call for an integrated pedagogical approach – combining comparative law, legal linguistics, and translation studies (Biel 2024) – to train future jurists and translators as contextual mediators capable of making the law's meaning visible and intelligible across languages and legal systems. Given the interdisciplinary arena of the conference, the study aims to offer professionals coming from non-linguistic disciplines a renewed lens for understanding how law acquires meaning within and across linguistic communities. By situating legal interpretation within its broader communicative and institutional ecologies, it highlights that understanding law's context requires attention to its metacontext – the discursive, translational, and communal conditions that make legal meaning possible. This perspective does not replace

doctrinal or philosophical reasoning; it complements them by revealing the communicative infrastructures through which legal authority and understanding are co-produced.

### **READING BETWEEN THE LINES: A GRICEAN METHOD FOR ANALYSING CONSENT DOCUMENTS [Emmi Kaaya (Department of Philosophy, University of Tartu)]**

One of the central aims of informed consent is to enable a well-informed decision about a proposed action. In human subjects research, where informed consent is a foundational ethical principle, consent documents are a primary channel for conveying key information about participation. Assessing whether a consent document genuinely facilitates informed choice requires looking beyond its literal wording because inferential processes are inherent in linguistic communication: readers inevitably draw conclusions that go beyond what is explicitly stated.

To address this, a Gricean method of content analysis is introduced to examine key information about research participation is communicated to potential consent-givers. Drawing on Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicature, the method evaluates both what documents explicitly state and what they are likely to imply to their intended readership. It then assesses whether these implications are consistent with applicable law, ethical norms, or established biobank practice.

The method is illustrated through an analysis of consent documents from University Medicine Greifswald (Germany) and Helsinki Biobank (Finland), focusing on how the right to withdraw consent and the implications of exercising that right is communicated to potential sample donors. The analysis shows that both documents risk generating implicatures that overstate the scope of withdrawal.

By systematically examining both stated and implied content, the Gricean analysis reveals how written communications can convey meanings that extend beyond their explicit wording. Such misalignments often arise not from overt inaccuracies, but from the inferences an ordinary reader is likely to draw when information is incomplete, ambiguously phrased, or framed in ways that invite over-generalisation. Identifying these divergences provides a basis for evaluating the adequacy and accuracy of information disclosures. In doing so, the method not only assesses compliance with legal and ethical standards but also examines whether consent documents genuinely enable informed decision-making or risk undermining it through the implications they convey.

**STRANGE LAND: DISCRETIONARY POWER OF LABOUR INSPECTORS INSPECTING FOREIGN NON-WORKERS [Johanna Vanto, Lauri Salonen, Anne Alvesalo-Kuusi (Faculty of Law, University of Turku)]**

This paper draws on research regarding street-level bureaucracy to examine how occupational safety and health authorities exercise discretion in a novel legal context involving foreign wild berry pickers in Finland. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the paper explores data consisting of interviews with inspectors and inspection reports. The paper focuses on the application of the 2021 Berry Act (487/2021) during the period 2021–2023, between a phase of complete legal non-regulation (before 2021) and a regulatory policy shift that classified wild berry pickers as seasonal employees (2024 onwards). The Berry Act sought, among other objectives, to improve the position of the berry pickers. However, the unusual legal construction of the Berry Act ultimately entrenched the status of foreign berry pickers as non-employees working on tourist visas, collecting berries for berry companies in Finnish forests under so-called everyman's rights. The task of the occupational safety and health authorities was to conduct visits to the berry pickers' camps to verify that the berry-picking companies complied with the requirements of the Berry Act. Given that the pickers did not hold formal employment contracts, inspectors considered themselves as lacking the authority to oversee their wages and working hours. In this peculiar context, involving working non-workers, the usual approaches and routines of the occupational safety and health authorities did not apply. Inspectors operated in challenging and often confusing circumstances, under considerable time pressure. Inspections were frequently conducted late in the evening, in camps that may host dozens of pickers, leaving little opportunity to interview them when they are already tired and hungry. On some occasions, the camp had dispersed before the inspectors even arrived. In most cases, inspectors recorded multiple observations of non-compliance, reflecting the pervasive challenges of enforcing the law. The context and culture of inspection exhibits temporal and geographical variation, with inspectors identifying more instances of non-compliance in the beginning of the period studied and in areas subject to more frequent inspections. Building on Lipsky's (1980) foundational work and subsequent studies of street-level bureaucracy in contexts such as pandemics and other crises (e.g., Bao et al. 2023; Gofen & Lotta 2021; Alcadipani et al. 2020; Meza et al. 2020), this paper shifts attention from well-established discretionary routines to the micro-processes through which novel discretionary practices emerge when formal procedures and institutional scripts are absent. Focusing on an unusual setting marked by legal novelty, we trace how frontline workers navigate ambiguity, improvise, and sometimes fail to create workable order. In doing so, the study offers insight into how policies are enacted on the ground under conditions where rules are unsettled, complementing recent crisis-focused

research by detailing the mechanisms of practice formation in unchoreographed environments.

**The Scope of Legal Interpretation [Nicholas Allott (Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, University of Oslo) and Kevin Toh (Faculty of Laws, UCL and the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies)]**

There are some widely held views about legal interpretation and legal determinacy that we want to scrutinize and question. Some of the widely held views that we want to scrutinize appear to be premised on what could be called “communicata conceptions” of the law or legal facts. According to such conceptions, legal interpretation takes in legal texts (and contexts) as inputs, and turns out (pragmatically-enriched) meanings as outputs. Oftentimes, it turns out, meanings of legal texts do not by themselves enable judges to decide cases brought before them. Communicata conceptions of the law thus imply significant scopes for the non-interpretive part of adjudication in many cases, and they often go hand-in-hand with a view that the adjudicative remainder is picked up by judicial discretion, which consists of judges making legally unfettered choices among the multiple options left available by legal interpretation. As a part of a campaign against this package of commonly-held views, this paper is aimed at motivating a conception of the law or legal facts that is an alternative to communicata conceptions. Communicata conceptions are premised on the view that the law of a community consists of rules, broadly construed, and that these rules are meanings of legal texts. We argue that in addition to rules, we should admit examples or exemplars as constituents of the law of a community. And we argue that this enriched conception of legal facts has some surprising implications for the nature and scope of legal interpretation.