

RCSL NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON SOCIOLOGY OF LAW

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EDITORIAL

Why and How We Organize Meetings

The present issue of the RCSL Newsletter contains material about three meetings we will hold in the next future: – relating to this year's 2026 Annual Meeting, Santiago de Chile, 31 August–3 September, the call for travel grants applications (**deadline closing next Monday 25 May**; p. 3), and an introduction to the Law and Society Group of Chile (p. 10) ; – details about the 2027 XXI ISA Congress, Gwangju, Korea 4–10 July 2027 (next deadline: **closing of the call for session proposals, 25 June**; p. 4), in which RCSL will participate with the ambition to establish bridges between this congress and the 2027 Global Law & Society Meeting, Hong Kong, 22–25 June; – a call for expressions of interest in hosting the 2028 RCSL Meeting (**deadline 15 July**; p. 5). And this issue also contains a substantial section presenting calls relating to meetings of interest for the socio-legal research community (p. 12).

Considering these contents, it makes sense here to reflect on what it means to organize meetings, which is one of the main activities of entities like the RCSL.

A possible starting point, inspired by Habermas – to whom we must pay tribute in this issue (p. 8) – is to remember that what generates our modern human agency – certain social groupings, a certain notion of individuality, a certain relationship to the world, languages – is produced to a significant extent by

CONTENTS

Editorial.....	1
2026 Podgórecki Prize – Call for Nominations	3
2026 Santiago de Chile RCSL Meeting – Travel Grants	3
2027 ISA Congress.....	4
2028 RCSL Annual Meeting.....	5
RCSL on LinkedIn	5
Interview with Camilo Umaña.....	6
In Memoriam Jean Van Houtte (1934–2025).....	7
Jürgen Habermas – A tribute coming from the sociology of law.....	8
Working Group Reports:	
RCSL WG Digitalisation, AI and Society	9
Introducing Institutions:	
Law and Society Group of Chile.....	10
Introducing Research Projects:	
Algonormative Expectations	10
Podcast Spotlight:	
Doing Time, Talking Crime	11
Working Definition	12
The Migration Oxford Podcast	12
Book Reviews – Call for Contributions.....	12
Calls and Upcoming Events.....	12
RCSL Board, Working Groups, Office Address	16

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what happens in social interaction; social interaction, however, is necessarily temporary, and its outcome very fragile. This is why we learned to develop mechanisms likely to intensify the experience generated by interaction, and to favour the memory and the portability of its results. Meetings combine several of such mechanisms. Three categories of them are worth a mention here.

- Firstly **organization**, in the sense of planned collective action. Carrying out an explicitly planned activity creates conditions for the people involved to experience themselves collectively as a group with certain characteristics, and individually as persons with a certain position and role in that group. In the case of the organization of meetings, one may distinguish two main sets of activities: the preparation, and the taking place of meetings. Throughout these two phases, moments are defined, during which certain roles have to be played, obliging all participants to pay attention to the fact that they are convening, to prepare meetings, or to contribute to a meeting (drafting calls, submitting proposals, evaluating proposals, composing contributions, scheduling sessions, and so on; opening panels, chairing panels, presenting papers, discussing papers, and so on). In some of these moments in particular, the participants will have the opportunity to experience in concrete terms the group to which they belong, by participating in sessions in which a significant part of the members of the group are also present. This is likely to produce a concrete memory of the group's reality.

- Secondly **written material**, naming the moments of interaction, the participants, the contents of their interactions; and giving an account of what took place during a certain moment. Such written material shapes and specifies the experiences collected in the organized interaction and helps their later reference in other contexts. Belonging to this material: statutes of the group, presentations of the meeting's topic - a good example: the introduction to the theme of the Santiago de Chile RC SL Meeting of this year: see <https://rcsl2026.udp.cl/>; programme books; papers to be presented, or later to be included in proceedings or other publications; testimonies of participants, as those to be found in other issues of this newsletter. The other way round, what happens in meetings gives substance to the notion we have about people, meeting in person the colleagues named in papers and programmes, as well as, at another level, the notion we have about certain themes and concepts, witnessing what certain words we know from the texts do in our discussions. A circle between discourses and interactions which may be particularly productive

when it comes to give meetings a title. By the way: let us here notice that this circle is currently challenged by the development of algorithmic tools, an evolution tackled by a research project introduced in this issue (p. 10).

- Thirdly **a place**, offering facilities, surrounded by a local environment, this environment being part of a country, of a region of the world, providing a specific context for the organized interaction, as well as for the interactions taking place before, between, and after the moments of organized interaction (something offered only by in-person meetings). This context is likely to favour or condition gatherings and conversations, to inspire part of the topics tackled in the communication which will take place in formal sessions and other gatherings. Regarding the places of its meetings, RC SL currently experiences two quite different situations. On the one hand, it has the privilege of being in the condition to organize a series of meetings at the same place: Oñati, in the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain, where the International Institute for the Sociology of Law is located, the creation of which is evoked in the present issue in the obituary for Jean Van Houtte, who signed as RC SL President the foundational protocol concluded with the Basque Government in 1988 (p. 7). This stable meeting location strongly favours links between successive events, as well as, to some extent, familiarity between participants, who share, beyond a common domain of scientific interest, the memories of a certain place, its customs, its history, its current characteristics, which is likely to strengthen the basis of the communication between them (see in this issue the interview of the current IISL Scientific Director, Camilo Umaña, p. 6). On the other hand, we find ourselves, precisely in these years, facing the challenge of organizing our annual meetings from year to year in very different places: after some meetings in Europe, one in North Africa (2025), one this year in Latin America, and two the next year 2027 in East Asia (to be noted that some Working Groups are organizing meetings in Europe during this period; see in this issue the initiatives of WG Digitalization, IA and Society, p. 9). It is definitely a challenge to establish an effective continuity between meetings taking place in such different locations. At the same time, it is by succeeding in establishing this continuity that we may confirm our identity as a scientific association operating internationally; aiming at being a component of the world society.

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2026 PODGÓRECKI PRIZE

Call for Nominations Now Open

The [Podgórecki Prize](#) is awarded annually by the RCSL for outstanding achievements in socio-legal research. It recognises, in alternate years, distinguished and outstanding lifetime achievements, and outstanding scholarship by a socio-legal researcher at an earlier stage of her/his career.



Adam Podgórecki (photo used with permission from the Oscar Halecki Institute, Canada)

In 2026 the RCSL Jury Committee for the Podgórecki Prize calls for nominations for the Prize for emerging socio-legal scholars who have published one or more significant works within no more than 10 years of their doctorate. The prize for emerging socio-legal scholars is a commemorative certificate, 8 years of complimentary RCSL membership, and participation as observer in the RCSL Board from summer 2026 to summer 2028.

Nominations require the support of at least two members of the RCSL, and should include the candidate's CV and a brief letter of support signed by the nominators. Members of the 2026 Jury Committee are not allowed to sign as nominators. It is desirable, but not essential, that nominees are members of RCSL. Previous nominees may be re-nominated in this 2026 round, with updated letters of support and CVs. The Jury Committee does not have access to previous correspondence or reviews.

Publications may be in any language. For works in languages other than those familiar to the Jury Committee, the nominations should give an indication of the value of the work and provide selected translations. To consider works in less well-known languages, the Jury Committee may co-opt and consult other RCSL members.

Further information may be found at <https://rcsl.hypotheses.org/adam-podgorecki-prize>

Nominations should be sent to the Chair of the Jury Committee, Adam Czarnota, to be received **by midnight GMT on 25 July 2026**, with copy to Laura Noemi Lora, RCSL Secretary (rcsl@iisj.es).

The 2026 Jury Committee is composed of:

- Adam Czarnota, Sydney, Australia (Chair)
- Ole Hammerslev, Odense, Denmark,
- Renata Almeida Da Costa, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

The prize will be awarded at the **2026 RCSL Meeting, Santiago de Chile 31 August to 3 September**.

Adam Czarnota

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2026 SANTIAGO DE CHILE RCSL MEETING

Travel Grants

The preparation of the 2026 Santiago de Chile RCSL Meeting (<https://rcsl2026.udp.cl/>) is well on the way and a first version of its complete programme has recently been published. It is now time for potential participants to deal with their travel and accommodation arrangements.



As in other years, RCSL will support the travel costs of some of the students and post-docs participating in the 2026 Meeting.

Application deadline: May 25, 2026

Applications must be sent by the applicants to Laura Noemi Lora, RCSL Secretary and Chair of the 2026 RCSL Santiago de Chile Meeting Travel Grants Committee, at lauranoemilora@derecho.uba.ar

To be eligible, applications must include:

- The application form, duly filled in and signed;
- A copy of the email received from the RCSL Santiago Conference 2026 Local Organizing Committee (rcsl2026@mail.udp.cl) notifying the acceptance of the abstract submitted by the applicant;
- A copy of the applicant's passport;
- A document certifying the current place of residence of the applicant (if outside the country issuing the passport; for example, a document issued by a student residence, or similar);

• For post-docs, a document certifying the date of the PhD defence.

Eligible applications will be ranked according to the status of participant and the country of origin, following the order already adopted for the ISA registration grant call:

- Students from C countries
- Students from B countries
- Students from A countries
- Post-doc researchers from C countries (up to three years after PhD)
- Post-doc researchers from B countries (up to three years after PhD)
- Post-doc researchers from A countries (up to three years after PhD)

Grant amounts:

- Latin America: 2 grants - USD 400
- Central & North America: 2 grants - USD 700
- Other parts of the world: 4 grants - USD 1,000

Once the minimum number of grants is allocated, the Student Grant Committee shall ensure a fair re-distribution between these three regions if required by the number of eligible applications.

The ranking and the final selection, considering the justification of the demand, if necessary, will be established by the Student Travel Grant Committee, in principle by **June 10, 2026**.

The Committee includes:

- Laura Noemi Lora - Argentina (chair)
- Julia Dahlvik - Austria
- Jeanne Hersant - Chile
- Edvaldo Moita - Brazil

The grant allocated will be paid to the beneficiaries upon presentation of the corresponding travel and accommodation invoices, with the amount to be paid limited to the amount of these invoices.

By applying for a travel grant, applicants declare their availability to write a short report about an aspect of the 2026 Santiago de Chile RC SL Meeting for the RC SL Newsletter.

2027 ISA CONGRESS

Gwangju, Korea, 4-10 July 2027

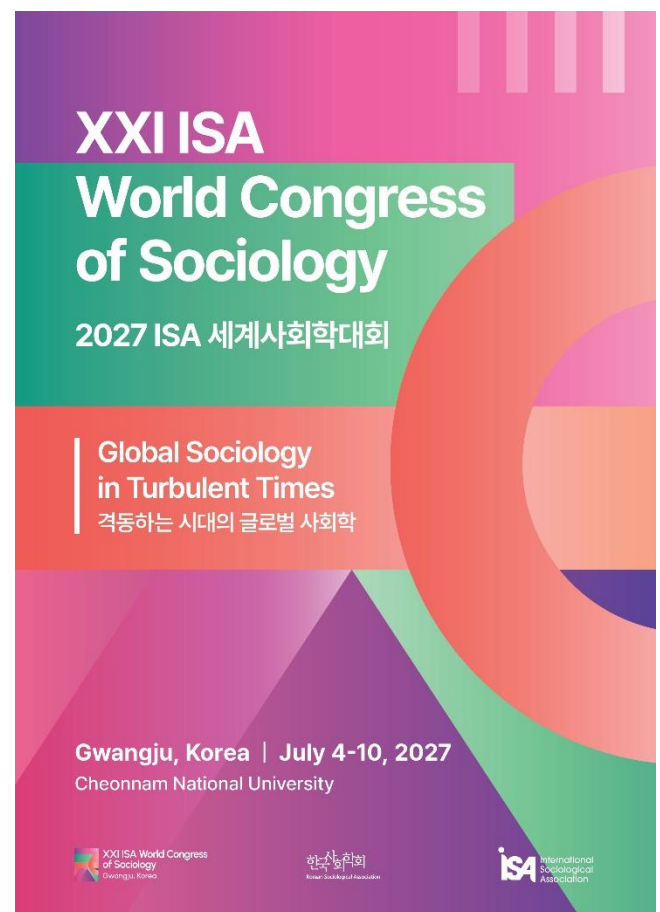
Complete information on this event has been recently published in the ISA Website: [XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology](#).

The theme of the Congress will be **Global Sociology in Turbulent Times**.

There certainly are narrow connections between this theme and what could be considered as priorities in

the present sociology of law agenda - see the editorial to the last issue of this Newsletter [Sociology of Law as an International Undertaking](#).

One important contribution of RC SL to this congress could be to discuss the links between Global Sociology and International Law. A discussion to the preparation of which RC SL will be excellently qualified after having devoted its 2026 Meeting to the theme **The Democratic Rule of Law in World Society**. Actually, this 2026 theme also places RC SL in a favourable position to establish bridges between the theme of the congress and the history of Gwangju, the city - to quote the ISA Call - "marked by South Koreans' historic struggle for democracy".



An important issue has been the Coordination of the RC SL Programme in Gwangju. It was highly advisable to entrust it to somebody based in Korea, while RC SL hasn't had any connection to that country up to now. Masayuki Murayama and I approached our colleague **Masaki Iwasaki**, Professor at Seoul National University, active and very well networked in the socio-legal domain. I am extremely pleased to announce here that he kindly accepted our invitation and will act as RC SL **Programme Coordinator**. To take advantage of the experience of the RC SL Participation at the 2025 ISA Forum in Rabat, I will act as Co-Coordinator.

Just as in the case of the 2025 Rabat Forum, an **RCSL Gwangju Sessions Programme Committee** will be set up by the RCSL Executive Committee. Volunteers are invited to contact Laura Lora, RCSL Secretary (rcsl@iisl.es).

You will find detailed [guidelines](#) for the preparation of the Gwangju Congress, including a complete timeline, on the ISA-Website. For the moment, three dates are to be carefully kept in mind (remember that it is constant practice of ISA not to extend announced deadlines):

25 June 2026 Deadline for the submission of **Session Proposals**. This deadline concerns in the first place the Working Group chairs, but other interested RCSL members may submit proposals. The challenge is to propose topics which imaginatively specify the Congress theme by linking it to the domains of a WG or to other relevant socio-legal issues.

28 September 2026 Deadline for **Integrative Sessions Proposals**, which have to be submitted by at least three Research Committees (or ISA Working Groups or Thematic Groups) or National Associations. This concerns mainly the Programme Organisation and the RCSL Governing Bodies, but suggestions emanating from RCSL Members, ideally based on previous contacts with colleagues from other Research Committees, would be extremely helpful. Do not hesitate to send them to us.

14 October 2026 Deadline for **Abstract Proposals**, which will have to be linked to the sessions selected. One last point: Don't forget that this ISA Congress will take place a few days after the **Hong Kong Global Law & Society Meeting 22-25 June 2027**. It might be worth to find ways of combining the participation in these two events – in particular for RCSL Members based in regions of the world distant from East Asia. The proximity between the two events will be taken into account by the organizers, in order to bring about productive thematic complementarities, and to design an exciting **RCSL 2027 Double Meeting**.

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2028 RCSL ANNUAL MEETING

Call for expressions of interest as host of the 2028 RCSL Annual Meeting

In 2027 two World Meetings involving RCSL will take place, **VIII Global Law & Society Meeting** and **XXI ISA Congress**, both in East Asia. RCSL has to take

advantage of the proximity in time and space between these two meetings, in order to favour a strong participation of members based in other regions of the world, and thereby an effective contribution to these two World Meetings.

Under these conditions, it appears preferable not to organise one more RCSL meeting in that year 2027. So the next RCSL Annual Meeting in its usual format will take place in **2028**. After meetings in North Africa, Latin America and East Asia, it could make sense to organize that 2028 meeting in **Europe**, but other regions of the world could be considered. To warrant the best possible conditions for taking the decision on the venue of RCSL 2028, the RCSL Board, at its meeting of 16 March 2026, decided to open the present call. Statements of interest should be sent to Laura Lora, RCSL Secretary (rcsl@iisl.es) by **15 July 2026**, identifying the proponent, who has to be affiliated or regular RCSL Member, and the institution to which she/he is affiliated, indicating the institution considered to host the event, as well as possible dates, and supplying a short justification of the place proposed, giving in particular an account of activities in sociology of law carried out at that place.

The Board will take its decision on the basis of the expressions of interest received at the 2026 Santiago de Chile RCSL Meeting.

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RCSL ON LinkedIn



We are pleased to announce the launch of the official LinkedIn page of the Research Committee on Sociology of Law (RCSL), which you can visit and (follow!) using this link: [RCSL on LinkedIn](#)

This new platform is intended to complement our Newsletter by providing a space for more timely updates. Here, we will share news from our working groups and members, highlight issues of common academic interest, and circulate announcements that benefit from more immediate dissemination – as

well as divulging the contents of the Newsletter itself in a LinkedIn format.

If you would like us to share or repost any, you may do so by contacting us through LinkedIn's messaging system or by emailing the editors directly.

Luisa Hedler
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INTERVIEW WITH CAMILO UMAÑA

Scientific Director of the IISJ

The International Institute for the Sociology of Law (IISJ) recently welcomed Camilo Umaña as its new Scientific Director, who brings extensive experience not only in research, but policy making and advocacy to the role. In this conversation, he reflects on his research trajectory, his longstanding relationship with the Institute, and the challenges and opportunities ahead for socio-legal scholarship.



Camilo Umaña

Could you tell us about your current research interests, and what draws you to the IISJ?

Thank you for inviting me to speak! I have mainly worked in three areas: Transitional justice and peace studies; drug policies and organized crime; and access to justice related to the prison system and the criminal systems. While these three different research topics might seem very broad, what connects them and makes them cohesive is the focus of bringing a more action-oriented agenda to socio-legal studies. It is about social justice, and how socio-legal studies can help us not only illuminate theory, but also bring about a better framework for action, and actually trying to challenge structures of injustice.

Of course! And it feels like action and impact are sorely needed in the current global context.

It is increasingly urgent, indeed, especially in a context of rising authoritarian regimes, ongoing armed conflicts, and rapid technological developments, including in warfare. There is a lack of reflective public policies to address those issues, and to attempt to make a more inclusive world. We need to think, again and again, about strategies to create a better impact in terms of social justice.

In a more light-hearted tone: you have a long relationship with the Institute – what are your links with it?

I first came to Oñati as a master's student about 15 years ago, and since then I have realized how much of a special experience it was to study there, to conduct research and think about socio-legal studies at the institute. That is not only because you get a solid understanding of theory, of methodologies, but also for the exchanges with a broad network of different people. Oñati is a rather isolated small town in the middle of the mountains in the Basque country, but at the same time it is a meeting point for researchers from all over. In this rather small space, you learn to know people not only through their work, but through personal exchanges and coexistence. Especially in these times, where many institutions are larger and more online-focused, I especially value the sense of collectivity, cohesiveness and community that you get.

In this sense, coming back to the Institute as Scientific Director is simply a gift. Just this year, we have around 13 workshops, with 20 to 25 people in each one; over 50 people as visiting scholars, and the Master students... If you start adding them all up, there is a lot of people coming with very particular interests. It's not the greatest party destination, but it's a great place to meet people who have this quality of being focused on the socio-legal field, and who have their minds open to exchanges.

How do you see the relationship between the Institute's global outlook and its local setting in the Basque Country?

It's a very interesting balance, and not always easy to achieve. The Basque Country offers a rich context for research—whether on multiculturalism, legal pluralism, peacebuilding, or migration and so on. So building a link to the local life is very important, especially because I often say that the campus is the town itself: you work in the Institute, but also in cafés, in the plaza, in conversation with others. This creates a very immersive and productive environment, where people are focused, open to exchange, and deeply engaged in their work. The immersion on the

environment itself – the mountains, the nature, the town – makes for a very involving environment, where many people have reported being very productive.

In your role as Academic Director, what do you see in your path ahead? What are the opportunities and challenges you face in this role?

One key challenge is ensuring that socio-legal studies remain relevant to the pressing issues of our time, while also producing knowledge that endures. We need to build theories, but also methodologies and data that can support better decision-making in different contexts. Another important issue is how to engage with new technologies—using them to improve research and teaching, without losing critical thinking or depth.

There is also the question of how to foster meaningful dialogue in increasingly polarized societies. We need to create spaces for exchange that do not reproduce hate or exclusion, but instead encourage constructive engagement across differences. Issues of communicating socio-legal knowledge are also very important: while we have a very good academic journal ourselves, the audience for this type of communication is quite endogamic. We need to open up our knowledge to a wider public, to make it accessible and relevant beyond academia. This is not only a matter of research impact, but for the role that knowledge plays in shaping public debate and political choices.

Funding is also a key question – while war endeavours are quite well-funded, there is not a lot of money invested in innovating for peace building justice-led initiatives. So if we don't have the same amount of resources, we really need to think about preserving our human resources, the people that can think and take ideas into action.

But despite the challenges, I see great opportunity with what we have in the Institute, especially with its focus on exchange between people, collective interaction. While it is a challenge in itself to find the balance between maintaining the good things we have while adapting to the current times, I think if we manage to preserve these characteristics, we are preserving something unique that can help us not only to survive, but also to be more and more relevant in today's society.

Interview conducted by Luisa Hedler
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IN MEMORIAM JEAN VAN HOUTTE (1934–2025)

On November 22, 2025, Jean Van Houtte passed away in Antwerp, Belgium. Without a doubt, he holds iconic significance for the institutional development of the sociology of law in Belgium and far beyond. As a socially engaged student of law and criminology at Ghent State University, his interest in modern post-war empirical sociology gradually increased. This led to a sociological dissertation at the Catholic University of Leuven on "the problem of church attendance in the Ghent agglomeration" (1963). A few years later, he traded the sociology of religion for a similar social scientific approach to another normative domain of society, namely law. Whether studying religion or law, his perspective remained unchanged: sociology is an empirical science that starts from social problems. This inspired multiple research topics including the timely payment of alimony allowances, delay in administration of justice, demographics of the legal profession and legal aid for low-income families.



Jean Van Houtte (archive image © Universiteit Antwerpen)

As a young sociology professor, Jean Van Houtte introduced the sociology of law into the law curriculum in Antwerp. In 1972, he established the Center for Sociology of Law (CRS) at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at UFSIA (University of Antwerp). As director of the CRS, he worked with strategic insight to strengthen the discipline nationally and internationally. For instance, the Annual Meeting of the RCSL was hosted twice by the CRS in Antwerp. Those present might remember the garden party he threw at his family house. Conversely, Jean Van Houtte and his team hardly skipped any of the annual meetings abroad. In his view, sociology of law was inherently cross-border – and the RCSL and Oñati were two perfect platforms.

Jean Van Houtte was always eager to translate his substantive interest in the sociology of law into institutional connections. After meeting Renato Treves and Adam Podgórecki at the 6th ISA World Congress in Evian (1966), he became a member of the RCSL. In 1974, Jean Van Houtte was elected secretary, and in 1980, president. He held that position until 1990. One of his latest acts as president was the founding of the IISL: in 1988, the Basque government and the RCSL signed the protocol for the creation of the International Institute for the Sociology of Law (IISL) in the old university building of Oñati. Incidentally, at the time, he held the pen as Rector Magnificus of UFSIA; Jean Van Houtte always had a knack for administration and policy.

But even more than for his administrative and sociological achievements, Jean will be remembered for the unique way in which he fulfilled these roles. Endless discussions were not his style. He much preferred to focus on personal connections and cultural enrichment. From Toronto to Tokyo, from Budapest to Brisbane, legal sociologists that had the pleasure of knowing him personally will forever associate Jean with fine dining, wine and art. Jean Van Houtte embodied the ideal type of the professor-for-life, a calling rather than a profession. In his eyes, his 90th birthday was the perfect occasion to organize a workshop on the "sociological heritage of law at the University of Antwerp." His declining health meant he had to miss his own reception, but that didn't stop him from continuing to work on the publication of the presentations and findings from that seminar afterward.

Jean bade farewell to this world at the age of 91, but his unstoppable drive and jest will live on in the many lives he touched. His quest for human connection and his intellectual sharpness will remain a source of inspiration.

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JÜRGEN HABERMAS

A tribute, coming from the sociology of law

Having the function of representing scholars and researchers active all around the world in the fieldwork of sociology of law, RCSL has strong and specific reasons to participate in the tribute paid to Jürgen Habermas by what experienced itself at that

occasion as a world public sphere, after he passed away on last 14 March at the age of 96.

As a matter of fact, throughout his whole career, Habermas remained distant from the socio-legal field, as a differentiated scientific domain. A distance to which he gave expression by not accepting André-Jean Arnaud's invitation to visit the Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law. A distance that might be linked to, on the one hand, his aim to understand modern society as a whole – which led him to avoid any specialization excessively focusing on specific components of that society – and, on the other hand, his will to actively participate, as a citizen-philosopher, in the political arena – which led him to renounce the distanced position of an observer.



Jürgen Habermas (© Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian)

Despite that distance, however, there were phases of narrow contacts between Habermas's work and the socio-legal domain. At a critical moment in the elaboration of his theory of communicative action, looking for ways of illustrating his main conclusions, he focused on the role of the law in modern society. And he did so after his attention had been attracted by research carried out at that time on the issue of juridification. Taking that research into account, he produced the chapter "Tendencies toward Juridification" of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (German original publication 1981; English translation 1987), which he presented, later on, at a workshop organized by Gunther Teubner at the European University Institute in Florence on "Dilemmas of Law in the Welfare State" (book published 1986), under the title «Law as Medium and Law as Institution». The most substantial output of this period during which he mainly worked on the law was his book *Faktizität und Geltung / Between Fact and Norms* (German original publication 1981; English translation 1987), recently qualified as one of the "key works" in the domain of sociology of law (see the volume *Soziologische Theorien des Rechts – Eine Einführung an Hand von Schlüsseltexten*, 2024, edited by Alfons Bora and

Andrea Kretschmann). The discussion of this book in the United States, in 1992, gave rise to a critical exchange between Habermas and Niklas Luhmann, himself at that time finalizing *Das Recht der Gesellschaft – Law as a Social System* (German original publication 1993; English translation 2004). This exchange is well documented by the contributions of both authors to the volume *Habermas on Law and Democracy* published some years later (1998, edited by Michel Rosenfeld and Andrew Arato). It personifies broader theoretical tensions which for decades shaped social sciences, in particular in their approach of the law.

The work published during that period, as well as later books and papers, among them those concerned with deliberative democracy, with Europe, or with the constitution of world society, left us a complex set of hypotheses about law in modern society. Hypotheses resulting from a merger between sociological approaches to the law, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the results of controversies with influential philosophers, as well as of analyses developed in the debate of contemporary issues – such as, among others, the Reunification of Germany, the 9/11 Attacks, or the Second Gulf War. And always formulated with that main concern, motivated by the experience of World War II: to understand and to contribute to the efforts, never sufficient, in most cases far from successful, on the way to establishing democratic togetherness at the scales of Germany, Europe, and of the World. Hypotheses, to refer some of them, about the ambivalent role of the law between institutionalizing human subjects and framing the activity of complex organizations; about the way law is likely to contribute to the production of legitimate shared norms, by structuring discussions; about the diversity of the styles of legal reasoning conditioning the professional application of the law, what he called legal paradigms; about the distance and indispensable mediation between professional and lay knowledge about the law; about the relevance of the interactions between the law and other cultural spheres (like science and art) for the construction of complex societies.

Such hypotheses certainly have the potential to inspire research. But the theory of society to the construction of which they contribute also might allow us – to paraphrase the title of one the most famous papers of Habermas – to practice sociology of law in a way that could answer his above evoked reservations concerning this domain, with his help. Habermas left us elements of a theory helpful to discuss the places of science and of law in society, which gives us means to reflect our position as

researchers, as well as the position of the law we study as researchers. This might enable us both to specialize in the study of one specific domain of society, the law, and to meaningfully connect the results of research on that particular domain with broader efforts of understanding contemporary world society as a whole. And this might enable us to meaningfully separate and reconnect our roles of researchers and of citizens.

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WORKING GROUPS REPORTS

RCSL WG Digitalisation, AI and Society

The Working Group on Digitalisation, AI and Society has been quite active – both online and in person –, and addressing the relationship between law, society and the development of new technologies through many different angles.

We have had two webinars: in December 2025, Stefan Larsson and Julia Dahlvik hosted a talk on *AI Impacts on Poverty* with Michele Gilman, Professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law, USA, followed up by a recent one in May 5th, where we invited Cari Hyde-Vaamonde and Julia Dahlvik to talk about their contributions to the forthcoming Encyclopaedia on Sociology of Law.

Moreover, the working group is developing a new research line at the International Institute of Sociology of Law, researching AI and new technologies, under the coordination of Germano Schwartz (LaSalle) and Stefan Larsson (Lund University).

You can read more about the details and how to get involved here: <https://www.iisj.net/node/9015>

There has also been a recent workshop at Oñati with the subject *Democracy At Risk: Algornormative Expectations and the Threat of Digital Oligarchies*, between 29-30 of April, where Germano Schwartz and Renata Almeida da Costa hosted scholars working at universities in 4 continents, and ranging from theoretical contributions of the introduction of actuarial logic into the functioning of the legal system, to the empirical and specific role of child caregivers in interacting with care robots.

As for future activities, aside from hosting panels at the next RCSL meeting in Santiago do Chile, there is also an AI Lund event at Lund university, which will take place on **October 6th** – *The EU AI Act in Context*:

Implementation, Interaction, and Global Developments.

More information [here](#).

Stefan Larsson
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INTRODUCING INSTITUTIONS

Law and Society Group of Chile

The Law and Society Group of Chile brings together researchers from various universities and institutions across the country who are interested in the empirical, critical, and interdisciplinary study of law as a social phenomenon. Since its establishment in 2017, it has consolidated itself as one of the clearest expressions of the growth of this field in Chile and of the institutionalization process of a field that, for a long time, occupied a marginal position compared to more dogmatic or formalist approaches.

The Law and Society Group, despite not being a formal association, has organized four congresses since 2018. Congress I, held in Viña del Mar, was the inaugural milestone that brought together a diversity of researchers who, until then, were developing socio-legal research in relatively isolated ways. Congress II, held in 2019 in Rancagua, allowed for strengthening and expanding the group's researcher network, projecting its work toward Latin America. Following a recess period marked by the pandemic, the III and IV congresses, held in Santiago in 2024 and in Concepción in 2025, respectively, demonstrated the consolidation of a more robust network of researchers in the country, with the co-organization of academics from various universities, including the University of Chile, the University of Concepción, Alberto Hurtado University, O'Higgins University, the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, and Adolfo Ibáñez University.

The group's consolidation process has been accompanied by thematic expansion. Thus, classic areas of socio-legal research, present since the first congress, such as access to justice, legal professions, legal pluralism, gender, and criminology, have diversified in subsequent congresses with topics such as environment, territories and legal geographies, transitional justice, and cultural studies on law. In this way, the group serves as a space for developing diverse and new research agendas, reflecting the transformations of the socio-legal field itself.

Overall, the Law and Society Group Chile reflect the transition toward a growing recognizable, diverse, and connected community that includes researchers throughout the country. Alongside the group's consolidation, its members have become increasingly active within international scientific networks and are eagerly looking forward to the RCSL's annual meeting in Santiago de Chile, this coming September.

Ignacio Riquelme,
Universidad de O'Higgins, Rancagua, Chile
 Jeanne Hersant,
P. Universidad Católica de Chile

INTRODUCING RESEARCH PROJECTS

Algonormative Expectations

It is commonplace to state that algorithms are omnipresent in the communications of global society. Indeed, while they function as mechanisms for reducing complexity, algorithms also increase it. Because they structure and filter decisions, algorithms also guide behaviour. Therefore, they influence not only cognitive expectations, but normative expectations as well.

The research project *Algonormative Expectations* is grounded in this problem and proposes to examine it through three sociological theories applied to law. The first is Niklas Luhmann and his theory of social systems; the second is Håkan Hydén and his idea of society as norm; and the third is Elena Esposito and her understanding of algorithms as virtual communication partners. Its central hypothesis maintains that algorithms, as forms of artificial communication, can influence normative expectations, giving rise to what are termed algonormative expectations.

The project has four main objectives: (i) to identify the conditions under which algonormative expectations emerge; (ii) to empirically demonstrate their existence in contemporary legal practices; (iii) to develop analytical tools for their observation; and (iv) to analyse how the legal system can absorb and process such expectations. Methodologically, the project adopts a functionalist approach, consistent with Luhmannian theory, based on comparing functionally equivalent solutions to systemic problems.

One of the project's key proposals lies in its empirical dimension, as it seeks to confirm its hypotheses through empirical methods, addressing one of the major criticisms often directed at systems theory, namely, that it lacks practical applicability. The project will investigate the use and presence of algorithms in Generative Artificial Intelligence tools employed by the judiciary in decision-making processes. It will also seek to demonstrate problems of opacity in the governance of digital platforms and their consequences for technology-mediated labor relations and the circulation of communication. In doing so, it aims to make clear the interdependence between typical legal operations and algorithms, showing how they become part of both the operational closure and the cognitive openness of the legal system.

The project is carried out by an international network of researchers affiliated with institutions in Brazil and Europe, including Univ. La Salle (Germano Schwartz and Emerson Wendt), Lund Univ. (Håkan Hydén), Copenhagen Business School (Luisa Hedler Ferreira Fjellander), and Aalborg Univ. (Stine Nielsen), among other Brazilian institutions: Univ. Federal de Pernambuco (Artur Stamford), Faculdade de Direito Milton Campos (Carlos Rohrmann), Univ. Federal de Goiás (Arnaldo Bastos Santos Neto), Univ. Federal da Bahia (Wálber Carneiro), and FMU (Irineu Barreto).

The project is funded by Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), under grant number 49195/2024-3, and is hosted by Universidade La Salle. It began in 2025 and will conclude in 2028, with annual events scheduled for 2026 in São Paulo, 2027 in Canoas, and 2028 in Copenhagen, where intermediate and final results will be presented, including articles, podcasts, and a book.

The project also engages directly with the Research Line *AI and New Technologies* of the International Institute for the Sociology of Law, co-led by Germano Schwartz and Stefan Larsson of Lund University, by investigating the impacts of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on legal communication and normativity. Anyone interested in joining the project may follow the Instagram profile [@algonormativity](#) or write to germano.schwartz@me.com

Germano Schwartz

This text was written in Portuguese by Germano Schwartz, the project leader, and then translated into English by an AI, before undergoing human revision by the author himself.

PODCAST SPOTLIGHT

In the 'Podcast Spotlight' section, we highlight audio resources that engage with socio-legal scholarship, methodological approaches, and substantive issues relevant to our community. Each newsletter features selected podcasts that showcase innovative research, stimulating conversations, and the work of scholars within or relevant to our field, offering members an additional way to engage with current debates and developments in sociology of law.

"Doing Time, Talking Crime" from Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law

For scholars interested in the empirical and theoretical dimensions of criminal law, public law, and criminology, "Doing Time, Talking Crime" offers a window into cutting-edge research at one of Europe's leading institutions in these fields.



In each episode, researchers from the Institute discuss their academic findings in a relaxed, informal atmosphere, explaining their projects, the difficulties they encounter, and why their research matters for contemporary society.

It is hosted by the Institute's press officer Anna Schaich (German episodes) and scientific translator Christopher Murphy (English episodes).

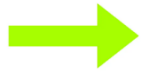
The range of topics reflects the Institute's interdisciplinary approach to studying crime, security, and law. Recent episodes have explored image-based sexual abuse and its legal dimensions, femicide legislation in Latin America, the psychology of personality traits, defamation law in political campaigns, and the use of virtual reality technology to understand peer influence and decision-making in criminological research.

Other episodes examine legal hermeneutics and the nature of truth in hard cases, private military contractors and regulatory gaps, fear of crime in Germany, the European Arrest Warrant, and extra-judicial conflict resolution in immigrant communities.

Available at [Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law](#)

"Working Definition"

by Rebecca Lowe



"Working Definition" offers an engaging intellectual journey about fundamental philosophical concepts that underpin legal and political thought. Hosted by Rebecca Lowe, this podcast

features conversations with guests about contested concepts to provide rigorous yet accessible rough working definitions. The podcast has explored a wide range of concepts central to socio-legal scholarship. Episodes have examined **transparency** with Tom Hoenig, **democracy** with Josiah Ober, **freedom** with Tyler Cowen, **privacy** with Ignacio Cofone, **politics** with Oliver Traldi, **rights** with John Tasioulas, **forgiveness** with Ben Brophy, **happiness** with Henry Oliver, and **equality** with Teresa Bejan.

Available on [Working Definition](#)

"The Migration Oxford Podcast" from the University of Oxford

The aim of the Migration Oxford podcast is to bring together researchers and other observers to address the major migration issues of our time, both in the UK and internationally.



Co-hosted by Jacqueline Broadhead, Director of the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity, and Rob McNeil, Deputy Director of The Migration Observatory, the podcast is being aired since 2022.

Recent episodes have explored welcoming cities and the policies that shape inclusive urban spaces, refugee women's experiences of mobility and belonging through cycling in London, the politics of emigration and data science in migration research, Ukrainian women's displacement experiences, the rise of far-right politics and its implications for immigration policy in Germany and the United States, municipal ID cards for irregular migrants, diaspora communities and their contributions to development, and the innovative "Migration Sounds" project featuring 120 sounds of migration across 51 countries. Audio and full transcript are available for download.

Available on [The Migration Oxford Podcast](#)

Patrícia André

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BOOK REVIEWS

Call for Contributions: New Book Review Section

We are excited to announce a new section featuring brief reviews of books within the area of socio-legal studies. This is a great opportunity to highlight new scholarship, share insights with the RCSL community and spark interesting discussions.

Reviews should take up to 600 words, summarizing key arguments and including critical engagement and reflections.

Book suggestions and reviews should be sent to newsletter.rcsl@gmail.com.

Luisa Hedler
lthf.bhl@cbs.dk

CALLS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

In this section, we share events and calls for papers, conferences, and other opportunities that might be of interest to the RCSL community.

APPROACHING DEADLINES

Convegno Annuale di Diritto & Società: Teorie critiche del diritto e ricerca socio-giuridica. Approcci, metodi e sfide.

Announcement Type: Call for Abstracts

Institution: Associazione di studi su Diritto & Società

Date: 2-3 October 2026

Location: Università di Genova, Italy

Description: This year's conference offers a space for reflection on the impact of critical legal theories (CLT) in contemporary socio-legal research. Papers may address how CLT frameworks expose practices of exclusion, normalisation, and hierarchisation produced through law; how they centre the perspectives of vulnerable subjects; and how they illuminate processes of norm production, judicial reasoning, and administrative practice. The conference will also focus on tensions between legal critique and the strategic use of law as a tool for social transformation.

Abstracts are accepted in Italian, English and Spanish.

Deadline: 7 June 2026

More Info: associazionedirittosocieta@gmail.com / [website link](#)

28th International Meeting of Research and Investigation (EIRI) – The Social Contract in Dispute: Discourse, Legitimacy and Transformation

Announcement Type: Call for Abstracts

Institution/Location: UTAD – Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Vila Real, Portugal

Date: 7-8 October 2026

Description: Living in the midst/context of strong tensions and political polarizations that threaten how society is organised and the fundamentals of democratic legitimacy, the 28th International Meeting of Research and Investigation is dedicated to reflecting the social contract and its contemporary transformations. The aim is to promote an interdisciplinary space for theoretical reflection and empirical analysis that approaches the social contract not only as a normative or judicial-political category, but also as a symbolic, narrative, and cultural construction, continuously subject to dispute, erosion, or renewal. The conference welcomes both individual paper proposals and closed panel proposals. Proposals in Portuguese, Spanish, and English are welcome.

Deadline: 20 June 2026

More Info: eiri@utad.pt / [website link](#)

14th Portuguese Congress of Sociology – Thematic Section on Sociology of Law and Justice

Announcement Type: Call for Abstracts

Location: Faculty of Economics, University of Algarve, Faro, Portugal

Format: In-person (with one day for online presentations on 22 March 2027)

Date: 23-25 March 2027

Title: Building Futures: Sociology in the Public Sphere

Description: The Thematic Section of Sociology of Law and Justice of the Portuguese Sociological Association invites the submission of papers for the 14th Portuguese Congress of Sociology. The general theme of the Congress invites us to reflect critically on the role of Sociology in the public sphere, particularly through its activities of producing and disseminating informed knowledge; its engagement with different groups of citizens and diverse formats of participation; and its problematisation of the conditions under which knowledge is produced, as well as the ethical dilemmas that cut across scientific research. Within this context, the Sociology of Law and Justice plays an important role in this disciplinary mobilisation by examining, among other issues: democratic institutions, practices of separation of powers, and the interconnections between the political and the legal; the protection and mobilisation of human rights and their diverse conceptualisations;

the multiple and often intersectional forms of inequality and their effects on the development of full citizenship and social justice; the conditions, experiences, and impacts of deprivation of liberty (including juvenile justice, prisons, and other forms of confinement), as well as debates surrounding reformism, penal abolitionism, and punitivism as social responses; the use of technology and artificial intelligence in the legal-penal field and the ethical challenges associated with algorithmic societies, situated between political and legislative choices and everyday practice; and ideological polarisation and its impacts on the public sphere.

Deadline: 22 June 2026

More Info: direito@aps.pt / [website link](#)

4th Karl Marx Congress – The Crisis of Neoliberal Capitalism and Necropolitics

Announcement Type: Call for Abstracts

Institution: NOVA FCSH, Lisbon, Portugal

Date: 22-23 January 2027

Description: The aim of the congress is to analyse the crisis of neoliberal capitalism (1980s – first quarter of the 21st century) from a dual perspective: that of historical analysis and that of theoretical debate of the crisis in its various dimensions, along with the study of related experiences of social, political, or cultural activism. To this end, the congress will be organised around plenary sessions (keynote speeches) and the following seven thematic sections: the economic and financial crisis of neoliberal capitalism; politics, hyperpolitics and necropolitics; social transformations and struggles; late capitalism, ecological and environmental disaster, and ecosocialism; feminisms, emancipation and social reproduction; culture and cultural counter-revolution; imperialism, war and genocide. Abstracts are accepted in Portuguese and English.

Deadline: 30 June 2026

More Info: [website link](#)

Call for contributing to a Buchforum

Announcement Type: Call for Contributions

Publication: German Journal of Law and Society

Description: The *German Journal of Law and Society – Zeitschrift für Rechtssoziologie* recently opened a call for contributions to a *Buchforum*. Taking the occasion of the publication of two books dealing with the development of sociology of law in Germany – Alfons Bora, *Responsive Rechtssoziologie* (2023) and Rüdiger Lautmann, *Die Idee des Sozialen im Denken des Rechts* (2025), the journal aims at promoting a debate, based on these two books, about the relationship between law and social reality today,

and, at the same time, about the position of sociology of law in between different disciplines and professions, as well as about interdisciplinarity and reflexivity as features of the socio-legal domain. Contributions addressing the international dimension of these issues are very welcome.

Deadline: 30 September 2026

More Info: [website link](#)

ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES

Access to Justice in a Changing World

Announcement Type: Call for Monographs and Edited Collections Proposals

Description: Edinburgh University Press invites proposals for monographs and edited collections for the book series *Access to Justice in a Changing World*. Access to justice is a widely studied phenomenon, relevant to jurisdictions around the world and different fields of law. Technology, alternative justice forums, and non-legal actors are becoming increasingly central to debates around the everyday realisation of rights and interests. This series takes an explicitly bottom-up and decentred approach to access to justice, contrasting with the top-down, law-framed, and court-focused approach of orthodox scholarship. A result of this approach is that the series particularly welcomes empirically-based work, interdisciplinary approaches that combine legal and other perspectives, and work which considers access to justice in a wider social and comparative context. In addition, the series particularly welcomes work from the Global South, which remains under-represented in current scholarship.

Deadline: Rolling

More Info: [website link](#). You can also contact the Series Editor for further information and advice: Chris Gill, Professor of Socio-Legal Studies, University of Glasgow, chris.gill@glasgow.ac.uk.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Research Seminar in Sociology of Law with Raluca Grosescu and Henry Rammelt

Announcement Type: Seminar

Institution: Sociology of Law Department, Lund University

Location: Lund University and online

Format: in-person and online via zoom

Date: 27 May 2026

Description: This presentation discusses the approaches and main findings of *Corporate Accountability for Human Rights Violations: Civil Society and Transnational Actions Across the World* (Springer, 2025), edited by Raluca Grosescu and John

G. Dale. Taking an actor-focused perspective, the collection examines civil society and social movements as drivers of corporate accountability across Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe, while attending to the fragmentation of this global movement along ontological, ideological, and professional lines. The volume argues that transnational and intersectoral alliances prove most effective in countering corporate impunity and expanding spaces of accountability, even as divergent local contexts and resources continue to fracture collective action.

More Info: isabel.schoultz@soclaw.lu.se / [website link](#)

Socio-Legal Discussion Group: Concealed Claims, Contested Citizens: An Ethnography of Internal Migration in India

Announcement Type: Discussion Group

Institution: Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, University of Oxford

Location: University of Oxford and online

Format: in-person and online via zoom

Date: 28 May 2026

Description: Speaker: Ayesha Pattnaik. This talk draws on her doctoral research with internal migrants in India. Based on a year-long multi-sited ethnography following migrants from Odisha working in Kerala's urban informal economy, she examines how migrants experience and navigate the law at their destinations. Drawing on scholarship on moral economies, she argues that migrants negotiate work, risk, and support through shared norms and relationships, through which ideas of 'good work' and justice are collectively produced. Rather than simply lacking access to the state, migrants actively reconfigure their relationship to it, often prioritising relational forms of security over formal rights.

More Info: studentrep@csls.ox.ac.uk / [website link](#)

18th Legal Theory Festival

Announcement Type: Festival

Institution: Edinburgh Law School

Location: Old College, Edinburgh.

Date: 1 – 3 June 2026

Description: The 18th Legal Theory Festival at Edinburgh Law School will take place on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of June 2026. There will be five workshops over the three days, with papers from a mix of local and invited speakers and headed by the Annual Lecture of the Edinburgh Centre for Legal Theory, which will this year be given by Professor Helena Alviar García. On the evening Tuesday 2nd, there will be a wine reception to launch the *Research Handbook on Legal Argumentation* recently published by Elgar, followed

by a Festival dinner at the Hotel du Vin. All are welcome, but registration is required.

More Info: [website link](#)

JDG - Jurisprudence Discussion Group

Announcement Type: Seminars

Institution: University of Oxford

Location: Balliol College, Oxford.

Date: 4, 11, 18 June 2026

Description: The JDG is a forum of the University of Oxford for discussing original work in legal theory as well as moral and political philosophy. The Trinity Term 2026 – convened by Mariana Canales, David Enoch, and Marcelo Melo – will finish with the following seminars: Alma Diamond from the University of Michigan will present on “A Dynamic Theory of Social Obligation”; Shasha Sun from Oxford will present on “Defending the Motivational Account of Exclusionary Reasons”; and Claudio Michelin from Edinburgh will close the term with a presentation on “Reclaiming Subjectivity in Legal Argumentation”.

More Info: [website link](#)

Decentralised Justice: Law in the Digital Age of Crowds and Code

Announcement Type: Workshop

Institution: Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, University of Oxford

Location: Keble College, Oxford

Date: 9 June 2026

Description: This workshop will focus on technologies and frameworks shaping new forms of dispute resolution. As traditional legal systems face unprecedented challenges in the digital age, this event explores how decentralised justice, blockchain, and artificial intelligence are reshaping arbitration, institutional design, and the rule of law. This seminar brings together world-leading researchers and practitioners at the intersection of law, computer science, and institutional design. Registration is required, but admission is free.

More Info: ekin.genc@law.ox.ac.uk / [website link](#)

The Art and Alchemy of Human Rights Interpretation

Announcement Type: Inaugural Lecture

Institution: Edinburgh Law School

Location: Old College, Edinburgh.

Date: 19 June 2026

Description: Inaugural Lecture of Professor Kasey McCall-Smith who holds the Chair of International Law and Human Rights and is programme director for the LL.M. in Human Rights at Edinburgh Law School. Her research focuses on international human rights law, treaty law and she is interested in how different actors

contribute to the development of international law, including the role of treaty bodies as interpreters and generators of law. Her recent publications focus on reservations to treaties, human rights incorporation, and human rights interpretation, which will be the focus of her inaugural lecture.

More Info: [website link](#)

V Conferencia Internacional “En Teoría HAY MUJERES (en teoría)”

Announcement Type: Conference

Institution: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Location: Madrid, Spain.

Date: 10–11 September 2026

Description: This conference promotes the international visibility of women – with particular attention to early-career scholars – in philosophy and law. Conceived in 2018 by a network of academics, the conference aims to build and strengthen ecosystems of innovation in research and territorial development. Further details on dates, venue, and programme are available through the Tarello Institute for Legal Philosophy and the UPF Events page.

More Info: [website link](#)

Patrícia André

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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FROM RCSL MEMBERS

	Open calls
	Announcements of upcoming events
	Reports on relevant events
	Research project updates
	Working Group activities
	Media (podcasts, films, interviews)
	Book reviews
	Other scholarly activities relevant to our socio-legal community

Share your news with the RCSL community!

Submissions for the next issue should be sent to newsletter.rcsl@gmail.com on a rolling basis. The RCSL Newsletter is published twice a year.

When submitting, please include a brief headline and your contact information. Images are welcome (please include photo credits).

Help us keep our community informed and connected!
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