

Since 2011 (we are celebrating our 10-year anniversary!) the Argumentation conference has always provided a platform to discuss and explore alternative methods of legal argumentation, i.e. those that are not regularly employed in everyday legal practice, but would prove extremely valuable if adopted. It has long been our intention to bring new stimuli to the theory and practice legal argumentation by showing that the outcomes of traditional as well as alternative methods of legal argumentation are valuable and can be combined in coherent theories and practices.

This year we would like to focus our discussions on conceptualization in law.

Conceptualization is at the core of understanding complex (sign) systems, such as law. Concepts are generally understood as socially and mentally conditioned links (associative bonds) between the signifier and signified (Saussure 1916/1977, Ogden & Richards 1923); something by what we make sense of the world (von der Pfordten 2009, 23-24, Stephanopoulos & Ginsburg 2017, 150) or even as building blocks of thoughts (Margolis 2019). Concepts are among one of the most intensively and interdisciplinary investigated topics nowadays in particular in cognitive science, artificial intelligence, linguistics and modern philosophy. Conceptual analysis has also regained its prominent position in the field of legal theory and philosophy.

Accordingly, legal concepts may be considered building blocks of law (Hart 1961) and at the core of their analysis is the never-ending search for a meaning of a word of legal language uttered in legal context. The investigations on meaning have been the subject of intensive scrutiny in the field of legal philosophy and remain one of the core discussions concerning the very foundations of law and legal reasoning (Hage 2018). Legal language has been described as a ‘type of code intended and used as a means of capturing the

complex of law, which has evolved [and keeps evolving] hand in hand with it’ (Myška et al. 2012). It is not just a way to describe or communicate law, but it is an integral part of the law itself, something capable of creating and shaping it (White 1981-1982, 1985); and similarly law ‘cannot be reduced to a system unchanged by the way agents talk about it’ (Myška et al. 2012). Thus, legal concepts ‘[play] an important role in the construction, interpretation, negotiation and implementation of legal justice’ (compare Bhatia, Candlin, Engberg 2008, 9). Understanding legal concepts – and law – is a matter of understanding them within the extremely complex social reality.

Recently, the traditional analytic method of conceptual analysis has been criticized as not being able to take in wider social context, such as globalization (Twinning 2009). Social sciences have long been developing methods to study conceptualization, yet law seem to be quite wary when it comes to making use of them (Stephanopoulos & Ginsburg 2017, 148). Only carefully, the analysis of legal concepts ventures into borrowing methods from other disciplines (e.g. semantics and pragmatics in Skozen 2015, sociology in McCrudden 2006; or Stephanopoulos & Ginsburg 2017 – even though they claim that their study is not to be considered legal theory). Legal concepts are the object of intensive study in the field of Artificial Intelligence and Law, especially in the context of development of legal ontologies and the use of Semantic Web technology (Sartor, Casanovas, Biasiotti, Fernández-Barrera eds. 2011). In addition, legal scholarship has been moving towards a more empirical direction recently, allowing us to introduce external factors in our understanding of law (e.g. Fowler and Jeon 2007, Derlén and Lindholm 2014, Eisenberg 2011, Heise 2011), which is the space where we would like our year’s conference discussions to fit in.

We invite papers related to (but not limited to):

- Issues of legal and juridical meaning
- Conceptual analysis in law
- Conceptualism in contemporary legal theory
- Types of legal concepts
- The nature of legal concepts and their role in legal reasoning
- Novel and interdisciplinary methodologies in analysis of legal concepts
- Formal and computational models of legal concepts
- Empirical research on legal concepts, including concept formation and acquisition
- Vague and open-textured legal concepts
- Visualization of legal concepts

We still invite you to contribute to one of the traditional workshops, each specializing in a specific and unique method of studying legal argumentation:

Formal Methods in Legal Reasoning
Law and Literature
Law and Language
Visualization of Law

We welcome participants who want to share their research only by speaking at the conference as well as those who wish to publish their full paper in the conference proceedings.

Those who wish to speak at conference only, please send your abstract proposals of cca 500 words to argumentation@law.muni.cz by 1 July 2021.

Those who wish to have their paper considered for publishing in the conference proceedings, please send your full paper (min. 5.000 words) to argumentation@law.muni.cz by 20 July 2021.