Vacancies

[COHUBICOL is hiring!](#) We are looking for two postdocs to join us for the next 2-3 years. One in law (at Vrije Universiteit Brussels) and one in computer science (at Radboud University in the Netherlands). The researchers will join the legal team in Brussels (if they have a PhD in law), or the CS team Radboud University (RU) (if they have a PhD in CS). They will work on

- **a proper understanding of the claims made about legal technologies and their substantiation**, taking into account both technical and organisational issues
- an analysis of how the integration of these technologies into legal practice will affect both **the development of positive law and the nature of the rule of law**

Deadline: 10 February, please disseminate the full vacancy to potentially relevant candidates

Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Research in Computational Law ([CRCL](#))

- Early February 2021 a new article will be published online first: 'Hermeneutical injustice and the computational turn in law', by COHUBICOL legal researcher [Emilie van den Hoven](#), replied by computer scientist [Ben Green](#). The Journal is Open Access, if you subscribe you will be updated for new content.
- Also, check out our editorial board, which demonstrates the kind of cross-disciplinary engagement we aim for. We welcome [Federico Cabitza](#) as a new member of the board and look forward to his salient insights in machine learning, notably his ability to develop an internal critique of hazardous assumptions, based on a robust scientific understanding of AI research design.

Update on staff research:

[Paulus Meessen](#) is a PhD candidate at Radboud University, working in the department of computer science of the Science Faculty on the COHUBICOL project:

"As part of the CS team I work on one of the early stages of the COHUBICOL project - developing a computer science vocabulary for 'computational law'. This is a cross-disciplinary activity that allows us to engage with the broad range of sub-disciplines and practices from computer engineering. Many of these are foundational for the technologies that push the mode of existence of law towards code-driven and data-driven (e.g. tools and techniques from software engineering, machine learning, data science, statistics, and cryptography). While creating this vocabulary, and in close interaction with the other disciplines in the project specifically (law, philosophy), we have even discussed the theory of floating-point numbers, smooth functions and the meaning of science in 'Data Science'! Such exchanges of knowledge are really fun! We confront and reflect on our assumptions and beliefs as computer scientists, but also get to share instances of the more obscure beauty and elegance in our field.

Currently, I am investigating the underpinnings of the sort of strong claims that can be made in Computer Science about the technologies that are used in systems of algorithmic regulation. These systems are relevant for the make-up of code-driven law. In particular, I

look at the techniques from an area from computer science called 'formal verification'. Formal (mathematical) proofs can greatly contribute to our understanding of the working of software code and help to substantiate the capabilities of these software and algorithms. The difference between natural and formal language however needs to be bridged (at least twice) in such applications or in 'legal tech'. Not only do we need to represent the real world into formal models, but then translate it back again to understand what a verification in a formal system means for our daily lives. As such we need to find out what methods of verification are possible for algorithmic regulation, and which of those are going to be helpful to preserve protections built into the legal system - when its mode of existence changes."

Research blog
Two news research blogs are online, written independently but nevertheless addressing the same underlying issue of change in and of the law. Emilie van den Hoven and Gianmarco Gori attended the 2020 COHUBICOL Philosophers' seminar and took away pivotal insights in how text-driven law incorporates and enables change, raising questions about how machine learning can or cannot deal with change. This seems to be a new approach of law and the rule of law, highlighting not only the need to incorporate and enable contestation but also investigating the nature of change that modern positive law affords.

Presentations
- Hildebrandt presented at the Lorentz workshop on Robust AI at Leiden University on 11 January 2021
- Hildebrandt gave a seminar at the Law Faculty of the University of Oxford on 'Data driven law on edge', slides and video are available here
- Hildebrandt will be presenting at 'Law and Computation. An Algorithm for the Rule of Law and Justice?', a Northwestern University Academic Symposium in Chicago on 5 February 2021, you can register here

Added resources to the website:
- Under further resources we have added the MIT Computational Law Report, note that the section 'further resources' offers myriad relevant institutes, journals and research projects.
- Under bibliography we regularly add books, journal articles, chapters and reports relevant to COHUBICOL. The bibliography has been made accessible via a public ZOTERO database, which enables anybody to access and use these resources (though pdfs are usually not linked due to copyright restrictions. We just added, e.g. *The Philosophy of Affordances* by Manuel Heras-Escribano (2019), a wonderful resource for those interested in deploying the concept of 'affordances', providing an in-depth overview of the history, scope, purpose and consequences of its use. We also added 'Climbing towards NLU: On Meaning, Form, and Understanding in the Age of Data' by Emily M. Bender (2020), explaining why natural language processing as we have it today (including BERT and GPT-3) is not equivalent with natural language understanding.

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