

LAWYERS WITH BRAINS

Collaborative Projects (Autumn 2018) Proposal



Group Members Involved:

- FDR (Private Law): Mark Kawakami
- FDR (Criminal Law): Stephanie Blom
- FPN (Applied Social Psychology & Neuroscience): Phil Brüll
- SBE (Neuroscience of Decision Making & Neuroeconomics): Marcello Negrini

Description of the Research Topic:

Hans Kelsen once noted that a legal order is “an aggregate or a plurality of general and individual norms that govern human behavior,” and so even as a legal philosopher, he dabbled in fields as diverse as psychology and sociology to better understand how norms were formed and influenced. Bearing this anecdote in mind, the topic of our collaboration is: what makes actors behave in a more pro-social manner and how effective is the law in fostering such changes. Whether it is a question like what makes corporate stakeholders engage in environmentally sustainable practices or what incentivizes national actors to cooperate with those across the border, our question can be found at the core of these societal challenges.

While researching the continuing process of economic and political integration is of vital importance, we must not forget the underlying human factor in all of these trends. Therefore, rather than only looking outward to find extrinsic solutions to these quandaries, we must also look within ourselves (literally) and incorporate cognitive and neuro-sciences into the discussion of how the law can be better designed to address the negative impacts of the aforementioned integration. Thus, the main goal of our collaboration is to ensure that enough of our students and staff are equipped with the basic understanding of how the human brain works, what physiological factors impact our decision-making process, and what their potential legal implications are through informed dialogue.

Overview of Planned Activities:

The threshold aim of this project will simply be to put lawyers in a room together with specialists from fields such as social psychology and neuroscience to initiate bridge-building dialogues (monthly meetings up to 6 months). The dialogues will focus on issues such as: 1) methodology and how these eclectic disciplines can find common frames of reference; 2) what lawyers can learn from social psychologists or neuro-economists and vice-versa; and 3) how we can valorize our findings in order to incentivize more pro-social behavior changes.

The planning group will organize each dialogue sessions by: 1) inviting select group of attendees; 2) assigning topical reading materials relevant to the issues at hand to enhance our dialogues; and 3) inviting relevant external experts capable of providing insightful perspectives.¹ After the completion of the dialogue sessions, the planning group will draft a report consisting of our findings, which we will seek to publish.

¹ We are currently in contact with potential speakers from Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen Nederland (MVO Nederland) and Stichting Trajekt. Depending on the funding, we would also like to invite speakers from Stockholm University, the Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience, and the Human Brain Project.

Contribution to the Research Program and Pillars:

This curiosity-driven project will not only increase the visibility and the diversity of our faculty's research program, but will also showcase how truly committed we are to the development of T-shaped lawyers seeking to deepen their understanding of global justice. By educating lawyers on how the brain works and how various socio-psychological factors affect our decision-making process, we can look at the issues surrounding the integration of and the interaction between legal orders from unique, new perspectives. These developments can ultimately render new ideas and measures capable of countering the negative externalities that arise in the course of the grand integration process, including but not limited to climate change and the refugee crisis.

Estimated Budget:

Date(s): Monthly meetings up to 6 months (exact dates TBD)				
Venue(s): Available rooms either in FDR, FPN or SBE				
Estimates based on 15 participants + 1 speaker per dialogue (subject to change)				
COSTS				
Location (find space within faculties)	Amount	Frequency	Attendees	Estimated
Room Reservations	€0.00	6	16	€ 0.00
Catering				
Coffee & Tea (through Albron)	€ 3.50	6	16	€ 336.00
Lunch with Speakers	€ 20.00	3	5	€ 60.00
Dinner with Speakers	€ 50.00	3	5	€ 150.00
Speakers				
Travel Costs to/from Amsterdam	€ 50.00	1	1	€ 50.00
Travel Costs to/from Utrecht	€ 50.00	1	1	€ 50.00
Travel Costs to/from Stockholm	€ 200.00	1	1	€ 200.00
Accommodation Cost	€ 100.00	2	1	€ 200.00
Total				€ 1,046.00