

Inspiring LAW Research Meeting shows scope and willingness to reach out and collaborate

On Wednesday 2 October, at our LAW Research Meeting, we explored what we as a faculty see as the main upcoming research topics. It is good to regularly reflect upon what we do in research, and whether this still fits the main academic and societal challenges. In six presentations by our researchers, several concepts appeared to be commonly shared: authority and constitutionalism, trust in authority, climate change and marginalized groups. A plea was made for an integral approach towards research on a particular topic. We also discussed how we can involve our students in these topics, in setting the agenda as well as doing research. The conclusion was that there are lots of opportunities to collaborate, in research and education, where deemed useful.

Read the full report on the LAW Research Meeting below. The six interesting presentations showed great potential and willingness to collaborate with colleagues on various topical subjects. Massimo Fichera addressed some fundamental questions related to several challenges constitutionalism and democracy face, in particular the rise of populist movements, climate change, AI, etc. Raymond Schlössels connected to this and highlighted the major challenges that make regulating and maintaining public authority increasingly complex (e.g. digitalisation, decline of the state, European influences, political pressure) and the changing role of the government. He did this from a Dutch perspective, but stressed that these issues are not unique to the Netherlands. David Roef, Gaetano Ancona and Giulia Giardi spoke about increasing concerns that we are living in the midst of a "post-truth" or "post-factual" society. In October 2025 they will organise a conference to explore how *post-truth* narratives and politics may influence and challenge criminal law.

In the second part the focus was on sustainability and climate change. Andrea Broderick discussed climate change as a human rights issue. She stated that much value can still be added to the debate on climate justice through increasing the focus on comparative analysis and integrating the voices of marginalised communities. Dominic Coppens explained that the climate crises requires unprecedented regulatory changes at domestic and international levels. This shift towards sustainability affects different areas of law and must take on board insights from other social and natural sciences – creating an opportunity, and need, for multi/interdisciplinary research. Finally, Marijn van der Sluis rounded things off by raising the question of how to bring the various branches of research working on issues of sustainability, in particular climate change together, and to what extent that is necessary.

In the following discussion, the focus was on how to involve students in determining our future research topics and carrying them out. Legal challenges and Marble projects for bachelor students, master theses or courses on a specific theme may inspire researchers and students alike and can strengthen the link between research and education.

The dean Jan Smits emphasised that the meeting demonstrated the unique willingness of our staff to collaborate with colleagues from other areas of the law. He advised to keep an eye on other parties setting the (research) agenda, such as funders, the UM, and other faculties. In particular, he pointed to SBE whose SSH sector plan agenda offers interesting opportunities for cooperation. The vice dean for research Anke Moerland concluded that this meeting showed the importance of thinking outside the box, reaching out to colleagues and working together. She invited the institutes and groups to create momentum by encouraging the exploration of issues at the forefront of knowledge. In the future, we will organise such meetings more often.