

## 1. RETHINKING LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS IN RELATION TO THE USE OF NON-HUMAN ANIMALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLOITATION

### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

Birgitta Wahlberg, Åbo Akademi University, [birgitta.wahlberg@abo.fi](mailto:birgitta.wahlberg@abo.fi)

### **Panel description**

The purpose of the panel is to discuss accountability in legal frameworks concerning the use of non-human beings and the natural environment for human purposes. Especially in relation to the use of non-humans in food production, including the production of food for the non-humans, and the extensive utilization of water resources. These practices have devastating consequences – not only for the non-humans bred, kept, and killed within the production – but also for broader ecological integrity, biodiversity, and ultimately human well-being.

Despite the fact that more legislation aimed at protecting non-human animals and the environment exists today than at any other point in human history, the scale of non-human and nature exploitation continues to grow, contributing significantly both on non-humans' welfare and life, and to ecological degradation and climate change. Drawing on perspectives mainly from animal law and environmental law, the panel will explore pressing questions, including for example: who is responsible to whom for destructions that are non-reversible? What are the possibilities and limitations of existing legal regimes in recognizing the interests and/or rights of non-human beings? Is there appropriate legal and non-legal accountability tools to meet the many challenges facing our societies, including environmental crisis and biodiversity losses? Can accountability be meaningfully extended to include non-humans and nature as subjects of intrinsic value that might override the rights of humans? And how might the concept of accountability reshape normative assumptions about interest(s), harm, obligation, and justice?

By engaging with this kind of questions, the panel aims to challenge established doctrines of interests, rights, liability, and responsibility, and to open space for reimagining legal possibilities that goes beyond the human. Contributions that address theoretical frameworks, case studies, jurisprudential innovations, or policy-oriented proposals are all welcome.

### **Languages in which submissions can be made**

Swedish, Finnish, English

## 2. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE USE OF ALGORITHMIC SYSTEMS.

### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

Markku Suksi, Åbo Akademi University. [msuksi@abo.fi](mailto:msuksi@abo.fi)

### **Panel description**

The use of algorithmic systems in activities of the private and the public sector started several decades ago. The law governing the use of algorithmic systems, be they rule-based or machine-learning-based AI-systems, has been lagging behind. As concerns automated decision-making by public authorities, the Constitutional Law Committee of the Parliament of Finland noticed in the late 2010s that Government Bills proposing the introduction of automated decision-making were lacking in terms of accountability provisions concerning the exercise of public powers. Legislation adopted in 2023 and thereafter addresses these issues, but what the outcome might be in practical application and in legal interpretation is still to be assessed. In 2024, the European Union adopted an AI Act which treats algorithmic systems as products on the market and leads to various distribution of accountability between various actors when algorithmic products are taken into use. But how should we understand and interpret the various responsibilities of the various actors? In addition, the Council of Europe adopted in 2024 a Framework Convention concerning AI which requires that States parties to the AI Convention adopt legislation concerning artificial intelligence. At the same time, algorithmic systems can be used in manners that may result in regular tort and criminal accountability. The accountability issues related to algorithmic systems are thus manifold and may engage various legal regimes. The purpose of the panel is to review the ways in which legal research deals with accountability issues related to the use of algorithmic systems and how accountability is interpreted in the various algorithmic contexts. This is an emerging area of legal research and at this juncture, it is justified to take stock of legal research in this area.

### **Languages in which submissions can be made**

Swedish, Finnish, English

### 3. THE ABILITY OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM TO ACCOMMODATE VULNERABILITIES

#### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

Prof. Elina Pirjatanniemi, Åbo Akademi University and Dr. Iina Järvinen, University of Eastern Finland

Contact: Mikaela Heikkilä, [mikaela.heikkila@abo.fi](mailto:mikaela.heikkila@abo.fi)

#### **Panel description**

The panel on accountability for special protection and its present-day realisation welcomes both macro and micro perspectives. It departs from the understanding that despite international and domestic regulation that aims to protect groups of people at risk of vulnerability, the position and inclusion of persons in a vulnerable position have weakened over the past few years by cuts to social and health services, education and culture.

Against this background, the panel seeks to discuss issues such as: How well does the legal system carry its social responsibility to address vulnerability in the Nordic welfare societies? How is vulnerability taken into account in the legal system, in the implementation of legislation and in people's everyday lives? Does legal research manage to address the related issues of access to justice, the realisation of rights and participation of groups of people at risk of vulnerability?

Departing from the macro perspective and moving towards the micro perspective, the panel discusses the specific positive obligations of authorities to consider people's different needs and include the voices of differently positioned people in designing legislation and policies, coupled with critical discussions on how accountability is being perceived and realised in such contexts. This could, among other things, include discussions on outsourcing of special protection services to the third sector in combination with the state drastically cutting funding for many of these actors.

These general themes are applied to the discussion of special protection for groups of individuals such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with long-term health challenges, sexual and gender minorities, ethnic minorities, drug users and persons with mental health issues, for whom the vulnerability risks tend to accumulate and intersect.

The panel welcomes legal, theoretical, empirical, multi- and interdisciplinary submissions on the significance of vulnerability in the legal system and legal research, with the common denominator being the responsibility for safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups. The submissions can be based on studies that are at any stage of work.

#### **Languages in which submissions can be made**

Swedish, Finnish, English

#### 4. THE ACCOUNTABILITY KNOT – THE CONCEPTS AND LANGUAGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHAT THEY TELL US ABOUT LAW

##### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, Åbo Akademi University [sia.spiliopoulouakermark@abo.fi](mailto:sia.spiliopoulouakermark@abo.fi)

##### **Panel description**

While accountability may even be seen sometimes as a buzzword, the quest for accountability has been and is an essential part of the legal universe for a long time. In private as well as in public law, domestically as well as internationally, conceptions and tools of accountability are a salient element of legal systems. Individual and collective accountability permeate the various fields of law. Still, there is also much discussion on accountability deficit(s). What are the conceptual constituent elements, the functions, legal ramifications, practices and the logic of accountability in its varying forms and in different legal fields, today and across time and place? How are concepts of accountability transformed through new technology and beyond human considerations? Is there too much, or too little accountability? How does the interaction between different levels and forms of accountability operate, for instance legal – political and regional – national – international? What are the connections between accountability thinking and idea(l)s of justice?

##### **Languages in which submissions can be made**

Swedish, English

## 5. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAW AND TRUST

### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

Magdalena Kmak, Åbo Akademi University, [magdalena.kmak@abo.fi](mailto:magdalena.kmak@abo.fi)

### **Panel description**

In legal research the relationship between trust and law has been a subject of studies both within the theory and sociology of law as well as in the concrete legal subdisciplines such as administrative law, civil law, or the EU law. The discussion concerning the relationship between trust and law has included for instance the impact of legal regulations on trust towards law, state and its institutions and concrete legal principles adopted in different jurisdictions. More concretely, trust might be embedded for example in the legal principle of trust in the state and its law, the principle of protection of acquired rights, the principle of legitimate expectations, in a guarantee of good faith and in some of the principles of family law. At the same time trust in law together with legal culture, are also external conditions that affect law. They have an impact on adopting a good law as part of the common good and on guaranteeing societal usefulness of law.

We invite presentations studying the multifaceted relationship between law and trust from both doctrinal and interdisciplinary perspectives. Analysis could also include the relationship between law and concepts related to trust. In particular we invite reflections on the relationship between law, legal culture, trust and accountability.

### **Languages in which submissions can be made**

The preferred language of presentations is English, however presentations in Finnish and Swedish are also welcomed.

## 6. CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO CORPORATIONS

### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

Jukka Mähönen, University of Helsinki, [jukka.mahonen@helsinki.fi](mailto:jukka.mahonen@helsinki.fi), Taina Pihlajarinne, University of Helsinki

### **Panel description**

The role of private actors as corporations in society and the economy is crucial, and so their role both as tools of destruction and tools for welfare and sustainable value creation. As creations of society and its members private actors are accountable for society, but society is accountable for private actors as well, in enabling them to fulfil their societal role and in refraining from destructive deeds that harm them. Although we are especially interested in the role of private actors in sustainable transition, our open panel invites all kinds of contributions on the theme, also those that challenge the sustainability paradigm. As example of themes for contributions can be mentioned:

- How to enhance corporate accountability to society – law, social norms, market structures, technology?
- Accountability of private governance and private rule making and standard setting
- The state as enabler of and as obstacle to private economic activity
- To do good: how to incentivize sustainable innovations and sustainable creativity through private actors?
- Private actors in the pressure of power struggles between the mighty states
- Less mighty states in the pressure of power struggle between the mighty private actors

Examples of themes are private global governance as standards and accountability of private standard setters (e.g. IASB, Equator Principles), corporate human rights and environmental due diligence duties as hybrid of private and public regulation, extraterritorial effect of corporate responsibility regulation and its counter-effects from hostile governments (as an example the EU CS3D and the PROTECT USA Act), the role and responsibilities of global platforms, responsible utilization of AI, the role of the states in regulating the platforms and use of AI, the role of private actors in innovations and the role of states creating drivers and obstacles for innovations.

### **Languages in which submissions can be made**

Swedish, Finnish, English

## 7. ROLE OF CONTRACT LANGUAGE AND LEGAL DESIGN IN ENHANCING SUSTAINABILITY IN VALUE CHAINS

### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

Jargonfree project research group, University of Tampere, leader Anne Ketola

Contact and chair: Soili Nystén-Haarala, [soili.nysten-haarala@ulapland.fi](mailto:soili.nysten-haarala@ulapland.fi)

### **Panel description**

Companies play an important role in the global sustainability crisis, and the contracts they use in their business operations are central in implementing environmental and social responsibility. However, the language used in these contracts is typically complex and vague, which obscures the parties' commitments. Our multidisciplinary JARGONFREE project refers to this type of language use as sustainabilitease: it is overly abstract and complex sustainability jargon that only experts can understand. Our research focuses on corporate sustainability due diligence requirements in supply chains, especially supply and procurement contracts. We look at contracts and the related codes of conduct, as well as model clauses derived from sustainability regulation. We examine the sustainabilitease used in this material as its own register; a form of language use typical of the text types included in the material. Our goal is to describe the characteristics of this language use and to show what kind of language choices undermine or promote the realization of sustainability goals. We have interviewed business people from nine Finnish corporations and analyzed their documents.

In the beginning of the panel, we give a short presentation of the results of our project so far. After that Professor Robert Bird, University of Connecticut, gives a presentation: Strategic Legal Design for Sustainability.

The panel is open for presentations either about contracts, language or legal design, both separately or combining them in working for sustainability goals. Presentations about tools, such as Artificial Intelligence, for enhancing sustainability with contracts or Codes of Conduct are also welcomed.

### **Languages in which submissions can be made**

English

## 8. FUTURE ORIENTED LAW

### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

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### **Panel description**

Legal thinking typically focuses on the present, but the emergence of new long-term societal challenges has heightened the need for a forward-looking approach to law. Short-term societal and legal decision-making struggles to address the enduring challenges posed by issues such as climate change and other global environmental problems. The multifaceted concept of sustainable development, encompassing ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, introduces significant legal aspects oriented towards the future. Moreover, recent crises – such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the financial crisis – have underscored the necessity for the legal system to anticipate and adapt. Additionally, digitalization and artificial intelligence challenge traditional conceptions of law and create a demand for novel legal solutions and perspectives.

Future-oriented law generally creates possibilities for addressing fundamental long-term developments with significant legal implications. Such questions have begun to be legally considered, for example, in research on the rights of future generations, where a central issue is the responsibility of present generations for intergenerational justice.

The panel aims to form a comprehensive understanding of the future orientation of law. Contributions are invited from different perspectives on the future-oriented aspects of law (including the rights of future generations and the responsibility for their realization, as well as the legal system's capacity to adapt to long-term challenges).

### **Languages in which submissions can be made**

Finnish, English



## 9. HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN LEGAL DECISION MAKING

### **Name and email address of chair / convenor**

Julia Korkman, Åbo Akademi, [jkorkman@abo.fi](mailto:jkorkman@abo.fi) and Timo Saranpää [timo.saranpaa@oikeus.fi](mailto:timo.saranpaa@oikeus.fi)

### **Panel description**

This symposium explores the intersection of human psychology and legal accountability, examining how verbal statements, behavioural expectations, cognitive biases, and decision-making processes influence legal outcomes. Drawing on interdisciplinary research, it critically reflects on how human judgment and perception shape the assessment of truth, responsibility, and justice within legal systems.

The session invites scholars to discuss methodologies for evaluating human behaviour in legal contexts and the broader implications for fairness and accountability in legal research and practice. Additionally, the symposium will address the impact of digitalisation on court proceedings—particularly how virtual formats may affect the interpretation of statements and perceptions of procedural justice. It also encourages discussion on how psychological factors influence sensitive legal areas such as the assessment of sexual offence allegations and the dynamics of plea bargaining.

Contributions that address theoretical frameworks, case studies, jurisprudential innovations, or policy-oriented proposals are all welcome.

### **Languages in which submissions can be made.**

Swedish, Finnish, English