

## International Conference – Call for Papers

### Laypersons in Law – Social Science Perspectives on Legal Practices of Non-professionals, Berlin 09-10 May 2019

**The Centre Marc Bloch and the Otto-von-Guericke University Magdeburg organize an international conference on legal practices of laypersons to be held in Berlin from 09 to 10 May 2019.**

Lay judges and jury members in criminal trials; activists establishing so-called “people’s” or “citizen’s” tribunals, or proponents of alternative law - most of them are not legal experts with state-sanctioned competences. And yet, they all practice law, contribute to its production and development. In contrast, socio-legal research on law conceptualizes norms and acts mostly in the context of legal experts and legal institutions, including parliament, courts, tribunals and international organizations. Persons who are not part of these legal institutions – such as civil society organizations, activists, individuals, researchers or businesses – are often considered to be irrelevant for legal processes and laypersons are understood as mere consumers of law in traditional literature. Non-professionals as subjects of studies come almost exclusively in implementation research to the fore – and therefore in research on the effectiveness of law.

Studies on lay persons stemming from different disciplines and theoretical backgrounds indicate, however, that non-professionals can play a significant role in legal systems. They can indirectly contribute to law-making and legal practices when they use and refer to legal concepts in their professional or private life, or when they oppose them. For instance, regulation of complex challenges such as climate change and sustainable development involve diverse stakeholders and institutions. *These findings and importance of laypersons in law raise questions regarding the current and historical nature, role and function of law.*

Today, we know very little about the role of laypersons for practices in legal systems. This international conference addresses this knowledge gap. It looks systematically into the role of non-professionals in law from a socio-legal perspective. The aim of the conference is to question existing assumptions about the social character of law both theoretically and empirically, and contribute to new thoughts on the issue.

We invite submissions from a variety of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives and using different methodologies. The two-day conference aims to bring together senior researchers as well as young scholars and PhD candidates not only from sociology, political science and law, but also from related disciplines, including history, anthropology, international relations, and area studies. We offer an exceptional opportunity, to present and discuss papers on “laypersons in law” from different research perspectives and approaches.

The conference is organized around four central topics. Papers can address questions including, but not limited to the following topics:

- What is the difference between laypersons and legal experts? How has the distinction between the two groups historically evolved? (e.g. professionalization and emergence of legal careers today and in the past: the emergence of laypersons; laypersons versus legal experts in different fields of law and in different legal systems)
- To what extent do laypersons contribute to law-making, judicial interpretation and shifting legal approaches? (e.g. laypersons as actors in juridification and judicial formalization processes, as law producers (e.g. living law, Reichsbürger), as actors in boycott, opposition and reform of law, as interpreters of law through appropriation, reinterpretation, translation, framing or misinterpretation of law and legal approaches)
- How do (individual or collective) laypersons mobilize? (e.g. individual practices: researchers, political activists; collective practices: groups of actors in political groups, civil society organizations or businesses; alternative courts: so called “citizen’s”, “people’s or “opinion” tribunals; mobilization practices in relation to education and social structures)
- How are laypersons influenced by law considering their social, political and historical environment? (Legal socialization and appropriation of law in the context of social class, social structure, education and milieu; Subjectivation in the context of law; The institutional and political environment as influencing factors for laypersons)

We call for papers (English, German or French) contributing to a structured analysis on the role of non-professionals in law which has been little studied so far. **Paper proposals (100-300 words) are expected by 15th January 2019. They should be sent to [statelawconflict@cmb.hu-berlin.de](mailto:statelawconflict@cmb.hu-berlin.de).** The focus is on an intense discussion of research papers. Preferred conference language will be English. Participation and travelling costs will be covered according to the conference budget.

Please do not hesitate to contact the organizers Ulrike Zeigermann, Andrea Kretschmann and Guillaume Mouralis for any further questions.

Paper proposals: 15 January 2019 Paper selection: 20 January 2019 Paper submission: 24 April 2019	Conference: 09.-10. May 2019 Where: Centre Marc Bloch Friedrichstraße 191 10117 Berlin, Germany
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