

## CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS AT THE INSTITUTE

The IALS stages high-quality conferences covering a wide range of subjects, and this editorial focuses on two events which took place in 2018. The Third Annual Conference on “The future of the commercial contract in scholarship and law reform”, presented on 12 October 2018, reflected the findings of research undertaken during 2016-18 at the IALS Centre for Corporate and Finance Law (CFL). The CFL runs an ongoing research project on the subject, maintaining an international network of participating scholars, and the conference was organised in collaboration with the Universities of Westminster and Exeter. The event focused on the interface between public and private law, and the articles by five of those who gave presentations are featured in this issue and showcase the work of the CFL.

There could be no better time to publish “The consequences of Brexit on existing and future commercial law contracts”. Given the continuing uncertainty as to the shape of any future regulatory framework for cross-border commercial transactions with Europe and beyond, Muriel Renaudin, of Cardiff University, bases her discussion on the assumption that the UK will leave the European Union without continued membership of current EU trade and judicial cooperation agreements. In “The paradoxes of the theory of *imprévision* in the new French law of contract: a judicial deterrent?” Catherine Pédamon of Westminster Law School, University of Westminster, revisits the theory and practice of hardship in the context of Article 1195 CC of the rewritten Civil code that now enshrines the theory of *imprévision* (unforeseeability) in French law. “Commercial registers and transparency”, by Maren Heidemann of the IALS, highlights recent reforms of commercial registers in Europe, as well as challenges and opportunities arising from transparency registers and their relationship to the traditional commercial register. “The regulatory power of international trade contracts over 19th century Dutch commercial sales law” investigates how national courts accommodate the changing commercial practices out of which disputes arise; Janwillem Oosterhuis, of the Faculty of Law, Maastricht University, addresses this and other issues from a historical perspective. Finally, in her article “Harmonisation impossible? On the evolution of the English, French, and Bulgarian approach to hardship in commercial contracts”, Radosveta Vassileva of UCL considers the approaches to hardship adopted by different jurisdictions.

Mention must also be made of Sirajo Yakubu, who studied for his PhD at the IALS and has contributed “Combating the laundering of proceeds of crime in the United Kingdom: an analysis of the Criminal Finances Act 2017” to this issue.

The second event to be highlighted is “Transforming cities with AI: law policy and ethics”, the 2018 Annual Conference of the Information Law and Policy Centre (ILPC) held at the Institute on 23 November 2018. The writer of this editorial attended the conference and was asked by the organisers to give a closing address drawing together the various themes raised during the day. Artificial intelligence can be quite a daunting subject for those without much scientific or technical knowledge, but a technology revolution has taken place in recent years which has completely changed the landscape of communications and information law, as the conference illustrated.

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Baroness Onora O’Neill, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy (University of Cambridge) and Cross Bench Member of the House of Lords, delivered the 2018 ILPC Annual Lecture entitled “Ethics for Communication”. Baroness O’Neill called for ethics for communication, rather than ethics of communication, because her chosen title moves beyond addressing the relationship between ethics and communication, or the extent to which communication is ethical, and instead names a decisive purpose for which communication must be directed.

The conference keynote panel included leading figures from government, industry, academia, and civil society, with Tony Porter (Surveillance Camera Commissioner), Helena U Vrabec (Legal and Privacy Officer, Palantir Technologies), Peter Wells (Head of Policy, Open Data Institute) and Baroness O’Neill. This panel was chaired by Dr Nóra Ni Loideain (Director, ILPC) with Silke Carlo (Chief Executive, Big Brother Watch) as discussant.

The conference divided into four panels, the first of which – AI and transport – focused on discussing the legal and implications of smart cars. The second panel – AI, decision-making and trust – examined the different governance mechanisms and policy narratives around public trust and oversight that have framed the development of AI-decision making systems to date. In “Automated due process? Criminal justice and AI”, the third panel addressed the use and governance of AI-driven systems within the criminal justice sector. The final panel – AI and autonomy in the city – brought together an interdisciplinary range of speakers to discuss the use of AI technologies both in cities and in legal administration. Selected articles appear in issue 24.1 of the quarterly journal *Communications Law*, published by Bloomsbury Professional, sponsors of the conference with the John Coffin Memorial Trust.

## Julian Harris

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*Sadly the time has come for me to move on, and I have ended my involvement with the IALS and Amicus Curiae after some 21 years spent in various roles. I would like to thank my colleagues, the many contributors to the journal and everyone else associated with the publication for their support during my period of tenure.*