

---

## **BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF COMPARATIVE LAW**

YSEULT MARIQUE

Essex University, FÖV Speyer and ULB

---

### **ABOUT THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF COMPARATIVE LAW**

Created in 1950 under the name of the United Kingdom National Committee of Comparative Law, the British Association of Comparative Law (BACL) is the UK body which coordinates and encourages comparative legal research and teaching throughout the UK. It has three main activities with these aims in mind.

First, BACL holds a PhD workshop in spring every year. The last workshops were held in Oxford (2016), Cambridge (2018) and Lancaster (2019). This year the COVID-19 crisis meant that the workshop scheduled in Bristol will need to be rearranged. In 2020, Kent University has kindly offered to organize the next workshop (with a special topic dedicated to Latin America). The overall objective of these workshops is to provide a friendly forum for about 15 early career researchers to present their doctoral research and receive supportive feedback from colleagues.

Secondly, BACL holds a seminar just at the start of the Society of Legal Scholars' Conference in September every year. In 2019, the topic was held in honour of the late Professor Watson on transplants and mixed jurisdiction, with papers presented by Professor Uwe Kischel (Greifswald), Professor Geoffrey Samuel (Kent), Professor John Cairns (Edinburgh) and Dr Richard Kirkham (Sheffield). Although the BACL annual seminar is usually held in the UK, the 2017 seminar was organized in cooperation with the Irish Society of Comparative Law in Dublin on the topic of 'Comparing UK and Irish Law: A Special Relationship?'. Following the Dublin seminar, Professor Paula Giliker, the then Chair of BACL, edited the papers which were published in the *Common Law World Review* (2018) 47(1).

Thirdly, BACL is the national committee coordinating reports for UK law schools for the International Academy of Comparative Law, which organizes a world congress in comparative law every four years. The next congress will be held in Asunción (Paraguay) in 2022.

Current BACL membership is drawn from many of the UK's law schools (including Aberdeen, Bangor, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, City, Dundee, Edinburgh, Exeter, Essex, Glasgow, Hull, Kent, King's College London, Kingston, Law Institute Jersey, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores, LSE, Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan, Newcastle, Northumbria, Nottingham, Oxford, Queen Mary University, School of Advanced Study University of London, Sussex, Strathclyde, UCL, UEA, Warwick and Westminster).

More recently, BACL has started a blog in order to foster the interaction and visibility of comparative law projects among the academic community: see the [BACL website](#).

In response to the current exceptional situation making us all aware how interconnected our globalized world has become, BACL has launched a call for blog contributions entitled 'COVID-19 in comparative perspective'.

## COVID-19 IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: CALL FOR BLOG PIECES

The current COVID-19 pandemic is bringing into sharp focus two key questions at the core of comparative law research: first, **globalization** and how increasing and intense are our political, social, cultural and economic interactions with countries, public and private organizations and fellow humans across the world; secondly, **the distinctiveness of national reactions to this shared common challenge**.

The COVID-19 crisis brings this very tension between these local and global dimensions sharply into our daily lives when we need to stay six feet away from others and shows how differently we experience these general guidelines, depending on whether we are pregnant and about to give birth, taking care of toddlers, home-schooling children, caring for vulnerable relatives, ensuring there is food on the table, or keeping up with our work through online technologies.

Many blogs are currently putting together excellent insights and thoughts about this crisis. BACL would like to contribute to this discussion by *bringing comparison more sharply in focus in order to*

*understand where lessons can be learned, how far they can be learned and how important contextualizing the discussions may be.* BACL would thus be interested in short blog pieces on the following perspectives on the COVID-19 crisis:

- ◇ **Risks and legal techniques dealing with risks**—medical risks, financial risks, travel-related risks, mental risks, risks of fake news spreading on social media, risks prevention, risk assessment, torts etc. How does the approach to risks in a given country (or entity) help us better understand globalisation and national cultures? Can different models be identified?
- ◇ **Comparison on protecting vulnerable people**—how vulnerable people are understood in this crisis: this would include the vulnerable categories regarding their physical conditions but also women and domestic violence, the homeless, inmates, refugees etc. How does the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of 'vulnerability' shape who is understood to be 'vulnerable'?
- ◇ **Comparison with previous experiences of crisis in a given country**—current governments often do not reinvent the wheel in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. They go back to previous crises to address the current one. How do they do that? Which types of previous crisis? Is this self-evident regarding the subject-matter (due to being related to a crisis arising from food poisoning or disease) or because of the powers needed by the government (state of emergency type of reaction)?
- ◇ **Research designs (and comparisons) in times of crisis**—Lessons from elsewhere can be tempting to gain time or to address lack of domestic expertise, but should the government and their experts not make basic checks before looking elsewhere for inspiration? How can/should this be done? Can comparative lawyers contribute to the WHO's thinking here in the sense that uniform broad guidelines may actually be problematic in various ways as they do not address local specificities (needs or expertise etc.) or how regulators, national government, private organizations develop their short and longer-term responses to the crisis?

This call has three rolling deadlines, which would allow for a more instant approach to our questions and then a more conceptual take on COVID-19 as the crisis unfolds. The next deadlines will be:

- ◇ 15 September 2020
- ◇ 15 March 2021
- ◇ 15 September 2021.

The blog pieces should be ca 1,500 words long. Acceptance to publish the blog pieces and/or suggested revisions prior to publications will be communicated shortly after the deadline.

Please do send your enquiries or blog posts to [Dr Yseult Marique](#).