

Special Issue of the World Comparative Law

An emerging 'human-centred' paradigm for the delivery of justice: a comparative law analysis

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Description

Digital innovations in law and the justice sector are often framed as 'people centred', 'person-centred', 'citizen-centred' ('citizen-focus(s)ed') or 'human-centred' approaches to legal design. These approaches emerge (seemingly) as alternative to the managerialist paradigm, which had dominated justice and public administration in recent decades. The main idea underlying these approaches is putting the needs of the individual person in the centre of judicial service delivery.

Originating from the development field, the concepts of 'citizen-focused' (OECD, 2009) or 'citizen-centric' public services (World Bank, 2018) and 'people-centred' justice (Pathfinders, 2021) have quickly penetrated national policy discourses on the administration of justice. At the same time, questions remain regarding the theoretical underpinnings of 'human-centred' design (Ryan, 2024); the real-life context and consequences of its use in law and justice (e.g. its focus on the marketised 'user,' and the fact that it is being used by tech companies to promote their own commercial interests, (de Souza & Santuber 2024); as well as challenges and limitations in implementing 'human-centred' design in practice (Savolainen, 2021; van Velsen et al, 2022).

The goal of this Special Issue is to examine the (hidden) assumptions behind, and the practical implementation of the 'human-centred' or 'people-centred' approaches in the context of digital innovations in judicial systems. This includes in the framing of digital policy, the implementation of technical systems, and the development of legal technologies.

The Special issue will aim to consist of theoretical contributions, country case studies as well as comparative case studies. Case studies will cover judicial systems that represent different legal traditions and socio-political contexts. Particular attention will be paid to applying decolonial theory to 'human-centred design,' namely to examine whether and to what extent it promotes a particular Western-centred view of law and justice (and if so, what are the consequences thereof as documented by case studies). We welcome contributions with varied methodological approaches, and research designs, and invite expressions of interest in the form of abstracts of 500 words.

Timeline

Deadline of abstracts: 22 November 2024

Notification of acceptance: 15 December 2024

Draft papers: 1st April 2025

Authors workshop: 10-11 April 2025

Submission of paper for peer review: 15th May 2025

Publication: Late 2025

Submission

Please send your abstracts to siddharth@justiceadda.com & anna.pivaty@ru.nl.

References:

De Souza & Santuber (2024), The Socio-Politics of Legal Design and their Epistemic Consequences

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2009), Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services

Pathfinders (2021), Justice for All. The Task Force on Justice

Ryan, M. We're only human after all: a critique of human-centred AI. *AI & Soc* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-01976-2>.

Savolainen, K. (2021). User-Centred Design without Involving Users: A Longitudinal Case Study in a Human-Centred-Design-Mature Company. *The Design Journal*, 24(6), 887–905. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2021.1980267>

van Velsen L, Ludden G, Grünloh C. The Limitations of User-and Human-Centered Design in an eHealth Context and How to Move Beyond Them. *J Med Internet Res*. 2022 Oct 5;24(10):e37341. doi: 10.2196/37341. PMID: 36197718; PMCID: PMC9582917.

World Bank (2018), Indicators of Citizen-Centric Public Service Delivery