

HUMAN VULNERABILITY IN INTERACTION WITH AI

2ND CONFERENCE OF THE PRIN-PROJECT DIVE

University of Rome ‘Tor Vergata’

Villa Mondragone

16th and 17th May 2024

Call for Papers for PhD Students

In the context of the PRIN-Project “Digital Vulnerability in European Private Law” (DiVE), we are planning the second conference, to be held on 16 and 17 May 2024 at the University of Rome Tor Vergata, focusing on the theme “Human Vulnerability in Interaction with AI”.

The inaugural conference, held in Ferrara last June, delved into the current legal status of the concept of digital vulnerability within domestic and European private law, particularly in relation to the marketplace and vulnerable consumers.

The upcoming Rome conference aims to broaden this perspective, shifting its focus to the realm of human-machine interaction (HMI or human-robot interaction, HRI). It seeks to explore the facets that should be considered when defining digital vulnerability as a characteristic of legal subjectivity pertaining to humans. This includes examining the social, economic, and political legal structures shaped by humans to express their identities.

For our purposes, “machine” encompasses both advanced forms of Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) and future Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), where AI ceases to be a mere tool and becomes an agent. The analysis encompasses vulnerabilities arising from human-machine interactions in both natural and digital environments, highlighting the opportunities and threats they generate.

The challenges presented by HMI can be divided into three layers, each corresponding to a conference session:

1. The first layer delves into legal subjectivity and individual identity, exploring how continuous changes in people's identities, both actively and passively expressed in their 'onlife', affect self-determination and agency (Floridi). This contrasts with the traditional legal view of subjects as unified and stable entities.

2. The second layer examines digital vulnerability through the sociological lens of inclusion/exclusion dynamics. It investigates vulnerabilities in terms of access (right to access, connectivity, disconnection, data retention, etc.) and vulnerabilities arising from access (social sorting, intersectional discrimination, exclusionary practices, individual manipulation, social homogenization, and personalization of informational environments). This layer addresses the legal implications concerning the exercise of freedom, fundamental human rights, and exposure to control and bias in times of 'deep mediatization' (Hepp). This includes examining the tension between personal autonomy and heteronomous imposition, integrity of individual identity and algorithmic domination (Zuboff).

3. The third layer explores scenarios of human-machine hybridization, such as those emerging from the anthropomorphization of machines and human augmentation for therapeutic purposes. It assesses the advantages, disadvantages, risks, and limits of a future where the boundaries between humans and machines blur.

All three layers prompt questions about the functioning of current private law regulations, social, economic, and political structures, human mind compared to artificial neural networks (Parisi), and big data models (Quarteroni).

Understanding these layers necessitates dialogue between legal scholars and scientists from various fields, including philosophy, sociology, medicine, computer science, physics, and mathematics.

If you are interested in participating as a speaker, please submit an abstract no longer than 500 words to digital.vulnerability@gmail.com by February 29, 2024. Abstracts should address one or more of the three layers mentioned earlier, focusing on identifying dynamics in human-machine interactions, emerging vulnerability patterns, and proposing how to govern these interactions in a human-friendly manner and mitigate associated risks. PhD students will present their papers in a peer to peer basis.

The DiVE Project Team and the International Advisory Board Members will evaluate proposals and provide feedback by March 15, 2024. Please note that we are not able to provide funding for travel and stay expenses.

Selected speakers will have a 10-minute presentation slot, followed by Q&A and a general discussion. They will also be invited to submit papers for publication in the conference volume.

We look forward to receiving your papers and welcoming you to our Rome conference.

Claudia Amodio, Camilla Crea, Alberto De Franceschi, Amalia Diurni, Marta Infantino, Luca Ettore Perriello, Loredana Tullio

