

## **Towards a digital access to legal information, law, and justice?**

Nowadays, multiple digital tools are populating our lives. Their omnipresence radically affects our relationship to ourselves, to others and to the world. Legal and judicial matters are impacted by this phenomenon, as reflected by the notions of legaltechs, modernization, platformization, case law database, etc. In this context, public states must invent ways to address both connected and disconnected citizens. Second, they must prevent the psychosocial risks to which their employees and hyperconnected citizens are exposed. Third, they must coherently articulate the digital and ecological transitions. This triple challenge is dizzying and questions the notions of modernity and modernization, which, according to the sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour, have become obsolete<sup>1</sup>.

But digital technologies also remind us that access to legal information constitutes both a principle and a problem of law. If all lawyers, clerks, magistrates, experts and citizens should in principle have the same access to the law, many disparities and inequalities characterize the Right to the Law. In Belgium, a free and open case law database has been expected in the last two years. It requires efficient digital infrastructures and a framework ensuring the protection of personal data. These two prerequisites for any online publication of case law are crucial issues for the independence of the rule of law.

These few considerations indicate how digital technologies question public policies and investments. Is it a matter of giving priority to the race ahead, to acceleration, productivity, and performance, even if it means exhausting human, energetic, and economic resources? Or is it first and foremost a matter of reducing inequalities, protecting the most vulnerable, and opening the access to legal information, law, and justice?<sup>2</sup>

Christophe Dubois, Professeur de sociologie, ULiege (c.dubois@uliege.be)

---

<sup>1</sup> Latour, B. (2012). *We have never been modern*. Harvard university press; Latour, B. (2018). *Down to earth: Politics in the new climatic regime*. John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>2</sup> For further details, see Dubois, C. (2022). La numérisation, levier d'une justice accessible et indépendante?. *Journal des Tribunaux*, 6881(1), 12-14.