



**Ius Commune Conference Amsterdam,
27-28 November 2025**

**Call for Papers Workshop on Comparative
Legal History:**

***Ius Commune in the Making:
Meaning in Law***



Ius Commune Workshop on Comparative Legal History

Ius Commune in the Making: Meaning in Law

27 November 2025

The 29th Ius Commune Conference will take place in Amsterdam (27-28 November 2025), and a Workshop will be devoted to “Meaning in Law.”

The workshops on “Comparative Legal History – Ius Commune in the Making” aim to reveal and understand the nature and effects of various legal formants in the development of law. Indeed, forces of legal formants are too often lost or hidden beneath a superficiality of commonalities. History is a living laboratory. In the past, we explored the role of legal actors (2014), legal sources (2016), force of local laws (2017), methods and dynamics of law (2018), networks (2019), paradigmatic shifts (2020), great debates in the history of law (2021), the concept of innovation in law (2023), and manifestations of nature in law (2024).

This upcoming workshop is dedicated to the different conceptions of “meaning” in law. What is understood by meaning? On a working level, it may be taken up as “interpretation” of rules or juridical acts, or as “qualification” of facts. There it provides for a wide realm of comparative historical research. It does cover in essence everything, concerning individual and societal intention and action - and whatever over time is part of the legal domain. Legal methodology is just around the corner, and so is political philosophy - to any individual person, or to institutions such as legislators, judges, and professors. To get to the meaning of a legislative, judicial, or jurisprudential norm: why are some schools of thought, such as textualism, originalism, contextualism, or sociological jurisprudence, preferred over others?

Maxims or principles enlighten the cobbled roads towards meaning in law. *In claris cessat interpretatio* - if words are clear, interpretation stops; even so: though the Praetor’s edict could be perfectly clear, still its interpretation should not be neglected, Ulpian makes clear (D 25.4.1.11). Matters not dealt with in law, may be derived by analogy - Julian (D 1.3.12) - if such makes sense in the light of what has been prescribed. At the same time, concepts may have a range of consecutive (legal history) and parallel (comparative law) meanings in the legal domain - even in the same society or jurisdiction. Contracts have been similarly understood based on texts or contexts; understanding contracts gave birth to similar maxims, which methodological toolboxes show, albeit with large differences, both of the civil law and the common law traditions. The meaning of a rule or a fact is, however, not only determined by the method of logical and/or empirical reasoning - but also by (tradition of) explicit consensus, customs, and religion. Is there a hierarchy? In any way - all modes of finding and justification of meaning are interrelated, react and overlap, and ultimately may contribute. Traditional customs, specifically proven, meeting rational standards and natural, canonical *aequitas* might not only be accepted, but might even trump mandatory statutes; natural *aequitas* similarly might give birth to an *actio utilis* where traditional and consensual law did not. What is meaning in law? Certainty too often seems to be in contemporary law the prime virtue. It is not. There is hierarchy here. In the quest for a good life, *veritas* and *fides* have more important seats at the table - always headed by the bright sun of justice.

Senior researchers and PhD candidates are invited to submit an abstract of a paper related to the above-mentioned theme. Abstracts (max. 400 words) should be sent to Agustín Parise (agustin.parise@maastrichtuniversity.nl) no later than **1 August 2025**. Shortly after that, the authors will be informed whether their papers are selected for a presentation during the Workshop. All contributions should be in English. Co-authored papers will be also considered. The organizing

committee will give preference to early-career researchers when facing submissions of similar quality.

Researchers from within and outside the Ius Commune Research School will be eligible to present abstracts. Please also forward this call to colleagues who might be interested.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact a member of the organizing committee,

Harry Dondorp (j.h.dondorp@vu.nl)

Wouter Druwé (wouter.druwe@kuleuven.be)

Michael Milo (j.m.milo@uu.nl)

Pim Oosterhuis (janwillem.oosterhuis@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

Agustín Parise (agustin.parise@maastrichtuniversity.nl)