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Kort præsentation

Hin-Yan lives and breathes his research: scribbling ferociously in his black moleskine notebook while holed up in his office; losing himself in manic whiteboarding sessions with others; and confusing most people he talks to with dynamic jumps in narrative, logic and topic. You will find sketches of current research projects, and research-integrated educational activities, below, and should these spark interest, do feel free to get in touch!

Research

Hin-Yan's research interests are eclectic (some would suggest chaotic), rapidly-developing and often hit dead-ends or lay dormant for long periods. At present, these interests lie in four broad trajectories: at the frontiers of emerging technology governance with a focus on artificial intelligence and legal disruption; in developing regulatory and policy tools to mitigate existential and global catastrophic risks; the ramifications of influence, manipulation, and cognitive liberty; and the societal implications of quantum AI.

Artificial Intelligence and Legal Disruption

While nominally focusing upon the myriad of legal, regulatory and governance challenges posed by artificial intelligence, his real research agenda is to deploy such new and emerging technologies as a mirror upon the contemporary regulatory order. Thus, his research in this area attempts to leverage the defamiliarising vantage point offered by AI as a benchmark to critically evaluate hitherto unseen regulatory configurations in which we have been embedded.

As a way of organising the broad array of issues at the nexus between law, regulation and governance on the one hand, and artificial intelligence on the other, Hin-Yan is developing the concept of 'Legal Disruption' (with a group concept paper in Law, Innovation and Technology, and in Futures). Within this framework, artificial intelligence applications only become problematic to the extent where these cause the law 'run out', reveal latent inconsistencies and unfounded presumptions, or otherwise disrupt societal function. He is also the coordinator of the Artificial Intelligence and Legal Disruption Research Group (AI-LeD) at the Faculty which aims in part to further develop this conceptual framework.

Existential and Global Catastrophic Risks

Hin-Yan's research interest in existential and global catastrophic risks stems not so much from spectacular hazards capable of triggering human extinction, such as AI and other technogenic risks, but rather revolve around the myriad of ways in which civilizational decline can be intertwined with sub-optimal governance or can be path-dependent upon poor regulatory constellations that are being put in place presently.

Concretely, his scepticism towards one-hit knock-out existential threats culminated in a joint-piece, 'Governing Boring Apocalypses', which hopes to broaden the study of existential risks. With the advent of Covid-19, the same team has reconvened to tease out lessons from the pandemic for the governance of existential and global catastrophic risks more generally in another article.

Influence, Manipulation, and Cognitive Liberty

Hin-Yan is becoming increasingly alarmed about advancing capabilities to influence minds and manipulate behaviour. In the context of law, regulation, and governance, he has sketched out some of these ideas in 'Rule Following Robots', but his concern goes a lot broader and deeper than this...

Quantum AI

As part of a larger consortium project, Q-Shift: Decision-Making in the Age of Quantum AI, Hin-Yan will be exploring the potential problem-space raised by coupling AI with quantum computing. This project launched in November 2022, and more will be available at: <https://www.quantumstateofworld.com/>

Educational Activities

Hin-Yan avowedly does not teach.

Instead, his approach to education is to mentor his students to develop their own ways of interrogating the world, and to seek the questions that they are genuinely engaged with. This involves equipping students with tacit abilities, such as: a nose for sniffing out the most relevant problem, or aspect of a problem; matching a problem appropriately with the student's skill set, interest, and motivation; and instilling a robust sense of self-critique. Education should not be about the accumulation of data, information, or necessarily knowledge (from the DIKW hierarchy); if this is true, then we need to try other methods and means and target these towards other objectives. Hin-Yan's courses (past, present, and proposed) are part of an iterative processes to test this approach. At present, Hin-Yan is tinkering with techniques and approaches from improv.

Hin-Yan convenes a popular elective Master's course 'Artificial Intelligence and Legal Disruption'. Instead of teaching classes, he leads wide-ranging critical discussions that are anchored in pre-assigned papers with the aim of pushing thinking forward in a deeply research-integrated manner. Complex and hectic scrawls are known to sprawl themselves across the whiteboard as each session progresses, and each seminar ends with more problems than they start with. Student evaluations have consistently raised the uniqueness of this class, and have said for example that 'His passion for the subject (artificial intelligence and legal disruption) and brilliance is obvious, and transmits to the entire class'.

Resonating the research-integrated approach of this class, a collection of final papers has been published by Retskraft in a Special Issue on Artificial Intelligence and Legal Disruption (Volume 5, Issue 1).

From Autumn 2021, Hin-Yan will also be running Policy and Governance for Global Catastrophic and Existential Risks for the Security Risk Management Programme at the Political Science Department as an outlet for his research trajectory on the topic. This will be one of the extremely few courses on Existential Risks available worldwide, but the hope is to build momentum behind educational activities in this area. He will also be co-convening a new course on Human Rights, Democracy and Digital Technology that hopes to educate students specifically on the human rights and democratic challenges and opportunities presented by digital technologies (and hopefully it will do what it says on the tin).

He also runs a range of eclectic PhD Courses, including: 'Innovation and Disruption in Legal Research', 'Models of Legal Disruption', and 'Ignorance, Agnotology, and Uncertainty: Drivers for Doctoral Research'. The underlying purpose behind these courses is to directly engage PhD candidates with the challenge of problem-finding (as opposed to the traditional problem-solving), to immerse them within deeper questions of what the legal and regulatory order should be doing, and how uncertainty might change the very cores of their theses.

He has been nominated as one of only two teachers by the University of Copenhagen for the Ministry of Higher Education and Science's Teaching Prize in 2020 and 2021, and has been nominated for the Harald Teaching Prize every year that he has taught in Copenhagen. He has finally been awarded the Harald in 2021, and will be the proud owner of the porcelain owl that comes with it. He operates a digital-device free policy for all of his educational activities to preserve and promote participation, dialogue and focus.

Hin-Yan helped to kick-start Æther, an intellectual playgroup with various activities including a Journal and a regular Salon, to facilitate longer-term engagement and to build a community around these ideas and this work.

Research Supervision

Hin-Yan is always happy to supervise strong Master's dissertation projects in any area that connects with what he's working on, or which piques his interest as promising research projects or trajectories. Similarly, Hin-Yan is always on the look-out for outstanding PhD candidates pursuing brilliant theses, like Matthijs Maas and Sue Anne Teo. Just be ready that, projects tend to take unorthodox and counter-intuitive turns under his watch.

Background

Dr Hin-Yan Liu joined the Faculty of Law as an Associate Professor in 2015. Before coming to Copenhagen, he was first a Max Weber Fellow and subsequently a Research Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, while concurrently holding a permanent appointment at New York University (NYU) in Florence. He had previously held academic positions at King's College London and the University of Westminster, and has visited the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law in Freiburg on a Max Planck Society Scholarship.

His doctoral work at King's College London was supported by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, King's College London and the Government of Alberta. Controversially arguing that ordinary legal processes were at the source of the impunity enjoyed by the modern private military company, his thesis was passed without amendments and has been adapted into a monography published by Hart in September 2015. He was awarded his LL.M. in Human Rights Law by University College London (UCL) with distinction, and also he holds separate degrees in both law and in psychology.

Hin-Yan is an avid climber, alpinist, and mountaineer and was formerly a climbing instructor with the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, and a volunteer alpine leader for the Alpine Club of Canada. Finding himself living and working in a country without gradient has meant coming to terms with the fact that regular adventures are no longer possible. Surviving on memories of solo treks through Tibet, the Rockies, the Alps, and beyond, and on his follies and adventures on rock and ice, he now finds solace and freedom in building and riding his fixies (reliving of his time darting between the traffic and racing and playing cycle-courier in London's urban jungle).

Taking advantage of the wind and the waves in Copenhagen, Hin-Yan can also now be found tethered to the lines of his kite. Under the waves, Hin-Yan is a certified Rescue Diver, with a growing obsession for wreck diving. Taking to the skies, he is a paragliding Club Pilot, but does not yet have the patience for the copious amounts of parawaiting that is involved. Hin-Yan is now trying his hand at improv, which is reminiscent of his 'teaching' style.

On paper, Hin-Yan is 'from' Canada and Hong Kong SAR, but he's also survived English Public School and savoured years of la bella vita in the Tuscan countryside, as well as tramping nomadically over countless roadtrips through the Iberian peninsula, western Canada/US, and Morocco (among others).

Kvalifikationer

PhD, King's College London

Dimissionsdato: 1 nov. 2012

LLM (Distinction), University College London

Dimissionsdato: 1 nov. 2008

LLB (Hons.), City, University of London

Dimissionsdato: 26 jun. 2007

BA (Psychology), University of Alberta

Dimissionsdato: 10 jun. 2005

Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy

Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice

Publikationer

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6 mar. 2013

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22 feb. 2013

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2009 → 2012

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