

VANESSA VILLANUEVA COLLAO

[GitHub](#) ◇ [SSRN](#) ◇ [ORCID](#)

+1(929) 229-8784 ◇ +39 339 39 84 1 82 ◇ Italy

vanessa.villanuevacollao@eui.eu ◇ vanessa.villanueva@unibocconi.it

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Bocconi University , Milan, Italy <i>Academic Fellow</i> , Department of Law	2024–2025
European University Institute (EUI) , Fiesole, Italy <i>Visiting Fellow</i> , Max Weber Programme for Postdoctoral Studies <i>Max Weber Fellow</i>	2024–2025 2023–2024
University of Roma Tre , Rome, Italy <i>Research Fellow</i> , South EU Google Data Governance Chair	2022–2024
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign , Champaign, IL <i>Adjunct Instructor</i> , Legal Writing (Law500)	2022
Università degli Studi di Genova , Italy <i>Adjunct Professor</i> , English Law, Master in Legal Translation, Department of Linguistics	2012–2021
Uniforma–Interuniversity Consortium for Legal Continuing Education , Italy <i>Researcher</i> , Trust Law	2011–2013

EDUCATION

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Law <i>Doctor of the Science of Law (J.S.D.)</i> - Pass without revisions Dissertation: Cryptogatekeepers in Decentralized Finance, Conflicts of Interest and Prospective Solutions Chair: Verity Winship . Committee: Amitai Aviram , Jeremy McClane , Thomas Ulen . Relevant Coursework: Empirical Methods in Law, Genomics & the Law, Machine Learning <i>Senior Editor</i> , Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal <i>Research Assistant</i> , College of Law Prof. Verity Winship (Small Business Surveys NSF-project) Prof. Jeremy McClane (SPACs & Business Development Companies) WGS, Prof. Colleen Murphy - Migration Game Design Working Group	2024 2020–2023 2020–2021 Summer 2021 2019–2021
University of Michigan , Ann-Arbor, MI ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research Structural Equation Models for Latent Variables Categorical Data Analysis	2021 2020
The University of Chicago, Coase-Sandor Institute for Law & Economics , Chicago, IL Summer School in Law and Economics	2018
University of California at Berkeley, School of Law , Berkeley, CA <i>Master of Laws (LL.M.)</i> . Relevant Coursework: Privacy law, Cybersecurity	2016
Università degli Studi di Genova, School of Economics , Genoa, Italy <i>Master in Maritime and Transportation Insurance (M.A.)</i>	2013
Università degli Studi di Genova, School of Law , Genoa, Italy <i>Laurea in Giurisprudenza [Juris Doctor (J.D.) equivalent]</i>	2011

CERTIFICATIONS

European University Institute (EUI) , Fiesole, Italy Teaching Training Certificate (3 ECTS)	2024
Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models Institute , Princeton Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models Certification	2020

DATASETS

ICO DATASET 2019 - Dataset of 2,194 Initial Coin Offerings during the 2019 boom.
available at <https://villanuevacollao-datasets.blogspot.com/p/ico-dataset-2019.html>
DOI: doi.org/10.3886/E217142V2

SELECTED ARTICLES

Understanding the Role of Informal Relationships, Social Norms, and Emerging Power Structures in Decentralized Governance (2025), *under peer review*.

Decentralized Finance's Premise & Promise of Decentralization & Disintermediation (2025), *submitted to law review*.

Cryptogatekeepers as a Response to Conflicts of Interest in Decentralized Finance (2025), *submitted to law review*.

Protecting Privacy with Blockchain: When Genomics Meets DTC, EUR. J. PRIVACY & TECHNOL. (2025) *forthcoming*

DeFi—A Framework of the Automated Financial Open System, 26 TULANE J. TECHNOL. & INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY 75 (2024).

Navigating the Transatlantic AI Landscape: The EU Artificial Intelligence Act and its Ripple Effect on the US, MEDIA LAWS (2024).

Empirical Methods in Comparative Law: Data Talks, 12/2 COMP. L. REV. 55 (2023); University of Illinois College of Law Legal Studies Research Paper No. 23-13

New ICO Intermediaries, 5 ITALIAN L.J. 731 (2019), University of Illinois College of Law Legal Studies Research Paper No. 20-12 (with Verity Winship).

featured in [the Legal Theory Blog](#), as very interesting and recommended

featured in [Tokenizzazioni di azioni e azioni tokens](#), CONSOB: Quaderni Giuridici (P. Carrière, N. de Luca, M. de Mari, G. Gasparri, T.N. Poli (2023)).

PUBLICATIONS IN ITALIAN AND SPANISH

Le offerte iniziali e gli scambi di crypto-attività (Initial Offers and Exchanges of Crypto-Assets), CONSOB (Italian Securities & Exchange Comm'n), Comment published on Final Report (2020).

El fideicomiso en América Latina, reflexiones para la comparación jurídica [Latin-American Trusts, reflections on Comparative Law], 45 ACTUALIDAD CIVIL [ACT. CIV.] 315 (2018) (Peru).

Diritto Marittimo ed Economia [Maritime and Navigation Law] 2015 (It.). (with P. Cremonese).

I contratti conclusi in internet, in IL RISARCIMENTO DEL DANNO AL CONSUMATORE [Contracts via the Internet, INDEMNIFIABLE DAMAGES ON CONSUMER CASES] TRATTATI 165 (Cendon, ed., 2014)(It.).

Il Waqf: Charitable Trust dei modelli Islamici [Waqf: Islamic model of Charitable Trusts], 1 TRUSTS E ATTIVITÀ FIDUCIARIE [T&AF] 148 (2013) (It.).

WORK IN PROGRESS

DAOS, Decentralized Governance, and Vote Buying. An Experimental Study

This research investigates how members' participation in decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs) can be incentivized using an experimental approach. The online experiment simulated decision-making processes in a controlled environment, engaging participants as members of a fictional DAO. Participants interacted via a chat platform and responded to a series of polls factorially designed to test whether factors such as separating voting rights, delegation, and informational prompts influence governance behavior.

The Functions of Cryptointermediaries: The Decline of Cryptocurrency Exchanges and the Rise of Cryptoauditors as the “White Hats” of Decentralized Finance

This work uses an interdisciplinary approach through a case study to unravel the origins, structure, functions, and comparison between cryptocurrency exchanges and traditional exchanges and Alternative Trading systems. It argues that the functions of traditional intermediaries are performed by new intermediaries or cryptointermediaries. These new roles dictated by market forces and technological constraints are fundamental for the development of the DeFi ecosystem, particularly the increasing role of cryptoauditing companies seen as “good hackers” following several crashes involving cryptocurrency exchanges. While these cryptointermediaries are not perfect, they allow us to observe several nuances that can illuminate future paths in regulation.

Decentralized (?), But Far From Disorganized: A Comparative Analysis of Legal Wrappers and the Evolving Structure of DAOs

This paper offers a foundational understanding of DAOs and provides a comparative analysis of the legal structures employed to integrate DAOs into existing legal frameworks. It examines the effectiveness of DAO-specific entities such as DAO LLCs and alternative structures, including trusts, foundations, and benefit corporations across multiple jurisdictions. Departing from a case study, the study explores how regulatory approaches in the US, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Guernsey, and other key financial hubs shape DAO governance, capital formation, and accountability. By contrasting these models, this paper critically assesses whether these legal adaptations (or irritations) effectively reconcile the ethos of DAOs with the need for regulatory compliance and legal certainty.

Data Governance Firms in Corporate Boardrooms

I argue that algorithms should be integrated into the board structure of data-driven enterprises. Thus, data governance frameworks are crucial for management, especially for board decision-making. How do we include data governance in the boardroom? I illustrate how the boardroom can implement data governance by creating a hybrid model: an “algorithm” alongside the human board composition. This boardroom model includes a legal entity (a Data Governance Firm—DGF) for designing an algorithmic board member consistent with the corporation's purpose. The DGF's role in developing an algorithmic seat transforms the corporation and its constituencies into complex intersectional relationships based on data. Rather than being a nexus of contracts, modern corporations and their constituencies can be included in datasets showing a nexus of data.

The New Frontier of Data Privacy and Ownership Structure: Tokenizing Genomics

Biotech companies have resorted to blockchain and unregulated vehicles, such as initial coin offerings, as a cheap way of monetizing DNA during the funding stage. This paper will explain how biotech blockchain companies have promised investors control over genetic data but obscured other dynamics within the company ownership structure. Not only do token holders lack voting rights, but they are also in a new vulnerable position: the company has possession of their genetic data. At the same time, traditional shareholders surreptitiously gain more power and control. My analysis will shed light on the relationship between shareholders who invested capital and token holders whose interests depend on the human genetic capital shared with the company and the emerging implications.

BLOG POSTS

[Bringing Accountability Back to Decentralized Finance](#), COLUMBIA L.S. BLUE SKY BLOG (June, 2025)

[From Code to Contract: How Legal Wrappers Are Reshaping DAO Governance](#), OXFORD BUS. L. BLOG, OBLB (May 14, 2025)

[The EU AI Act: A Global Game-Changer or a Roadblock for Innovation in the US?](#), OXFORD BUS. L. BLOG, OBLB (March 4, 2025)

[Rodolfo Sacco: The professor, the partisan, the man](#), ASCL BLOG (April, 2022)

[Auditing Crypto-Financing](#), Duke Law, THE FINREG BLOG (Mar. 10, 2020) (with Verity Winship)

[Auditing Initial Coin Offerings and Smart-Contracts](#), CUHK, Center for Financial Regulation and Economic Development, Machine Lawyering (Mar. 3, 2020) (with Verity Winship)

AWARDS & GRANTS

Governance of Emerging Technologies and Science, GETS & Arizona State University 2024
GETS conference Grant

Early-Stage Research (ESR) & Max Weber Programme Grants, European University Institute 2023
[Project: Decentralized Governance: Models for Accessible Cryptomarkets](#)

Mask Network Grant. Project: The Tech Book 2023

CULPJ- Consortium for Undergraduate Law & Justice Research Programs Grant 2022
Travel grant for the Global Meeting on Law & Society at Lisbon

Supplemental Summer Block Grant, University of Illinois-Graduate College. Dissertation Grant 2020

JSD Scholarship, University of Illinois-College of Law 2018–2023

Master Scholarship, European Social Fund-Liguria Region 2012

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

COURSES

Instructor - [Introduction to the Legal System](#), Bocconi University Spring 2025

Adjunct Instructor - Legal Writing, University of Illinois, College of Law July–Aug. 2022
Small section within the course "Law500". Profs. Moritz & McDade

Teaching Assistant - Contracts, University of Illinois, College of Law Spring 2020
Review sessions for LLMs and JDs. Prof. Ralph Brubaker

Teaching Assistant - Civil Procedure, University of Illinois, College of Law Spring & Fall 2019
Review sessions for LLMs. Prof. Verity Winship

LECTURES

ON CORPORATE LAW & TECHNOLOGY

Corporate Technologies' Impact on Corporate Boards

U. of Westminster. Company & Corporate Law. Instructor: Prof. Ioannis Glinavos Spring 2024

EUI. Seminar "Introduction to Corporate Governance". Instructor: Prof. Mathias Siems Fall 2023

The US Approach to Sustainable Corporations—EUI—Department of Law Fall 2023
Seminar "Introduction to Corporate Governance". Instructor: Prof. Mathias Siems

<i>Introduction to Cryptomarkets</i> —University of Roma Tre—Department of Law	Spring 2023
Within the course “Comparative Law of Digital Markets”. Instructor: Prof. Noah Vardi	
<i>AI and its impact in businesses [IA—L’impatto nelle aziende]</i> —University of Roma Tre	Fall 2022
Within the course “Diritto comparato dei dati e dell’intelligenza artificiale” [Comparative Law of Data and Artificial Intelligence]. Instructor: Dr. Sirio Zolea.	
<i>Smart Contracts: Legal Issues and Restitutionary Solutions</i> —Univ. of Illinois, College of Law	Fall 2022
Within the course “Fintech Law and Policy.” Instructor: Paul Kayrouz.	
<i>Blockchain and the Development of Web 3.0</i> —University of Roma Tre—Department of Law	May 2022
In the course “Digital Technologies and the Law.” Instructor: Prof. Giorgio Resta.	
<i>Blockchain and IP</i> —University of Salerno-European Law Students’ Ass’n (ELSA)	June 2021
Webinar Academy (EWA) on AI and Intellectual Property	
ON METHODOLOGY	
<i>Experiments in Legal Research</i> —NOVA, School of Law, Lisbon	Spring 2024
Within the Course of Methodology. Instructor: Fabrizio Esposito	
<i>Interdisciplinary Approaches to Law</i> —University of Roma Tre—Department of Law	Spring 2023
Within the Methodology Seminars 2023 of the PhD in “Law & Social Change”.	
<i>Comparative Legal Systems</i> -University of Genoa, Department of Law	2016–2018
Within the Course of Comparative Law	

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

<i>DAOs, Decentralized Governance, and Vote Buying. An Experimental Study</i>	
NBLSC, UCLA School of Law, Lowell Milken Institute for Business Law & Policy	June 2025
EUI-MWP, Weird Capitalism	May 2025
Law & Society Conference-Chicago, Technology, Innovation & AI in the Corporate Space	May 2025
La Sapienza University, SIDE/ISLE-Italian Association of Law & Economics	Dec. 2024
<i>A Comparative Analysis of Legal Wrappers and the Evolving Structure of DAOs</i>	
National Taiwan University, 6th YCC Workshop-Comparative Business & Financial Law	May 2025
<i>A Comparative Analysis of Legal Wrappers and the Evolving Structure of DAOs</i>	
National Taiwan University, 6th YCC Workshop-Comparative Business & Financial Law	May 2025
<i>Decentralized Governance: Models for Accessible Cryptomarkets</i>	
University of Pittsburgh, WINIR Institutional Resilience & Recovery	Sep. 2024
BlockchainGov Research Workshop	July 2024
Bocconi University, Corporate Governance and Reputation	July 2024
EUI-MWP, Navigating Trends in Financial Markets & Corporate Governance	July 2024
EUI-MWF Conference. The Return of Authority in Digital Governance	June 2024
University of Westminster-CETI	Mar. 2024
<i>Cryptogatekeepers in Decentralized Finance. Conflicts of Interest and Prospective Solutions</i>	
Governance of Emerging Technologies, Arizona State University (from call for papers)	May 2024
SPEED, Nova School of Law	April 2024
<i>Cryptointermediaries in Decentralized Finance</i>	
WINIR—Institutional Innovation & Evolution (from call for papers)	Sep. 2023
University of Genoa & University of Roma Tre - New Trends in Corporate Governance	July 2023

Data Governance Firms in Corporate Boardrooms

[WINIR—Polycentric Governance and the Challenges of the 21st Century](#)(call for papers) Sep. 2022
[Law & Society–Global Meeting](#), Iscte—University Institute of Lisbon (from call for papers) July 2022

The New Frontier in Data Privacy and Ownership Structure: Tokenizing Genomics

[Legal Design for Transparency in Consumer Contracts operating online and offline](#), Oct.2021
Jean Monnet Chair PROTECH (from call for papers)
[National Business Law Scholars Conference—University of Tennessee at Knoxville](#) June 2021
[Law & Soc’y–Chicago Annual Meeting](#)(from call for papers) May 2021
[Machine Lawyering Conference: Human Sovereignty and Machine Efficiency in the Law](#)
The Chinese University of Hong Kong (from call for papers) Jan. 2021

Conflicts of Interest in DeFi: The Duties of Cryptointermediaries

[Rijeka Doctoral Conference 2021—University of Rijeka](#) Dec. 2021
10th National SJD Roundtable–Georgetown University Law Center April 2021

Empirical Methods in Law: Data Talks

[17th Annual Conference of the Italian Soc’y of Law and Economics \(SIDE\)](#) Dec. 2021
Panel: Comparative Law & Econ. (from call for papers).
[American Soc’y of Comparative Law “Annual Conference”](#) Oct. 2020
Panel Law & Methodology (from call for papers)
[AIDC/YCC Conference “New Topics and Methods in Comparative Law Research”](#) June 2020
Panel on Systemology (from call for papers)

New ICO Intermediaries

[Exploring cryptocurrencies & other related markets-roundtable](#). L.& Soc’y Conference May 2020
University of Luxembourg Nov. 2019

CONFERENCES AND SPEAKER SERIES ORGANIZED

WINIR Young Scholars Workshop [“AI & Institutions”](#) May 2025
University of Pittsburgh-WINIR - Young Scholars Workshop, [“Bridging Divides”](#) Sep. 2024
EUI, MWP Conference [“Continuity or Rupture: Towards an Interdisciplinary Inquiry”](#) Feb.–June 2024
EUI & Law & Science, [“Capitalist Law”](#) presentation of Katharina Pistor’s Book, Mar. 2024
co-sponsored by the EUI Finance & Soc’y Cluster
WINIR - Young Scholars, [Call for Papers: “Technology and Institutional Change”](#) Sep. 2023
Symposium [New Trends in Corporate Governance-Univ. of Genoa & Roma Tre Univ.](#), July 2023
WINIR - Inaugural Young Scholars Workshop - [Call for Abstracts: “Technology and Society”](#) May 2023
South EU Google Data Governance Chair
[“Data Protection and Consumer Protection Conference”](#) - Roma Tre University Mar. 2023
[“The Future of Data Protection Conference”](#) - Roma Tre University Mar. 2022
Law as Science Project - [Organized Events on Methodology](#) Fall 2022–Spring 2023

OTHER PRESENTATIONS

[ECGI: Different Types of Shareholders and Corporate Decision-Making](#) June 2025
Bocconi University - ECGI (Discussant)
[Fireside Chat: A Fair Conversation about Blockchain Regulation](#) May 2024
EUI, The Law, Rationalism, and Complexity Working Group (Moderator)

<i>Artificial Intelligence & Institutional Change - WINIR Conference</i> (Invited Moderator)	Sep. 2023
<i>Fintech & Financial Innovation - WINIR Pre-Conference Workshop</i> (Invited Moderator)	Sep. 2023
<i>Inaugural WINIR Young Scholars Workshop</i> (Invited Moderator)	May. 2023
<i>Introduction to the Law & Economics Institute-IAED-</i> (Invited Speaker)	Mar. 2023
Universidad de Palermo (Argentina) “El análisis económico del derecho como catalizador de la igualdad de género” [The Economic Analysis of Law as a Catalyst for Gender Equality]	
<i>Decentralized Finance</i> , Berkeley Global Society (Paris) (Invited Speaker)	Sep. 2022
<i>Ninth Annual Corporate & Securities Litigation Workshop - (Chicago)</i> (Invited Moderator)	Sep. 2022
University of Illinois, College of Law	
<i>Revista Facultad de Jurisprudencia (RFJ) 75th Anniversary</i> (Invited Moderator)	Nov. 2021
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador–PUCE	
<i>25th Annual Conf.: Econ. Analysis of the Law & Institutional Change</i> (Invited Moderator)	Oct. 2021
Latin American, Caribbean and Iberic Law and Economics Association-ALACDE	

APPOINTMENTS TO RESEARCH ASSOCIATIONS

<i>Instituto de Análisis Económico del Derecho</i> [Law & Economics Institute]	since 2023
University of Palermo - Buenos Aires, Argentina	

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Law Office of Paolo Ghiara. Associate. Genoa	2017–2018
SUNIA – Syndicate of Tenants and Assignees. Genoa	2015–2016
Regional Project Coordinator, EU Project EnerSHIFT, quality of social housing buildings initiative	
ClaimsConsult s.a.s. Average Adjuster, marine and cargo claims specialist. Genoa	2015
Kuehne and Nagel S.R.L. Intern. Genoa	2012
Private practice Mediator, Labor Law, Immigration Law, tertiary sector. Genoa	2001–2011

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE & MEMBERSHIPS

ACADEMIC SERVICE

European University Institute

<i>Guest Reviewer for the EJLS Special Issue on International Law and Technology</i>	2024
<i>Finance and Society cluster</i> (organized event)	2024

European Law Institute

<i>Consultative Committee: Succession of Digital Assets Data and Other Digital Remains</i>	2024
--	------

University of California at Berkeley, LL.M. Alumni Ambassador

<i>LL.M. Program Application Reviewer</i>	2023–2024
---	-----------

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

<i>JSD Representative</i>	2019–2023
---------------------------	-----------

BOARD AND ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Law as Science Project

<i>Advisor & Project Lead (Interdisciplinary Methodological Approaches to Legal Studies)</i>	2024-current
<i>Coordinator & Editor (Legal Method Lab)</i>	2022-2024

WINIR—World Interdisciplinary Network of Institutional Research

<i>WINIR Young Scholars Committee</i>	2022-current
<i>Reviewer Journal of Institutional Economics - JOIE</i>	2025

Berkeley Global Society

<i>Board Member—Editor of blog posts and social media posts (X/Twitter)</i>	2020–2023
---	-----------

OTHER MEMBERSHIPS

AALS—Association of American Law Schools; AIDC—Associazione Italiana di Diritto Comparato
American Society of Comparative Law; ALACDE—Latin American & Caribbean L.& Econ. Ass'n
European Law Institute; Law & Society Association; SIDE-Italian Society of Law and Economics;
SIRD—Società Italiana per la Ricerca nel Diritto comparato

LANGUAGES

Spanish (native); English (fluent); Italian (fluent); French (basic knowledge)