

PROF. ALEX BIEDERMANN (FDCA / ESC)



PROJECT TYPE	Starting Grant (2014 SNSF Temporary Backup Scheme)
TITLE	Normative Decision Structures of Forensic Interpretation in the Legal Process
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At a time when there are over 9 million criminal proceedings in the EU every year, and the European Commission is promoting principles such as equality of arms to provide all parties with the protection of a fair trial, it is discomfoting to learn that decades of behavioural studies have shown that practical human decision-making is not as good as we think it is. It is regularly liable to many forms of inconsistency.

Also, with a public and media that tend to be more demanding and less forgiving, inference and decision-making in legal contexts with its potentially pervading consequences for defendants' personal lives attract utmost attention. Much current research concentrates on a descriptive approach to this topic, in the sense of analysing instances of potential miscarriages of justice, but researchers largely avoid the normative questions of how thinking and decision-making ought to be assessed (e.g., logical coherence). Most likely, this is because normative insight often reveals where intuitive perceptions go astray, which is a result that people dislike. Our proposal for a way to deal with this risky topic is to act on the interdependency between forensic science and the law. By relying on the most recent concepts for graphical decision-analytic modelling, this project takes on the task of working out normative decision schemes through which forensic scientists and other participants in legal proceedings can beneficially interact when using scientific evidence as a core element in legal decision-making.

The focus is on forensic interpretation, which is the use of forensic science to help reduce uncertainty about propositions of legal interest. The normative perspective makes this project both deep-probing and penetrating, as it will provide compelling analytical schemes with a computational basis to ensure clarity, balance and transparency along with argumentative rigor, and a host of fundamental insights into the workings of contemporary legal systems.