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MULTISENSORY LAW AND THE CONCEPT OF INTERFACE: How they Can Be Approached from a Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract
Dr. Colette R. Brunschwig has been the pioneer of so-called “Multisensory Law”, which became a new branch of knowledge in Law as well as in Cognitive Sciences. In one of her articles Dr. Brunschwig presents the idea of interfaces in Multisensory Law, consisting of multisensory brain-computer interfaces. In this paper we study the concept of interface in Multisensory Law, aiming to collaborate towards the theoretical development of Multisensory Law and its relationship with the discourse of Cognitive Sciences, Information Sciences and Legal Theory. The concept of interface can also be useful for connecting different branches of Multisensory Law, such as visual law and audio-visual law, unifying them.

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MULTISENSORY LAW AND THE CONCEPT OF INTERFACE: How they can be approached from a theoretical perspective

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1 What is Multisensory Law according to Brunschwig: an introduction

Brunschwig says that “understanding the term multisensory law requires clarifying the adjective multisensory, the noun law, and how these terms are related”, adding that law is understood in its broad sense and multisensory refers to the psychology of perception, including stimuli.

Regarding the subject of multisensory law, Brunschwig affirms that “this emerging legal discipline explores the sensory phenomena of the Law, be they unisensory (i.e., visual, auditory, Kinaesthetic, and so forth) or multisensory (i.e., audiovisual, tactile-kinaesthetic, visual-kinaesthetic, and so forth). In her view, we are multisensory beings in a multisensory world, so why should Law continue to be only verbal?”

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2 Ibidem.
In proposing the use of virtual reality for disabled people, Bruschwig talks about multisensory brain-computer interfaces and multisensory digital rhetoric. In this note we hope to contribute towards the subject by presenting aspects of the concept of interface in Law from a theoretical viewpoint.

2 Interfaces in law

An interface is a kind of celebration of the broadest potential of interaction. There is no sufficiently clear definition of the word “interface”, as it is a recent addition in the history of the lexicon, the fruit of sociolinguistic evolution, in this case influenced by computer science and technology.

However, the understanding of the meaning of the term “interface” is intuitive. It refers to the idea of “means”, the mediation or link between two surfaces, or the transition between two elements.

Now it is obvious that the idea of “interface” is related to transdisciplinarity, also in Law, and may be useful for methodological reflection concerning the transition between topics.

In fact, one of the most common failings that we have observed in juridical studies that claim to be interdisciplinary is that the author treats the elements of the topic separately, fragmented in such a way that interdisciplinarity is jeopardised. Nevertheless, it can be revealing.

In transdisciplinarity, which is transversal, there must be an interface between the elements, such that one element is the continuity of the other and the transition between them takes place in a natural way.

Through the interface, the elements of a research topic merge as in a holistic unit, and we thus have a genuine transdiscipline.

The interface, as an extreme form of interaction, is a semantic relation, in the sense of mediating the meaning of one element, taking it to the other.

In reality, the world, society, people and mental representations have always had countless interfaces, which are sometimes hidden and sometimes apparent, insofar as they advance knowledge about the object.

The interface has a cognitive function, as it helps the understanding of topics related amongst themselves, facilitating an intuitive grasp, so that the whole can be envisaged in a broad, orderly way.

In juridical research specifically, we suggest that the interfaces between the elements of a transversal topic can be presented as categories between these elements, expressed by the “most representative words” of these elements. The interfaces can thus function as dialogues between the elements of topics in Law.

5 Idem, ibidem.

6 This topic has already been discussed in: CARNEIRO, M. F. Pesquisa jurídica na complexidade e transdisciplinaridade. 3ª. ed., Curitiba: Juruá Editora, 2013, p. 32.
It is important to emphasize that an interface can be conceived of in a synthetic way, since its role is that of a link between two landscapes in the vast universe of juridical knowledge. The interface must therefore be brief, not saturated with data, since its role is to facilitate the flow between two or more elements.

We mentioned above the “vast juridical universe”, which is an open formation of networks, since Law is a body of knowledge in constant evolution. Very well: we must take into account that, in formations of open networks, there are different types and degrees of interactivity, such that the manner of construction of the interfaces may vary infinitely and not obey rigid models.

In the organisation of a multisensory juridical context, the interfaces have to be adapted to the genre and types of discourses, so that they can shape communication.

The interface lies between the structures that organise transdisciplinary and multisensory language. It can thus have different attributes: it can be uni-, bi- or multidirectional; it can act as a vector, or, on the other hand, as an axis of diffusion. It can also be represented as the simultaneous and collective intention of the elements, or as a form of approach to the object of analysis, operating as a material and logical support in the transdisciplinary and multisensory organisation of the research topic.

It is important to remember, however, that an interface, being a complex phenomenon, ambivalent or polyvalent, is imprecise by nature, so that the organisation of multisensory juridical knowledge by interfaces can be represented as a flexible network. The interface has the role of continuum in discontinuous reality.

3 First conclusion

In this brief note we have examined the concepts of multisensory law and interface, particularly in Law. My proposal is to see whether interfaces can be useful for connections between the branches of Multisensory Law, such as visual law and audio-visual law, unifying them, since Law is unitary.

In these times of networks and connections, in a complex world in which everything is interconnected, we consider that interfaces can perform an interesting role for the unity of the different branches of Multisensory Law.

In this brief note we examined first the idea of Multisensory Law, as conceived by its founder, Dr Colette R. Brunswig. We then examined the theoretical concept of interface, observing that it will always be inter- or trans-disciplinary, as is Multisensory Law. Finally we concluded that Multisensory Law implies the existence of interfaces between one meaning and another, which must be developed in research into a topic.

However, the role of interfaces in Multisensory Law is presented here just as a hypothesis, for discussion which may be developed and deepened in future works.
MULTISENSORY JUSTICE – A POEM

People
Have cried out for
Called for
Justice
Throughout history
with their
Voices
Eyes
Organs
Brain.

People
Have demanded
justice
With all their
Senses
Yet law
Has been mostly
Written
Verbal.

Nowadays law
Has become
Multisensory.

Will it be
A new response
For people?

Multisensory Law
for
Multisensory
And more complete
Justice.

By Maria Francisca Carneiro
References

