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## THE DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF LEGAL INFORMATION IN EXPERT-LAY ONLINE INTERACTION

### Abstract

With the advent of web 2.0 technologies, a preliminary step when looking for legal information and advice often involves the use of online law forums. Through the analysis of a corpus of threads drawn from the *Justanswer* law forum, this paper discusses the negotiation of professional identity and popularization of legal knowledge through the use of explanatory structures. Popularization cannot be simplistically intended as a form of intra-linguistic translation based on the transposition of specialized language into a simplified form. Instead, it should represent a process of text production or recontextualization in which explanatory structures play an important role in the communication of legal information. The study argues for the abandonment of the traditional paradigm that mechanically equates experts with the use of specialized language and offers a critical investigation into the notion of legal expertise, especially in light of the proliferation of online law forums, which have to some extent contributed to the redefinition of legal authority.

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### Key words

legal forums, explanatory structures, expert-lay interaction.

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