



# Public Law and Human Rights Forum

香港城市大學  
City University of Hong Kong

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## Local and Global Legal Developments amid COVID-19

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To prevent the spread of COVID-19, countries have imposed multiple social distancing and confinement measures since early 2020. People have had to move most of the activities online, which accelerated the integration of digital technology into different industries. Against this backdrop, the CityU Law Review, a student-edited and peer-reviewed academic law journal, and the Public Law and Human Rights Forum co-organized this conference to discuss developments in online dispute resolution public health law, insolvency law and labour law throughout the past two and a half years.



From left to right  
Top row: Prof. David LARSON, Dr. Pablo ARELLANO, Prof. Wai Yee WAN  
Bottom row: Prof. Ana ACOSTA, Dr. Julia TOMASSETTI

The conference was moderated by **Dr. Julia TOMASSETTI** (Assistant Professor and Core Member of the CPLR, CityU School of Law). Four distinguished scholars were invited to present on this conference: **Prof. David LARSON** (Chair, American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution; Professor of Law; Senior Fellow, Dispute Resolution Institute, Mitchell

Hamline School of Law), **Prof. Ana ACOSTA** (Associate Professor of Law, Mitchell Hamline School of Law), **Prof. Wai Yee WAN** (Associate Dean and Professor, CityU School of Law) and **Dr. Pablo ARELLANO** (Labour Law Specialist, Labour Law and Reform Unit Governance and Tripartism Department, International Labour Organization). Dr. Tomassetti welcomed the speakers and thanked the audience for participating in this conference.

Prof. Larson discussed how technology has helped legal professionals to deliver their service during the pandemic. For example, the significant expansion and improvement of online dispute resolution (ODR) enable parties to conduct mediation meetings and hearings online. He is of the view that the COVID-19 has driven people to rethink how justice could be provided. Prof. Acosta examined the racial disparities in COVID-19 infection rates, hospitalizations and deaths in the U.S. and workplace safety protection using an interdisciplinary public health and legal perspective. Her presentation indicated that the working conditions in industries that employ many workers of color, such as warehouses and meat processing plants, often fail to meet safety standard. Workers are therefore in higher risk of exposure to COVID-19. Prof Wan discussed governmental responses to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on small and medium sized enterprise in Hong Kong. She commented that economic measures should be supplemented by temporary restructuring law reforms catering to distressed but economically viable SMEs restructure their debts. Dr. ARELLANO analyzed the survey conducted by the International Labour Organization on how labour dispute resolution mechanisms have responded to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasized that key principles of good governance should be considered when addressing these challenges.

On behalf of CPLR, Dr. Tomassetti thanked the speakers for their insightful presentations and the CityU Law Review for co-organizing this conference.