

Dissertation release **7.8.2017**

Visualization makes contracts more understandable and user-friendly

Title of the dissertation	Beyond the wall of contract text. Visualizing contracts to foster understanding and collaboration within and across organizations
Contents of the dissertation	<p>Business contracts are often too long, complex, and hard to understand. Such contracts do not serve the needs of the people who plan, negotiate, and implement them within and across organizations. Contracts seem optimized to win in court and allocate risk after legal problems have arisen, but that is not their only function. Contracts should also help prevent legal problems and secure business opportunities. But to achieve this goal, they must be designed to ensure clear communication and provide information in action-oriented ways.</p> <p>This study explores the novel practice of contract visualization – the use of diagrams, images, and visually structured layouts to make contracts more searchable, readable, and understandable for their day-to-day users, operating in a business-as-usual scenario.</p> <p>The study offers four key contributions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- it demonstrates that users understand visualized contracts more accurately and quickly, compared to informationally equivalent text-only contracts;- it outlines which visualizations can be effectively used to make contracts more understandable;- it illustrates how contract visualization can be used to frame emerging business relationships more positively and collaboratively. Visualization can be used to overcome some typical knowledge barriers in the contracting process, such as communicating across professions, firms, and separate stages of negotiation and implementation;- it suggests different pathways for organizations to adopt contract visualization practices (pattern libraries, ready-made visual templates, and automated IT solutions). <p>This study illustrates that contract documents do not only have a legal function in case of litigation. They are important managerial and communication tools that can be used strategically to build better business relationships with customers and suppliers.</p>
Field of the dissertation	Organisational Behavior and Knowledge Management
Doctoral candidate	Stefania Passera, MA (Design)
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Opponent	Professor George Siedel, University of Michigan, USA
Custos	Professor Eila Järvenpää, Aalto University School of Science, Department of Industrial Engineering and Management
Electronic dissertation	http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-60-7528-0
Doctoral candidate's contact information	Stefania Passera, Department of Industrial Management and Engineering 0505625117, stefania.passera@aalto.fi