



Call for papers

The Dust of Time? Towards a 21st Century Constitutionalism

7-8 October 2021

At the beginning of the 2020s societies around the globe are facing unprecedented challenges. Although we are all absorbed by the pandemic and its consequences, many other issues have remained no less pressing. Climate change is demanding collective action and a fundamental restructuring of our economies in the coming decades. Rising economic inequality, exacerbated first by the ‘age of austerity’ and now by the pandemic, calls into question the ‘neoliberal’ social and economic models our societies have inherited from past decades. The monopolisation of corporate power, especially of large tech companies, is not only challenging the power of the state but increasingly privatising the public sphere. Liberal democracy is subject to centrifugal forces, from authoritarian backlash against juridification and de-politicisation to political polarisation and ‘culture wars’ around gender and racial inequalities as well as the future of migration. The European Union is facing challenges (see e.g. the Brexit and the rule of law crisis) and looking for a sustainable post-Lisbon model based on a new constitutional equilibrium between the EU and its Member States.

Many of these challenges are not addressed by present-day constitutional regimes. Moreover, the younger generation – those who will be the most impacted by these problems – did not participate in constitutional drafting processes, and the authority to interpret the texts usually lies with very experienced scholars and judges. And yet, the ‘dead hand of the past’ seems to be stifling debate around how constitutionalism should be reconceived in order to meet the changed circumstances.

Rather than seeing the constitutional liberalism of the 20th century as the realisation of universal principles, it could also be regarded as a distinct and contingent constitutional

project that responded to a specific set of constitutional challenges and historical events. 20th century constitutionalism sought to constrain the powers of the state through individual rights, constitutional adjudication, and supranational integration in order to prevent a slide into authoritarianism. However, as already mentioned the 21st century brings its very own set of challenges, many of which seem to call for unprecedented collective action and, arguably, systemic transformation. How does constitutionalism need to be reconceived in the light of our current context in order to make it more responsive to these challenges?

We believe it is the mission of young constitutional scholars to make the lived realities and ideas of our generation audible in scholarly discourse. We therefore invite constitutional scholars from Europe and beyond to engage in a thinking process about how constitutions and constitutional lawyers should address today's and tomorrow's most pressing challenges vis-a-vis existing constitutional orders. We are particularly interested in hearing the voices of early career researchers. Are today's constitutional texts suitable for organizing today's and future societies? Which issues should they stress more? Do the actors involved in the interpreting process such as judges and scholars need to question certain beliefs and approaches? How can we make sure that everybody identifies with the constitutional law and that it does not turn into an empty shell? How to facilitate youth participation in those processes and ensure that their opinion is taken into account?

The panels we envision are:

Panel 1: Theoretical Perspectives (constitutional change, democratization processes and participation procedures);

Panel 2: Challenges from the Past (militant democracy, neoliberalism, social rights, values, integration of religion)

Panel 3: Future Challenges (climate change, corporate constitutionalism, digitalization, the pandemic, the power of big companies)

Panel 4: Post-Lisbon European Constitutionalism (integration of national law, disintegration, enhanced cooperation in certain areas)

If you would like to participate in the conference “The Dust of Time? Towards a 21st Century Constitutionalism” send us an abstract of your paper (around 300 words) by **31 March 2021** to constpol@eui.eu. We plan to publish the conference output in a journal or as an edited volume. The conference will take place on **7-8 October 2021 at the European University Institute in Florence**. If it is not possible to hold the conference on campus, it will be held online. For updates also on topical events organized in advance of the final conference, please follow us on Twitter ([@ConstPol](https://twitter.com/ConstPol)) or on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/constpolEUI/>).