

Call for papers  
The molecules of private law  
University of Oxford  
11-12 September 2025

This symposium aims to stimulate discussion of the fundamental building blocks of private law. Examples include such concepts as obligation, duty, responsibility, thing, ownership, personality, capacity, patrimony, right, power, privilege, immunity. These and other basic constituents of legal thought continue to generate debate, controversy, and confusion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not only in long-established fields of law, but also when new difficulties arise, such as in relation to data, digital assets, artificial intelligence, or other technologies.

The organizers now issue a call for papers on any topic related to this objective. Papers will presumptively address one ‘molecule’, but might be envisioned differently. The word limit for papers will be short (ca. 5,000 words). Papers may or may not be comparative in their perspective, and may be co-authored.

We expect to select about ten papers from this call for papers to be discussed at the symposium; additional participants may be invited. Papers will not be fully presented by the author(s); all participants will be expected to read the papers in advance. Each paper will be assigned a commentator whose comments will initiate a comparative discussion. Authors will have a brief opportunity to respond to the commentator before the period of discussion.

Going forward, the organizers aim to identify topics of common interest among the scholars in attendance with the objective of generating a longer-term research agenda in relation to the molecules of private law. The symposium does not include an immediate publication project but this remains open for the future.

Proposals in response to this call for papers should include a working title and an abstract of no more than 350 words. They should be sent by email to [lionel.smith@law.ox.ac.uk](mailto:lionel.smith@law.ox.ac.uk) by 28 February 2025. Papers will be selected on the basis of their quality and originality, their fit with other papers being presented at the symposium, and with the aim of welcoming a diversity of viewpoints. The selection will be made by a scientific committee made up of Prof. Ciara Kennefick, Faculty of Law, University of Oxford; Prof. Alexandra Popovici, *Faculté de droit, Université de Sherbrooke*; and Prof. Lionel Smith, Faculty of Law, University of Oxford. Scholars whose proposals are selected can expect that full texts will be due by 31 July 2025.

Some funding may be available for travel and accommodation for scholars whose proposals are selected but who would otherwise not be able to attend. Prospective participants who wish to be considered for this funding are invited to explain their needs.