

Conceptual Innovation, Methods & Law

An Interdisciplinary Legal Residence

King's College London 16th June to 3rd July 2025

hosted by The Dickson Poon School of Law

Bringing conceptual innovation and new sociolegal and humanities methods to the concepts of law

A call for scholars to participate in a series of interdisciplinary conversations and reflections on concepts, methods, and law in London – for three weeks in summer 2025.

Applications are invited from academics, in the UK and internationally, who are interested in participating in the 2025 interdisciplinary summer residence on Conceptual Innovation, Methods & Law at The Dickson Poon School of Law, King's College London.

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This is the second residence in a new biannual initiative to be held at King's College London. It will involve a mix of programmed and informal activities with a core group of 25-30 scholars over three weeks, with plenty of time for participants to undertake other activities, including research, writing, and informal networking.

The aim of the event is to stimulate thinking about concepts and conceptual methods, and to deepen and develop new understandings, by sharing ideas and thinking collaboratively. Conceptual scholarship takes place in many different fields, subject to different methods and academic frameworks (with their own normative constraints and expectations). This Residence seeks to bring together a group of people working with concepts in different ways who are interested in learning from other perspectives.

We welcome scholars working on conceptual methods and legal concepts from different perspectives and fields (including law, sociology, politics, policy studies, philosophy, development and global studies, gender, race, and disability studies, anthropology, and geography) ready to participate in an interdisciplinary discussion. The group will be a mix of junior, mid-career, and senior scholars. PhD students are also welcome to apply.

Successful applicants will be invited to participate in the 2025 Residence and to contribute to its programme of activities.

**Travel assistance is available for all participants. For participants coming from the Global South, financial assistance with accommodation and living costs is also available.

Provisional structure

Over the three weeks, we will have nine seminars (approximately 2 1/2 hours each), programmed for mid/late afternoon so mornings are free from Residence commitments.

The seminars will involve some preparatory reading, including Residence scholars' work. There will also be two or three early evening lectures. Additional academic and social events can be organised if the 2025 Cohort wishes, e.g., to develop collaborative writing initiatives.

A news story on our 2023 Residence on Equality, Law and Social Justice can be found on the [King's website](#).

To apply

We welcome applications from interested scholars at all career stages. Please submit your application by **20th August 2024**.

Applications should be sent to lawresearch@kcl.ac.uk. They should include a) 1–2-page letter describing your work in this area and what you would hope to contribute and gain from participation; b) a short up-to-date CV.

We aim to select a diverse group of scholars whose work and thinking can together contribute to developing a deeper understanding of these issues. Applications from PhD students and independent scholars are welcome. The final programme will be developed in conjunction with participants.

Funded applicants are expected to participate in the full three-week event.

Please direct academic enquiries and queries to: Davina.Cooper@kcl.ac.uk

For administrative, travel and financial inquiries, please contact lawresearch@kcl.ac.uk

Organising Group:

Davina Cooper (convenor)
Emily Barritt
Sylvie Delacroix
Liat Levanon
Yael Lifshitz
Mark Lunney

Bringing conceptual innovation and new sociolegal and humanities methods to the concepts of law

The organisation and enactment of meaning sits at the heart of much interdisciplinary legal scholarship. Taking the concept as a key social unit in how meaning is organised, we can observe its entry into the field of law in several different ways. There are legal concepts, from property, war, and family, to religion, sex, and personhood, to analyse, critique, reject, reform, and revalue. There are concepts brought to law, and related fields, to do the analytical work, such as intersectionality, depletion, queer utopias, and regulation. And there are the concepts that support and give rise to our methods – interpretive, social, theoretical, anticipatory, critical, genealogical, deconstructive, prefigurative, and so on. There are concepts that don't yet exist or that don't yet have much traction, which may be imagined and created through methods such as conceptual engineering. There are concepts already named whose meanings can be reconstructed for prefigurative or critical work. And there is the challenging terrain of concepts' materialisation or manifestation. If concepts are more than ideational devices, how conceptual meanings get manifested or realised, and how they make sense of existing (or emerging) ontological forms, from AI to ecological crisis, are important subjects to explore. Important here also is the different force that concepts carry. The stakes in interpreting legal (or policy) concepts, for instance, reflects the power and authority that their institutional role and formalisation generates.

This interdisciplinary, international residence will explore the vibrant field of conceptual scholarship, conceptual methodologies, and law, focusing on new methods for understanding and using concepts, key areas of contemporary discussion, and core animating concepts. Possible concepts for this Residence to address are value, care, recognition, flourishing, extraction, property, time, borders, withdrawal, energy, governing, and utopia. The concepts selected will be based on the work and interests of those participating. However, the Residence works from the premise that concepts involve the organisation of meaning in ways that are contested, plural, evolving, and tied up with different forms of materialisation.

Animating Questions for the Residence

1. How should we conceptualise concepts?
2. What is the relationship between concepts, language, and materiality?
3. What can be learned about law, policy, and related institutional practices through studying concepts and a conceptual approach to scholarship?
4. What conceptual methodologies are helpful? Specifically, what new conceptual methodologies are worth attending to?
5. What value is there and what challenges emerge in taking up conceptual meanings that collide with mainstream understandings?
6. Are concepts 'things' to understand or to deploy; what kinds of things might they be?
7. How do concepts surface in institutional and everyday life and what do they do there?

8. How are legal concepts different from other kinds of concept? Is their distinctiveness simply to do with the legal authority, technicality, and professionalism they bear?
9. How does institutionalisation shape the struggles around concepts? Are the struggles that take place over legal concepts different to those around concepts used in other policymaking and regulatory processes?
10. Are all social concepts inherently plural and contested?
11. How should law (caselaw, legislation etc) approach the temporalities of concepts – in terms of flux and evolution, and in facing towards pasts, presents, or futures?
12. Do we use concepts or are we used by them – how can this interrelationship best be understood?
13. How should the networked character of concepts be approached?
14. What do different (non-legal) fields bring to the study of legal concepts?